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The 39th General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission

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The 39th General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission was held from July 6-31 in the house of the Daughters of Charity on the Via Ezio in Rome. The theme was "The Worldwide Vincentian Family and the Challenges of the Mission in the Third Millennium." There were 119 participants, including 7 members of the General Curia, 49 Visitors (that of Cuba was absent for health reasons), and 63 delegates from the provinces.

Organization and services of the Assembly. Some of the participants stayed at the Via Ezio, while others were lodged nearby at the Leonine College, which is also the Provincial House of the confreres of Rome.

The sessions were held in the large conference room of the Via Ezio which is equipped for simultaneous translation. Fourteen dedicated translators competently and patiently translated the talks and documents, either orally or in writing, into French, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. The three moderators, Frs. Christian Sens, Joseph Levesque and Jaime Corera directed the work and the discussions. Fr. Giuseppe Turati, named Secretary of the Assembly, faithfully wrote up the minutes of the Assembly with the help of Bruno Gonella. The former also organized the work of the various people who gave themselves unselfishly in the nearby secretariat and whose collaboration was invaluable. Fr. Seraffín Peralta and Sr. Germaine Price, DC, were the facilitators. Fr. Alvaro Quevedo, chronicler, wrote an article each day which was put on the Internet web site in Spanish, French, and English, and which, we hope, kept you regularly informed on the progress of our work. Fr. Lourenço Mika was our video-reporter, filming our Assembly in all its aspects and taking many photos. He is now preparing a video in several languages in order to present the Assembly and its principal decisions to the provinces.

First days. The Assembly began on July 6 at 9 a.m. with a Eucharist presided over by Fr. Robert Maloney, Superior General, in the main chapel of the Leonine College. Songs and readings in various languages reflected the wonderful diversity of the participants. Then, in the conference hall, Fr. Maloney, opened the Assembly and gave his report on the State of the Congregation, which he presented with the projection of lively images, thanks to the marvels that computers afford us today. Several members of the General Curia presented their reports, using the same audio-visual means. Some did this with remarkable panache, like Frs. Patrick Griffin, Econome General, and Rolando Delagoza, Procurer General, who, in spite of the seriousness of their subjects, managed to capture our attention and even to give us a moment of entertainment.

After the approbation of the *Directory of the Assembly*, it was decided to adopt the *Documentum Laboris* as the basic text of the Assembly. Then, the Assembly chose Frs. Manuel Ginete, Gabriel Naranjo, John Rybolt, Gilson Camargo, Wiel Bellemakers, and Urban Osuji as members of the Central Commission which was presided over by the Superior General and on which the three moderators and the two facilitators participated.

Week of the Vincentian Family. From July 9-14, the "Week of the Vincentian Family" took place with the participation of 33 representatives from the Family in a very fraternal environment. Present were those principally responsible for the Company of the Daughters of Charity (Mother Juana Elizondo and her entire council), the AIC, and the St. Vincent de Paul Society, as well as

some of those responsible on national levels for the Vincentian Marian Youth groups and the Miraculous Medal Association. Four Superiors General of Congregations of Vincentian inspiration attended the meeting, as well as three representatives of the many lay people who, without belonging to a movement, collaborate closely with us in our missions and ministries. On July 9, 11 members of a panel representing the diverse realities offered presentations on his/her community, movement, or apostolic work. Then, various work groups, in which the members of the Assembly mixed with the guests from the Vincentian Family, permitted a rich sharing of experiences and better mutual understanding. This "Week" concluded with the formulation of "Recommendations" from the groups to the General Assembly, which aimed principally at collaboration in human and Vincentian formation and the elaboration of common projects in the service of the poor. These recommendations were studied later by the Assembly. This "Week" with the 33 guests is a first in the history of the Congregation and will certainly influence its relationships of friendship and collaboration with the other branches of the Vincentian Family.

Elections of the Superior General and of the General Council. Subsequently, while studying the *Documentum Laboris*, chosen as the basic document, the Assembly proceeded to the elections. After a straw vote, in conformity with the *Directory*, the election of the successor of St. Vincent took place on July 17. Fr. Robert P. Maloney was elected Superior General for a second mandate.

On the following days, the Assembly proceeded with the elections of the Assistants General with the following results:

Fr. J. Ignacio Fernández de Mendoza (Saragossa), reelected Vicar General

Fr. José Antonio Ubillús (Peru), elected Assistant General

Fr. Victor Bieler (Indonesia), reelected Assistant General

Fr. Józef Kapuciak (Poland), elected Assistant General

All these elections were welcomed with warm applause.

Return to the study of the theme and the final text of the Assembly. The Assembly elected four commissions for working on the different parts of the theme. The days were spent in meeting by language groups which studied the various aspects of the theme and presented amendments; there were also plenary discussions.

When the diverse amendments from all parts of the theme had been voted on, the Assembly turned over the whole document to the Editing Commission, composed of Frs. John Rybolt, Gabriel Naranjo, and Emeric Amyot d'Inville who were to assemble the various texts from the commissions into a single text with unified style. The text of the Editing Commission was submitted to the different language groups who presented amendments and "modi" which the Editing Commission classified and presented to the vote of the Assembly in a plenary session. This text, corrected according to the amendments and "modi" adopted by the Assembly, was approved by a large majority in the plenary session on the morning of July 31, and became the Final Text of the 1998 Assembly addressed to the entire Congregation of the Mission. It bears the following title: "With the Vincentian Family we face the challenges of the Mission at the Threshold of the new millennium."

Study of the Postulates. At the same time, the Assembly studied the postulates which had been received. Around twenty of them were simply turned over to the Superior General so that he can see with this council what follow-up he wishes to give them. Several postulates covered the theme of the Assembly and were treated with it. The others were rejected.

Several Decrees of the 1992 Assembly were reconfirmed.

Recreational and Festive Moments. Diverse festive moments marked this Assembly: we should mention in particular the lovely day at Naples offered by the Province of Naples on Sunday, July 19; the feast day dinner organized by the Leonine College and that organized by the Sisters of Via Ezio; the World Cup matches followed passionately on the large screen in the conference hall and the celebration of France's victory; the numerous anniversaries and national feasts where we greeted one another joyously, etc.

The last day. On the morning of July 31, the last day of the Assembly, Fr. Maloney, surrounded by his council, presided over the closing Eucharist. Then the last plenary session was held in the course of which the Final Text of the Assembly was approved and Fr. Maloney gave his closing address. Then, he declared the 39th General Assembly of the Congregation of the Mission closed.

After a fraternal meal, each one returned to his province and mission, with the responsibility of spreading in his province the results and decisions of the Assembly.