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Office of the Procurator General

*by Rolando Delagoza, C.M.
Procurator General*

N.B. The following text is a description of the Powerpoint Presentation which graphically and vividly delineated the various functions of the office of the Procurator General. This high technology presentation combined graphics, video, text, and sound through the use of computers and scanners. Each paragraph in the presentation had a script describing the simulation, the figures, the movements exhibited in around 20 slides. For example, to show that the Procurator General has to visit a dozen offices, a simulation, employing the magic of graphics, displayed a man moving from one office to another. In this way, the Assembly members were hearing, seeing and experiencing the actual work of the Procurator General and came to appreciate it as part of the administration of the General Curia.

Introduction. As all of you are aware, the small office of the Procurator General is at the service of the whole Vincentian Family. I shall only present to you a historical definition, an outline and some tips on how to prepare a good dispensation case.

I. The Office of the Procurator General

The Procurator General is a member of any religious order or congregation in charge of dealing with the Holy See on the affairs of the religious order or congregation in the interest of the whole community or of any member thereof (i.e. province, house or individual members). The obligation of having a representative of the Father General in Rome was already practiced before 1814. The Congregation of Bishops and Religious decreed on August 22, 1814 that all male religious orders or congregations of Pontifical Right should maintain a procurator general at the Holy See (translated from *Dizionario Ecclesiastico III*, 346).

It was on March 5, 1843 that the Congregation of the Mission officially appointed a procurator general in the person of Fr. Simone Ugo (Circ. Sup. Gen IR, 31, 571). Before 1843, there were 24 Vincentians who were assigned the job but without the official title. Among these were: François Ducoudray who obtained the bull "Salvatoris Nostri" (January 12, 1633); Louis Lebreton who got the rescript to found the first house in Rome (July 11, 1641); Thomas Berthe and Edme Jolly for the approval of the vows through the Papal Brief "Ex Commissa Nobis" (September 22, 1655).

Slide No. 1. This is a general outline of the work of the Procurator General. The Daughters of Charity, the Congregation of the Mission and the other Vincentian Family members submit to him any business that needs the approval of the Holy See. He examines the documents, writes a recommendation, submits them to respective offices and waits for the approval or disapproval. The various Vatican offices with the most number of business are listed on the side of slide no. 1.

Slide No. 2. This is a more detailed outline of business transactions with the Holy See showing the input, the Vatican offices and the expected output. The most important Vatican office as far as the Procurator General is concerned is the CIVCSVA which means the "Congregatio pro Institutis vitae consecratae et societatis vitae apostolicae." It is the office that deals with most of the rescripts asked by the General Curia and the provinces.

Slide No. 3. This is a graphic presentation of the distribution of letters sent and the time distribution at the office of the Procurator General. You can easily see that the two most important offices for us are those of the Secretary of State and the CIVCSVA.

II. Preparation of Cases: Some Tips

1. Introduction. While the office of the Procurator General is very willing and eager to help all the provinces solve important cases, especially AOO (ab omnibus oneribus) cases, its success in obtaining dispensations depends, to a large extent, on the Provincial Visitors. Here are some tips or suggestions for improving our service.

2. Documentation. This includes the letter of the petitioner, curriculum vitae of the petitioner, decree of suspension, mandates, testimony of the petitioner, testimony of two persons who know the petitioner, medical records, scrutinies, votum of the priest-instructor, votum of the Ordinary, votum of the local ordinary and certificate of authenticity.

Completeness also refers to the content of each particular document.

3. Strong Arguments.

- Preferably from the petitioner himself, e.g., he should not have been ordained in the first place.
- From the formators, e.g., the faculty was divided on whether to ordain or not to ordain.
- Medical or psychiatric records.

- Vota of the priest-instructor and the Ordinary (Provincial Superior) should be written in such a way that the strength and thoroughness of the case are evident.

4. Good Presentation.

- Pages are numbered consecutively and authenticated by the Notary.
- Handwritten documents should have a typewritten or computerized transcription.
- Official copies of certificates of attempted marriage, etc. should be legible.

5. Expert Help

- From language groups
- From non-Vincentian groups, e.g. diocesan and religious groups

6. Role of the Procurator General

- Reviews the case, e.g., checks documents for completeness
- Prepares a summary and an opinion
- Prepares transmittal letter
- Submits papers to the Holy See
- Waits for the decision of the Holy See
- Transmits decision to the petitioner through the Provincial Visitor

It is my hope that all of you will help the office of the Procurator General, so that following in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul, we will all become true "servant leaders" ready to serve our confreres in need. Thank you very much and may God bless us all.