

## **REFLECTION FOR THE 2022 GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

### **Rome, June 2022**

Six years have passed since our last General Assembly in 2016 at DePaul University in Chicago. Now, we are gathered for our 43<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly here at Saint Juan de Avila Center in Rome.

The Final Document of the 42<sup>nd</sup> General Assembly, “Four Hundred Years of Fidelity to the Charism and the New Evangelization,” left us, members of the Little Company, with guidelines and priorities to put into action in the six years following that Assembly (2016-2022). The General Council, at the beginning of its six years of service, chose eight areas to prioritize that were based on the Final Document.

- 1) Initial Formation
- 2) International Missions and Internationality
- 3) Confreres in Difficulty
- 4) The Vincentian Family
- 5) Solidarity
- 6) Reconfiguration
- 7) Sense of Belonging to the CM, Overcoming Provincialism
- 8) Vincentian Identity

#### **1) INITIAL FORMATION**

This topic is ever-present at our General Assemblies and the last one was no exception. We know that, during the time of Initial Formation, our seminarians receive the foundations of our Charism and Spirituality, and so we are conscious that we need to put much energy and focus into this area. During the last six years, we tried to take some further steps in this regard, but there is, of course, still much to do.

The most recent *Ratio Formationis* in use in the Congregation still remains *ad experimentum* and needs to be confirmed by the whole Congregation. This administration began the revision of the present *Ratio Formationis*, but was not able to conclude it. When completed, it then will be presented to the whole Congregation for its final approval. That remains for the next administration to do.

With a team of confreres, this administration also began reviewing the *Practical Guide for the Local Superior*. From the beginning, a change of title was suggested and, with it, the focus of the document. The proposed new title is *Guide for the Local Community*. Just as for the *Ratio Formationis*, it will remain for the next administration to conclude the *Guide for the Local Community*.

The desire to open an International Vincentian Theologate in Africa had been in the making for many years, and lately it became a reality. It is the International Vincentian Theologate in the city of Enugu, Nigeria.

A crucial part of Initial Formation is the formators. Recently, the General Curia began an initiative to help all those provinces, vice-provinces, and regions that need to prepare formators for our own seminarians, as well as for the diocesan seminaries where we serve. We seek to support financially those that lack the economic means to send their confreres to specialized courses in different parts of the world. Our goal is that every formation house at every stage of formation have enough prepared formators for future members of our Little Company. We are now in the second year of this initiative. Every year we accept 10 to 15 new confreres into this program.

With regard to ongoing formation, we need to give special priority to the accompaniment of confreres up to 10 years of ordination, if they are priests, or vocation, if they are lay brothers. This also will be an area for the next administration to develop.

## **2) INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS AND INTERNATIONALITY**

The Missions *Ad Gentes*, of which the International Missions are a part, are one of the fundamental aspects of our Charism. Because the *Statutes of the International Missions* dated from 2013, we updated those *Statutes* to be more in tune with our present reality.

The original idea of the International Missions was to found new missions and, after a certain period of time, when the mission was well structured, pass it on to the local clergy and move on to another mission, another country. In recent years, the perspective of the International Missions changed from remaining in a certain mission for more or less a short while under the General Curia and then passing in on to the local clergy, to putting down our roots in the mission, for the Congregation to remain and further develop in the given country. With such a perspective, we started asking different provinces to take over the responsibility and coordination of a given mission, which has brought more stability for further development like vocational promotion, initial formation, personnel, etc.

In the last few years, the International Missions of Benin, Punta Arenas, and Chad ceased being International Missions and their coordination was taken over by the following provinces: the International Mission of Benin by the Province of Poland, the International Mission of Punta Arenas by the Province of Chile, and the International Mission of Chad by the Vice-Province of Cameroon.

Diocesan seminaries in the mission territories will be placed, at some point, in the hands of the local clergy.

