

Rome, 31 December 2007

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

Tempo Forte (3-7 December 2007) Circular

“Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by encouragement we might have hope” (Rom 15:4).

Dear Brothers,

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

The following is a summary of some of the points that we discussed in our most recent *tempo forte* meeting 3-7 December 2007.

1. We began our session with on-going formation. A guest speaker, a Divine Word Father, Willie Mueller, who worked many years in China, shared with us the **situation of the church in China today**.

2. We finalized some points regarding the new **Task Force** that has been formed on **On-Going Formation** whose members are Father Dan Borlik, coordinator, Father Manny Ginete, Secretary and Father Francis Solás. The Task Force will meet in the *tempo forte* meeting of March.

3. Believe it or not, we are already in the planning stages for our up-coming **General Assembly of 2010**. We have done a preliminary selection of the members of the preparatory commission who will be contacted by the Superior General to confirm their participation. Within the next couple of weeks the Visitors will receive a questionnaire so that they might recommend topics for discussion in the General Assembly.

4. In 2010 we will be celebrating the **350th anniversary of the death of St. Vincent de Paul**. We did some brainstorming on possible ideas. We will also consult the Visitors regarding this matter, and other selected groups of confreres on ideas regarding how we might celebrate this memorable event. A commission for the 350th anniversary will be selected taking into consideration other members of the Vincentian family. This matter will be discussed further in the meeting of the Vincentian family representatives January 31 - February 2.

5. The commission for **renovating the archives and the library of the General Curia** gave a report. We will be doing a major renovation of the lower basement of the Curia in order that archives might be consolidated there and the library restructured with the creation of an office for the librarian and a section on reserved Vincentian books.

6. **Brother L'ubomír Žemla** requested from the Superior General the termination of his service in the Curia, completing the five years agreement that was made between the previous administration and the Province of Slovakia. The Superior General and council are grateful for the services that L'ubo has provided and will begin a search for a new Brother candidate.

7. We reviewed a report from Father Suescun of the Office of Communications/Publications. He informs us that the **new e-mail mailboxes** are prepared. All Visitors, Economes and Secretaries will be receiving a mailbox direction which we hope to have implemented at the beginning of the new year.

8. We treated **economic matters**. As part of a new process, a summary of each of the Provincial financial reports was presented and discussed. The Superior General will write to all the Provinces taking into consideration the suggestions of the council. It was also recommended by the Econome General to simplify the process for the Mission Distribution Fund. He and the assistant for missions, Father Jose Ubillús, will be contacting the recipients of this fund with the modified formulas.

9. We reviewed a report from the **commission for promotion of systemic change**. Two proposals were made: 1) that over the next two years, 2008-2009, workshops on systemic change will be done regionally; 2) a donation of start-up money for projects for the poor promoted by the Vincentian family.

10. We discussed the 9 projects that were presented for the **Systemic Change Award**. Four projects were selected. The Econome General will be informing those provinces as well as others that have participated, to either consider sending their projects for the mission award in July and/or maturing their projects to be presented at a future date.

11. We received the quarterly report from the **Vincentian Solidarity Office**. Since the last *tempo forte* meeting two new VSO projects were received and three micro project grants were given. The Superior General and his council approved a request for a special project in the Vice-Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius. All confreres are encouraged to check out the site of the Vincentian Solidarity Office, which is www.FamVin.org/vso

12. We received a report from the **web master of famvin**, Father John Freund. For the English webpage, you are encouraged to check out the phenomenon of youtube in which short videos are recognized as a major tool of ministry today. Two have been inaugurated on famvin: <http://youtube.com/famvin2007> and <http://youtube.com/group/famvin>

13. Father Ginete, **Vincentian Family delegate**, presented the report. Several suggestions were made: that the Vincentian office send materials to other branches of the Vincentian family beyond those traditional groups, particularly the annual letter of the Vincentian Family international heads; investigate the possibility of doing on-going formation for male communities of the Vincentian family. The Superior General will contact the Directors of CIF to explore new possibilities or to invite these groups to participate in some of the existing programs. We also reviewed the proposed agenda for the annual meeting of the Vincentian Family heads soliciting input from the General Council.

