

Rome, 23 March 2007

To the Members of the Congregation of the Mission

Tempo Forte (5-9 March) Circular

Dear Brothers,

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

The following are some of the matters that were treated in the *tempo forte* meeting and which may be of interest to the members of the Congregation of the Mission.

1. After a long and deliberate discussion, we named a new **Secretary General**, who graciously accepted to assume this position. He is Claudio Santangelo, originally from the Province of Rome. For a year and a half he has been serving in the Province of Austria. Most recently, he has been in Rome studying Islam. Claudio will finish his studies in June, when he will take up the role of Secretary General full-time. I am grateful to both the Provinces of Rome and Austria for their acceptance of this decision of the Superior General and his council. Claudio replaces Father Juan Carlos Cerquera, who, for reasons of health, was unable to continue in the role of Secretary General. On behalf of the whole Congregation of the Mission, I want to thank Father Juan Carlos for the generous service that he provided to the Congregation, as well as to me personally as Superior General, during his time in this position.
2. One of the issues to be discussed at the **International Visitors' Meeting** in June will be the frequency, duration and content of the General Assemblies. Father José Antonio Ubillús generously accepted to head the Curia Technical Commission for that meeting. He informs us that there are still a number of Visitors who have yet to process their visas for Mexico. **I would like to reiterate, after many warnings, how difficult it is to get a visa for Mexico.**
3. We discussed the organization of **Servant-Leadership in the Curia House**. Father Giuseppe Guerra has been named legal representative for the Curia in Rome. He will continue in his position as Assistant to the Treasurer General for another period of three years, as well as continuing in his role as Postulator General. He will also assume, on a full-time basis, the role of Procurator General, which he has been doing *pro tem*, since Father Varghese Thottamkara left the Curia.

4. We discussed the **Vincentian Historical Sites** as a continuing effort to improve their visitor-friendliness, especially those of the Berceau and the Chapel of Saint Vincent in Paris. A project has been drawn up by Father Alain Pérez with regard to ongoing formation in the Berceau for the international Vincentian Family. There are hopes that we can put together some pilgrimage packages of tours to our different historical sites in France.
5. In the report on the **Archives**, we learned that 19 volumes of the General Councils from 1827-1969 have been recorded on CD and microfilm, as well as photocopies of the microfilm. We will continue the process of consultation in order to help us reorganize the Archives of the General Curia.
6. We received correspondence from the coordinator of the **Think Tank**, Father Robert Maloney. There are a number of things to report. The title of the Think Tank has been changed to become more language-friendly. It is now the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change. The Commission made a report at the annual meeting of the international heads of the Vincentian Family, at which it was decided to make Systemic Change the theme for this year's feast of Saint Vincent de Paul. The Commission also recommended some new criteria for the Systemic Change Award, which were accepted by the council and will be put into effect in the next letter sent out for the Systemic Change Award. The Commission is committed to publishing a book, which will be entitled, *Seeds of Hope*. It will also develop a didactic kit for understanding systemic change, as well as offering workshops. Among the materials in the didactic kit will be information on the question of water, as it is becoming an enormous worldwide problem today.
7. We studied the final **Financial Report** of the former Treasurer General, Father Elmer Bauer. I want to take this opportunity, in the name of the entire Congregation of the Mission, and in the name of the Curia and my own name, to thank Father Elmer for his generous years of service to the Congregation of the Mission in this role. Through his leadership and pedagogical capabilities, the financial portion of the Congregation of the Mission continues to improve.
8. The Superior General and council made the decision that the **Mission Distribution Fund** would be for the internal needs of the different provinces of the Congregation of the Mission and will not cover social programs. It was recommended that such programs make petitions directly to the Vincentian Solidarity Office. The Visitors of the provinces that receive help from the Mission Distribution Fund, as well as the eligible Conferences of

Visitors and some bishops of the Congregation of the Mission, received a letter on 13 February from the Assistant General for the Missions concerning the Distribution Fund for 2007. **They are asked to return their requests and reports to the General Curia before 30 April.**

9. Father José Antonio Ubillús, our liaison with the **CIF Program**, informed us of the mini-CIF that will be offered from 24 June to 21 July, with the option of an additional week to go to the Berceau and other places south, according to their usual itinerary. Their session on Leadership, which was to be offered from 25 February to 25 March, did not get a good response, so it was canceled, with the hope of offering it again in the summer of 2008. The regular Ongoing Formation Program of CIF will be from 9 September to 7 December in French, Spanish and Italian. The Vincentian Heritage Program will be offered from 15 April to 11 May in English. All are encouraged to participate in these wonderful opportunities to deepen our Vincentian spirituality.
10. The Superior General and his council decided to increase the number of provinces and regions that can be recipients of the **Vincentian Solidarity Fund**. The official list will be distributed and discussed at the Visitors' Meeting in June and will become effective on 1 July 2007. Before that, each of the Visitors concerned will receive a letter from the Superior General, informing them that their provinces can now or once again present projects for financing by the VSO.
11. We had a report from the Director of the **Vincentian Solidarity Office**, Brother Peter Campbell. From 1 December 2006 to 28 February 2007, the VSO accepted six new projects. The new projects accepted are from the Provinces of Fortaleza, North India, South India, Congo, Madagascar and Nigeria. In that same time period, the Vincentian Solidarity Fund provided grants to four micro-projects from the Provinces of Costa Rica, Cuba, North India and Ethiopia. I invite you to take a look at the website of the Vincentian Solidarity Office (www.famvin.org/vso) and the most recent achievements in the March 2007 Bulletin.
12. We received a report from Father Manuel Ginete, the **Delegate for the Vincentian Family**. He gave us a summary of the annual meeting of the international heads of some branches of the Vincentian Family, which was held in Rome from 2-4 February. He also spoke of his visit to the Philippines with the Superior General. There they held a number of meetings with the different branches of the Vincentian Family. Father Ginete also participated in the National Missionary Days of COVIDE-AMVE and JMV-Spain from 2-4 March. He also participated in the General Assembly of AIC from 9-14 March.

