

Rome, 11 May 2006

*To all 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!*

I hope all of you are living the graces that came from the celebration of Holy Week with an abundance of life in community and in your service of the poor in your various apostolates.

I recently made a trip to Mozambique during which I had the opportunity to visit with many members of the Vincentian Family. In particular, I met with our confreres who are members of the Vice-province, the community of the Province of Mexico in Chongoene and the community of the Province of Salamanca in Nacala. I also visited the Daughters of Charity in different places throughout the country.

I have one purpose in mind for writing this circular. As you are well aware, we have a shortage of missionaries available in the various apostolates that depend on foreign missionaries. The number of volunteers, in response to the Mission Appeal letters that both Fr. Maloney, my predecessor, and I have written, has fallen off dramatically. This raises for me a question, which requires reflection on the part of all members of the Congregation of the Mission, especially the Visitors, who are responsible animating the missionary spirit of the provinces. Are we instilling, within the hearts of each member, the spirit to serve as missionaries either at home or abroad?

On a number of my visits, especially when I speak to those in houses of formation and formation teams, as well as to members of provincial councils, I have made it very clear that our young men, although they are prepared in such-and-such a province, they are prepared for the Congregation of the Mission. I remind them that our Constitutions state (12, 5<sup>o</sup>) that they must have a “readiness to go to any part of the world, according to the example of the first missionaries of the Congregation.”

At times I have the impression that, as a Congregation, we have become too “provincial”; that is, we have a concern only for our particular area of work, our own territory and we forget about having men available to work outside the limits of the province. This is a dimension that has always been part of our tradition and is a way of showing willingness to collaborate with the efforts of the Congregation at the general level. There is a need to do some

awareness building in our provinces and that depends on the Visitors. I hope to discuss this theme with them at the International Visitors' Meeting in Mexico next year.

Now, once again, I would like to make an urgent appeal to all members of the Congregation of the Mission to consider making themselves available to serve in the missions, particularly where certain provinces have asked for assistance. Such a petition was made by the Vice-Province of Mozambique and that is why it was listed as the number two need in my Mission Appeal Letter last October.

Over the past two years, the Vice-Province has lost six men. After giving of their time generously in the vice-province, they made the decision to return to their provinces of origin at the conclusion of their contracts. That is certainly a right which everyone has to exercise when collaborating in the evangelization efforts of other provinces. But, as a result of this drastic loss in the number of confreres in the vice-province, the Vice-Visitor and his council had to close, unfortunately, three of their mission posts, precisely because there are not enough personnel to guarantee evangelization in the context of good community living.

I want to make another appeal. This is not the ordinary time to do it. But because the situation is urgent and necessary, I do so to all the members of the Congregation of the Mission. If anyone has an inclination to serve on an international mission or to serve by collaborating with another province of the Congregation that is in urgent need of assistance, please write to me. It is, of course, important that you share your desire with your Visitor. But you need to discern how God wants you to live out your vocation as a member of the Congregation of the Mission. Even though the needs of a particular province may be great, the needs of the international Congregation of the Mission are just as great. The Superior General and his council always ask the opinion of the Visitor and his council about the different candidates who offer themselves as volunteers for various missions. But the last word with regard to whether or not a man will work on a particular mission is a decision of the Superior General.

I also ask the following of the Visitors and their councils:

1. That, in both your initial and ongoing formation programs, you provide adequate time to the development of a missionary spirit within all the members of the province.
2. That you make very clear to the men who enter the Congregation in your province that they are members of the Congregation of the Mission and are not limited to being members of your province.

3. That, if a man in your province shows a willingness and desire to give of himself to a province other than his own, you take seriously his concern for living out his vocation as a member of the worldwide Congregation.

Rest assured that, with faith and trust in God, when we give from our needs, the Lord will truly bless us. I say that with all sincerity and with great confidence in the God who desires that our mission continue in the world today.

God bless you all.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

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