Many provinces, vice-provinces, and regions have missions in territories we clearly can call Missions *Ad Gentes* too, yet they are not International Missions. The biggest challenge remains in finding confreres available to go to the Missions *Ad Gentes*.

For many years, the Superior General has been sending an invitation letter to all the confreres of the Congregation inviting volunteers for the Missions *Ad Gentes* in general, and the International Missions in particular. In recent years, we added other ways to invite and encourage confreres to volunteer. The Communications Office has put forward an initiative on cmgloal and social media, called the 1% campaign, meaning that each year 1% of the confreres of the Congregation (30 confreres) will volunteer to go to the Missions *Ad Gentes*.

Lately, we had added a new initiative, directly inviting the provinces who have many vocations, to begin new Missions *Ad Gentes* in countries where we are not yet present. The General Curia, in collaboration with the Franz Foundation, started a new fund to help financially in the first three to five years those provinces, vice-provinces, or regions opening a new Mission *Ad Gentes*. Thus, recently or in the immediate future, the following provinces initiated or will initiate new Missions *Ad Gentes*:

- ✓ The Province of Vietnam opened a mission in Laos.
- ✓ The Province of North India is opening a mission in Cambodia.
- ✓ The Province of South India opened missions in Malawi and Sri Lanka.
- ✓ The Province of Nigeria opened missions in Ghana and Sierra Leone.
- ✓ The North-East Region of the Province of North India opened a mission in Myanmar.
- ✓ The Province of the Philippines also opened a mission in Myanmar.
- ✓ The Region of Rwanda-Burundi of the Province of Colombia opened a mission in the Central African Republic.
- ✓ The Vice-Province of Cameroon is opening a mission in Guinea Equatorial.

One of the recommendations, which was emphasized again at the previous General Assembly in relation to the International Missions, was the importance of preparing the missionaries before the leave for the missions, as well as accompanying them after they return. To do this, we put together a course at CIF for confreres preparing to go to the missions *Ad Gentes*, and inviting too the confreres who are already on the missions. We were able to organize one course and then Covid happened, making it impossible to continue running such a course for the next two years. One attempt was made last year to do it via Zoom, but not many confreres participated. At the end of this year, we plan to offer the course in person again.

### **3) CONFRERES IN DIFFICULTY**

We continued the efforts begun by previous administrations in collaboration with the Visitors concerning, in particular, confreres illegally absent from the Congregation. We tried to solve as many cases as possible. In the whole Congregation, there now remain around 25 cases from around 114 in 2016, still to be resolved.

#### **4) THE VINCENTIAN FAMILY**

The Vincentian Family has tremendous potential that we need to keep developing. We have to focus on the sense of belonging to the Family, helping its members to see that the only way forward for the Family to grow is to act collectively, not individually. The Vincentian Family Executive Committee (VFEC) coordinates members of various Congregations and Lay Associations belonging to the Vincentian Family. Its President is the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul.

The Vincentian Family Office (VFO), presently located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, animates and puts into practice the decisions and suggestions from the VFEC for the whole Vincentian Family around the world. In recent years, the VFO has updated the list of all the Congregations and Lay Associations of the Vincentian Family. Its staff members have met personally with almost all the Superiors/Superioresses General and International Presidents of the 163 branches who had expressed clearly their desire to belong to the Vincentian Family because of their roots and closeness to the Vincentian Spirituality and Charism. The Vincentian Family now is present in 164 countries.

In 2017, for the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Vincentian Charism and Spirituality, the Vincentian Family made a presentation at the European Parliament in Brussels in June, followed by the International Symposium held in Rome in October. At that event, the Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA) initiative was launched officially, as was the pilgrimage of the Relics of Saint Vincent de Paul. In October 2018, the Vincentian Film Festival was organized at Castel Gandolfo under the title, “Finding Vince 400,” with the theme of “Globalizing Charity.” In 2020, a meeting of all the International Leaders of the Vincentian Family was held in Rome at which 99 Congregations and Lay Associations participated.

