6-30-2003

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Congregation of the Mission

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Congregation of the Mission. Vincentiana, 47, no. 3 (May-June 2003)
The Visitors' Conferences of the C.M.

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA
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To the Visitatrixes of the Daughters of Charity and the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Sisters and Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you!

In recent years, with much joy, we have seen resurgence of the lay missionary vocation within the Vincentian Family. MISEVI has been receiving young people, accompanying them in their formation, and helping them find concrete ways of putting their missionary zeal into practice. It held its first International Assembly in Madrid at the beginning of the year 2001.

Among the challenges mentioned in the Final Document of the Assembly is the commitment "to be creative and propagate the spirit of MISEVI, to come up with the necessary responses so that, in International harmony, we will open doors to new realities and facilitate the incorporation of new members."

In order to fulfill this commitment, today I want to announce a meeting — to be held in Mexico on July 30 - August 3, 2003 — in which, besides sharing experiences that are already taking place, we will concretize the ways in which MISEVI can be founded and spread in other countries.

We offer this meeting especially for members of the Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, and lay people in your provinces and countries who are thinking of founding MISEVI. Also invited are lay people who are already living out the Vincentian missionary vocation and desire to spread the Good News outside their own country.

I have asked MISEVI's International President, Eva Villar, as well as Fr. Felipe Nieto, member of the International Coordinating Team, and Fr. Benjamin Romo, who is my delegate on an international level to many of the principal branches of the
Vincentian Family, to organize the meeting. They will soon be in contact with you and will provide more details about the program and about how to sign up for it.

I encourage you to send a representative(s) to this meeting which, I trust, will be of great help to those provinces that want to found MISEVI in their country and thus promote the missionary vocation *ad gentes* that the Holy Spirit has inspired in the Church and in our Vincentian Family.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

*Superior General*
Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is **counted only once**, considered under his principal ministry, as of 31 December 2002.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>MINISTRY</th>
<th>PRIESTS</th>
<th>PERMANENT DEACONS</th>
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<td>5. Seminaries and clerical formation</td>
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<td>6. Formation of our own exclusively</td>
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<td>7. Missions Ad Gentes</td>
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<td>8. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)</td>
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<td>9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)</td>
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P* = Priests; PD* = Permanent Deacons; CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CB = Candidates to the Brotherhood; * Priests or permanent deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute; TP = Aspirants to the Priesthood; TB = Aspirants to the Brotherhood.
## Appointments and Confirmations by the Superior General

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The members of SIEV, Frs. Julio Suéscun Olcoz, John Prager, Kazimierz Stelmach, Roberto Lovera, Executive Secretary, and José María Nieto, delegate from the General Curia, held their annual meeting in Kraków, at the Provincial House, from 12-14 September 2002. Fr. Jean-Yves Ducourneau was not present due to pastoral commitments as chaplain of the French armed forces.

The seat of the annual meeting was chosen in the context of the interest SIEV has for our most important historical archives. In 2001, in Paris, the archives of the Motherhouse, the Congregation's most important, were visited. This year, in Kraków, Fr. Uminski, who is responsible for the archives, guided the members of SIEV on its visit to the library and the archives of the Province of Poland. The visit was also an occasion for an exchange on the techniques of archives and cataloging. Next year, the members of SIEV intend to visit the third large historical archive, that of Turin.

The secretary reported on the proceedings of the 2002 Vincentian Month directed toward the Advisors and Spiritual Councillors of the Vincentian lay groups, which was held in Paris during the month of July. Forty confreres, 60 Daughters of Charity, two religious from other Congregations and one laywoman participated. Many other laypersons from the various Vincentian branches participated during brief periods. The documentation on this month was published in *Vincentiana*, 2002, N° 4-5.

Among the initiatives planned and supported by SIEV in recent years, an initiative which has now reached a conclusion, was the publication of a series of studies on the figure of St. John Gabriel Perboyre. These studies were written by several confreres on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the saint's birth and were published in *Vincentiana*, 2002, N° 6.

The problem of animating some young confreres to specialize in Vincentian studies is being kept alive. For this, SIEV has suggested organizing a special meeting. The Superior General and his Council approved this project and offered some useful suggestions with regard to the method. Now SIEV will take care of organizing it.

Another project was presented, which already has the approval of the Superior General: to collect on a CD-Rom all the contents of the magazine *Vincentiana* beginning from 1995; that is, from the moment when it began to be published in three languages. This initiative hopes to offer to all confreres the possibility of being able to
use easily all the material which the magazine published in those years. At present, it is seeking possible collaborators for this work.

