

RELAZIONE DEL SUPERIOR4E GENERALE ALL'AG 2022

Roma, 29 giugno 2022

Sono passati sei anni dalla nostra ultima Assemblea Generale, che si è tenuta nel 2016 all'Università DePaul di Chicago. Ora siamo qui riuniti per la nostra 43^a Assemblea generale al Centro San Juan de Avila di Roma.

Il Documento finale della 42^a Assemblea generale, "*Quattrocento anni di fedeltà al carisma e la nuova evangelizzazione*", ha consegnato a noi, membri della Piccola Compagnia, le linee guida e le priorità da mettere in atto nei sei anni successivi all'Assemblea (2016-2022). Il Consiglio Generale, all'inizio dei suoi sei anni di servizio, ha individuato otto aree privilegiate, a partire dal *Documento Finale*:

- 1) la formazione iniziale,
- 2) le missioni internazionali e l'internazionalità,
- 3) i confratelli in difficoltà,
- 4) la famiglia vincenziana,
- 5) la solidarietà,
- 6) la riconfigurazione,
- 7) il senso di appartenenza alla CM e il superamento del provincialismo,
- 8) l'identità vincenziana.

1) **FORMAZIONE INIZIALE**

Questo tema è sempre presente nelle nostre Assemblee Generali e l'ultima non ha fatto eccezione. Sappiamo che, durante il periodo di formazione iniziale, i nostri seminaristi ricevono le basi del nostro carisma e della nostra spiritualità, e quindi siamo consapevoli di dover dedicare molta energia e attenzione a quest'area. Negli ultimi sei anni abbiamo cercato di fare qualche passo in avanti in questo senso, ma naturalmente c'è ancora molto da fare.

La più recente *Ratio Formationis* in uso nella Congregazione rimane ancora *ad experimentum* e deve essere confermata da tutta la Congregazione. Questa amministrazione ha iniziato la revisione dell'attuale *Ratio Formationis*, ma non è riuscita a concluderla. Una volta completata, sarà presentata a tutta la Congregazione per l'approvazione finale. Resta da fare per la prossima amministrazione.

Con un gruppo di confratelli, questa amministrazione ha iniziato a rivedere anche la *Guida pratica per il Superiore locale*. Fin dall'inizio è stato suggerito un cambiamento del titolo e, con esso, del *focus* del documento. Il nuovo titolo proposto è *Guida per la comunità locale*.

Come per la *Ratio Formationis*, spetterà alla prossima amministrazione la conclusione della *Guida per la comunità locale*.

Il desiderio di aprire un Teologato Internazionale Vincenziano in Africa era in cantiere da molti anni, e ultimamente è diventato realtà. Si tratta del Teologato Vincenziano Internazionale nella città di Enugu, in Nigeria.

Un aspetto cruciale della Formazione iniziale è costituita dai formatori. Recentemente, la Curia generale ha avviato un'iniziativa per aiutare tutte quelle Province, Vice-Province e Regioni che hanno bisogno di preparare formatori per i propri seminaristi e per i seminari diocesani in cui prestiamo servizio. Cerchiamo di sostenere finanziariamente coloro che non hanno i mezzi economici per inviare i loro confratelli a corsi specializzati in diverse parti del mondo. Il nostro obiettivo è che ogni casa di formazione, in ogni fase della formazione, abbia un numero sufficiente di formatori preparati per i futuri membri della nostra Piccola Compagnia. Siamo al secondo anno di questa iniziativa. Ogni anno accettiamo da 10 a 15 nuovi confratelli in questo programma.

Per quanto riguarda la formazione permanente, dobbiamo dare particolare priorità all'accompagnamento dei confratelli fino a 10 anni dall'ordinazione, se sono sacerdoti, o dalla vocazione, se sono fratelli laici. Anche questo sarà un ambito da sviluppare per la prossima amministrazione.

2) MISSIONI INTERNAZIONALI E INTERNAZIONALITÀ

Le Missioni *ad Gentes*, di cui le missioni internazionali fanno parte, sono uno degli aspetti fondamentali del nostro carisma. Poiché gli Statuti delle missioni internazionali risalgono al 2013, li abbiamo aggiornati perché fossero più in sintonia con la nostra realtà attuale.