The VFO continues to encourage and strengthen committees and task forces, to develop new areas of service and new initiatives, while trying to improve structures. One of the structures that the VFO started to strengthen and improve, and found where they are not, is the Vincentian Family National Councils in the countries where the Vincentian Family is present. Many new Confraternities have been founded, especially in Latin and Central America: Vincentian Lawyers, Musicians, Teachers, Vincentians involved in Media, etc.

One area that is still undergoing work is how we, as the worldwide Vincentian Family, can respond to natural disasters, wars, etc. as quickly and effectively as possible. The VFEC also is working to find ways to build up a Patrimonial Fund.

#### **5) SOLIDARITY**

Solidarity was given significant attention at the previous General Assembly too and is an area on which the General Council has worked. During the Assembly, solidarity was discussed in terms of financial support, as well as support in personnel. As its first objective, the General Council looked to developing and presenting to the Congregation the area of financial support and left the support in terms of personnel for a later moment.

A few approaches and explanations were presented in the area of financial support, but so far, we, as a Congregation, could not yet come to a conclusion or acceptance of the project. One initiative that has been present for many years in the area of financial solidarity for the provinces is the Mission Distribution Fund (MDF). This too will need an analysis as to how the fund is helping needy provinces and how the money is being used.

## **6) RECONFIGURATION**

In a very limited way, the word reconfiguration can be understood as a fusion or union of two or more provinces into one. This is just one aspect of what reconfiguration means in the much wider sense of the word. During these last six years, we had a fusion of the Province of Hungary, which became a Region of the Province of Vincentian Missionaries of Italy, and the Province of Cuba, which became a Region under the General Curia.

Considering the word reconfiguration in a much wider sense means for provinces to reflect with prophetic insight on the spirit of our Spirituality and Charism. In this regard, a certain province or certain provinces or even an entire continent might consider the ministries or services to examine, share, and then act on. In so doing, they would leave some and prioritize others in the near and long-term in order to be more effective and better in tune with our Charism and Spirituality.

The reasons for doing so could be different: reconfigure because of shrinking numbers of confreres in certain provinces, reexamining all ministries and services in order to prioritize the ones closest to our Charism and Spirituality, or choosing some area of service in the spirit of our Congregation in collaboration with other provinces. In this way, we can be more effective and attain better results.

On a broader scale, one such area of collaboration involving many provinces might encompass the Continent of Europe, where we could develop a common project or priority that all the Provinces of Europe would embrace in some way. For example, having a few centers across Europe where we would serve immigrants and refugees, helping and accompanying them spiritually, materially, emotionally, legally, and with job training.

## **7) SENSE OF BELONGING TO THE CM, OVERCOMING PROVINCIALISM**

In many cases, we still face the challenge of developing a sense of belonging to the CM. We will discuss and look at this challenge in depth during this General Assembly, as we focus on the identity of the CM, trying to help every single confrere deepen his sense of belonging to the Little Company.

The more we develop the aspects of internationality and interculturality within the Congregation, the more we will be able to overcome so-called provincialism. This involves closing oneself within a certain province, community, service, or ministry and not seeing the larger picture, not being aware that we are part of a much greater reality, which is the International Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul. We need to be very interested in what is happening within the whole Congregation around the world. We might describe this as staying on the mountain and looking into the valley, but not staying in the valley, from which we cannot see much.

We need to think globally and act locally. The present global reality in the area of communications is a tremendous help to overcoming the narrow view and getting to know and link with the wider Congregation, building international bridges, collaborating.

## **8) VINCENTIAN IDENTITY**

This was the eighth and final point on which the General Council of this administration worked, as based on the Final Document of the 2016 GA. This theme also was present in the previous administration. In these last six years, we reaffirmed the weakness of our Vincentian identity as members of the Little Company in the areas of Spirituality, Lifestyle, and Ministries. Based on the suggestions of the Visitors at the meeting in Manila, Philippines, in 2019, this reflection led to the decision to choose the theme of identity as the focus for the XLIII General Assembly.