Father Ginete also reported that he had addressed the student confreres from the Leonine College on the theme of the Leadership Role of the Congregation of the Mission in the Vincentian Family: Implications for On-Going Formation.

14. We received the quarterly report from the **Vincentian representative before the United Nations**. Among the highlights of his report were a reminder that on 10 December the United Nations celebrated the 60th anniversary of its Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year also marks the 40th anniversary of Populorum Progressio. One of the events that Father Foley participated in was the Interreligious and Intercultural Dialog for Tolerance, Understanding and Peace. One of the documents, entitled, "A Common Word Between Us," is a Muslim invitation to Christian leaders for a Christian-Muslim dialog. This document is available from Father Foley (jpfcm@verizon.net). It may be of particular interest to those confreres serving in areas where the Christian-Muslim relationship is significant. Father Joe also reported that he has been in dialog with the Brothers of Charity in order to explore the possibility of further collaboration.

15. We received a report from Father José Antonio Ubillús, the liason with the **CIF program**. As many know, we have a new member on the team, Father José Carlos Fonsatti, who will assume the responsibility in place of Juan Julián Catalán who finishes his service in September 2008.

The **Vincentian Heritage Session** on 15 April - 12 May, was evaluated. 18 confreres participated. Future sessions will include not only English and Spanish but Portuguese and French when required.

The **Mini CIF program** that was established for those who work in universities, was presented 24 June - 28 July, but had only five participants each of whom rated the program highly. The most recent **On-going Formation session** 9 September - 7 December had nineteen confreres from Africa and Asia and one Colombian.

Formation programs for 2008 After their session in Rome 9-15 January, the new Visitors are encouraged to participate in a program established especially for them. SIEV will have its session from 4-15 February hosted in the CIF facilities. The next Heritage Session will be 13 April - 10 May in English, Spanish and Portuguese. The leadership workshop will be offered from 22 June - 19 July. Participants in this program will be the Visitors and/or a member of their councils. The On-going Formation session will be 8 September - 7 December. **Once again, I encourage all Visitors as well as all members of the Congregation of the Mission to take seriously their on-going formation. We are our greatest resource and being continually renewed is a matter of justice to those we are called to serve.**

16. Report from the Assistant for Missions. Two confreres, one from Ecuador and the other from Brazil participated on an **on-going formation session for missionaries** here in Rome. Their evaluation is forthcoming. Father Ubillus announced that scholarships for this program will be available in the future.

17. **Conferences of Visitors.** Of particular interest was the concluding document of a CLAPVI meeting that was held in Santo Domingo for **Brothers of the Congregation of the Mission.** We discussed different ways we might continue to promote the vocation of Brothers in the Congregation of the Mission, recalling the words of St. Vincent, "When one has a good brother in a community, one has a lasting treasure."

We have received word that the **new Executive Secretary of COVIAM** is Joseph Epok of the Region of Cameroon, Province of Paris. This recommendation has been confirmed by the Visitor of Paris. Many thanks to Emmanuel Typamm for his role as previous Executive Secretary. Our prayers are for Joseph as he accompanies the Visitors of COVIAM as they work to develop the mission of the Provinces, Vice-provinces and missions in Africa.

18. We reviewed reports from our international mission in **El Alto** as well as in **Papua New Guinea.**

19. We studied the requests of **five responses of the most recent Mission Appeal letter** of the Superior General. We encourage other confreres, if they feel a passion for any of the possible mission sites that were presented in the October Mission

Appeal letter, to continue to mature their reflection and to write to the Superior General. We know that the harvest is great and the laborers are few; so we pray continually that the Lord might send laborers into his harvest.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General