

1-2005

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission (Rome, January 4, 2005)

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Recommended Citation

Gay, Gregory C.M. (2005) "To the members of the Congregation of the Mission (Rome, January 4, 2005)," *Vincentiana*: Vol. 49: No. 1, Article 3.

Available at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol49/iss1/3>

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GENERAL CURIA

Rome, January 4, 2005
Feast of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

This circular has to do with some of the conclusions of our latest *tempo forte* meeting, which was held from 13-17 December, with two additional days on 22 and 23 December.

- 1) We decided to have an **extraordinary council meeting** that will be held from 21-23 February to discuss and reflect on all the matters dealing with our most recent General Assembly: the document itself, the evaluation of the General Assembly, a deeper discussion of the ordinances, postulata that were presented (especially that recommended to the Superior General and his council), etc.
- 2) A date was established for an ordinary council meeting to take a look at the final draft of the **newly revised *Directory for the Directors of the Daughters of Charity***. We discussed the possibility of a training program for new Directors. That matter will be discussed further, after having heard the opinion of the Mother General and her council.
- 3) We also discussed the possibility of **preparing someone as Archivist and Procurator General**, who would eventually replace Fr. Rolando DelaGoza.
- 4) We treated financial matters, with a **full report from the Treasurer General**. Among the things that we studied, reviewed, made recommendations about and approved were the budgets for the Vincentian Family Office, the Vincentian Family Website, the CM UN NGO Representative, the Vincentian Solidarity Office. We also approved the budget for the History of the Congregation that is being prepared by two of our confreres and the budget of SIEV. We also reviewed, made proposals, and

approved the budgets for the international missions of the Solomon Islands and El Alto, Bolivia. We also reviewed the annual Mission Fund Distribution, within the Treasurer General's report, and made the decision that **the presidents of CLAPVI, COVIAM and APVC will be sent a formulary for Mission Fund Distribution**, to help with the meetings of the Visitors themselves and also meetings that have to do with the formation of formators. A letter will be written to each of the presidents explaining this decision.

- 5) Following the Treasurer General's report, other reports were made. The first was from Brother Peter Campbell, who was present from **the Vincentian Solidarity Office**. The Vincentian Solidarity Office is handling more than 15 major projects, submitted from different provinces. Brother Peter made a proposal to the council to begin micro-project grants up to \$5000 with the Vincentian Solidarity Fund. Revenue sources for micro-project grants are the contributions made by confreres, local communities, and provinces to the Vincentian Solidarity Fund in response to the appeal of the Superior General in October of last year. A letter explaining the micro-project grants will be sent to all the confreres, through their Visitors, from the administrator, Brother Peter Campbell. **One of the novelties of these micro-project grants** is that the requests can be submitted **in Spanish, French or English**, the three official languages of the Congregation. This differs from the policy for major Vincentian Solidarity Office projects.
- 6) The council also reviewed **the report of the Vincentian Family website**, submitted by its webmaster, Fr. John Freund. Among the different things discussed was how to encourage provinces, Visitors, confreres to send information to the website so that we can more effectively tell the story of how we are living out our charism in serving the poor. In a later circular I will speak at greater length concerning this issue.
- 7) We also reviewed **the report from the NGO at the United Nations** presented by Fr. Joseph Foley, who is the representative of the Congregation there. The report in itself was extremely interesting and we are asking his permission to publish it on the Vincentian Family website. In summary, advocacy work happens most effectively when it is done in committed working groups, with products that are seen as credible. An individual NGO can rarely have the same impact as an effective committee. You are all encouraged to check out the website that the Congregation has for the NGO with the following address: www.cm-ngo.net
- 8) We received **a full report from SIEV**. The Superior General and his council continue to support SIEV as an instrument for

helping to spread the knowledge of the Congregation of the Mission and its charism among our members and other members of the Vincentian Family. The possibility of inviting one of the members of the CIF team to participate as a member of SIEV was discussed and will be presented to both SIEV and CIF for their consideration.