During recent years, the topic of sexual abuse of minors and vulnerable adults came more and more into focus within the Church. Based on Pope Francis' *motu proprio* and his clear decision to tackle this horrific behavior of any person in consecrated life—dioceses, as well as Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, recommended organizing committees within their own structures. These will keep their members informed and help when a case of abuse of minors or vulnerable adults surfaces. For our Congregation the coordinator for “Safeguarding” is Father Miles Heinen.

## **THE LITTLE COMPANY IN THE NEXT SIX YEARS (2022-2028)**

### **1) *IDENTITY OF THE CM AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY***

From our beginnings, the people themselves started calling us missionaries, a word that includes within it a sense of dynamism, movement, going to the peripheries, not being caught

in a state of stagnation, but bearing a constant desire to evangelize by personal example, deeds, and words to the farthest corners of the world.

When we speak of identity, we speak of our Spirituality and Charism. The two areas are interconnected strongly to the point that we may use just one of those two words, Charism, to describe both. Then again, we may be tempted to illustrate both areas of Charism and Spirituality by listing things we do, services, ministries in which we are involved, and setting aside the reasons why we do what we do. To find the response to who we are we need to search in the area of our Spirituality.

Jesus Christ is the rule of the mission (the way He thinks, feels, speaks, acts). Saint Vincent built his Spirituality on certain pillars: the Incarnation, the Holy Trinity, the Eucharist, Mary, Providence, the five virtues, the usual three vows with the addition of Stability as the fourth one. He included prayer, listening to the Word of God, a daily half hour of meditation in common and a desirable half hour of meditation in private, celebration of the Sacraments (Eucharist and Reconciliation), and each confrere having a Spiritual Director.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** to reconnect with our roots, with the origins of our Spirituality and Charism. During our General Assembly, we will reflect on our identity under three titles: Spirituality, Lifestyle, and Ministries.

To reconnect with our roots, we must begin by reading and praying with our *Common Rules*, our first *Constitutions*, before taking in our hands our present *Constitutions and Statutes*, because the present *Constitutions*, as well as all the other *Constitutions* that followed from the first *Constitutions* or *Common Rules* were based on them. According to the signs of the times, the *Constitutions* update and add words, trying to emphasize one area more than another, etc., but the Spirituality and the Charism left us by Saint Vincent de Paul in the first *Constitutions* do not change and remain the strongest foundations of who we are. It is for this reason that we cannot understand the present *Constitutions* completely, if we do not return regularly to reading and praying with our *Common Rules*.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> and final point of the XII and final chapter of the *Common Rules*, Saint Vincent asks every missionary to keep the *Constitutions* always with him and to read or listen to them every three months. In this spirit, I wish that every single missionary read and pray with the *Common Rules* and our present *Constitutions* alternately every three months, starting by reading the *Common Rules*, a point or paragraph every day. When one finishes the *Common Rules*, he moves onto the present *Constitutions* in the same way and continues reading and praying alternately from the time of initial formation all throughout his life.

I strongly recommend that every province, vice-province, and region distribute to every single confrere, regardless of age, a hard copy of the *Common Rules, Constitutions and Statutes*, if he does not have one. If they need to be reprinted, then do so. The three books that need to accompany every missionary every day are the *Bible*, the *Breviary*, and the book with our *Common Rules, Constitutions and Statutes*.

In heaven, our saintly confreres, including some who have been recognized officially by the Church, remain our intercessors before Jesus. May we too put all our efforts into bringing the causes of our confreres in process of beatification or canonization to their conclusion to deepen our relationship with the confreres in heaven. May we also be open to starting new processes of beatification for confreres who, because of their saintly life, will remain models for us of Vincentian Spirituality and Charism.