L'idea originaria delle missioni internazionali era quella di fondare nuove missioni e, dopo un certo periodo di tempo, una volta ben strutturate, consegnarle al clero locale per trasferirci in un'altra missione, in un altro Paese. Negli ultimi anni, la prospettiva delle missioni internazionali è cambiata: dal rimanere in una certa missione per un periodo più o meno breve sotto la Curia generale e poi passare al clero locale, al mettere le nostre radici nella missione, affinché la Congregazione rimanga e si sviluppi ulteriormente in quel dato Paese. Con questa prospettiva, abbiamo iniziato a chiedere a diverse Province di assumere la responsabilità e il coordinamento di una determinata missione, il che ha portato maggiore stabilità per un ulteriore sviluppo come la promozione vocazionale, la formazione iniziale, il personale, ecc.

Negli ultimi anni, le missioni internazionali del Benin, di Punta Arenas e del Ciad hanno cessato di essere tali e il loro coordinamento è stato assunto da alcune Province: la missione internazionale del Benin dalla Provincia di Polonia, la missione internazionale di Punta Arenas dalla Provincia del Cile e la missione internazionale del Ciad dalla Vice-Province del Camerun.

I seminari diocesani nei territori di missione saranno affidati, a un certo punto, al clero locale. Molte Province, Vice-Province e Regioni hanno missioni in territori che possiamo chiaramente chiamare missioni *ad Gentes*, ma non sono missioni internazionali. La sfida più grande rimane quella di trovare confratelli disponibili ad andare nelle missioni *ad Gentes*.

Per molti anni, il Superiore Generale ha fatto un appello missionario a tutti i confratelli della Congregazione per stimolare volontari per le missioni *ad Gentes* in generale e per le missioni internazionali in particolare. Negli ultimi anni, abbiamo aggiunto altri modi per invitare e incoraggiare i confratelli al volontariato. L'Ufficio Comunicazioni ha proposto un'iniziativa sul sito *cmglobal* e sui *social media*, chiamata campagna dell'1%, che prevede che ogni anno l'1% dei confratelli della Congregazione (30 confratelli) si offra volontariamente per le missioni *ad Gentes*.

Ultimamente abbiamo aggiunto una nuova iniziativa, invitando direttamente le Province che hanno molte vocazioni ad avviare nuove missioni *ad Gentes* in Paesi dove non siamo ancora presenti. La Curia generale, in collaborazione con la Fondazione Franz, ha avviato un nuovo fondo per aiutare finanziariamente nei primi tre-cinque anni quelle Province, Vice-Province o Regioni che aprono una nuova missione *ad Gentes*. Così, recentemente o nell'immediato futuro, le seguenti Province hanno avviato o avvieranno nuove missioni *ad Gentes*:

- ✓ La Provincia del Vietnam ha aperto una missione in Laos.
- ✓ La Provincia dell'India del Nord sta aprendo una missione in Cambogia.
- ✓ La Provincia dell'India del Sud ha aperto missioni in Malawi e Sri Lanka.
- ✓ La Provincia della Nigeria ha aperto missioni in Ghana e Sierra Leone.
- ✓ La Regione Nord-Est della Provincia dell'India del Nord ha aperto una missione in Myanmar.
- ✓ Anche la Provincia delle Filippine ha aperto una missione in Myanmar.
- ✓ La Regione del Ruanda-Burundi della Provincia di Colombia ha aperto una missione nella Repubblica Centrafricana.
- ✓ La Vice-Provincia del Camerun sta aprendo una missione in Guinea Equatoriale.

Una delle raccomandazioni nuovamente sottolineata dalla precedente Assemblea Generale in relazione alle missioni internazionali, è stata l'importanza di preparare i missionari prima della partenza per le missioni, come pure di accompagnarli dopo il loro ritorno. Per fare questo, abbiamo organizzato un corso al CIF per i confratelli che si preparano ad andare in missione *ad Gentes*, invitando anche i confratelli che sono già in missione. Siamo riusciti a organizzare un corso, ma poi è arrivata il Covid, che ha reso impossibile continuare a tenere un corso del genere per i due anni successivi. L'anno scorso si è tentato di farlo via Zoom, ma non hanno partecipato molti confratelli. Alla fine di quest'anno, abbiamo intenzione di offrire nuovamente il corso di persona.

