

Rome, 28 October 2005

*Feast of Sts. Simon and Jude, Apostles*

### *To the Members of the Congregation of the Mission*

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

This circular has to do with the *tempo forte* meeting of the General Council from 3-7 October 2005. In this *tempo forte* meeting we treated almost 50 points that needed to be dealt with concerning the Congregation of the Mission at the general level. I will try to highlight briefly some of the major points on which we made decisions.

At the beginning of our meeting, we had an ongoing formation session, to which we invited all the members of the Curia House. Also present was Msgr. Ríos Mont, our confrere who is the Auxiliary Bishop of Guatemala. We had a conference entitled, "The Humanization of Jails and the Liberation of Their Prisoners." This was presented by Fr. Marco Gnavi from the Community of Sant'Egidio.

1. As a recommendation which came from the General Assembly with regard to **Vincentian places**, we have decided as a council to try to pursue enriching our heritage as a Vincentian Family at the Berceau of St. Vincent de Paul. With the help of Fr. Jean-Pierre Renouard, we have received some valuable information with regard to the Berceau and we will be asking the support and opinion of the Visitors of Paris and Toulouse in regard to this holy place of the Congregation.
2. I received a letter from Fr. Giuseppe Guerra, the Postulator General, regarding a **petition from the Holy See** that we include two confreres in the list of the memorial of the Blessed on 2 September. More information will be forthcoming from the Postulator General and the Superior General on this matter.
3. In responding to another petition of the 2004 General Assembly, we have concretized the **Commission for the Study of the Statutes** of the Congregation of the Mission. The Commission will be composed of Frs. Paul Golden (Midwest), Giuseppe Turati (Turin), Juan Julián Díaz Catalán (Zaragoza), Eli Chaves dos Santos (Rio de Janeiro), and Alberto Vernaschi (Rome). The Commission will have its first meeting in March 2006. We would

hope that they will have their program for studying the Statutes ready six months before the Visitors' Meeting in 2007.

4. We have chosen the Province of Mexico to host the **International Meeting of Visitors** in 2007. This meeting will take place from 4-15 June 2007. I want to extend special thanks to all the provinces who offered to host this meeting. The Preparatory Commission for the Visitors' Meeting will be named at our *tempo forte* meeting in December.
5. The first draft of the **project of the General Council** for 2005-2010 was presented by the Superior General. The project, as you will see, is based on the idea of greater communion and participation at all levels of the Congregation, including the Vincentian Family.
  - There will be a special focus on the development of our identity as a missionary Congregation.
  - We will deepen our knowledge of the Congregation as an international institution, developing the role of the Conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces.
  - Each Assistant to the Superior General is asked to establish a deep relationship with the different provinces and Conferences that are under his care.
  - Another point is to promote the living of our vows in the context of the world in which we are living.
  - Another will be the emphasis on initial and ongoing formation, with a desire to support the project of SIEV for the formation of our confreres, as well as the promotion of the CIF program.
  - We will also continue promoting the Vincentian Family and our relationship therein.
  - We will try to respond to the challenge made to us by Pope John Paul II in his letter addressed to me and the members of the General Assembly by strengthening our formation of the diocesan clergy.
  - We will also seek to strengthen the dimension of prayer in the life of the Congregation at all levels.
  - We hope to optimize communication and access to information.

These are some of the points that will be considered for our project. As mentioned above, it is only a first draft, so we will continue to work on it during coming ordinary council meetings throughout the year.

6. We have begun to investigate the possibility of establishing a **development office** for the Congregation at the international level.
7. We approved a **“Program for Systemic Change”** with the objective of helping to bring about systemic change in the apostolates of the confreres, especially those ministering to the oppressed poor. This program, which will probably be called the “Think Tank,” will be coordinated by Fr. Robert Maloney, with a team composed of the following: Joseph Foley, C.M. (NGO representative at the UN), Pedro Opeka, C.M. (Madagascar), Norberto Carcellar, C.M. (Philippines), Mrs. Patricia de Nava (AIC), Sr. Ellen Flynn, D.C. (Great Britain), with pending a member from the SSVF.

Related to the “Program for Systemic Change” is the **Systemic Change Award**, which has as its objective to acknowledge and support specific projects developed by individual or groups of confreres who have designed a project in their apostolate, whether specifically missionary or not, that reflects St. Vincent’s creativity in responding to the needs of the Church and/or help promote systemic change to the unjust structures which oppress the poor. This Systemic Change Award will be granted annually on 25 January. The Visitors will soon have information about the details of the award and its application to share with the confreres of the provinces.

