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Mission Appeal Letter (October 19, 1996)

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October 19, 1996

To Vincentians throughout the world

My very dear Brothers,

The grace and peace of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you!

As I was preparing for the canonization this year, I read the letters of John Gabriel Perboyre. Just after he received news that he could go to China, he wrote to his uncle: "How happy I am for such a wonderful vocation." He loved being a missionary and it was soon evident, upon his arrival on the mainland, that he loved the Chinese people. Today, when we emphasize inculturation so much, it is interesting to note the various ways in which he adapted to Chinese life. He took on the people's grooming, dress, and customs. "If you could only see me now," he wrote almost laughingly to his brother Jacques, describing what a spectacle he was with his Chinese outfit, his shaved head, his long pigtail and mustache, and his eating with chopsticks. He worked hard to learn the language; in fact, he liked studying it and felt that he did reasonably well with Chinese. He found it fascinating, with its tones and its script. "For the Chinese," he wrote, "to read and to recite is to sing."

In this year when we have reflected so much on Perboyre, I am writing to you once again about our new international missions. First, let me quickly offer you some news flashes (more information will appear in *Nuntia*). Then, I will make an appeal, as I have done in other years.

SOME NEWS

- **China** _ I am very happy to tell you that two confreres, Joseph Loftus and Thomas Sendlein, are now on the mainland, studying Chinese full-time in Beijing. A Daughter of Charity, Sr. Kathleen Grimley, is in Sichuan teaching English full-time. Two more confreres, Pawe_ Wierzbicki and Y. Kusno Bintoro, have now arrived in Taiwan to join the mission team, with a third, Henk De Cuijper, soon to come.
- **Rwanda** _ Victor Bieler, Assistant for the Missions, and Aurelio Londoño, Visitor of Colombia, have just returned from Ruhengeri and Kigali, where they were exploring possibilities for the Province of Colombia to staff a new mission. The decision to go there is a difficult one for all of us because of the tragic violence that has ravaged Rwanda in recent years. Nonetheless, in the very broad consultation which we have made, many are encouraging us to take this step to join the 30 Daughters of Charity who are already laboring there.
- **Siberia** _ This past summer, two confreres from the Province of Poland, Maciej Kuczak and Krzysztof Waryan, visited the area of the prospective mission at Nasnij Tagil and sent me a complete report on the possibilities for ministry there. The Visitor of Poland has just informed me that the team will be in place in Nasnij Tagil by next September.
- **Albania** _ This mission has grown very rapidly. There are now seven confreres there and four communities of Daughters of Charity. The work centers in Rrëshen and radiates outward to many communities in the mountains. The Province of Naples

now has responsibility for the mission, with financial and personnel help from the Provinces of Rome and Turin.

- **Tanzania** _ This mission too is maturing well. There are five confreres in Mbinga and Mpepai at present, with the promise of two more in the near future. The area where we serve is very remote and very poor. The Sisters of Mercy of St. Vincent de Paul, with whom we work closely there, are likewise growing very rapidly with more than 120 young Tanzanian sisters.
- **Kharkiv, Ukraine** _ The confreres here are about to construct a house and pastoral center. It is most encouraging to see that young men from various parts of the Ukraine are already entering the seminary as candidates for the Congregation.
- **El Alto, Bolivia** _ I visited this mission during this past year and experienced both the beauty and the difficulties of the high altitude. The confreres here too are about to begin the construction of a community house. They have now been joined by Daughters of Charity from the Province of Bolivia. As I am writing, Victor Bieler is visiting El Alto.
- **Solomon Islands** _ The new seminary is just about complete. The confreres, after having lived and worked for several years in temporary quarters, are eager to settle into a more permanent setting with the seminarians.
- **Mozambique** _ The seminary in Xai-Xai, staffed by the Province of Mexico, is brimming over with students. Despite many start-up difficulties (malaria, construction delays), the confreres are very happy there.

We continue to take steps toward strengthening some of our other very poor missions. I have just made a direct appeal to the three Visitors of Brazil and the Visitor of Portugal to give personnel assistance to the Vice-Province of Mozambique. Two more confreres have been assigned full-time to the Province of Cuba, Frs. Miguel Ángel Renes and Gilbert Walker, but they are still awaiting visas.

Of course, besides these new international missions, many provinces continue to expend huge resources, especially in personnel and finances, in building up our many other foreign missions. For this I am most grateful.

AN APPEAL

At a recent meeting of our General Council, we decided that, over the next few years, we will consolidate the international missions mentioned above before beginning further new ones. Meanwhile, we are gradually entrusting these missions to various provinces within the Congregation so that their governance and future might be better secured. At the same time the Curia will continue to sustain the new missions with financial support and often with personnel too. As I am sure you have already noticed in this letter and in others, we are trying also to work in close relationship with the Daughters of Charity in these missions and with other branches of the wider Vincentian Family. In fact, collaboration with the members of our family has sometimes been the motive for taking on a new mission (e.g., Tanzania, Rwanda). As you have certainly noted too, a number of our new missions are connected with seminary work (e.g., the Solomons, Xai-Xai). It is encouraging to see that in a number of the missions there are vocations not only to the diocesan clergy but to the Congregation too.

This year's appeal is very simple:

1. We need further volunteers for all of the missions mentioned above. The needs are especially urgent
 - in Mozambique, where our numbers are small and the poverty is striking: it is often cited today as the poorest country in the world,
 - in Cuba, where our numbers are also small, food is scarce, and the confreres and sisters labor under great difficulties,
 - in La Moskitia in Honduras, a remote mission for which I have several times made an appeal, but for which so far, there have been few volunteers.

We also have needs in several Islamic countries (e.g., Algeria), where life and ministry are difficult.

2. Right now in the Solomons we have a rather pressing need for one or two full-time English-speaking confreres who might be able to teach basic courses in theology. The program there integrates philosophical and theological studies over a five-year period. Besides full-time confreres, it would also be helpful to have volunteers who could work in the seminary for a semester from time to time. For example, seminary teachers or university theology teachers from other countries might volunteer to serve in the Solomons for a semester or trimester.
3. For the mission in Siberia, we need more confreres who can speak or learn Russian and/or German.

St. Vincent had a great love for the missions. In his old age he told the confreres how much he longed to go there himself. To the very end of his life, he maintained a worldwide vision that made him yearn to see the gospel preached to the farthest reaches of the earth. He spoke eloquently about our vocation: "Let us imagine that he (Christ) says to us: `Go forth missionaries, go forth. What, are you still here? Look at the poor people who are awaiting you...'" (SV XI, 134). I encourage you, my brothers, to have this same yearning love for the missions. "How valuable a good missionary is! Only God can create him and form him. He is the work of the Almighty's great goodness" (SV VII, 613).

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

**SOME INFORMATION AND CRITERIA
FOR THOSE WHO WRITE**

1. If you should wish to volunteer, please send your letter in time to arrive in Rome by December 15, 1996.

2. So that I might read the letters all at once and so that they might be carefully organized, would you please address the envelopes as follows:

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
MISSIONS
Congregation of the Mission
Via dei Capasso, 30
00164 ROMA
ITALY

3. 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 mission.

4. While we have decided that no automatic age cut-off would be established, it is surely necessary that the missionary have reasonably good health.

5. Confreres who volunteer, by sending a letter to the Superior General, should inform the Visitor that they have done so.

6. Your letter should give some background about your person, your ministerial experience, and your training. It should also express any particular interests that you have, such as what mission you would like to take part in.

7. Even if you have already written in the past, please do not hesitate to contact me again.