A project to stimulate in-depth study of the social doctrine of the Church was drafted. This anticipates asking the collaboration of confreres who are experts in this field in order to publish a series of studies that dig into the social doctrine, making special reference to our vocation and our service of the poor.

The list of the most important documents of the Holy See with regard to the Congregation of the Mission and the Vincentian Family from 1878 onwards is almost finished. The editorial board of Vincentiana will be asked to publish this study in order to place it at the disposition of all the confreres.

This informative report is being sent with considerable delay with respect to the date of SIEV’s meeting because during this period the Superior General and his Council reflected at length on the function and tasks of SIEV and on the possibility of restructuring it. For now, the Superior General has confirmed temporarily the members of SIEV who are finishing their mandates.

The next meeting of SIEV is planned, in principle, for September 2003 in Turin.
The Editorial Board of our Vincentiana magazine considered it opportune to dedicate one of the issues to a new reality of the Congregation of the Mission: the existence of the Visitors' Conferences, which may be seen as the "five faces of the Congregation" as Fr. José María Nieto had suggested in his presentation about the Visitors' Conferences in Dublin in 2001 on the occasion of the Visitors' Meeting (cf. Vincentiana 46 [2002] 239).

CLAPVI (the Latin American Conference of Vincentian Provinces) was born in Santandercito, Colombia, in 1971 and groups together 14 provinces (Ecuador, Central America, Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro, Fortaleza, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico and Venezuela).


APVC (the Asian-Pacific Visitors' Conference) came to be in Sydney, Australia, in 1994 and brings together six provinces (Australia, Indonesia, Southern India, Northern India, the Philippines and China).

COVIAM (the Conference of Visitors of Africa and Madagascar) was constituted in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo, in 1994 and gathers together six provinces (Ethiopia, Congo, Madagascar, Mozambique, Nigeria and St. Justin de Jacobis).
The NCV (the National Conference of Visitors of the United States) had its unofficial beginning (see the history of this conference in this issue of *Vincentiana*) in Chicago in 1973. In 2002, in Rome, Fr. Robert Maloney, Superior General, “having consulted with the USA Visitors and with his own Council, established the National Conference of Visitors of the United States” (cf. statutes of the NCV, I. Introduction). This Conference brings together five provinces (Southern, New England, Midwestern, Western and Eastern).

“Visitors’ Conferences are clear and important expressions of this interprovincial collaboration, of collaboration between confrere Visitors, and between members of provinces on the same continent [...]. They arose out of necessity, the desire for mutual acquaintance, and from a common communitarian and apostolic problematic, from the need for reciprocal aid, from a search for more global and efficacious solutions” (cf. J.M. NIETO, “The Visitors’ Conferences,” in *Vincentiana* 46 [2002] 233).

In this dossier we offer you a history and the Statutes of each of these five Visitors’ Conferences (or “Conferences of Provinces” as is the case with CLAPVI). We thank all those who have collaborated in the writing of this article, especially with the historical part. We hope this will be useful information for the confreres: material that will help us know better the Latin American, the Asian/Australian, the European, the African and the United States “faces” of the Congregation of the Mission.

(JOSEPH V. CUMMINS, C.M., translator)
An Historical Overview of CLAPVI:
The Latin American Conference of Vincentian Provinces

by Gabriel Naranjo Salazar, C.M.
Visitor of Colombia
President of CLAPVI

Not a few articles have been written about this topic. I will limit myself to speaking about three points: the development stages, the mechanisms for promotion and the leadership of CLAPVI in these 31 years of its existence.

CLAPVI was born at a meeting called for that purpose by Fr. Luis Antonio Mojica, Visitor of Colombia, who had the idea at the General Assembly of 1968-1969. He consulted the Superior General, Fr. James Richardson, without forgetting to share the idea with his Latin American colleagues. Fr. Luis Vela should also be considered a co-founder for his specific contribution in the beginning.

The Visitors of Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Puerto Rico, as well as representatives from Central America and Mexico came to the initial meeting at the retreat center of the Capuchins, Tranquilandia in Santandercito, Colombia, from 21-24 September 1971.

The then Vicar General, Fr. Rafael Sáinz, was present at the first meeting, beginning a channel of contact between the General Curia and CLAPVI which has continued up until the present.

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1. The Stages: Three can be mentioned

First Stage: The Foundation Process 1971-1980

During these nine years the refrain from a then popular song: “Traveller, there is no road, the road is built as you travel,” seems to have been the theme. The first steps were inspired by the four fundamental objectives: creating a vision for the Latin American Vincentian, renewal of works and the missionaries themselves, organization of ongoing formation and interprovincial cooperation.