3) CONFRATELLI IN DIFFICOLTÀ

Abbiamo continuato gli sforzi iniziati dalle precedenti amministrazioni in collaborazione con i Visitatori per quanto riguarda, in particolare, i confratelli assenti illegalmente dalla Congregazione. Abbiamo cercato di risolvere il maggior numero possibile di casi. In tutta la Congregazione, rimangono ancora da risolvere circa 25 casi rispetto ai 114 del 2016.

4) LA FAMIGLIA VINCENZIANA

La Famiglia Vincenziana ha un enorme potenziale che dobbiamo continuare a sviluppare. Dobbiamo concentrarci sul senso di appartenenza alla Famiglia, aiutando i suoi membri a capire che l'unico modo per far crescere la Famiglia è agire collettivamente, non individualmente. Il Comitato Esecutivo della Famiglia Vincenziana (VFEC) coordina i membri delle varie Congregazioni e Associazioni laicali appartenenti alla Famiglia Vincenziana. Il suo presidente è il Superiore Generale della Congregazione della Missione di San Vincenzo de' Paoli.

L'Ufficio della Famiglia Vincenziana (VFO), attualmente situato a Filadelfia, in Pennsylvania, USA, anima e mette in pratica le decisioni e i suggerimenti della VFEC per tutta la Famiglia Vincenziana nel mondo. Negli ultimi anni, il VFO ha aggiornato l'elenco di tutte le Congregazioni e Associazioni laicali della Famiglia Vincenziana. I suoi collaboratori hanno incontrato personalmente quasi tutti i Superiori/Madri generali e i Presidenti internazionali dei 163 rami che hanno espresso chiaramente il loro desiderio di appartenere alla Famiglia Vincenziana per le loro radici e la loro vicinanza alla spiritualità e al carisma vincenziano. La Famiglia Vincenziana è ora presente in 164 Paesi.

Nel 2017, in occasione del 400° anniversario del carisma e della spiritualità vincenziana, la Famiglia Vincenziana ha tenuto una presentazione al Parlamento europeo a Bruxelles nel mese di giugno, seguita dal Simposio internazionale tenutosi a Roma in ottobre. In quell'occasione è stata lanciata ufficialmente l'iniziativa Famvin Homeless Alliance (FHA) e il pellegrinaggio delle Reliquie di San Vincenzo de' Paoli. Nell'ottobre 2018 è stato organizzato a Castel Gandolfo il Festival del Cinema Vincenziano dal titolo "Finding Vince 400", con il tema "Globalizzare la carità". Nel 2020 si è tenuto a Roma un incontro di tutti i leader internazionali della Famiglia Vincenziana, al quale hanno partecipato 99 Congregazioni e Associazioni laicali.

Il VFO continua a incoraggiare e rafforzare comitati e *task force*, a sviluppare nuove aree di servizio e nuove iniziative, cercando di migliorarne le strutture. Una delle strutture che il VFO ha iniziato a rafforzare e migliorare, fondandole dove non c'erano, sono i Consigli Nazionali della Famiglia Vincenziana nei Paesi in cui la Famiglia Vincenziana è presente. Sono state fondate molte nuove Confraternite, soprattutto in America Latina e Centrale: avvocati vincenziani, musicisti, insegnanti, vincenziani impegnati nei media, ecc.

Un'area su cui si sta ancora lavorando è il modo in cui noi, come Famiglia Vincenziana mondiale, possiamo rispondere a disastri naturali, guerre, ecc. nel modo più rapido ed efficace possibile. La VFEC sta inoltre lavorando per trovare il modo di costituire un Fondo patrimoniale.

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 5TH 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 14th 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 FORMATIONS***

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 400th 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 programming 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 21st century and beyond.

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