

Mission Appeal
Rome, 22 October 2006
World Mission Sunday

To all the members of the Congregation of the Mission

I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God.

(Luke 4:43)

The same Jesus Christ has ordained that God be known, served, and loved so that his kingdom and his justice may be sought above all things. Therefore, if Our Lord exhorts us and orders us to live in this way, he will surely give us the grace to accomplish this task, and indeed, will increase grace in us according to the measure that we are faithful to our mission (SV XII, 139).

Dear Brothers in St. Vincent,

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

Since May 2005, I have had the opportunity to visit many of the mission territories that are often presented in this Mission Appeal Letter.

In May 2005, I visited the **Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius** for the blessing of the new Central House, called "God's Gift." At the same time, I was able to visit some of the areas of mission of the Vice-Province, but certainly not all of them because of the vast distances there are from one house to the next. The vice-province is relatively new, formed in 2001 by joining five separate missions in the territory of the former Soviet Union. The volunteers serving there at present are from the Provinces of Eastern Europe. The Vice-Visitor is from Ireland.

Also in May, just one week after my mother's death, I was in the mission of the Provinces of Italy in **Albania**, where the faith of the young people is alive and well. The people of this country had lived for years unable to freely express their faith in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, because of a lack of missionaries, the Provinces of Italy have been forced to reduce the mission from two houses to one, in which three confreres are working to evangelize the poor. There is a solid presence of the Daughters of Charity in Albania and they certainly would like to have greater support from the Congregation of the Mission, as they carry out their duties in the service of the poor.

In December of the same year, I had the opportunity to visit the mission of the Province of Barcelona in the **Moskitia**, where I participated in the ordination of our first Vincentian from this mission territory. There are two confreres from the Province of Barcelona presently serving in this apostolate, as well as one from the Province of Central America, and two from Poland, one of whom is in Barcelona at this time preparing for the mission. The area is vast and the needs are great as our confreres and the Daughters of Charity try to make the love of Christ present among the indigenous people of the Moskitia. The bishop of this area is our own confrere, Bishop Luis Solé, who was ordained in 2005.

In February 2006, I visited our International Mission in **El Alto, Bolivia**, for the first time. I was impressed by the enthusiasm with which the confreres carry out their work, although they are dispersed. At present we have a confrere from the Province of the Orient, who accompanies our seminarians and the seminarians from two different dioceses (La Paz and El Alto); there is a confrere from the Province of Peru, who is the mission superior; there is a young confrere, who is finishing up his second year on the mission, from the Province of Madrid, Spain; and there are two newer confreres just beginning the mission, one from Argentina and the other from the Province of Paris, France. Likewise, the needs there are great. The confreres are spread out over a vast territory in an effort to respond to the needs of the indigenous people of this very isolated area.

During the month of April 2006, I visited both the **Vice-Province of Mozambique** and the mission of our confreres from Salamanca in **Nacala**, as well as the **mission** of our confreres **from the Province of Mexico**. It was shortly after my visit there that I wrote an extended, special appeal for this vice-province, which has been left shorthanded with much evangelization to be done. We received some promises from the different Provinces of COVIAM to help supply missionaries for the vice-province over the next couple of years, as well as continued support from the Provinces of Mexico, Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro, and Argentina. In the mission in Nacala there were three confreres who also shared ministry with MISEVI from Spain. One of those confreres has returned to Europe and is presently studying in Rome. The other missionary from Costa Rica will finish his commitment at the end of 2006, leaving just one missionary from the Province of Salamanca.

At the end of April and the beginning of May, on the occasion of the annual meeting of CEVIM, I visited **Istanbul**. The high school of the Province of Austria, St. George, is where one of last year's missionary volunteers from the Province of Rome is assigned. He is presently in Rome studying Islam. The current situation of relationships between Muslims and Christians, intensified by the

Pope's commentary, only highlights our need to be prepared as Christian missionaries in an area dominated by the Muslim religion.

This past August, I had the opportunity to visit our International Mission in the **Solomon Islands**, where the confreres have built up a nice community, working in the seminary, as well as in a lay formation center and rural parish. The confreres there are from the Philippines, Australia, Fiji, Indonesia, and Croatia. The confreres of the mission are beginning to attract candidates for the Congregation. They have petitioned to open a house of formation. That project is being pursued at the present time. In one of the neighboring dioceses, the bishop has asked for missionaries for parish ministry and lay formation. The Archbishop of Honiara himself encourages our presence in this missionary diocese. The majority of the seminarians who attend the seminary come from this area.

