

TEMPO FORTE CIRCULAR
(3-7 March 2008)

Rome, 27 March 2008

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 following is a summary of some of the points that we discussed in our most recent *tempo forte* meeting 3-7 March 2008.

1. We received an up-dated report from the **Commission for the Revision of the Statutes** who met in the General Curia from 25-26 February. Previously the Commission reviewed and organized all the suggestions that emerged at the Visitors' meeting in Mexico, June 2007. The material they have produced will be part of the material to be studied in the Domestic Assemblies in preparation for the General Assembly 2010. I want to thank publicly the members of this Commission, Fathers Alberto Vernaschi, Paul Golden, Juan Julián Díaz Catalán, and Giuseppe Turati, for the fine work that they have done up to this point.
2. We chose a place where we will hold the **General Assembly in 2010**. That information will be forthcoming. We decided on the theme for the General Assembly. That also will be forthcoming. We also drew up a list of things for the Preparatory Commission to do for the General Assembly. The coordinator of that Commission is Father Giuseppe Turati from the Province of Turin. Other members of the Commission are Father Elie Delplace from the Province of Paris, Father Zeracristos Yosief, from the Province of Saint Justin de Jacobis, Father Bienvenido Disu from the Province of the Philippines, Father Pat Griffin from the Province of Philadelphia and Father Fernando Macías from the Province of Chile. They will meet for the first time in June 2008.
3. We received an update from the Secretary General regarding the **catalog** for this year. We hope to begin distribution by the end of this month.

4. The Econome General gave a **financial report** for the year 2007.
5. Brother Peter Campbell gave us an update on the **Vincentian Solidarity Office** (www.famvin.org/vso). Since the last *tempo forte* meeting, they have received four new VSO projects and two micro-project grants. Brother Peter also shared with us the transition process for the VSO Director. As mentioned previously, Father Miles Heinen will begin his term as the Vincentian Solidarity Office Director in Philadelphia on 1 January 2009.

Another major decision that was made regarding the Vincentian Solidarity Office was to merge it with the International Development Office. In this *tempo forte* meeting we accepted the resignation of Father Carl Pieber who has been the Director of the International Development Office. Father Carl had been named the new Director of the Central Association of the Miraculous Medal in Philadelphia following the death of its former Director, Father Jim Kiernan. The work that he experienced was quite overwhelming. So as not to increase the burden, we looked for an alternative way of operating and decided to merge of the two Offices. It will be the responsibility of Brother Peter Campbell and Mr. Scott Fina to work out the details of that merger, reporting back to the Superior General and his Council at a further date with their recommendations. I take this opportunity to thank Father Carl Pieber for his generosity in serving as the International Development Director since January 2007.

6. Report from the **Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family**. Father Ginete reported on his visit of the Vincentian Family in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and Haiti in December 2007. He states that what is striking is the dedication and commitment that is so evident in our Family members towards the welfare of the poor, the desire to work together, and the conviction that formation in our spirituality is of the utmost importance. He also highlighted the dedication of the confreres and the Daughters of Charity in guiding lay people of our Family, helping to instill in them the true sense of Vincent's spirit.

He reported on the annual meeting of the Vincentian Family International Heads that was held in Rome 31 January - 2 February. It included the most number of participants to date because aside from the usual eight groups that come, three new groups were invited: the Sisters of Charity of St. Joan Antide-Thouret, the Sisters of Charity Federation of Strasbourg and the Sisters of Charity of the North American Federation. Also

joining in this year's gathering was Father Robert Maloney who gave a report on the Commission for Promoting Systemic Change. The theme for this year's celebration of the feast of St. Vincent de Paul will continue in the line of reflection on our spirituality in light of systemic change. Regarding the celebration of the 350th anniversary of the deaths of St. Vincent and St. Louise, it was decided that a group be formed on the international level. The Superior General will coordinate the formation of this group.

Father Ginete reported to us on the meeting of the AIC Executive Board in Milan in February. One of the highlights of that meeting was, "convinced of the option to promote systemic change, the AIC leadership decided to conduct a meeting within the framework of systemic change". The AIC demonstrated that it is not simply paying lip service to the current theme being adopted by the International Vincentian Family, but that it is wholeheartedly pouring its whole organization, leaders and members, into this program.

During the next months, Father Ginete will be at the Vincentian Family Gathering in New Orleans in April. He will then travel through Asia: Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines. In July he will be present with the Superior General at the Vincentian Youth Gathering in Bathurst, Australia as well as the World Youth Day in Sydney, Australia.

Father Ginete also included in his report an outline for the continental formation sessions for Vincentian Family Advisors, Directors, and leaders on systemic change. More information on these regional meetings is forthcoming.