13. In the report from the **Webmaster**, we first noted, with deep sadness, the death of Sister Gail Reith, RSM, who had been recently appointed to assist our webmaster, Father John Freund. She had a major role in expanding our internet presence beyond just being a newspaper to moving it into a major source of ongoing formation on-line. We have reached a new era in communication for the Congregation of the Mission. We did a video conference with Father John Freund, marking the first time that such had been used in an official report to the General Council. In preparation for the Visitors' Meeting in Mexico, Father John Freund would like to illustrate how internet sites can serve as a vehicle for communication and collaboration, as well as advocacy on behalf of the marginalized and formation for those who seek to serve in the way of Vincent. They also can be a medium for fundraising to support our ministries. We also discussed the possibility of improving the efficiency of communication from the Curia to the provinces and vice-versa through the establishment of new email addresses. We will start out on a relatively small scale with just provincial officials, such as the Visitors and Provincial Treasurers. The addresses will be formed using the provincial nomenclature from the beginning of the *Catalogue, Tabual Compendiorum*. **This matter also will be further discussed at the Visitors' Meeting in Mexico.**
14. We discussed a letter from the **Visitors of the Midwest, South and West Provinces of the United States**, outlining their plans for reconfiguration. The three Visitors will come to the General Curia on 26 April in order to discuss this process with the Superior General, the Vicar General and the Treasurer General in greater detail.
15. We received a report from the **Assistant for the Missions**. Among the many things worth mentioning is the good work that he has done in sending articles to missionaries throughout the Congregation, as well as promoting the possibility of participating in various workshops of ongoing formation for missionaries. We would like to recommend, at least for those of the Spanish-speaking world, the book that was published recently by CEME, entitled, *Vincent de Paul and the Mission*, a work by Father Mikel A. Sagastagoitia Calvo, from the Province of Zaragoza, a missionary in Honduras.
16. From the **International Missions**, the Superior General and his council approved the Community Plan presented by the missionary community of El Alto, Bolivia. The possibility of initiating a MISEVI international site in El Alto was discussed. We approved the revised contract between the Catholic Church in the Solomon Islands and the Congregation of the Mission. We

are happy to announce that there will be a new missionary arriving in Papua New Guinea, Father Justin Eke from Nigeria. He will become a member of the seminary staff, freeing Father Homero Marín to move from the seminary staff to become the pastor of a new parish, which has been offered to the Congregation by the Archbishop of Port Moresby. With this new parish, the Congregation will have the opportunity to receive candidates for the Congregation of the Mission. The confreres have received several inquiries in this regard. I take this opportunity to remind confreres that there is still a need for missionaries; parish ministry in the Solomon Islands and seminary ministry in Papua New Guinea are our greatest needs at this moment.

17. From **APVC**, we discussed the second draft of the “APVC Responsibility for the Mission in the Solomon Islands Agreement with the General Curia,” as well as the third draft of the “Memorandum of Understanding Among the Visitors of APVC Regarding the Solomon Islands Mission.”
18. From **CLAPVI**, we received the announcement of its next activity, which will be from 22-28 April in Rio de Janeiro with the theme: *Lectio Divina* and *Vicentina*. The presenters of the topic will be Father Gabriel Naranjo of the Congregation of the Mission and Father Carlo Josafat.
19. From **COVIAM**, we received a copy of the minutes of the Assembly that was held in 2006. Their topics for the formation of formators in 2007 were presented: Saint Vincent de Paul as Formator, Human Development, Intellectual and Theological Formation, and The Five Virtues from the Perspective of Inculturation, given by Father Robert Maloney. The Visitors and Regional Superiors will be gathered for a meeting (1-3 August), at which they will have a workshop on the **Ratio Missionum** from the perspective of Africa. We also had reports from Father Sylvester Peterka on his visits to the Province of Congo and the Region of Cameroon. Father Sy is a confrere from the Eastern Province of the United States and pastor of an African-American parish in Baltimore. He had been proposed to COVIAM by the Superior General and was accepted. Father Sy will attend the annual gathering of the formation of formators in Nairobi. His collaboration is in terms of formation.
20. The Superior General and the General Curia will give a donation to contribute toward the development of a Chair of Frederick Ozanam at the Pontifical Angelicum University in Rome. One of the promoters of this Chair is the Frederick Ozanam Foundation of the Saint Vincent de Paul Society in Rome.

21. The final item discussed was the team evaluation of the General Council. The dates have been established from now until 2010. This revision of our mission as a General Council is intended to comply with our Council Project, which states: "Evaluate, revise and update this 'Project of the General Council.'"

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General