## 2) *CULTURE OF VOCATIONS*

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** to renew our first love, to renew our original fire in following Jesus in consecrated life. This will help to rebuild an environment where the young feel free to choose their future, not threatened by many negative influences within society: the culture of indifference, anti-religious atmosphere, and feeling outcast if they decide to choose Jesus in consecrated life in general and, more specifically, in our Little Company as brothers or priests.

## 3) *VOCATIONAL PROMOTION*

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that vocational promotion continue to be a priority in every single province, vice-province, region, and international mission. Every vocational promotion plan must clearly include, at the same level of importance, the invitation to become a Brother or a Priest in our Little Company. Our Congregation needs to breathe with both lungs in order to follow our identity as Saint Vincent left it to us, so as best to serve through our Charism and Spirituality.

In these past years, we tried to stress the urgency of every province, vice-province, region, and international mission having a confrere responsible, as his main service, for coordinating vocational promotion, accompanied by a team of confreres who will plan together, organize events, and be in a regular contact with youth, supported by all the confreres. Coordinated by the Communications Office, with the cooperation of many confreres, a meeting for all confreres responsible for Vocational Promotion in the Congregation was organized in 2018 at CIF at our Motherhouse in Paris with the participation of almost all the confreres responsible for Vocational Promotion in the Congregation. The meeting produced a Final Document that became a basis for further initiatives in this regard, of which one was the organization of a three-year online course for those responsible for Vocational Promotion in the Congregation. It began in 2021 and will run through 2023. Coming from a conviction that Jesus continues to call persons to the consecrated life in His Church and to our Little Company, it is our duty to help those young people who are being called by Jesus to make a good discernment and the right decision in their lives.



#### 4) ***REVITALIZE THE PRESENCE OF BROTHERS IN THE CONGREGATION***

For many decades, the presence of the Brothers in our Little Company has been diminishing in an alarming way, to the point that in the Congregation today we have arrived at just 108 Brothers, among whom many are very advanced in age and with limited health.

Father Robert Maloney recently wrote a book entitled, *A Hidden Treasure – Brothers in the Congregation of the Mission*. The wealth of information contained therein is a wonderful gift for every confrere to help him reflect on the role and place of the Brother in the Little Company, which is invited to breathe with both lungs. It is available in six different languages to take back to your respective provinces, vice-provinces, and regions. You may take as many copies as you desire, free of charge. Reading it will help us gain new insights, ideas, and recommendations in this field.

In various parts of the world, people call us by different names. Sometimes the name given us emphasizes just one part of our membership like, Priests of the Mission, Padres Paúles, Padres Vincentinos, or Vincentian Fathers, where the Brothers are not mentioned explicitly. We now have a wonderful opportunity to start correcting or naming the members of the Congregation in those places by another name that will include that of the Brothers as well. Some provinces, in their Vocational Promotion Programs, clearly include and present the Congregation as being formed by Brothers and Priests and encourage both options.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that the Congregation, without delay, once again reflect deeply on the call, role, and place of service of Brothers in the Little Company. Programs of Vocational Promotion must adapt and include, without exception, both options: Brothers and Priests, thus giving young men two choices in becoming members of our Congregation.

If, in the coming years, the number of candidates for the Little Company will grow, including the number who wish to become Brothers, we can be sure that besides Jesus's Mercy towards our Congregation, we ourselves, by making significant efforts toward this goal, surely will be part of the visible fruits.

#### 5) ***FORMATION OF FORMATIORS***

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that every province, vice-province, and region have sufficient well-prepared formators for all stages of initial formation, as well as for ongoing formation for all of us. With this goal in mind, we recently opened a new fund to support financially those provinces, vice-provinces, and regions, which lack the financial means to send confreres to the courses for formators. Such courses last up to two years or more, if the confrere needs first to learn or improve the language in which the course is being offered.