Very soon the membership was consolidated: to the nine founding provinces were added the Vice-Province of Costa Rica and the Panamanian Mission of the US Province of Philadelphia in mid-1972 and the three Brazilian Provinces at the Assembly in Rome in 1974. The Cuban Province joined at the Assembly in Mexico in 1977.

After a visit to all the provinces by the newly named Executive Secretary in 1972, CLAPVI was guided toward two directions which have characterized it: the publication of a bulletin, which quickly became a magazine, and the formation courses for the confreres.


The point of departure was the Assembly of 1980 in Rome, which coincided with the General Assembly of the Congregation, which was a new and important factor.

In 1983 the nature of the representative of the Regional Superior of Honduras for the Barcelona Province was made official and in 1990 the one for the Zaragoza Province in the same Central American country.

The important innovation during these 17 years consisted in the change of method to achieve the same goals: the meetings — a type of workshop — which are shorter, from two weeks to ten days, instead of courses for ongoing formation; and the openness to the presence of the Daughters of Charity and lay Vincentians.

Third Step: The Maturation Process, Since 1999

Several factors permit us to speak about a third moment in these last three years: for the first time four Visitatrices of the Daughters of Charity (Central America, Chile, Bogotá, Ecuador) spoke at an Assembly; a non-Colombian Executive Secretary, Emilio Melchor, a Spaniard but from the Province of Ecuador, was named; the headquarters of the Executive Secretary moved from Bogotá to

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2 CLAPVI Assembly in San José de Costa Rica on 17 July 1999.
Maracaibo; following the conclusions of the last General Assembly and the desire of the Superior General, annual courses of formation for formators are organized in three areas: CLAPVI-North, CLAPVI-South-Spanish language and CLAPVI-South-Portuguese language; it was suggested to the Visitors of the United States that they name a representative because of the work of the North American confreres with Latin American immigrants.

Two defined policies arose at this time: the collegial role of the Executive Council and respect for the autonomy of the different branches of the Vincentian Family.

During the last three years the progress of CLAPVI has concentrated on achieving three objectives: ongoing formation of the confreres, sharing of experiences and interprovincial cooperation. This has been inspired by: the present-day situation, preferential option for the poor, the universality of the Vincentian charism, the refoundation of the Congregation on the continent, a sense of belonging to the CM and the Vincentian Family, the ecclesiology of the protagonism of the laity and the poor, the inculturation and updating of the charism.

The project, promoted by the President and the Executive Secretary together, has emphasized the meetings and the formation courses for formators. The former have covered pastoral topics: education, missions, ministry with indigenous people and the formation of the clergy. They have been combined with a youth meeting and also with a popular mission, for the first time outside of Latin America, in the United States.

2. Mechanisms for Promotion

The Statutes and the historical situation have highlighted three: the assemblies, the meetings and the magazine.

a) The Assemblies. The most recent Assembly, the 11th, was held in Curitiba for the opening of the centenary of the province. The first, celebrated in San Miguel, Argentina, in 1973, studied the proposals from the confreres as a result of the foundation of CLAPVI. Since the second Assembly, at Rome in 1974, and the fifth, at Funza in 1983, the Assemblies in even-numbered years have been celebrated to coincide with the General Assemblies of the CM and the Assemblies in odd-numbered years with the inter-assembly meetings of the Visitors, with the exception of the last two.

The Superior General, the Vicar General and the Assistants can participate with voice and vote. In fact we have always been able to count on the presence of one of them. For example, Fr. James Richardson with the Vicar General, Fr. Rafael Sáinz and two of
the assistants, Frs. Zico and Sylvestre, were at the third Assembly held in Mexico in November 1977 to reflect on the vocation problem; Fr. Richard McCullen with the Vicar, Fr. Miguel Pérez Flores, two assistants, Gaziello and Pires de Almeida and the Secretary General, Paul Henzmann, were at the fifth Assembly held at Villa Pául, Funza, from 7-10 January 1983, immediately before the first world meeting of the Visitors, which approved the Statutes.

b) The Meetings have a double content: doctrinal and experiential. The meetings have tried to share the teaching of St. Vincent de Paul and the magisterium of our superiors and General Assemblies, as well as the meaning of the great figures of the Vincentian Family around anniversaries or important celebrations, and the papal magisterium and that of the Latin American episcopate, CELAM, especially Medellín (1968), Puebla (1979) and Santo Domingo (1992).

On the experiential level these have been a forum for sharing the reality of Vincentian pastoral activity on the continent, viewed with the lens of Liberation Theology and the formation of our students. These two guides have produced an important document: The CLAPVI Manual for Missions, a Latin American re-reading of the Ratio Formationis Vicentianae.

c) The Magazine. The magazine began as a bulletin, but soon moved up a category to become a key means to promote memory, reflection and communication. It finished its 28th year and 113th issue with the publication of the January-February 2003 issue.

