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Vincentian Solidarity Office

*by Peter A. Campbell, C.M.
VSO Administrator
8.XI.2002*

Opening Remarks

Good morning! I am very happy to be here with you today. This morning I will speak about the newly established Vincentian Solidarity Office or VSO. As you know, our Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M., and his Council appointed me as the first Administrator of the VSO. I am grateful to them for the opportunity to serve in this new ministry for the Congregation of the Mission. I will do my best.

My talk is divided into four parts:

- I. What is the VSO?*
- II. Why was the VSO started?*
- III. How does the VSO work?*
- IV. Some other practical matters about the VSO*

The basic outline and content of my talk is summarized in the *VSO Brochure*. (You received a copy of the *VSO Brochure* at the beginning of my talk.) After my presentation, there will be time for you to ask questions about the content of my talk. I will also be available after the session, if you would like to speak with me about the services of the VSO.

I. What is the VSO?

The VSO is a new office of service established by the Superior General and the General Council of the Congregation of the Mission on June 15, 2002. The goal of the VSO is:

To assist the poorer provinces, vice-provinces and missions of the Congregation of the Mission with writing successful grant proposals to funding organizations for their works and needs.

The word “missions” in the goal statement refers to both the poorer foreign missions of provinces and to the new international missions under the jurisdiction of the Superior General and his Council.

The VSO serves as an intermediary between a province, vice-province or mission and various funding organizations for the application and awarding of grant funds for a project.

The VSO is an optional service in the Congregation of the Mission that a province, vice-province or mission can use. Since it is not the intention of the General Curia to centralize all grant proposals through the VSO, a province, vice-province or mission is free to continue to send grant proposals for projects directly to funding organizations or to donors.

The VSO is a program under the jurisdiction of the Superior General and his Council. The staff of the VSO consists of myself, as the Administrator. The VSO Administrator is appointed by and accountable to the Superior General and his Council. Simply stated, the job description of the VSO Administrator is to serve as an international grant writer for the Congregation of the Mission.

The VSO is located at St. Vincent's Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA, which is the Motherhouse of the Eastern Province of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States. You are most welcome to come and visit the VSO at anytime.

II. Why Was the VSO Started?

The VSO was created to help solve a problem. The context of the problem is that some of the provinces, vice-provinces and missions of the Congregation of the Mission, particularly those outside of Western Europe and the United States, do not have adequate financial resources to support their apostolates and the needs of their members. In addition, in many of these areas of the world the Congregation is growing.

The General Curia has responded to this situation through the annual Mission Fund Distribution, Special Needs Fund, establishing the International Mission Funds and promoting the setting up of Patrimony Funds. Despite these efforts, the General Curia cannot satisfy all the petitions it receives for financial assistance, especially those for construction projects.

The problem is that some of the poorer provinces, vice-provinces and missions of the Congregation of the Mission do not apply for or are not successful at receiving grant monies from international funding organizations

because they do not know where to seek grant funds or do not know how to write successful grant proposals for projects.

To address this problem, the Superior General and his Council established the VSO to assist needy provinces, vice-provinces and missions with writing successful grant proposals to funding organizations for their provincial apostolates and the needs of their confreres.

III. How does the VSO Work?

The province, vice-province or mission, the VSO and the various funding organizations form a partnership to provide grant funds for a project that benefits the needs of the confreres or the people they serve.

The responsibilities of the province, vice-province or mission for the project are:

- To design, plan and implement the project.
- To manage the grant funds awarded to the project.
- To prepare the financial and evaluation reports required by funding organizations for the project.

The responsibilities of the VSO for the project are spelled out in the eight objectives for accomplishing the goal of the VSO. I would like to read each objective and then make some brief comments about the tasks that will be done to carry out the objective.

1. *To select projects submitted by the Visitors or Vice-Visitors and their Councils for VSO assistance based on criteria approved by the Superior General and his Council.*

The Visitor or Vice-Visitor and his Council determine the provincial priorities for projects in a province, vice-province or mission.

They are responsible for approving and sending the *VSO Project Application Form* to the VSO Administrator. (*You received a copy of the VSO Project Application Form at the beginning of my talk.*) The questions on the application form focus on the major areas of a basic grant proposal for a project. These areas are the problem statement, goal and objectives, method, budget and evaluation.

After receiving the application form, the VSO Administrator applies the *VSO Project Criteria* approved by the Superior General and his Council to the

request for VSO assistance. The project must satisfy all six criteria before the VSO Administrator will accept the project for service. The criteria are:

1. *The Visitor or Vice-Visitor and his Council approve and send the VSO Project Application Form to the VSO Administrator.*
2. *The VSO Project Application Form is properly filled out.*
3. *The province, vice-province or mission submitting the project is economically poor.*

One measure for determining economic poverty are those provinces, vice-provinces and missions that currently receive financial assistance from the General Curia.