A second award, the **Mission Award**, has as its objective to acknowledge and support specific projects developed by individual or groups of confreres who have designed a project that promotes in a noteworthy way the missionary work that they are involved in. This award will be granted annually on 30 July, the feast of St. Justin De Jacobis.

One of the main ideas behind these projects is to stimulate the creative missionary juices of the different members of the Congregation of the Mission, to help us to continue to be on fire in our evangelization of the poor.

8. Another economic issue we discussed was the **patrimony fund project**. A donor has promised us matching-fund money by which we hope to be able to establish patrimonial funds for a number of the poorer provinces of the Congregation.
9. We are also in the process of organizing the **meeting of new Visitors** which will be from 18-24 January 2006. Fr. Corpus Delgado has been asked to coordinate the program. He met with us to discuss the details.
10. The General Council approved a project, with the approval of COVIAM, to solicit the support of a confrere from the Eastern

Province of the United States, Fr. Sylvester Peterka. He has been asked to **support different provinces of COVIAM**, particularly in the areas of formation of formators and ongoing formation, through workshops and programs that will be developed during the summer months.

11. A tentative agreement was drawn up between the General Curia and the Visitors of the Asian Pacific Conference, by which the APVC will take **responsibility for the mission in the Solomon Islands**, with the support of the General Curia.
12. The issue of **reconfiguration** was discussed with regard to a number of provinces that have already been contacted. The General Council will encourage ongoing dialogue on this issue in order to come to an understanding about it and how it can help us in being faithful to our main objective which is to evangelize the poor and to do that in the most efficient and edifying way.
13. We discussed a number of reports from different commissions related to the General Curia. One report in particular concerned the meeting of **SIEV** (International Secretariat for Vincentian Studies) which was held on 20-21 September here at the General Curia in Rome. Present were the members of the outgoing team, as well as the new group of confreres who will be taking over the work of SIEV. I want to take the opportunity to thank the outgoing members of SIEV for the many years of generous service that they have given in the promotion of ongoing formation in the spirit of the Congregation of the Mission: Roberto Lovera (Turin), John Prager (Eastern, USA), Kazimierz Stelmach (Poland), José María Nieto (Delegate from the General Curia), and Julio Suescun (Zaragoza). The new team, which gathered with them for this time of transition, is composed of the new Executive Secretary, Fr. Alexander Jenerj (Austria), and Gilson C  zar Camargo (Curitiba), Eugene Curran (Ireland), Elie Delplace (Paris/Cameroon), Hugh O'Donnell (representative from CIF), Mitxel A. Olabu  naga Ornes (Zaragoza), and Juan Carlos Cerquera (Secretary General, delegate from the General Curia). The new Executive Secretary of SIEV will be getting out a report to the members of the Congregation to present the projects that they hope to develop in their years of service to the Congregation in this function.
14. It is also worth mentioning again for the information of all the confreres, the report of the **webmaster for the Vincentian Family**, Fr. John Freund. Let me repeat that the Congregation of the Mission website has a new address: [www.cmgglobal.org](http://www.cmgglobal.org) The priority for this new site is input of content from the General Curia. A point of interest on the website is the Vincentian

Encyclopedia, the Wikipedia, wherein you can find, for example, posts from John Rybolt, who continues to add draft chapters of his *History of the Congregation*.

15. In his report to the General Council, Manuel Ginete, the **Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family**, mentioned, among other things, the ongoing preparation for the Second International Meeting of the Association of the Miraculous Medal. This will be held in Rome from 24-28 October. Manuel also participated in the Second International Assembly of JMV, as well as World Youth Day in Cologne, Germany, together with the Superior General. He visited different members of the Vincentian Family in Tanzania and Ethiopia. He likewise participated in a theological-cultural conference of the Italian Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Foundation Frederick Ozanam, together with the Superior General and Fr. Mario Di Carlo, Superior of the Curia House in Rome.
16. Under the theme of **missions**, we discussed the candidates for the missions throughout the Congregation. More information about this will come out in the Mission Appeal Letter later this month.
17. We worked on the agreement among the Superior General, the Province of Chile and the missionaries of El Alto with regard to the formation of students, who come from the **international mission in El Alto, Bolivia**.
18. The **international missions in the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea** received a visit from the Assistant General for Missions, Fr. José Antonio Ubillús.

Those are just some of the highlights of our October *tempo forte* meeting.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.  
*Superior General*