

9-2003

Mission Appeal 2003 (Rome, October 15, 2003)

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Recommended Citation

(2003) "Mission Appeal 2003 (Rome, October 15, 2003)," *Vincentiana*: Vol. 47 : No. 5 , Article 7.
Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol47/iss5/7>

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Rome, October 15, 2003

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

When St. Vincent announced the opening of the mission in Madagascar, Charles Nacquart, who was 31 years of age, volunteered. On March 22, 1648, St. Vincent wrote a touching letter, accepting his offer:

The Company has cast its eyes on you, as the best offering it has, to do homage to our Sovereign Creator and to render him this service, together with another good priest of the Company. O, my more than dearest Father, what does your heart say to this news? ... You will need generosity and sublime courage. You will also need faith as great as Abraham's and the charity of St. Paul. Zeal, patience, deference, poverty, solicitude, discretion, moral integrity, and an ardent desire to be entirely consumed for God are as appropriate for you as for the great St. Francis Xavier (SV III, 278-279).

Nacquart was an extraordinary missionary. During the long voyage to Madagascar, he learned the indigenous language so well that shortly afterwards he was able to write a brief summary of Christian doctrine which was published under the title *A Small Catechism, with Morning and Evening Prayer*. He evangelized the territory around Fort Dauphin tirelessly, but died at 33 after only a year and a half on the mission. Reflecting on his death, St. Vincent exclaimed to the confreres gathered at St. Lazare:

That great servant of God! ... What a great loss ..., but also what a great gain! O, Savior! "The blood of martyrs, the seed of Christians." This leads me to hope that his martyrdom (because he died for God) will be the seed of Christians and that God, in view of his death, will give us the grace to bear fruit ... So let us ask God to give the Company this spirit, this heart, this heart which will make us go everywhere, this heart of the Son of God, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord, the heart of Our Lord... (SV XI, 290-291).

As you have probably already guessed, today I am writing to you, as I do every October, to bring you news about the missions, where many wonderful missionaries like Charles Nacquart continue to serve, and also to appeal for your

help.

SOME BRIEF NEWS ITEMS

I have lots of good news to share with you this year.

On 13-16 February, I traveled to Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, with Frs. Paul Roche and Edward Łojek. There we met with Cardinal Bačkis in order to speak about our house and church, which were confiscated by the Communist government 50 years ago. The church has now been given back to the archdiocese. Our large house there, formerly a seminary, is at present a hospital housing 200 patients. Shortly after my return to Rome, the Cardinal wrote to invite us back to our church in Vilnius. The Jesuits in Lithuania have promised to help us in working out the practicalities of reestablishing the Congregation there.

Fr. Urban Osuji, our Vice-Visitor in Nigeria, has written to tell me that the Vice-Province has accepted a new mission in Liberia. Its primary focus will be the offering of a spiritual year to seminarians who are in formation for the diocesan priesthood. The three confreres who will begin the mission next September will also, in addition to their work in the formation program, have parochial responsibilities.

Earlier this year the Congregation for the Oriental Churches asked us to take over the running of the Pontifical Ethiopian College, within Vatican City, for the formation of priests from Ethiopia and Eritrea. With the consent of the members of the General Council and after consulting the Visitors of the Province of Ethiopia and the Vice-Province of St. Justin de Jacobis, I accepted this invitation. Abba Berhanemeskel Keflemariam, from Eritrea, was appointed as Rector and Abba Hagos Hayish, from Ethiopia, was appointed as Vice-Rector/Treasurer/Prefect. A group of us, including our confrere, Archbishop Berhaneyesus Demerew Souraphiel, took part in the opening ceremonies on October 7.

The Campaign Against Hunger has given rise to a large number of creative projects, both in our mission countries and elsewhere. Almost all the countries where we serve have responded with enthusiasm to this campaign. The projects they have organized, which often involve many of the branches of our Vincentian Family, are of two types: 1) those that aim at meeting immediate needs, like breakfast programs for children on their way to school; 2) those that aim at combatting the causes of hunger, like agricultural training, animal husbandry, fish farms, and educational programs. Some of our countries where economic resources are more abundant have helped poorer countries by raising funds for projects which focus on attacking the causes of poverty. The Vincentian Family in Italy, for example, has raised more than 130,000 euros to

lay the groundwork for four projects in Africa.