Its most important function has been to collect the content of the assemblies, the courses and the meetings. But it has also been the bearer of the history of the provinces and their perspectives, especially when it was their turn to edit the issue. It has served as a forum for the sharing of ideas, not by experts or technicians, but by those concerned with theology, pastoral practice or Vincentian topics.

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3 In 1980, the 150th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal to St. Catherine Labouré; in 1981, the fourth centenary of the birth of St. Vincent de Paul; in 1983, the 350th anniversary of the AIC and the sesquicentennial of the SSVP; in 1984, the beatification of the Martyrs of Angers; in 1987, the 250th anniversary of the canonization of St. Vincent de Paul; in 1988, 20 years since Medellín; in 1991, the fourth centenary of the birth of St. Louise de Marillac; in 1992, 500 years of evangelization in Latin America; etc.
It has addressed two topics especially: Liberation Theology and New Evangelization. Clearly the largest portion of its pages has gathered experiences and reflections about vocational ministry, the formation of our students and the evangelization of the poor. Its most important contribution has been historic.

3. The Leadership

The tradition, consecrated in the norms, has emphasized the leadership of the Presidents and the Secretaries. The statutes support this as well.

a) The Statutes were approved at the Fifth Assembly on 25 January 1983.

After a short, historical introduction and a preliminary chapter about the name, nature, constitution and headquarters, there are three other chapters about: ends, members and administrative structures, and a conclusion with final dispositions referring to economic matters and lesser concerns.

b) Twelve Visitors have been Presidents up until the present: four from Colombia, three from Mexico, two from Chile and one each from Venezuela, Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba.

c) The Executive Secretary has played the key role in the history of CLAPVI, and to a certain degree has determined its stages of development:

- Luis Jenaro Rojas formed the foundational structures and participated in them from the beginning. To him we owe the first steps along the road to objectives, activities and mechanisms;

- Álvaro Juan Quevedo marked the Conference with a strong tendency towards Liberation Theology and Vincentian topics;

- Hernando Escobar helped CLAPVI breathe the air of the Vincentian Family and was especially concerned with the formation of our students;

- Emilio Melchor sped up the move of the office to the Province of Venezuela and blessed the marriage of CLAPVI with computerization and has untiringly supported the courses of formation for the formators.

Antonio Elduayen, who defines himself as “the Executive Secretary who lasted just three months,” deserves a special mention. With his energy, in that short time, he managed to edit number 64 of the magazine in Chile and began to move the offices to Santiago.
Conclusion

CLAPVI is intimately tied to the Second Vatican Council and the immediate reaction to it that arose in the CM. Influenced by the "nouvelle théologie," the Council changed many models of ecclesial life. Latin America is the continent which most quickly and enthusiastically accepted the Council and the Congregation is one of the ecclesiastical institutions which accepted it with judgment and balance.

The secret of this radical impulse is rooted in two fundamental affirmations: what the Council said to the Church about itself in *Lumen Gentium* and what it said about its relationship with the world in *Gaudium et Spes*.

From a Church which had been strongly centralized it moved to a clear affirmation of the communion of sister Churches. With the image of the People of God, it highlighted its charismatic and pilgrim character instead of the static and bureaucratic institutional image. This opened up two unexpected roads: the collegiality of the hierarchy and the ever-increasing desire for the presence of the laity in the life and structures of the Church.

The relationship of the Church to the world is perhaps the conciliar theme most developed in Latin America, thanks to the assemblies of CELAM in Medellín in 1968 and Puebla in 1979. But, its origins are in the words of John XXIII at the opening of the Council when he spoke about the "Church of the poor."

CLAPVI has been a home to and a school for the ecclesiology of communion and the theology of liberation, for example in its references to the so-called bases. These two telling historical data can be mentioned on this point: it is the only one of the five conferences of the Congregation which is not for the Visitors, but the provinces; the delegates from Latin America to the General Assemblies of the CM are members, with voice and vote, to the Assemblies of CLAPVI when these are held at the same time.

A legitimate offspring of this theological focus has been the theology of liberation which has guided the theological reflection and, even more, the pastoral thrust of CLAPVI.