Immediately thereafter, I visited our International Mission in **Papua New Guinea**, where we have three confreres: one from the Philippines, one from Colombia and one from the Province of Puerto Rico, who is from the Dominican Republic. Their presence in this part of world has also attracted some candidates to the Congregation. At the same time, the confreres desire to extend the mission to rural, parochial ministries. There is also an invitation for confreres who are professors to teach in the Theological Institute, as well as to be formators for the major seminary.

The only other established mission that has asked for volunteers this year is the **Province of China**. It is a province that is made up of confreres from a number of different provinces of the Congregation, serving both in Taiwan and mainland China.

We have asked for volunteers for each of the above-mentioned missions on a number of occasions, both in my time as Superior General, as well as during the administration of Fr. Maloney.

There are **two new requests**. One is from the **Bishop of the Diocese of Auki, in the Solomon Islands**, as mentioned above. The other is from the **Bishop of the Diocese of Roraima, in Brazil**, which has a total of 400,000 people, having doubled in the last two years because of immigration. He has a total of four diocesan priests and a handful of religious priests from two different communities. The bishop is young, ordained a year ago. He has lots of enthusiasm and a desire to have missionaries in his diocese, both to accompany the Daughters of Charity, who work there, as well as to begin evangelization in the Vincentian tradition. My first call goes out, obviously, to the Provinces of Brazil to consider this petition. At the same time, the call is extended to all the members of CLAPVI, but would not be limited only to the confreres in Latin America, but to anyone who feels inclined to live and work in this impoverished area of Brazil on the frontier with Venezuela.

Before I give a detailed list of the needs of each of these areas of mission, I would like to share with you a dream that I have, especially after having visited, for the first time, the area of the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. I dream that we can expand the presence of the Congregation of the Mission in the South Pacific. It is a fairly new territory for evangelization, a young Church with many needs and many challenges to confront, such as tribalism and violence. The dream was brought on because of the enthusiasm I see in our missionaries working there, as well as the vocations they are beginning to attract and the support we receive from the local bishops.

I conclude this introduction with a word of gratitude to all the missionaries of the Congregation of the Mission, not only those mentioned herein, but others working in extremely difficult missionary situations, such as Kalimantan and West Papua in Indonesia, as well as the other mission that the Province of Indonesia has in Papua New Guinea. Unfortunately, because of distance, I was not able to visit all of these mission territories this past summer during my swing through Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, but I have made plans to return between now and 2009, God willing.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

El Alto, Bolivia

There are presently five missionaries in El Alto. As the mission superior told me, there is always room for more, especially since the Bishop of El Alto is asking for accompaniment, by way of formators, for his seminary. There is also a need for missionaries who want to work in rural parishes, helping to build community and overcoming the isolation that is experienced in these distant mission stations. The languages are Spanish and Aymara.

Papua New Guinea

Here there is an urgent need for a formator. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, we will need other pastoral agents, so that we might expand our presence beyond the seminary formation there. The language is English and the native language of the people is Pidgin and others.

Solomon Islands

I received a special petition from the Bishop of the Diocese of Auki. On 25 September, he wrote requesting the services of Vincentian Fathers in his diocese. He would like them to be assigned to do both parish pastoral work and to teach at the Diocese of Auki Catechist School. The diocese is located in the Province of Malaita. It is a rural diocese with a Catholic population of about 35,000 that

live in 220 villages, divided into nine parishes. His diocese has no religious men at present and it would be great to have the Vincentian charism at the Catechist School, where laity are trained and empowered to be leaders and teachers in their own communities. The diocese has the highest percentage of any diocese in all of Oceania as far as vocations to religious life and the priesthood go. As the Congregation contemplates accepting candidates from the Solomons, Malaita would certainly be a great source of possible vocations. He concluded by saying that he realizes that the Congregation is in great demand throughout the world, but he asks that we please consider this request. It comes from Bishop Chris Cardone, O.P.

At the same time, in our established mission in the Solomon Islands, because of the desire that our confreres have of beginning a house of formation, they will need a confrere to work in this area, as well as a professor of Moral Theology for the seminary. The language is English and the native language of the people is Pidgin and others.

