

Rome, 20 December 2005

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!

The General Council held its final *tempo forte* meeting of 2005 from 5-9 December. For our ongoing formation session this time, we had a presentation given by Fr. Bartholomew Kiely, a Jesuit from the Institute of Psychology at the Pontifical Gregorian University. He spoke on "Homosexuality and the Priesthood: Criteria for Accompaniment." He based his remarks on the just-released document from the Congregation for Catholic Education, "Instruction Concerning the Criteria for the Discernment of Vocations with regard to Persons with Homosexual Tendencies in view of their Admission to the Seminary and to Holy Orders."

1. Among the different matters that we treated in the *tempo forte* meeting was an initial report on the International Development Office. We have asked Fr. Carl Pieber of the Eastern Province to assist us in investigating the possibility of beginning a Development Office at the international level. He has been invited to bring together some people and chair an ad hoc committee meeting sometime at the beginning of the new year.
2. We also studied the fifth draft of the proposal for the election of the new Superior General for 2010. A sixth draft will be prepared and then presented at the meeting of the Visitors in Mexico in 2007 for their discussion and input.
3. We talked about some of the final details of the Think Tank meeting, which will be held here in Rome from 27 February to 3 March. You will recall that Fr. Robert Maloney will be coordinating this group, which includes the following members of the Congregation and other members of the Vincentian Family: Fr. Joseph Foley (CM NGO representative at the UN), Fr. Pedro Opeka (Madagascar), Fr. Noberto Carcellar (Philippines), Sr. Ellen Flynn, D.C. (Great Britain), and Mrs. Patricia de Nava (AIC). You will recall that the purpose of the Think Tank is to have its members share their best practices in serving the poor, which, we hope will, in turn, help to stimulate more creativity in our evangelization and service of the poor throughout the Congregation.

4. We discussed an update on the New Visitors' Meeting, considering the final details of that meeting which will be held from 18-24 January 2006.
5. A concern of the former Superior General and his council was how to help provinces deal with the situations of confreres in difficulty in a general way. We have decided to organize, for January 2007 a workshop for those who might help confreres in difficult situations in the various provinces. In the near future, a letter will be sent to all the Visitors with regard to this matter.
6. We named the Preparatory Commission for the International Meeting of Visitors in Mexico in 2007. Its members are: Frs. Gabriel Naranjo (Coordinator, Colombia), Antonius Sad Budianto (Indonesia), Yves Bouchet (Toulouse), Daniel Borlik (USA South), and a confrere from Africa.
7. We spent almost a day and a half on the Treasurer General's report to the General Council. We made the decision to give a donation to the confreres and Daughters of Charity in Burundi, who were recent victims of an armed robbery, as well as to some of the social projects of the International Mission in El Alto, Bolivia. The budgets for the Vincentian Solidarity Office, the CM Website, the CM NGO Representative at the UN, SIEV, and the possible new Development Office were approved, as was that for the History of the Congregation project. We also studied the budgets for the International Missions of El Alto (Bolivia), the Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea.
8. We decided upon the recipients of the Systemic Change Award which will be announced on 25 January 2006. The \$ 100,000 will be divided equally among five projects which were chosen. This award will be granted to acknowledge and support specific projects that are developed by confreres and which reflect St. Vincent's creativity in responding to the needs of the Church, while also helping to promote systemic change of the unjust structures which oppress the poor today.
9. We studied the VSO report to the Superior General and General Council, as submitted by Brother Peter Campbell, the Administrator of the Vincentian Solidarity Office. Since the last *tempo forte* meeting in October 2005, the VSO accepted three new projects, secured funding for two previous projects, and awarded Vincentian Solidarity Fund money for three Micro-Project Grants. Information about the Vincentian Solidarity Office is on its website, which has been updated (www.famvin.org/vso). To this date, the English and French versions of the website are available and the Spanish version is in process.

10. In the report on development in using the internet from our webmaster, Fr. John Freund, we received an update on the new technology of podcasting. Basically this refers to the ability to subscribe to or tune into a series of audio or video presentations, broadcast via the internet. The religious subset of podcasting is called “God casting” and is a rapidly growing tool of evangelization. You can find an example of the podcasting on the famvin website under “Fr. Greg Reflects,” which has a new layout, part of which includes the video podcast.
11. We received the quarterly report to the Superior General and his Council by Fr. Manuel Ginete, my Delegate for the Vincentian Family. Among other things, he gave us some reflections on the role of the Delegate for the Vincentian Family. The matters of the Vincentian Family are as important to us as any other ministry that we have. The Delegate is directly accountable to the Superior General and reports to him and the General Council on a quarterly basis. Fr. Ginete’s role this year is to concentrate on stabilizing the different National Councils of the Vincentian Family throughout the world, as well as on raising consciousness in other areas of the importance of uniting ourselves in order that we might be a greater force in the service of our brothers and sisters, the poor.
12. Fr. Joseph Foley, the CM NGO representative to the United Nations told us in his report that links in Spanish and French have been added to the website (www.cm-ngo.net). He also reported that he has been giving classes on the UN Millennium Development Goals at De Paul University, as well as at the CIF Program. The Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, reminds us all that “development, peace and security, and human rights form the indispensable foundations for collective security and well-being.”
13. We also reflected on some of the volunteers who responded to the Mission Appeal letter of October 2005. To this date, we received four responses, two of which will be processed shortly. Fr. Gregory Walsh, from the Province of Australia, has been assigned to the International Mission in the Solomon Islands and will be moving there at the beginning of 2006. He is replacing Fr. Marek Owsiak who, after having served for five years on that mission, is returning to Poland. We are most grateful for Fr. Marek’s generous service there.
14. We had a meeting with the Vice-Visitor of the Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius, Fr. Paul Roche, and the Visitors of Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia in order to draw up a new agreement for supporting the Vice-Province from 2006-2011.

15. We concluded by studying the reports we received from the various Visitors' Conferences. The NCV gave us an update on the collaboration among the provinces in the United States. CLAPVI sent a three-year plan (2005-2008), along with the revision of its Statutes. From Asia-Pacific we got the announcement of the new President for the next period, Fr. Mathew Kallammakal of the Province of North India. He will be participating with the other Presidents of the Conferences of Visitors at the meeting scheduled just prior to our June 2006 *tempo forte*. As you have probably heard, the President of COVIAM, Fr. Benjamin Ramarosan, has been named Bishop of Farafangana. It will be necessary, therefore, to elect a new president at the next meeting of COVIAM in Madagascar. Meanwhile, COVIAM is under the responsibility of the Executive Secretary, Fr. Emmanuel Typamm from Cameroon. I take this opportunity to thank Fr. Benjamin for his generosity in serving not only as Visitor of the Province of Madagascar, but also as President of COVIAM. He did a fine job in the short time that he was president.

Those are the main things that I would like to share with you with regard to our *tempo forte* meeting this month. I take this opportunity to wish all of you a blessed and peace-filled Christmas and a New Year 2006 filled with enthusiasm and joy in your living in community for the service of the poor.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General