It is not pretentious to affirm that when the present Superior General invited us to be aware of the reality of the Vincentian Family and the last General Assembly moved us toward unity with humility, Latin America had already followed along a more or less lengthy road, for example in Mexico, Peru, Brazil and Colombia. Fr. Robert Maloney recognized this at the opening of the meeting that CLAPVI had in Rome on the eve of the General Assembly of 1998: "It was during a CLAPVI meeting in Mexico that I first came to appreciate..."
how important is the Vincentian Family. As you know, this theme has now taken on considerable momentum in the Congregation and is the theme of this General Assembly. So, thank you."^{4}

(JOHN PRAGER, C.M., translator)

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Historical Introduction

1. As a sign of inculturation, and as an expression of the Church as “communion and participation” as presented to us in Vatican II, Medellín, and Puebla, there evolved a greater integration and collaboration in the ministry of the evangelization of the poor among the Visitors of the Latin American Provinces of the Congregation of the Mission.

2. And so at the General Assembly of 1969, the Visitor of the Province of Colombia, Fr. Luis Antonio Mojica, communicated to Fr. James Richardson, Superior General, the desire for a greater integration among the Vincentian Provinces of Latin America.

3. Fr. Richardson supported the idea, which became a reality in Santandercito, Colombia on 24 September 1971, during a meeting with the Vicar General, Fr. Rafael Sáinz and the Visitors of the Spanish-speaking Provinces of Latin America: From Ecuador, Fr. Jorge Rivadeneira; from Argentina, Fr. Buenaventura Sarasola; from Colombia, Fr. Luis Antonio Mojica; from Chile, Fr. Robert Schwane; from Puerto Rico, Fr. Tomás Gásćue; from Venezuela, Fr. Luis Vela; from Peru, Fr. Marciano Rodríguez; from Central America, Fr. Godofredo Recinos (delegate of the Visitor); and from Mexico, Fr. Colombiano Núñez (delegate of the Visitor).

4. And so the CONFERENCE OF LATIN AMERICAN VISITORS (CLAVI) was born. But in 1972 the name was changed to the LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF VINCENTIAN PROVINCES whose initials “CLAPVI” now identify it. This same year the Vice-Province of Costa Rica and the Panama Mission, part of the Eastern Province of the United States, joined the Conference.

5. In August of 1974, the three Vincentian Provinces of Brazil also joined the Conference: Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba and Fortaleza. In 1977, the Province of Cuba entered. In 1983, the houses of the Province of Barcelona in Honduras joined. In 1990, the houses of the Province of Zaragoza in Honduras entered. And in 1999, a delegate of the Provinces of the United States joined because of their work with Latino immigrants.
Chapter I: 
PRELIMINARIES: NAME, NATURE, CONSTITUTION 
AND HEADQUARTERS

ARTICLE 1.

THE LATIN AMERICAN CONFERENCE OF VINCENTIAN PROVINCES of the Congregation of the Mission (CLAPVI) is a not-for-profit organization, whose permanent service is to orient, animate and coordinate Vincentian activities. Its aim is to offer to its members solutions for problems in common, mutual assistance, and the strengthening of the interprovincial bonds of unity and fraternity. It is guided by what is established in these Statutes, by the norms of the General Curia and by the law of the Church.

ARTICLE 2.

CLAPVI is composed of the Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Delegations of Provinces that work in and/or are related to Latin America.

ARTICLE 3.

The headquarters of the secretariat of CLAPVI shall by chosen by the Executive Secretary with the approval of the Executive Council.

ARTICLE 4.

The existence of the Conference has no specified time limit.

Chapter II:
THE ENDS OF CLAPVI

ARTICLE 5.

1. The general objective of CLAPVI is to realize the charism of St. Vincent in all of its activities within the historical and situational context of Latin America, for a more effective evangelization of the poor.

2. This is accomplished by means of the following specific objectives:

a) the interior renewal and permanent formation of its members;

b) the adaptation of the apostolic activities to the ends of the Congregation of the Mission, as defined in the Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission;

c) the search for common lines of formation and action;
1) the exchange of experiences in the diverse areas of pastoral activity, vocational promotion and Vincentian formation;

e) the establishment of common criteria for the interpretation and application of the legislation of the Church and of the General Curia to the Latin American reality;

f) the creation of a Latin American communitarian consciousness;

g) the promotion of interprovincial cooperation;

h) the promotion of meetings between the provinces;

i) the promotion of, and participation in, courses of specialization, along with the promotion of courses that are organized around formation in Vincentian spirituality.

3. It is the intention of CLAPVI that these meetings be held with an open-minded attitude, so that members of other communities and lay associations, provided that they share in the Vincentian spirit, can also be invited to them.

Chapter III:

MEMBERS OF CLAPVI

ARTICLE 6

"Constitutive" members of CLAPVI are the missionaries who are incorporated into the Provinces, Vice-Provinces or Delegations of Provinces which are mentioned in article 2.

