

GENERAL CURIA

MISSION APPEAL

Rome, 1st October 2008
*Feast of St. Therese of the Child Jesus
Patroness of the Missions*

To All the Members of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Confreres,

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

As St. Vincent, on one occasion, told the missioners:

“O gentlemen, how happy are those who feel this disposition, men to whom God has given the grace of being prepared and disposed to go to foreign lands to spend their lives there for Jesus Christ! History tells us of the many martyrs who have sacrificed themselves for God. And if we see that so many men in armies expose their lives for a little honor, or perhaps in the hopes of a little earthly recompense, with what far greater reason should not we expose our lives to carry the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the most distant lands to which his providence calls us” (SV XI, 51).

Once again I appeal to all the men of the Congregation of the Mission to continue to deepen yourselves in your missionary spirit whether in your home provinces or abroad, serving faithfully by following Jesus Christ evangelizing the poor. The appeal of this letter goes out to all of those confreres who, after having read the needs that exist, feel the call from the depths of their heart, to respond to these petitions.

Following our traditional format, I would like to begin by naming the confreres who petitioned and were accepted to work in different missions since the Mission Appeal Letter of 2007. At the same time

I will also mention where the needs continue to exist and new petitions that we have received. The division of the letter will be as follows:

- the international missions that are under the responsibility of the Superior General and his Council,
- petitions that we have received from other provinces throughout the Congregation of the Mission,
- new petitions that have come from different Bishops throughout the world, and
- other missionary news.

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

1. **The Solomon Island mission** under the General Curia is strongly supported by Asia Pacific Visitors Conference. Since our Mission Appeal of 2007 the following confreres have arrived to the mission in the Solomon Islands: Antonius Abimantrono from Indonesia, Flaviano Caintic from the Philippines and Joeli Nabogi from Australia as well Drago Ocvirk, from the province of Slovenia who has been helping out on a part-time basis now on two different occasions.

In a recent correspondence that I had from Greg Walsh, the superior of the international mission in the Solomon Islands, confreres asked for a confrere to take pastoral oversight of the parish in the care of the Congregation at Tenaru. The current parish priest, Father Ivica Gregurec, will be vacating that post in order to move into the formation role full-time. And as usual we are always open to the possibility of professors on a full-time or even a part-time basis. That would need to be coordinated with the rector of the seminary, as well as with the local superior. In addition, we have not yet received a response for assistance requested by one of the Bishops of the Solomon Islands who is very supportive of the Congregation of the Mission and has even recommended that one of his candidates begin his studies in the Congregation of the Mission. He has also expressed an openness to having other candidates who might feel called to a missionary spirit. He himself is a Dominican with roots in St. John's University. He would love to have men from a religious community or society of apostolic life like ours, since in his diocese at this time there are no other religious besides himself.

2. **Papua New Guinea.** Since our last Mission Appeal we received two positive responses, but unfortunately both are still awaiting

their working visas to enter Papua New Guinea. They are confronting, as many times we do in trying to place missionaries, the bureaucracies of governments who like to show their power by prohibiting good things from happening in their countries such as evangelization and promotion of the Good News for the poor.

As you well know, we have begun to accept candidates for the Congregation from the Mission in Papua New Guinea and we have initiated the beginnings of a parish. We have the need for volunteers both for work in the diocesan seminary, that is for formators and persons who would be able to teach in the institute in which the seminarians and other religious students study, as well as pastoral people who can help us to expand our evangelization experience in this international mission. At the end of this year, Father Tulio Cordero finishes his contract and will be returning to Puerto Rico, his province of origin. As with the Solomon Islands, the language is English and Pidgin English.

3. **El Alto, Bolivia.** In the mission in El Alto, Bolivia, our third international mission, presently we have four confreres. The mission is undergoing restructuring in order to improve the quality of service to the poor and the experience of community among the confreres in the mission there. The opportunities are various, and the need is for persons who have the capability of withstanding difficult situations regarding altitude and climate as well as language, which is Aymara besides Spanish.

PROVINCIAL MISSIONS

4. **Province of Cuba.** This is one of our smallest provinces, and yet one where the confreres work with great enthusiasm. Recently, in my canonical visit to Spain, I had the opportunity to meet with one of the Bishops of Cuba who was passing through Spain after his *ad limina* visit in Rome. He put out an urgent call for more missionaries from the Congregation of the Mission to accompany the three that are already in his Diocese of Santiago de Cuba. They are beginning a new missionary experience and in order that the confreres might feel adequately supported, by one another, it would be of utmost importance that they have other missionaries to support them in this most important, delicate missionary experience. At present, there are ten confreres in Cuba. After a long period of time we are delighted to have ordained recently a native Cuban. Until more vocations arise, we need the support of confreres from other provinces.