This September 27th, as you already know, the Vincentian Family launched a Campaign Against Malaria, which takes the lives of so many people in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Since malaria can be overcome only with massive support from governmental and other societal structures, this campaign has a political-action aspect; it also has a practical aspect, like the distribution of chemically treated mosquito nets and the setting up of educational programs. Much information about the campaign can be found on the famvin.org website.

Less officially, several of us find ourselves engaged these days in trying to facilitate cooperative efforts between the Community of Sant'Egidio and the Daughters of Charity in "Project DREAM" which is a quite successful program aimed at combatting AIDS in Mozambique, with the hope that this program will soon spread to Angola and Tanzania.

Here is some rapid news about various missions.

- **CHINA** — The situation in China is still complex, but there is considerable forward movement. Our apostolate focuses on renewing contacts, offering encouragement and formation to Chinese priests, sisters, and lay people, walking with them, and learning from them. We have found that the Vincentian charism is remarkably cross-cultural and has a special appeal to the Chinese people. While confreres continue to go back and forth to the mainland, we now, for the first time since 1950, have a rooted indigenous presence there, which is growing. We have also just been invited to staff a language and culture center, in a town where formerly we had deep roots. The sponsors are interested in offering language and cultural programs in English, French, Spanish, etc. Please contact me or Fr. John Wang for further information.
- **THE VICE-PROVINCE OF STS CYRIL AND METHODIUS** — Now well into its third year, the Vice-Province of Sts. Cyril and Methodius is becoming a cohesive unit that has gradually emerged from five originally separate missions. The first Vice-Provincial Assembly has just concluded, further uniting the group. There are ten students in the formation program, and the confreres are preparing to start a pre-novitiate program for six candidates to begin in Kiev in the New Year, as soon as the building presently under construction is completed. The potential for personnel in the Vice-Province is promising, but in the immediate future it will remain dependent on confreres joining it from other provinces. Presently, the confreres are engaged in parochial work, direct service to the poor, and, increasingly, in seminary work and ministry to priests. The languages in use are Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Slovakian, Polish

and soon also Lithuanian. All volunteers will be provided the opportunity to learn whatever language is required.

- **PAPUA NEW GUINEA** — Rolando Santos, Homero Marín and Tulio Cordero are quite happy in PNG and assist in the priestly formation of 71 seminarians who come from 14 dioceses in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Homero supervises the pastoral work of the seminarians and supervises their medical needs. During this last term Tulio started teaching Church History and Music. Rolando does much spiritual direction for the seminarians. Armed robbery continues to be a major problem in Port Moresby, together with unemployment, HIV/AIDS, and malnutrition resulting from a decline in the over-all socio-economic condition of the country, corruption in government, and failure in the delivery of basic services, especially health and education. The Churches, especially the Catholic Church, continue to be the primary providers of basic services in many parts of the country. The Church in PNG, while still relatively young, is growing steadily, especially in the number of priestly and religious vocations. The country still needs missionaries, especially older and experienced ones, to guide the growing number of young priests who gradually are taking over important positions in parishes and the dioceses.
- **SOLOMON ISLANDS** — Our work at the seminary continues to go very well; the bishops of the Solomons have expressed their delight with the presence of the confreres. Now, with the arrival of Chacko Panathara and Joseva Tuimavule, we have taken over a parish and apostolic center, both of which are on property adjacent to the seminary. Good Shepherd Parish is made up of seven communities, far separated from each other. Fr. Chacko, with the help of local catechists, is beginning to get to know the people, many of whom are now returning to their villages, after having fled during the ethnic strife three years ago. The parish, which has about 2000 members, includes seven communities, located on the main island of Guadalcanal, as well as one community of 50 Catholics on another island, Tulagi. Fr. Chacko has been going there quite regularly by boat, which takes from 3-12 hours, depending on the weather and the condition of the boat. Fr. Joseva has been appointed as Director of the Nazareth Apostolic Center (NAC) and takes care of the Parish Mission Center when Fr. Chacko goes to the villages. The confreres working in the seminary assist in the parish at times, and vice versa.
- **TANZANIA** — The Congregation has 12 seminarians in Tanzania this year and by next year we hope to have at least 20 candidates. At the moment our students are living at a major seminary, which next year will be unable to offer accommodations for our growing number of students.

The confreres are about to begin building a house of studies. Since they lack sufficient resources, they are planning to build in stages, as funds become available.