PROVINCIAL MISSIONS

Vice Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius

One of the most urgent needs for missionaries is in the Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius. This is another very difficult mission, which, nonetheless, has great promise and enthusiasm for the future of the Church. It calls for men to witness to the love of Jesus Christ in evangelizing the poor, where Catholicism is a considerable minority. The common language of the Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius is Russian. Many of the confreres speak Polish. CEVIM, the Conference of Visitors of Europe, has given financial support to the mission and some personnel from the Provinces of Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. But the call goes out to the entire Congregation to serve where the faith, after having been suppressed for so many years, is being awakened in a lively manner in some places, but with much difficulty in others.

Vice-Province of Mozambique

There is a continuing need for missionaries for pastoral-social ministry in the Vice-Province of Mozambique, as well as the urgent presence of missionaries in Nacala, which is part of the Province of Salamanca. The language spoken is Portuguese and the native language of the peoples served.

Moskitia, Honduras

This is a mission of the Province of Barcelona. There is a need for more rural missionaries. The languages are Spanish and Moskita.

Albania

This is a mission of the Italian Provinces. I make a simple plea to the worldwide Congregation for missionaries to work in this very isolated part of the world in parish ministry and as a support for the Daughters of Charity. The languages spoken are Albanian and Italian.

Istanbul, Turkey

The Visitor of Austria writes: "During the last weeks many open questions concerning a mutual understanding between Christians and Muslims have become visible. In Istanbul we would need confreres willing to learn Turkish and to undertake additional interreligious studies. Languages of the community in St. George are German and English."

China

The Province of China is looking for missionaries for both Taiwan and mainland China. The languages are English, Taiwanese and Mandarin Chinese. Because of the language and political uncertainty toward the Church, this is a difficult mission. It would be good that men start learning the process of inculturation, as well as the language, at a young age, even in their years of initial formation.

Other Places

Other provinces and places which have requested missionaries in the past and whose situation has improved little since the last time I wrote are the Province of Ecuador, the Province of Cuba, and Equatorial Guinea.

Ecuador is a young province with much promise in the future, but could use the presence of some experienced missionaries. The language is Spanish.

I think we all know well the situation in **Cuba**, the smallest of our provinces. It continues to be a work that takes much patience and ability to live the gospel in a unique way. The language is Spanish.

Equatorial Guinea would be a mission of basically accompanying the spiritual needs of the Daughters of Charity who work there, as well as light pastoral ministry. A missionary who is experienced could do some work on a part-time basis, if he has no difficulty living alone. The language is Spanish.

The missionaries of the Congregation of the Mission do not, by themselves, take on an apostolic work. Rather it is the Congregation, as a whole, which accepts the task of evangelization and the responsibility for carrying on this work.

*Since the foundation of the Company, this has been a fundamental principle. From this perspective, the missionaries should make themselves available to work where obedience sends them to labor and to carry on those works which have been entrusted to the Community (cf. MIGUEL PÉREZ FLORES, C.M. - ANTONIO ORCAJO, C.M., *The Way of Saint Vincent is Our Way*, translated by Charles T. Plock, C.M., Eastern Province, 1995, pp. 133-134).*

Your brother in St. Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

SOME INFORMATION AND CRITERIA FOR THOSE WHO WRITE

1. If you should wish to volunteer, please send your letter or e-mail in time to arrive in Rome by 27 November 2006.
2. It is, of course, helpful to know the language beforehand, but it is not absolutely necessary. A period of cultural and language training will be provided for the missionaries. Details will vary according to the particular place to which a confrere is sent.
3. While we have decided that no automatic age cutoff would be established, it is surely necessary that the missionary have reasonably good health and the flexibility needed for inculturation.
4. Confreres who volunteer should inform the Visitor that they have done so. I will always dialogue with the Visitor about the matter.
5. Your letter should give some background about your person, your ministerial experience, your languages, and your training. It should also express any particular interests that you have, such as the mission in which you would like to take part.
6. Even if you have already written in the past, please contact me again. Experience has demonstrated that confreres who are available at one moment might not be available at another, and vice-versa.
7. **If you are unable to give yourself as “gift,” consider a monetary contribution for the Vincentian Solidarity Fund.**