5. **Vice Province of Saints Cyril and Methodius.** This is still on the list of most important needs. Recently one of the young Polish confreres who worked for a number of years in the province has been transferred to Kazakhstan where the Polish Province is initiating a new mission. The common language among the confreres is Russian.
6. **Vice Province of Mozambique.** They are continually in need of more support as it has one of its native Mozambicans continuing to do further studies in order to be better prepared to serve the mission and the formation of our own there in Mozambique.
7. Province of Salamanca. They continually ask for support for their mission in **Nacala, Mozambique** where since last year they have been joined by the Eritrean confrere, Weldeghebriel Amine. That mission continues with Eugenio López, of the Province of Salamanca and Maurice Pilloud of the Province of Toulouse. There is expansive mission territory and always a need of further support. The language, as is in the Vice-Province of Mozambique, is Portuguese and the native language of the peoples.
8. A new mission request has come from the Province of Paris which through its mission in Cameroon has extended assistance to the country of **Equatorial Guinea**. Recently they sent me a project in which they hope that confreres from the international Congregation might be able to form a team, hopefully made up of someone from Cameroon as well as someone from the international Congregation, to respond more fully to the needs of the people there. They would be working in conjunction with the Daughters of Charity. The language in Equatorial Guinea is Spanish. The confreres in Cameroon, whose language is French and some English, have made a great effort to learn the language under the guidance of Father Claudio Ojeda from the Province of Salamanca who had worked for many years in Cameroon, but had been at the same time supporting this mission in Equatorial Guinea. You may recall that Father Claudio was one of the victims of the recent plane crash in Madrid. He was heading home to the Canary Islands for a long-awaited vacation. May he intercede for us so that God might inspire other missionaries of the Congregation to carry on the work that he had begun.
9. Another province that continually asks for assistance and support and is one of the most international provinces of the Congregation is that of the **Province of China** where we have work both in Taiwan and in mainland China. Many of the provinces of Asia have been quite responsive in trying to fulfill

the evangelization efforts in Taiwan, especially those from Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Since my last Mission Appeal, or even more recently since my appeal for help in a special limited way in mainland China, I received two positive responses. At this time there are two confreres, Francisco Cruz from the Province of the Philippines, and Padraig Regan from the province of Ireland, who are working now on a temporary basis in mainland China helping to support the English-speaking people there. We hope, with the occasion of the Olympic Games, that the situation for evangelization in China might continue to move forward.

10. A standard missionary request to help us deepen our understanding of the ever-increasing Muslim presence, is that of the mission of St. Georg's in **Istanbul**. The language is Turkish; in the house the languages are English and German.
11. The mission of **Albania** is currently staffed by members of various provinces of Italy, but is continually in need of missionaries from around the world.
12. The missionary territory of **Honduras** is under the responsibility of the province of Barcelona. The language, of course, is Spanish and Moskitia. Since 2007 we have one confrere from the province of Madrid working in San Pedro Sula Honduras, Miguel Angel Renes, enthusiastically spreading the good news among the people in a far distant land.
13. In a recent letter from the Vice Visitor of **Costa Rica**, Father Oscar Mata, writes of an urgent need for a missionary who would dedicate his time to the indigenous mission in Talamanca. Presently there is only one missionary in the area who is responsible for all of the pastoral commitments. The language would be Spanish and also the native language of the people of Talamanca.

OTHER NEW REQUESTS

14. I recently had a meeting with the Bishops of the Antilles Episcopal Conference. As I stated in an earlier request to English-speaking provinces, they are in need of formators for their seminary in **Trinidad, West Indies**, and for persons with the ability to teach, particularly philosophy or liturgy on a full-time or part-time basis. The language is English.
15. Another request received was from a Bishop where a team of MISEVI Spain works in **Cochabamba, Bolivia**. He has requested

missionaries to help support this team of lay members of the Vincentian Family as well as the Daughters of Charity who work in his Diocese. Pastoral needs are great and the Bishop is very enthusiastic about the possibility of Vincentian missionaries joining the rest of the Vincentian Family.

MISSION NEWS

The Province of Nigeria continues to prepare men to serve in different international missions, taking seriously the need to have missionaries available to respond to the needs in Africa. Ethiopia as well has supported and will continue to support Mozambique along with the Province of Eritrea.

A little bit of missionary news from the Superior General himself. I considered July to be my mission month. It began with the Bathurst Vincentian Youth meeting prior to World Youth Day. There were over 300 young people from the Vincentian Family, mostly from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, but also from Vincentian Marian Youth, gathered from 32 different countries in order to strengthen and deepen our spirituality and charism prior to celebrating this wonderful tri-annual event. I was quite impressed with the openness on the part of the young people to get to know one another, breaking barriers of language, culture and country boundaries that oftentimes keep people apart. They are a true witness for harmony and peace in the world.

After my experience there I went on to the Cook Islands, to visit a mission that was begun by the Daughters of Charity in 2005 where there are presently four Daughters working in two of the fifteen islands of the Cooks. The Sisters are working with the marginalized, that is persons with special needs as well as prisoners. It is a very isolated part of the world. I was happy to be with them for a week, visiting both Rarotonga Island and the Mauke Island.

After that I moved on to one of the mission territories of the Province of Indonesia, West Kalimantan, where eight confreres work in four different missions: an urban parish in the capital city of Pontianak, one confrere is the rector of a minor seminary, two work in a center for lay formation, two work in two different parishes a distance up the river. In one parish there are 38 villages and in the other 48 villages that are tended by the confreres and members of MISEVI Indonesia. The Daughters of Charity also work in one of these river parishes.

I visited these mission places in order to affirm our Vincentian presence among the poor who would otherwise be pastorally and

spiritually abandoned. From now until the end of my term as Superior General I expect to continue to have similar experiences in my visits to the Vincentian Family throughout the world.

I pray that God will inspire many missionaries to give themselves in this most special way.

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

INFORMATION AND CRITERIA FOR THOSE WHO WRITE

1. After a period of serious discernment, if you should feel moved to volunteer, please send your letter or e-mail to Rome no later than 27 November 2008.
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 also 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 not available at one moment might be available at another.
7. **If you are unable to give yourself as “gift,” consider a monetary contribution for the Vincentian Solidarity Fund.**