- **MOZAMBIQUE**

a. The Vice-Province of Mozambique — The confreres of the Vice-Province work in a large area in the southern part of the country. They labor in six missionary centers and also have two houses of formation, for the Internal Seminary and the Major Seminary. Close contacts have been formed with the members of the various branches of the Vincentian Family. Pastoral services are also offered to immigrants from South Africa. The official language is Portuguese. This year three new missionaries from Brazil came to join the mission, though the Vice-Province still needs more volunteers. Mozambique is one of the poorest countries in the world.

b. Nacala — The community of Nacala, which lies 2400 km from the capital, is attached to the Province of Salamanca, and receives help from Costa Rica and Nigeria. It continues to run an important educational program, with the opening of various elementary schools where more than 3000 children study and with the immediate challenge of getting a secondary school started. It is also beginning to set up a center to combat AIDS in collaboration with the Community of Sant'Egidio. Its pastoral energies are at present focused on improving the Catholic radio station and on opening a new parish. The community of priests and the lay members of JMV work in close collaboration, but two departures are in the offing: Fr. Emmanuel Ugwuoke will be leaving the mission in order to begin a study program in Italy and a laywoman, Mari Carmen Lupiañez, after five years in Nacala and ten in Honduras, also is planning on returning to her homeland at the end of the year. Both did excellent work. We need two or three more confreres! The language is Portuguese; other local languages are useful.

c. The Vincentian bishop of the diocese, Msgr. Germano Grachane, is asking for two confreres to begin a minor seminary for his diocese, which is extremely poor. The candidates at the seminary will live a very simple lifestyle and will go to a high school that the diocese is already running. These two confreres will be responsible for their formation, with help from our own missionary team in Nacala (the priests and lay missionaries), as well as from priests, sisters and brothers already laboring in the diocese.

- **RWANDA/BURUNDI** — The Province of Colombia took over this mission about six years ago. The missionary team has gradually increased in number and is attempting to respond to the huge demands of the mission while assuring that the confreres work together as a team. Four houses have been opened in this period. Néstor Emilio Giraldo has just arrived in Nemba, where Juan Ávila launched the mission in 1998. In Ruzo live William Marín and Félix Eduardo Osorio; the latter is also a new member of the Region. Rogelio Toro is in Rwisabi. This year a new house was opened in Kabgai, where 25 young men take part in a pre-seminary program and a philosophy program. Alirio Ceballos and Fenelón Castillo, who serves as Director of the Daughters of Charity, reside there. Juan Ávila is the Regional Superior. Other confreres from Colombia are preparing to go there in the near future. The mission has already opened a Vincentian seminary and has vocations for the Congregation of the Mission.
- **ALBANIA** — This year the confreres are marking the 10th anniversary of their presence in Albania. In December Msgr. Angelo Massafra, President of the Albanian Episcopal Conference, will preside over a thanksgiving celebration. Two young theology students from Scutari have arrived in Naples to prepare for entrance into the Internal Seminary. In addition, the Province of Slovakia has made an important contribution to the mission by sending Fr. Vincent Zonták as a new missionary to Scutari.
- **IRAN** — Presently there are two confreres in Iran: Fr. Lazare de Gérin, who has been working in Tabriz and Ispahan for the past 30 years, and Fr. Emile Toulemonde who arrived in December 2002. He had spent much of his life in Iran, until the overthrow of the Shah and was eager to return. He works in Teheran and, for the time being, lives with the Salesians because our house there needs considerable repair. For the future, a young Iranian seminarian has just completed the Internal Seminary at the Berceau of St. Vincent and now has three more years of study in Paris. The Province of Toulouse is planning to send another confrere to Iran in September 2004.

FIRST APPEAL

Many of the needs of our missions are already evident in the news that I have presented above. Below, I will specify some of our more urgent needs.

- **ANGOLA** — Fr. Humberto Sinka is about to arrive there. He will reside in Lobito, in a house near the Daughters of Charity. Fr. Jorge Pedroza, the Vice-Provincial in Mozambique, has graciously expressed a willingness to accept the Angolan candidates for the Congregation of the Mission whom

the Daughters of Charity have accompanied in an initial period of discernment.

