

Circular Letter - Tempo Forte

(26 February - 2 March 2018)

Rome, 23 March 2018

To all the members of the Congregation of the Mission:

It is good to be firm in attaining your goals, but use appropriate, attractive and agreeable means (CCD:IV:80)

My dear confreres, may the Risen Lord fill us with his light and his strength so that we might fulfill the mission that has been entrusted to us!

This *Tempo Forte* took place during the Lenten season and by the time this report is given to you we will most probably be in the midst of the Easter season. One season follows another, and then another. Thus, it is also important to be mindful of the fact that each individual stage of our life prepares us to live the following stage. Each of those stages, however, is characterized by our vocation because Mission and Charity are never indifferent and/or inconsequential realities.

We offer here a summary of our deliberations during the recent *Tempo Forte*.

Decisions of the General Council with regard to the Congregation

[1] Presentation of strategies: in light of the only Postulatum that was approved by the 2016 General Assembly, a postulatum dealing with effective solidarity among the Provinces of the Congregation, Father Miles Heinen presented the General Council with a financial solidarity plan. Once the General Council approves this plan, Father Heinen will present this plan to the Conferences of Visitors. Given the fact, however, that the members of CLAPVI will not meet until the end of this year, Father Heinen will present this plan to each Visitor or to small groups of Visitors from Latin America.

The members of each Provincial Council are asked to study this plan and comment on it so that, at the end of 2018 or at the *Tempo Forte* meeting of March 2019, the General Council can evaluate all these ideas. We then will engage all the Visitors engage all the Visitors in a dialogue on this matter during the 2019 Meeting of Visitors that will take place in the Philippines.

[2] Evaluation of the New Visitors' Meeting (January 2018): according to the evaluation of the 22 Visitors, the meeting was a very positive experience. There was good content and methodology, a simple fraternal environment, intense but respectful dialogue between the participants. Some elements need further consideration at the next such meeting: more attention to the liturgy, better balance between small group work and plenary sessions, a free day or at least a free afternoon for touring and/or shopping.

[3] *Practical Guide for the Visitor and the Local Superior:* a third edition of *A Practical Guide for the Visitor* will be prepared (there was an edition in 1998 and in 2005). Since there are only a few copies of the *Practical Guide for the Local Superior* (first edition was done in 2003), it was decided to revise the current edition

before printing any further copies. This work has been given to a commission composed of Manuel Ginete (Philippines), Dominique Iyolo (Congo), Corpus Delgado (Saragossa), Fernando Macías (Chile). The Vicar General, Javier Álvarez, will coordinate it.

[4] Vocation Promotion of the Brothers in the Congregation: Brother Martial Tatchim (Vice-Province of the Congo and presently archivist and librarian at the General Curia) presented a document about the vocation of the Brother in the Congregation. At the same time, he has invited the members of the Congregation to promote this form of being a missionary in the Congregation. Four other Brothers helped prepare this document.

The members of the General Council reacted positively to this document which highlighted certain elements. Brother Martial has been requested to rewrite the document but to do so from the perspective of developing a culture of vocations. The General Council has also established a commission to continue this reflection and to present some concrete proposals. The commission is composed of Brother Adriano Ferreira Silva (Rio de Janeiro), Brother Francisco Berbegal Vázquez (San Vicente de Paúl - Spain), Brother Martial Tatchim (Vice-Province of Cameroon), Father Guénolé Feugang (Vice-Province of Cameroon), and Miles Heinen (Assistant General).

[5] Association of Vincentian Permanent Deacons: a commission is developing International Statutes with regard to the future of the Association of Vincentian Permanent Deacons. This commission is composed of Roger Dubois (permanent deacon in Montreal), Father Paul Golden (Western Province, USA) and Father Christian Mauvais (France). A draft of this document was presented to General Council, suggestions were offered and it is hoped that this Association will be established formally very soon.

[6] Province of Cuba: the members of the General Council are in communication with the members of this province in order to reflect on the future of the Congregation in that part of the world. The projects that Father Jesús María Lusarreta (deceased) initiated continue to operate thanks to his niece, Yolanda, and the financial support of many people living in Spain and a group of Cubans who are managing these projects. We are going to attempt to set up a Father Lusarreta Foundation that will encompass three projects: Casa de los Abuelos (Grandparents' House), Taller Down (Down Workshop), and La Sopa de San Vicente (Saint Vincent's Soup). Father Leonidas Giraldo, a confrere from Colombia who is ministering in Cuba will coordinate the above-mentioned projects and will do so from the Miraculous Medal Parish in Havana.

At the request of the Archbishop of Santiago, Bishop Dionisio García Ibáñez, the community has given back to the diocese the parish (church, rectory, etc.) of San Francisco. The Episcopal Conference in Cuba is planning to establish a minor seminary, a formation center, and a worship center on that property and, in reality, the property and all the buildings do belong to the Archdiocese and not to the Congregation.