ARTICLE 7

"Representative" members of CLAPVI are the Visitors, Vice-Visitors, the members of the community who represent the Delegations of Provinces or their substitutes, the Representative of the Provinces of the U.S.A. who works with Latin American immigrants, the Executive Secretary of the Conference, and the members indicated in Art. 13 § 2.

ARTICLE 8

The members have the right:

a) to participate in the courses and interprovincial meetings and benefit from the other services offered by CLAPVI;

b) to form part of the Assemblies and the activities of CLAPVI by means of suggestions or proposals sent to the President or the Executive Secretary.
ARTICLE 9

The duties of the members are:

a) to show interest in the Conference and its activities;

b) to support the decisions made in Assembly;

c) to be willing to participate in the meetings and to offer other services when asked.

ARTICLE 10

Along with those rights specified in article 8, the representative members also have the right:

a) to have active and passive voice in the Assemblies;

b) to exercise the functions that might be asked of them by the Assemblies;

c) to propose to the Assembly, to the President, or to the Executive Secretary, possible services that CLAPVI should offer to the members.

ARTICLE 11

Along with those duties specified in article 9, the representative members also have the duty:

a) to take an active part in the functioning of CLAPVI;

b) to observe the orientations of the Assembly and to carry out, in their respective Provinces, Vice-Provinces and Delegations, the proposals which have been approved;

c) to give the President and the Executive Secretary, and also the rest of the personnel who make up the Executive Leadership of CLAPVI, the collaboration necessary for them to carry out their functions.

Chapter IV:

THE STRUCTURE

ARTICLE 12

CLAPVI is animated and administered by the following:

a) the Assembly,

b) the Executive Council,

c) the President,

d) the Executive Secretary.
ARTICLE 13

The Assembly is constituted by the representative members.

1. The Superior General or his Delegate, the Vicar General, and the Assistant Generals who may be present, are also members of the Assembly with voice and vote.

2. When the Assembly is held along with the General Assembly of the C.M., the Latin American Delegates to the General Assembly also participate in the Assembly of CLAPVI with voice and vote.

3. Constitutive members of the Conference, as well as other persons, in their capacity as experts or observers, may also be admitted to the Assembly. These shall have voice but not the right to vote.

ARTICLE 14

The Assembly meets:

a) ordinarily, every three years, during the dates and at the place previously determined after consulting the representative members;

b) extraordinarily, when the importance of the situation merits it, after receiving majority approval through the consultation of the representative members.

ARTICLE 15

The Assemblies can be held with the presence of 75% of the representative members.

ARTICLE 16

The Assembly has the duty:

a) to draw up for itself a Rule for its operation;

b) to assume the realization of the objectives of CLAPVI;

c) to study the proposed themes and to come up with conclusions on the matter;

d) to evaluate the activities of CLAPVI based on the report presented by the Executive Secretary, and to propose the Plan of Action for the next period;

e) to review the financial reports of the last period, and to study forms of support for the following period;

f) to reform and approve the Statutes;

g) to determine the place and the dates for the following Assembly;
Statutes of CLAPVI

h) to elect the President, the Vice-President, two Members-at-large, and the Executive Secretary;

i) to plan for and create positions or functions that it deems necessary for the proper functioning of the Conference.

ARTICLE 17

The orientations from the Assemblies of CLAPVI should be carried out by the Provinces, Vice-Provinces or Delegations, as determined by the respective Provincial, or Vice-Provincial, Councils.

TITLE 2: THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

ARTICLE 18

1. The Executive Council is made up of the President, Vice-President, two Members-at-large, and the Executive Secretary.

2. The President and the Executive Secretary form the Permanent Committee of the Conference.

ARTICLE 19

1. The Members-at-large are representative members of the Provinces, Vice-Provinces, Delegations of Provinces, and the Representative of the Provinces of the U.S.A. that work with Latin American immigrants, and are elected by the Assembly by the same process used to elect the President and for the same time period.

2. There are two Members-at-large.

3. The first Member-at-large elected assumes the functions of Vice-President, when the Vice-President ceases his functions.

4. When, during the period for which they were elected, the Members-at-large cease their functions, their successors become "ipso facto" Members-at-large.

5. If the first Member-at-large has to assume the office of Vice-President, the Executive Council will name a second Member-at-large.

SECTION 1: DUTIES OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

ARTICLE 20

The duties of the Executive Council are:

a) to see that the general and specific objectives of CLAPVI are faithfully carried out;

b) to plan, prepare and organize the Assemblies;

c) to approve the themes and the other modes of proceeding when interprovincial courses are organized by CLAPVI;
d) to resolve urgent matters for which the President convokes them;
e) to advise the President before the convoking of an Extraordinary Assembly;
f) to supervise the monetary funds of CLAPVI and to assure their proper use;
g) to study the Report presented by the Executive Secretary.