7. The Executive Secretary of **SIEV**, Julio Suescun, gave us a report on the colloquium of Young Vincentian Investigators that took place 3-16 February in Paris. More information concerning this colloquium can be found at www.cmglobal.org. The colloquium was directed by the Director of SIEV, Father Alexander Jernej, with the support of the CIF staff. There were nine participants, which they considered poor considering that there are many more confreres doing serious investigations in Vincentian topics. Nonetheless the organizers considered the workshop itself a great success. The recommendation of the Superior General and the Council was that these colloquia be held with greater frequency, perhaps every two or three years and that the content of the colloquium be published either in an article or in *Vincentiana*.
8. We had an report from Father Maloney updating us on the **Commission for the Promotion of Systemic Change**. Their

meeting was held in San Francisco in February. Some of the highlights of the meeting were the following:

- The book, *Seeds of Hope, Stories of Systemic Change*, is moving forward and on target. Hopefully it will be out by September 27.
- They decided to make the tool kit a work in progress that changes continually with use. It will be distributed for the first time to all the participants at the continental workshop which will take place in Mexico next year.
- They also spoke about start-up grants. An official letter regarding this matter was sent out to all Visitors on March 1. They also discussed the comic book version of systemic change.
- The Commission completed a ten-week series of articles on the Vincentian Family English web site. Their report spoke about the **continental workshops** for preparing leaders and moderators of the Vincentian Family for promoting systemic change. Those workshops will be held in 2009 in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and in 2010 in Europe, the United States, and most likely Brazil. The next meeting of the Commission will be held in Madrid at the International Secretariat of the JMV who, at the same time, will receive a workshop on systemic change.

9. We received a report from Father Joseph Foley the **Vincentian NGO at the United Nations**. One of the Commissions on which Father Foley participates is Social Development whose theme this year is "Creating Decent Work for All." Father Foley also spoke about his collaboration with the Brothers of Charity whom he considers to be a gift to us. Father Foley will be standing in for the Brothers in the UN in New York promoting the theme of "Human Rights at 60" where the Brothers want to speak about Mental Health as a human right. The Brothers offered to represent the CM at meetings in Geneva and/or Paris. It is good to see the collaboration of the Vincentian Family at this high level of discussion.

I would like to single out one of the highlights from the second part of his report. Father alerted us to the fact that there are 2.5 million Iraqi refugees living outside their country, many of them Catholic, forced to leave Iraq by the government that is presently being installed. The refugees face major sufferings such as the lack of water, food, and health care. Education is basically non-existent. The sad fact is that the United States spent more money in Iraq in four years than it spent in Africa in a century.

We thank Father Foley for his report. I certainly admit that we in the Council were energized by the presentation, helping us to be more conscious of the situation of the poor throughout the world and how their situation is being dealt with at this high-powered level. Check out his web page: www.cm-ngo.net.

10. We received a report from John Freund the **web master** for the Congregation of the Mission. The first matter to be highlighted is that St. John's University awarded its International Medal in recognition of the role of *famvin* in promoting international good will to John Freund during its annual Founders Week Convocation. Congratulations, John.

One of the other facets of the revamping of the English web page is providing a weekly featured video. We discussed the other sites in Spanish, Italian and French and how they have less access to some of the newer technology, such as YouTube. Expanding this material and technology to the other sites demands translators and that is where our difficulty arises, as we all know. Besides checking out the *famvin* web sites in the four languages in which they are produced, I encourage you to check out our own Congregation's web page www.cmglobal.org.

11. We reviewed some material that arrived from activities of the **Conferences of Visitors**. One was an evaluation of the Congregation of the Mission Forming the Formators Institute that was presented by Father Sy Peterka who is a member of the Eastern Province of the United States, assisting COVIAM, particularly in the area of initial and ongoing formation.
12. We also had a report with the presence of the three Visitors from the western part of the United States as they continue to move ahead in their **project of reconfiguration** with the goal of January 2010. Their report included mini-reports from the New Community Task Force, the Finances and Temporal Goods Task Force, the Leadership Task Force, the Provisional Policies Task Force and the Provisional Norms Task Force. To begin the meeting with the three Visitors, we prayed the prayer that they wrote for a new community. That prayer has been posted on the *cmglobal* web page. I would encourage all of you to join and pray for the success of this merger, **and at the same time giving others the grace to consider similar mergers where needed.**
13. We discussed issues regarding our three **international missions** of El Alto, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.
14. We have a report from Father José Antonio Ubillús, the **Assistant for Missions**. At the end of 2007 Father Ubillús produced a CD

in Spanish, French and English in PowerPoint style entitled “The Mission in a Globalized World.” Among his 2008 projects are securing scholarships in the “CIAM” program, a course on spirituality and animation for missionaries. Four different members of the Congregation of the Mission have participated in this course the last two years.

15. The General Council discussed some **criteria to be followed for preparation of missionaries** for new experiences.

The General Council made a decision that when sending missionaries to provinces that have requested assistance, they will be asked to comply with these criteria as well as to reflect seriously on the document of the Congregation, *Ratio Missionum*.

16. We studied pending cases for **volunteers for missions** as well as new candidates. We had five new volunteers. We hope that two can be placed shortly and the other three after a couple of years in their present ministries. Among these new candidates are confreres who have responded positively to the special Mission Appeal that I made concerning mainland China. As I reflect on this matter of volunteers, the petitions come in steadily, and although we are not able to place all the confreres immediately, we have a guarantee from them and their Visitors that we will be able to do so within a two or three year period. So little by little we are able to respond to the needs of the Church, many times outside the traditional structures of the Congregation of the Mission.

“... faithful to the gospel..., [we] should take care to open up new ways and use new means adapted to the circumstances of time and place” (C 2).

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General