4. *The project is a work of the Congregation of the Mission and benefits the needs of the confreres of the province, vice-province or mission or the people they serve.*
5. *There is a reasonable chance of securing grant funds for the project.*
6. *The VSO has the resources to work on the project.*

2. *To investigate funding sources for projects*

The VSO Administrator conducts research on funding sources for the project.

The VSO Administrator will also learn about available funding sources for projects by:

- initiating and maintaining good working relationships with funding organizations through personal visits;
- developing and fostering collaborative relationships with others who do international grant writing for religious communities; and

- joining associations and/or attending workshops on grant writing and fundraising.

3. *To provide assistance with writing grant proposals for projects*

After a project is selected for VSO assistance, the Visitor or Vice-Visitor designates a confere from his province, vice-province or mission to be the Project Coordinator. The Project Coordinator is the person that the VSO Administrator works with to review all aspects of a project. At the request of the VSO Administrator, the Project Coordinator supplies needed information for writing grant proposals for the project.

If it is warranted, the VSO Administrator conducts an onsite visit to see the project first-hand, for example, an expensive construction project.

Based on his research and contacts, the VSO Administrator determines which funding organizations are appropriate for the project. If it is necessary, he breaks down the project into a number of smaller grant proposals.

Then the VSO Administrator writes the grant proposals for the project according to the proposal guidelines of the various funding organizations. These grant proposals are based on the information supplied by the Visitor or Vice-Visitor on the *VSO Project Application Form*, provided by the Project Coordinator at the request of the VSO Administrator, or gathered during an onsite visit.

4. *To submit grant proposals for projects to the appropriate funding organizations*

The VSO Administrator sends the grant proposals for the project to the various funding organizations.

5. *To keep track of grant proposals submitted to various funding organizations for projects*

The VSO Administrator monitors the status of all grant proposals submitted to funding organizations for the project.

He also inquires about the status of grant proposals for the project when making personal visits to funding organizations.

6. *To handle all communication and correspondence with funding organizations regarding these grant proposals for projects*

The VSO Administrator receives all communications and correspondence from funding organizations regarding the grant proposals for the project.

The VSO Administrator keeps the Project Coordinator informed about the status of the grant proposals for the project.

He also sends copies of all communications to and from funding organizations about the project to the Project Coordinator.

If the Visitor or Vice-Visitor or the Project Coordinator have any questions, concerns or new information about the project, they should contact the VSO Administrator.

7. *To distribute grant funds awarded by funding organizations to projects with the assistance of the Treasurer General*

If funding organizations award grant funds to the project, they are sent to the VSO and deposited in the appropriate bank accounts.

In consultation with the Project Coordinator, the VSO Administrator sets up the schedule for sending grant funds to the project.

The VSO Administrator then works with the Treasurer General to release the funds according to the schedule.

If the Visitor or Vice-Visitor or Project Coordinator have any inquiries about the distribution of grant funds to a project, they should contact the VSO Administrator.

8. *To make sure that evaluation and financial reports for grants are filed on time with funding organizations*

The VSO Administrator reminds the Project Coordinator when the interim and final financial and evaluation reports for grants are due.

The Project Coordinator then prepares and sends the reports to the VSO Administrator.

After reviewing them, the VSO Administrator sends the required follow-up reports for grant funds awarded to projects to the funding organizations in a timely manner.

IV. Some Other Practical Matters about the VSO

1. English as the Working Language of the VSO

The working language of the VSO is English for two reasons. First, grant proposals can be submitted in English to almost all funding organizations around the world. Second, I, as the VSO Administrator, speak only English.

This means that the *VSO Project Application Form*, the grant proposals for a project, the financial and evaluation reports for grant funds for a project and all written and verbal communication with the VSO Administrator must be in English.

2. Startup Date for the VSO

The VSO will officially open on January 1, 2003. The Visitor or Vice-Visitor can send the completed *VSO Project Application Form* to me after that date. The address, telephone number, fax number, e-mail address and website address for the VSO are printed on the *VSO Brochure*.

3. VSO Website

The VSO will have a website at famvin.org/vso starting on January 1, 2003. You can go to the website to look up information about the VSO, for example, the VSO Goal and Objectives, the *VSO Project Criteria*, news updates on the VSO, etc. You will also be able to print out the *VSO Project Application Form* from the website.

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