ARTICLE 21

The Executive Council shall meet at last once a year.

SECTION 2: THE FUNCTIONS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

1. - THE PRESIDENT

ARTICLE 22

1. The President is elected by the Assembly with an absolute majority of votes in the first or second round. He shall exercise his office for a period of three years.

2. If there is no absolute majority of votes in the first or second round, and in case of a tie vote, the representative member shall be considered elected as President who, having a relative majority of votes, is eldest by vocation and by age.

3. Any representative member of CLAPVI may exercise the office of President.

4. The President may be reelected for another period of three years, according to the will of the Assembly.

5. The residence of the President shall be in his own province.

ARTICLE 23

The duties of the President are:

a) to officially represent CLAPVI;
b) to convene and preside at the Assemblies;
c) to see that the orientations given by the Assemblies are put into practice;
d) to solicit extraordinary financial contributions, with the previous approval of the majority of the representative members, to meet urgent needs which cannot be postponed;
e) to convene and preside at the sessions of the Executive Council;
f) to name a Substitute for the Executive Secretary until the next Assembly is held, in the event that he is unable to fulfill his duties.

2. - THE VICE-PRESIDENT

ARTICLE 24

The Vice-President shall be elected in the same way and for the same length of time as specified for the President.

ARTICLE 25

The Vice-President shall assume the functions of the President in his absence, or if he is unable to fulfill his duties.

3. - THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

ARTICLE 26

1. The Executive Secretary is elected by the Assembly for a three-year term. He may be reelected for a second and a third consecutive term.

2. The procedure for his election or reelection shall be the same as used for the election of the President.

ARTICLE 27

The duties of the Executive Secretary are:

a) to be completely available for the service of CLAPVI;

b) to officially represent CLAPVI when delegated to do so by the President;

c) to plan, prepare and organize the Assemblies, together with the other members of the Executive Council;

d) to maintain the archives of the secretariat properly organized;

e) to be responsible for the publication of the magazine;

f) to inform the representative members, through periodic communications, about the tasks accomplished;

g) to present a report of his activities at the Assemblies;

h) to write up the Acts of the sessions of the Assemblies and to submit them to the Executive Council for approval;

i) to see to the proper administration of CLAPVI;

j) to present the financial balance and status of CLAPVI to the Executive Council and the Assembly;
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k) to present the budget for the following three years to the Assembly for its consideration and approval;
l) to form part of the Executive Council in virtue of his office.

Chapter V:
FINAL DISPOSITIONS

ARTICLE 28

The participants in the courses, meetings and assemblies organized by CLAPVI will assume all the expenses associated with their participation.

ARTICLE 29

All the expenses of the Executive Secretary, while carrying out his duties, shall be assumed by CLAPVI.

ARTICLE 30

The expenses associated with the meetings of the Executive Council shall be assumed by CLAPVI.

ARTICLE 31

The interprovincial meetings organized by CLAPVI, in which neither the President nor the Vice-President are present, shall be presided over by the Visitor in whose province the gathering is held.

ARTICLE 32

The issues not stipulated in the Statutes shall be resolved by the Executive Council and the results shall be communicated to the members of CLAPVI.

(GILBERT WALKER, C.M., translator)
I. Founding

The idea of founding the Conference dates back to 13 July 1989. This was one of the resolutions that the European Visitors took during their meeting in Rio de Janeiro at the time of the international meeting of the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission. At that time, it was decided to create the Conference and to schedule its first meeting for 24-25 April 1990 at the Maison-Mère in Paris. Three visitors, Frs. Carlo Braga (Rome), José Mulet (Barcelona) and André Sylvestre (Toulouse) were chosen to develop the program.

The three Visitors met on 1 December 1989 in Toulouse to develop jointly a first draft of the program for the meeting of the Conference. The replies received from the Visitors of the Conference to the previously developed questionnaire were the starting point and the basis for this meeting.

Consequently, the Conference came into being, according to plan, on 24 April 1990 in Paris and took the name European Conference of the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission, abbreviated CEVIM, on the model of CLAPVI, the Latin American...
Conference already in existence. It consists of all the European provinces, with the Middle East, today amounting to twenty. During that same meeting in Paris, statutes were prepared and approved. They consisted at the time of eleven articles defining the existence, the goals and the running of CEVIM.

