

TEMPO FORTE CIRCULAR
(8-12 December 2008)

Rome, 12 January 2009

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!

From the 8-12 December we held our regular *tempo forte* meeting. I would like to share with you some of the more significant points that we discussed concerning the general operation and direction of the Congregation.

1. General Curia

- We evaluated a petition made by Brother Milton Pereira de Jesus, who after a three-month period of experience in the General Curia, had asked to return to his province of origin. I and the General Council have responded positively to his petition. The service that Brothers provide in the General Curia is not an easy service, as those who have done this know well. We as a Council have decided to make a general request to the Congregation of the Mission and to any brother, with the approval of his Visitor, who would like to give a service to the Congregation in the General Curia. We would ask a commitment of three years, but as has been our procedure, there would be a three-month probation period. Any Brother who may be interested should speak with his Visitor, and then have his Visitor, if he is in agreement, write to the Superior General with your offer.
- The Superior General and his Council decided to invite the Director General of the Daughters of Charity to an annual meeting with the Council during a *tempo forte* meeting. The purpose of the meeting is to help us to improve our quality of service to the Daughters of Charity throughout the world.

2. Economic Questions

- Besides the report given by the Econome General, we discussed a number of issues related to economy, particularly the world economic crisis and the impact that it has had on the

international Congregation especially with regard to its investments.

- There will be a course for Provincial Economes at the level of the Union of Economes General. Two confreres from English-speaking countries will be participating.
- We also discussed prolonging the commitment for a period of three years of Bernard Meade and Philippe Lamblin, two members of the Curia Finance Committee.
- We reviewed the annual report of each province, and the Superior General will be sending a letter regarding each of these reports. I remind those provinces who have not turned in their reports, to please do so in order that we might have that information here in the Curia as soon as possible.
- The following budgets were approved: the house budget of the Curia, the mission of Papua New Guinea, the mission of El Alto, the budget of the Vincentian Marian Youth international, the special request from MISEVI for the support of one missionary in the new mission in Angola, the History project, SIEV, the assistant to COVIAM, the Office to the United Nations, the communications office, the Office of the Vincentian Family, the Vincentian Solidarity Office. The Council also approved a donation of \$1,000 for the foundation Ozanam-Vincent de Paul to publish the Acts of the gathering held in honor of Giorgio La Pira.

3. The Systemic Change Award and Mission Award

- It was decided in this General Council meeting to alternate years between the Systemic Change Award, which will be presented in January 25, 2009 and the Mission Award which will be presented in July, 2010. The following years the winners will be published in July, giving the Visitors and confreres a longer opportunity to present their projects for consideration.
- Eight projects were presented for the Systemic Change Award and three were selected.

4. Vincentian Family Report

- A report was presented of Sister Maria Pilar's meetings in Untermarchtal, 30 September - 4 October of the Federation of the Sisters of Charity and in San Pedro Sula, Honduras 9-12 October of the Vincentian Family of Central America.
- At the CIF Program in Paris in November Father Ginete offered four conferences under the general heading of the Vincentian Family as Partners in the Worldwide Mission.

- Some of the projected activities that Father Ginete has for the coming months are: the Vincentian Family International Heads meeting in Madrid at the end of January; workshops on systemic change in Mexico in February, in Brazil in June, Cameroon in July and Bangkok in November. Father Ginete will also accompany AIC's International Assembly in Mexico in February as well as an AIC African seminar in Cameroon, taking advantage of the fact that he will be present in these countries for the workshops on leadership. At the same time he will represent the Superior General in the COVIAM meeting to be held after the Continental workshop in Cameroon. The last major event in 2009 will be participation in the AMM international meeting in November.

5. Vincentian Solidarity Office

Brother Peter Campbell presented a report. The recent activities of the VSO can be seen on the web page www.famvin.org/VSO.

6. Report from UN Representative

We received the report from Father Joseph Foley, the UN Representative. The highlight of his report was the announcement that 2009 has been proclaimed as the International Year of Reconciliation. This is a determination to pursue reconciliation processes in those societies affected or divided by conflicts; such processes are necessary for the establishment of firm and lasting peace. It also invites governments to implement adequate cultural, educational and social programs to promote the concept of reconciliation, encouraging holding conferences and seminars and disseminating information on the subject.

Father Foley also reported on a United Nations briefing on millennium villages. These villages are an integral approach to development with the hope of creating self-sustaining African villages. Since 2005, eighty villages have been created in ten countries. Father hopes that the idea of millennium villages can be implemented through the Projects Committee for the 350th anniversary because of its relationship to our Vincentian charism and our work for systemic change.

Father Foley is working on a new website. It is in the process of being set up, and can be viewed at www.cm-ngo.org.

7. Report from CLAPVI

The most recent assembly that the Conference of Visitors in Latin America held, at which Father José Antonio Ubillús was present, had the election of their new team of directors. Those

elected to represent Latin America are the following: President, Fr. Daniel Vásquez of the Province of Colombia; Vice President, Fr. José Francisco Ramos of the Province of Central America; Executive Secretary, Fr. José Jair Vélez of the Province of Colombia; Members, Frs. Silvano Calderón of the Province of Mexico and Agnaldo Aparecido de Paula of the Province of Rio.

8. International missions

- We reviewed a number of reports and projects presented by the mission in El Alto. The superior reported on the situation of each of the confreres; we received a draft of the contract with the diocese. We reviewed a project for lay missionaries. Their community report and apostolic project were approved by the Council. In May 2009, the Assistant Father José María Nieto will visit El Alto; in August, Father José Antonio Ubillús, Assistant for Mission, will also pay a visit.
- We have good news from the mission of Papua New Guinea. A confrere from Nigeria, Justin Eke, has finally received a visa. He arrived and is in place in the new house with the superior Rolly Santo. Our confrere from the Province of Puerto Rico, Tulio Cordero, has finished his missionary experience in Papua New Guinea and returned to his home province. I want to thank both Justin and Tulio for their commitment to this international mission of the Congregation of the Mission.
- With regard to the international mission of the Solomon Islands, we have received some information regarding our new student candidates from Papua New Guinea who are presently in the formation program in Solomon Islands and the Fiji Islands under the responsibility of the Province of Australia.
- With regard to new candidates for mission, we have received requests from three confreres, one for immediate placement and two for future commitments to the international missions in 2010 and 2011. Even though the response on the part of the international Congregation to these international missions has not been plentiful, there has been sufficient interest. We are in the process of making appeals and will dialog with candidates and their Visitors.

I take this opportunity, as we close this circular on our recent *tempo forte*, to wish all of you a new year filled with happiness and peace and much energy to do the work of the Lord as he invites us.

I encourage you all to strive continually for a deeper knowledge of the spirit of the Congregation, returning always to the gospel and to the example and teaching of Saint Vincent, mindful that our spirit and our ministries ought to nourish one another (C. 8).

Your brother in Saint Vincent,

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General