

FEATURE:

Echoes of the 2004 General Assembly

Presentation

by Alfredo Becerra Vázquez, C.M.

Editor of *Vincentiana*

The Congregation of the Mission experienced a time of grace and blessing during its 40th General Assembly.¹ This was a time in which God was really present in the midst of the 122 participants of the meeting. Fr. Robert P. Maloney, C.M., then Superior General, said: “God loves you personally — each member of this Assembly — and beyond that, he loves the Congregation of the Mission because he loves the friends of the poor. Allow God to pour out his Spirit on you in these days, assuring you of his presence and love.”²

Our Constitutions tell us that the aim of Assemblies in the C.M. is to preserve and promote the spirituality and the apostolic vitality of the Congregation (cf. C 135). In addition they define clearly its rights (cf. C 137).

The Preparatory Commission of the General Assembly (CPAG 2004), in its letter of 2002, proposed to us the theme for reflection: “*Our Vincentian identity today, having lived the new Constitutions for 20 years - An evaluation and three challenges for the future.*”³ They

¹ Cf. 40th General Assembly, 2004, Congregation of the Mission, “*Our Vincentian Identity Today in Light of the Constitutions: Evaluation and Challenges*” (Rome, July 5-29, 2004), in *Vincentiana* 48 (2004), 225-364.

² *Ibidem*, 237.

³ Cf. *Vincentiana* 46 (2002), 128-129.

sent the Consultation Document⁴ and other useful materials to get the Congregation preparing for the 40th General Assembly. Domestic and Provincial Assemblies were carried out throughout the Congregation. Later the provinces sent their contributions and thus CPAG 2004 drafted a Work Document that was sent to all the delegates for the General Assembly.

Fr. Robert Maloney sent a letter, dated 20 April 2004, to communicate some information about the General Assembly, along with the Work Document of the Assembly,⁵ the Directory, the postulata, and some practical instructions.

The General Assembly was an enriching experience. At it also, Fr. G. Gregory Gay, C.M., was elected as the new Superior General. The General Assembly drafted a Final Document.⁶

This dossier contains four articles that offer us reflections in light of the Final Document of the Assembly. The authors participated as delegates at the General Assembly.

In the first article, *Looking to the Immediate Past: A Challenging Horizon for the Construction of a Vincentian Identity*, its author, Eli Chaves dos Santos, C.M., invites to us to assimilate and to assume the conclusions and proposals of the General Assembly, to live our missionary vocation with creative fidelity, that is to say, as a “re-foundation” of the Vincentian charism so that it responds to the new poverties of our time.

Benjamín Ramarosan, C.M., is the author of the following article: *A Frank Look at the Present: Our Vincentian Identity Today*. The author focuses us on the necessity of living our identity as missionaries and sons of St. Vincent in the present moment, keeping in mind the fundamental purpose for which the Congregation of the Mission was founded.

40th General Assembly: A Daring Look Toward the Future is the title of the reflection that Santiago Azcárate Gorri, C.M., offers us. In it, he invites us to direct our glance toward the future with hope. Radicalism and confidence are two fundamental elements in our march forward. He proposes to us four points present in the third part of the Final Document: the strengthening of the charism, creative fidelity, a hopeful opening to the future and the importance of the formation of the Vincentian missionary.

Finally, Giuseppe Turati, C.M., in his article, *Reflection on the Postulates and Decrees Presented at the 2004 General Assembly*, does

⁴ Cf. *Ibidem*, 130-136.

⁵ Cf. *Vincentiana* 48 (2004), 65-76.

⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*, 353-364.

an analysis of these by subject matter, origin and the type of tendency they reflect. He puts forward various conclusions that show the different concerns of the provinces in the diverse parts of the world.

John Paul II said to us, "*Duc in altum!*," "*Put out into the deep*" (Lk 5:4). *Do not fear taking a risk, throwing out the nets for a catch. The Lord himself will be your guide! May God grant us this spirit of risk taking and of living out our Vincentian charism in a renewed, creative and joyful way!*

(ALFREDO BECERRA VÁZQUEZ, C.M., translator)