- **CUBA** — Our confreres in Cuba continue to work in difficult circumstances. Fr. Gilbert Walker will be arriving in these days to serve as Director of the Daughters of Charity. Several Visitors from Spanish-speaking countries recently responded generously to a special appeal that I made for personnel to help in Cuba. Because of small numbers, the confreres are spread out much too thin. Some live alone for long periods of time. Some are overworked. Some have become sick. I would like to be able to send more confreres to Cuba in the coming year.
- **EL ALTO** — Having served for five years on the Altiplano, several of the confreres have expressed the desire to return to their home country or to go to another mission. I would like to be able to send at least two more confreres to El Alto in the coming year. The languages on the mission are Spanish and Aymara. The living conditions are rugged because of the high altitude.
- **MOSKITIA, HONDURAS** — The Province of Barcelona, which is responsible for this mission, is seeking help and has already received some assistance from the Provinces of Colombia and Zaragoza. The needs, however, are very great. The mission is remote and very poor.
- **ISTANBUL** — The Austrian Province has conducted a mission in Istanbul for 120 years. Our high school there, St. Georgs, is financed in large part by the Austrian government. But unfortunately the province has no younger confreres who can guarantee the Congregation's presence in Turkey and thus assure a much-needed Christian contact with the Islamic world. The Visitor is looking for a confrere who would be willing to undertake a two-year educational program in Islamic studies: one year studying the Turkish language and culture in Istanbul and one year studying Islamic theology at the PISAI in Rome (where courses are given in either English or French). The language at our school is German.

SECOND APPEAL

Provinces continue to be enormously generous in contributing to IMF:2000-2004. Because of depressed market conditions, this fund is not growing as rapidly as its predecessor (IMF:2000) did, but it is doing reasonably well, given the present situation (which in recent months has been improving).

Each quarter at a *tempo forte* meeting of the General Council, the Treasurer General makes a report that also includes the contributions that

individual confreres have made to IMF:2000-2004. The members of the General Council always express astonishment at how abundant these contributions are. When I made the first appeal several years ago, none of us anticipated how generous the response of individual confreres would be.

Apart from IMF:2000 and IMF:2000-2004, one of my goals in recent years has been to set up patrimonial funds for our poorest provinces. The revenues from such funds, whose capital remains untouched, will help guarantee the future of those provinces and will be used for the formation of their members, their works among the poor, and the care of their aging missionaries. To create such funds, I have appealed to several better-off provinces, who have shown extraordinary generosity in sharing their resources with our poorest provinces.

I am very grateful too to confreres and friends of the Congregation who have, in their wills, left legacies, which are now bearing fruit in the missions. I can only encourage others to do the same. It is a very concrete way of expressing one's love and zeal for the missions, even after one's death.

This year's appeal is like that of other years. I make it with less embarrassment than in the past, since I see how generously you have responded to it. I ask you, with simplicity, to reflect on whether you as an individual can make a contribution, small or large, to IMF: 2000-2004. I also ask each of the Visitors to discuss with the members of the council whether your province might be able to make a contribution, small or large. I am enclosing a sheet that will provide you with instructions as to how this can be done.

Those are my appeals both for personnel and for financial assistance for the missions. St. Vincent loved to tell the story of great missionaries. One of the things that has most encouraged me as Superior General is the wonderful missionary spirit that I have seen among the confreres, young and old. I thank the Lord for that and ask him to continue to bless the Congregation and to deepen this spirit among us.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

IMF: 2000-2004

METHODS FOR MAKING A CONTRIBUTION

Provincial Contributions

1. Checks made payable to: “Congregazione della Missione” and with “Deposit Only” written on the back. These should be sent to:

Elmer Bauer III, C.M.
Treasurer General
Via dei Capasso, 30
00164 Roma
Italy

2. For Italy and France, the CCP account can be used following exactly the information in the General Catalogue, page 1.
3. Other possibilities for transfers can be discussed with the Treasurer General.

Individual Contributions

1. Checks made payable to: “Congregazione della Missione” and with “Deposit Only” written on the back, sent to the address above.
2. Other arrangements can be made via the Provincial Treasurer, who will be acquainted with various methods of transfer.

In every case:

1. All gifts received will be acknowledged.
2. If your contribution is not acknowledged in a reasonable time, please contact us for clarification.
3. Please inform us if you are making any transfer of money, as described above.

**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, 2003.
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
Congregazione della Missione
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 place to which a confrere is sent.
4. While we have decided that no automatic age cutoff would be established, it is surely necessary that the missionary have reasonably good health and the flexibility needed for inculturation.
5. Confreres who volunteer, by sending a letter to the Superior General, should inform the Visitor that they have done so. I will always dialogue with the Visitor about the matter.
6. Your letter should give some background about your person, your ministerial experience, your languages, 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 contact me again. Experience has demonstrated that confreres who are available at one moment might not be available at another, and vice-versa.