#### 6) ***MISSIONS “AD GENTES”***

The missions *Ad Gentes* are very much part of our Charism. Under this name, we include the International Missions that are directly under the coordination of the General Curia of which there are presently seven, as well as the missions that are coordinated by a province, vice-province, or region. In recent years some provinces, vice-provinces, and regions have opened new missions *Ad Gentes* in countries where we were still not present.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that this mission-*Ad-Gentes* spirit will continue to grow. I hope that those provinces, vice-provinces, and regions that, at present, have many positive responses from the young, that is, those that have many vocations will be ready to open new missions in the countries where we are not yet present.

The fund set up at the General Curia, with the collaboration of the Franz Foundation, to open new missions *Ad Gentes*, is a further encouragement. So far, we are present in 95 countries throughout the world. To be present just in the countries where at least some of the Congregations or Lay Associations of the Vincentian Family are present, we would have to extend our presence into 69 additional countries. We still have a long way to go to be present in the 164 countries where members of the Vincentian Family are.

## 7) **REVIVE THE POPULAR MISSIONS**

New developments in the Church and in the world require from us a constant update on the best ways to approach people today. Through the signs of the times, we must look for new ways to evangelize or re-evangelize.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that the Congregation will revive the Popular Missions throughout the Little Company. The Popular Missions are very active in many provinces, vice-provinces, and regions. However, it is also true that in other provinces, vice-provinces, and regions, the Popular Missions have lost considerable strength or are non-existent.

Because this ministry led to the birth and development of the Congregation, we need to put new energy, vision, and methods into giving Popular Missions in different parts of the world. We can learn from each other how Popular Missions are given within our Congregation, as well as in other Congregations in different parts of the world, and so adapt the best method to the place where we are serving. The social and cultural context in many countries has changed with the arrival of immigrants and refugees. In some places, reference to God and Christian communities has little importance. Such areas can become a different Popular-Mission model with an ongoing and much longer program.

One specialty of our Popular Missions that should be kept and reinforced is the Sacrament of Reconciliation where the person makes a confession of his or her whole past life. In many places, the Popular Missions of the Congregation are done in collaboration with the different branches of the Vincentian Family. I would like to encourage using this as a regular model

throughout the Congregation. Rather than giving Popular Missions by ourselves, they should be offered in close collaboration with the different Congregations and Lay Associations of the Vincentian Family present in the territory of the respective provinces, vice-provinces, or regions.

#### 8) ***FORMATION OF THE CLERGY***

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that this area be strengthened throughout the whole Congregation. It has been a part of our Charism since its foundation. We need to open ourselves again to being more present in diocesan seminaries, to the ongoing formation of the diocesan clergy, to being available to give retreats to diocesan priests and seminarians, and to willingly offer spiritual direction and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In general, we must remain very close to the diocesan clergy, inviting them into our communities on different occasions, sharing directly or indirectly our Spirituality and Charism with them. By doing so, we also gain an enormous army of collaborators with whom we look in the same direction.

Father Robert Maloney recently wrote another book entitled, *The Ministry of the Congregation of the Mission to Help Form the Diocesan Clergy – Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. This book is available in six different languages to take back to your respective provinces, vice-provinces, and regions. You may take as many copies as you desire, free of charge. Reading it will help us gain new insights, ideas, and recommendations in this field.

#### 9) ***FORMATION OF THE LAITY***

This area is also so much a part of our Charism. We accompany the various Lay Associations within the Vincentian Family and we are present in parishes, schools, colleges, universities, and other institutions. In some provinces, “Vincentian Formation Centers” already exist, where specialists in the areas of Vincentian Spirituality and Charism offer formation courses.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that a Vincentian Formation Center be organized in the territory of every province, vice-province, and region of the Congregation. The whole Vincentian Family present in a given country should coordinate it. It should be open to all the members of the Vincentian Family in the wider sense of the word and to anyone interested in learning about Vincentian Spirituality and Charism.