[7] Piacenza (Italy) – Collegio Alberoni: the Collegio Alberoni is a major seminary that is administered by the Congregation (Province of Italy). At the present time, there are 31 seminarians studying there (20 diocesan seminarians and 11 seminarians for the Congregation). Their studies are taken in this seminary that is equipped with everything that is necessary for the preparation of seminarians. Twenty-three professors teach philosophy and theology. A formation team is entrusted with the formation of the Vincentian seminarians. It is possible that the Alberoni Foundation will allow us to increase the number of seminarians for the Congregation, which, in turn, would allow us to make this formation center more international.

Offices dependent on the General Curia

- Father Jorge Rodríguez (Director of the Communication Office) presented a report on the work that was done during 2017 and a plan for the work for this current year. He also requested that a second person (a graphic designer) be hired part time. The Council approved that request.
- The archives-library: Brother Martial Tatchim, together with Ms. Giulia D'Angelo, has submitted a report to the Council, a report that outlines the present situation of our archives and library. They have made some recommendations with regard to the physical space and the organization of all this material in accord with more technical guidelines for libraries and archives. The General Council will take up this matter at its next meeting.
- It is most probable that Brother Martial will begin some studies next semester and will not be able to continue his work in the Archives and the Library. Now, however, that we have a professional working in these areas there will no need to request the services of a confrere. The Secretary General will be the supervisor.
- CIF: Father Emmanuel Typamm (Vice-Province of Cameroon) has been appointed as the Assistant Director of CIF. He will function there on a part-time basis; that is, he will be in Paris at the time of the different encounters. The rest of the time he will minister in the Vice-Province of Cameroon.
- SIEV: given the difficulty in finding Vincentian professors to participate in the Master's Program, SIEV has to rethink and organize this program in a different manner. The General Council encourages the members of SIEV to do this at their next meeting, which will be held in June.

- VSO: the plan to construct a building with 30 rooms at the Interprovincial Seminary in Enugu (Nigeria) is moving forward. The funds have been obtained, a commission has been appointed to supervise the work, a contractor has been chosen, and the work will begin very soon. It is hoped that this building will be ready for occupancy in September 2019.

Financial Matters

The Financial Commission of the Congregation met on the Saturday before the *Tempo Forte* meeting (24 February). This Commission is composed of Mr. Thomas Beck and Mr. Eric Cleland (laymen from the United States), Father Philippe Lamblin (treasurer for the French Province), Father Rafael Eloriaga (Philippines), Father George Shitsukane Busieka (Kenya) and Father Paul Parackal (Treasurer General). The members examined the financial status of the Congregation and on Monday, 26 February, had a dialogue with the members of the General Council. Mr. Eric Cleland will no longer serve on this commission and Sister Teresa George, DC, will become a member of the commission. We also considered adding another treasurer from one of the provinces of the Congregation.

The Missionary Funds for 2018 were distributed. These funds provide financial assistance to some of our provinces and international missions that are in need. The number of vocations was one of the elements that guided our distribution of these funds.

International Missions

At this time we do not have much to report and so we simply highlight the following:

- During the month of March, Father Tomaž Mavrič and Father Aarón Gutiérrez will visit the missions in El Alto, Cochabamba, and Beni (Bolivia) and Punta Arenas (Chile).

- At the end of March, Father Francisco Javier Álvarez will visit the mission in Tefe (Brazil). At that time Bishop Fernando Barbosa, CM (bishop of this area) will entrust the missionary territory of Caiambé to the Congregation.
- Angola – at the present time, Father Jason Soto is ministering alone and we are doing everything possible to find one or two other missionaries who are willing to serve in this mission.

The Vincentian Family

The Superior General reported to the council some of the matters that were discussed by the members of the Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family during their meeting which was held in Philadelphia (USA) during the month of January. A more complete report will be given at the June *Tempo Forte* meeting.

The Latin American Council of the Vincentian Family (FAVILA) has organized a meeting that will take place in Cochabamba (Bolivia). All branches of the Family in Latin America have been invited to participate in this gathering. This meeting is held every three years and Father Tomaž Mavrič and Father Aarón Gutiérrez will represent the Curia at this gathering.

Father Giuseppe Turati (Coordinator of the Systemic Change Commission) reported on some recent workshops that were offered, as well as future plans for the Commission.

A group of approximately 1000 young men and women is expected to participate in World Youth Day (2019) which will be held in the Republic of Panama.

Conferences of Visitors

In the coming months, all the Conferences will be meeting: Asia (APVC) will be in Taiwan during the month of April, the members of COVIAM will meet in Kinshasa from 18-21 April, and the members of CLAPVI will meet during the month of October.

The members of CEVIM will meet in Beirut (9-14 April) and are preparing an encounter of European Seminarians that will be held in Villebon, France (24-31 August). This gathering is intended to provide the young men with an opportunity to reflect together on the Vincentian charism.

The members of NVC will meet during the month of April and will continue to reflect on ways in which the guidelines of the 2016 General Assembly can become more rooted in the confreres: the solidarity plan, the intercultural reality, protection of minors in our parishes and schools, etc.

Happy Easter to all!

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

Tomaž Mavrič, CM
Superior General