- 9) Fr. José Antonio Ubillús discussed with us a memorandum with regard to the **CIF program**, where we continue to see its importance for all members of the Congregation. Once again, we encourage all Visitors to take seriously the invitation that their confreres participate in this program of our Vincentian heritage. I will also touch on this matter in a later circular.
- 10) With regard to the **Office of Vincentiana and Nuntia**, we welcomed, for the first time, its new representative, Fr. Alfredo Becerra. Among the things discussed was how to develop a deeper working relationship between the Office of *Vincentiana* and *Nuntia* and the office of the Delegate for the Vincentian Family. We also discussed with Alfredo his role as the link between the Curia and the Vincentian Family website and, in particular, how to develop the Congregation of the Mission piece of that website.
- 11) We then discussed the **missions. The first agenda item in this regard was a study of the responses to the questionnaire** that was sent out to all those who participated in the international missions that were or are at the present moment. Of the 42 questionnaires that were sent, we received 20 responses. The missions included were Tanzania, Bolivia, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Russia. We want to thank all the confreres who participated in this questionnaire. Their responses helped us a great deal in reflecting on the Congregation's work in the international missions. Later on it is hoped that the Assistant General for the Missions, Fr. José Antonio Ubillús, can give us a synthesis of the responses to the questionnaire.
- 12) We next reviewed the documentation with regard to **new volunteers for the missions** and those who responded to the Mission Appeal Letter from the Superior General in October.
- 13) Reports and/or information from the following missions were reviewed: El Alto (Bolivia), Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands. We also discussed a communication from our confrere Humberto Sinka, who is working in Angola, as well as letters received from a bishop in Equatorial Guinea and one in Esmeraldas, Ecuador.

The week of 13-17 having concluded, we had to continue the *tempo forte* on Wednesday, the 22nd, and Thursday, the 23rd. On those days we treated the following material.

- 14) We talked about the **International Meeting of Visitors** which will be held in **2007**. This was just an initial dialogue, at which we considered places and possible dates for that meeting. We decided that a letter would be written to six different provinces, asking them to fill out a questionnaire and, with that information, we will make a decision about the exact place and date of the next International Meeting of Visitors.
- 15) We reviewed the list of new Visitors and possible new Visitors between now and 2006. We determined that the **next session for new Visitors will be in January 2006**. The exact dates will be announced later.
- 16) We discussed **the ordinances promulgated by the former Superior General. It was decided that these ordinances will stand as they are**. This means that, as stated in the ordinance of 1999 with regard to language, **all our students, during their time of formation, will study a second language, English, French or Spanish, with a goal of being able to understand and speak it**. Also the ordinance of 2001 with regard to the **finance committee being established in each province of the Congregation of the Mission** will stand as is. In a later ordinary council meeting, both of these ordinances and related issues will be discussed, but at this time **this is the official announcement that the ordinances stand as they are**.
- 17) The official appointment and their beginning dates and terminating dates were established for the Office of *Vincentiana* and *Nuntia*, as well as the Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family and the official starting date for the new Secretary General, Juan Carlos Cerquera. He has just arrived here at the Curia and attended his first council meeting on 22 December. For the Office of *Vincentiana* and *Nuntia*, the official beginning date for Fr. Alfredo Becerra will be 1 January 2005. His office will be evaluated after three years. With regard to the Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family, Fr. Manuel Ginete, his official date for initiating in this role is 1 January 2005. The recommendation is that it would be for a period up to and including the next General Assembly and evaluated after the first three years. With regard to the new Secretary General, who is presently in a period of transition with the former Secretary General, Fr. José María Nieto, the official date of beginning will be 25 January 2005. His term of office will be according to what is stated in our Constitutions.
- 18) The last point to mention is the Assistants to the Superior General have submitted a partial list of their visits to the provinces which will be studied by the Superior General and discussed with them individually.

It is the intention of the Superior General and his council to present for the review of the members of the Congregation of the Mission matters discussed in our *tempo forte* that have to do with issues related to the Congregation of the Mission in general. The Visitors are encouraged, as with all communication from the Curia, to send to each missionary of their province this circular. To all the members of the Congregation of the Mission, any questions or comments of material read herein can be directed to the Curia, via e-mail: cmcuria@tin.it

Thank you very much.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." in a cursive script.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Superior General