#### 10) ***MAKE A PROFOUND ANALYSIS OF OUR PRESENCE IN THE PARISHES WHERE WE SERVE***

According to the analysis prepared by the Secretary General, Father Giuseppe Turati, on the areas of our ministries within the Congregation, we learn that the highest number by far of confreres, 30%, serve in parishes. This is followed by 10% who are retired, ill, or convalescing,

9% serving in seminaries and clerical formation, 8% serving in the missions *Ad Gentes*, 6% serving in education (primary, secondary, colleges, universities, etc.). All the other areas of our ministry are under 6%. Just 2% of the confreres serve in the area of direct service of the Poor. The numbers show us an enormous disproportion between our presence in parishes and our presence in other areas of service.

When we consider our presence in parishes, there are, of course, differences from one parish to another. Those parishes in mission territories that include a vast number of substations are very much a part of our Charism and Spirituality, as are also some in larger cities.

However, the challenge for every province, vice-province, and region is to make a profound analysis of the number of parishes each one has in its territory. We need to examine the presence of the Vincentian Charism and Spirituality in each one of the parishes to determine which parishes we should give back to the diocese. By reducing the number of parishes, we automatically make confreres available for other areas of our Charism and Spirituality that are underrepresented.

I am convinced that the more our services are in accord with our Charism and Spirituality in any part of the world, the more we will be of service to the Church and humanity. It will be the best way we, as missionaries of the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul, will be able to contribute to building up the Kingdom.

We know that the priority of bishops in their respective dioceses is to have enough priests in their parishes. Therefore, the bishops often approach us to ask us to take on new parishes. Over the next six years, after a deep analysis of the reality of our presence in the parishes, that today comes to 30% of all the confreres in the Congregation, this number can be reduced.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that we bring about a balance with the other areas of our ministries. Reducing by half our presence in parishes, that is, to 15%, we will be able to increase the percentages in other areas that are low or very low with regard to our overall presence in the Church and the world. The percentage of our presence in the parishes may still remain the highest even by reducing it to 15%, but we surely will increase representation in the other areas of our Charism: Popular Missions, missions *Ad Gentes*, formation of our own, direct service of the Poor, formation of clergy and laity, to name a few.

Two steps can help us to reach this goal. The first is to start this process soon after the General Assembly. After discussing this topic in our Provinces, Vice-Provinces or Regions, we will inform the respective bishops that in a short period of time, one, two, or a maximum of three years, we will return the selected parish or parishes back to the diocese. The second is that, from now on, before accepting any new parishes, we first reflect in the respective Provinces, Vice-provinces, and Regions on the present balance among the different areas of service: formation of our own, Popular Missions, missions *Ad Gentes*, direct service of the Poor, formation of clergy and laity, etc. After that analysis and determining that there is a good balance among the different areas of service, we will be able to respond to the bishop.

## ***11) FURTHER DEVELOP THE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE***

The various areas of communication are not a goal in themselves, but are always instruments to reach the people, to take the first steps in contacting, informing, and bringing the Good News to as many people as possible.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that the Office of Communications of the General Curia, serving the whole Congregation will keep developing into new areas of communication as the Holy Father encourages us to do, by words and deeds.

At the same time, I would like to encourage very much every province, vice-province, and region to develop further their respective Offices of Communications or to start such an Office where there is none.

## **CONCLUSION**

In the six-year period leading up to our next General Assembly in 2028, we will celebrate, in 2025, the 400<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the official foundation of the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul. This anniversary comes to us as an immense grace, as a further opportunity and challenge to revitalize our identity and to respond fully to the conclusions from this General Assembly, as they will be reflected in the Final Document and its Plan of Action.

God willing, our Motherhouse in Paris will be able, after a general renovation, to host the next Visitors' meeting that will fall in that same year, in between two General Assemblies. With an organizing committee, including the project and programing of the Motherhouse, the next administration surely will begin preparations for this very important moment in the life of the Little Company.

**In the next six years, I ardently desire** that all these preparations, events, meetings, and initiatives help us personally to revitalize our identity and then help others to be on fire and in love with the Vincentian Spirituality and Charism, so that we might all become "Mystics of Charity" in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

Tomaž Mavrič, CM  
Superior General