CEVIM was thus the second Conference of Visitors in the modern history of the Congregation. While the international meeting of Visitors in Rio de Janeiro surely contributed to its creation, it was the Latin American Conference, already in existence and functioning since 1971, that played the leading role. It was to this Conference that the European Visitors turned in Paris, acknowledging it as an example of interprovincial collaboration.

II. The goal and the tasks of the Conference

The creation of the Conference is already a mark of collaboration among the provinces of the European continent, and it constitutes an answer to the need of undertaking common initiatives in order to work more purposefully. We need to note here that it is equally as important and, following the principle of *primum esse deinde agire*, even more important, that the meeting of the Visitors contribute to deepening the sense of regional unity and identity with the entire Congregation of the Mission. The participation by the Superior General or by his representative in all or a part of the meeting contributes a great deal to it.

As early as the meeting in Rio de Janeiro itself, at its very beginning, the goals of the Conference were determined. They constitute at the same time the reasons for its existence and for its functioning. For example:

- a better mutual knowledge among the provinces;
- the study of common problems;
- carrying out of joint projects;
- fraternal help among the provinces.

In view of these goals, the Conference drew up its statutes, and determined that it would have as its goal *better information* and

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3 Cf. art. 1. The articles of the statutes of the Conference are cited here according to their present numbering.


5 Minutes of the meeting of 13 July 1989 in Rio de Janeiro.
collaboration among the provinces in the areas of formation and Mission. With this goal as a starting-point, CEVIM set forth two tasks for itself:

- to look toward greater awareness of the Vincentian Family, and to a deepening of the Vincentian spirit through promoting contacts and exchanges in the areas of formation and mission activity, as well as through methods and means to initiate youth into the Vincentian spirit;

- to promote all kinds of pastoral collaboration among the provinces, in the launching of new initiatives at a European level, such as missionary projects, language study, etc.

The experiences that CEVIM has had up to now show that the time of the annual meeting of the Visitors has been above all consecrated to the study of a prepared topic, and the presentation of the hosting province and of its works. The meetings have also been the occasion for launching cooperation between certain provinces, especially those that are neighbors geographically, and the offer of help in men and materials to provinces in some difficulty.

Speaking of goals, we should also note the importance of the Conference for the Visitors themselves. The community of Visitors, built up during several days and renewed yearly, allows a sharing of experiences and a coming to know the problems that exist presently in various provinces. This strengthens the feeling of common responsibility concerning the activity of the Congregation of the Mission in the region in question. In this way, the meeting also becomes an element in the continuing formation of the Visitors.

III. Organization and functioning

The meetings of the Conference are held yearly. They take place during the second week after Easter, each time in a different place, except for the years when the date and place coincide with the General Assembly or of the international meeting of Visitors.

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6 Art. 2.
7 Art. 3. This article was originally part of article 2. As can be determined from its content, this repetition helps to organize the statutes, since it emphasizes the goal and the tasks that result from them.
8 Art. 11. If we look at the logical order, it would be better to introduce this article immediately after article 3.
9 Cf. art. 6. For a while, the meetings were held earlier, but it was decided to hold them later on because of the meetings of MEGVIS (Mitteleuropäische Gruppe für Vincentinische Studien) on Vincentian spirituality, held just after Easter.
From the beginning of the Conference, it adopted its present method of preparing the meeting. Three visitors, members of the Conference, called the troika, are asked to give their advice; they include the Visitor of the province where the last meeting was held, and the Visitor of the province where the next meeting will be held. The Visitors jointly name a Secretary for the Conference, someone who is not already a Visitor.\footnote{Cf. art. 4. In practice, the third Visitor acts as a volunteer. A Secretary was chosen for the first time in 2000, during the Madrid meeting. Previously, one of the Visitors acted as the secretary. In 2001, in Dublin, it was decided that the term of the Secretary would be three years, renewable once.}

The troika is responsible for preparing the meeting of the Conference.\footnote{Cf. art. 5.} In practice, this means that the three Visitors and the Secretary meet several months in advance in the province hosting CEVIM. At the time of the meeting, details of the organization are discussed, such as the main theme, the program, the speakers and the dates. When these decisions have been made, a questionnaire is drawn up which treats of the main theme of the meeting, and this is sent to all the Visitors. Their responses are shared with all the participants in CEVIM and serve as a basis for studying the problems that have surfaced, and for drawing up a common final document.

The meeting brings together the Visitors and the Vice-Visitors of the provinces and vice-provinces participating in CEVIM. For important reasons, they can be replaced by the assistant of their province or by a member of their provincial council.\footnote{Cf. art. 8. Experience shows that this principle, which should exclude every other confrere who is neither an assistant nor a consultor, is not rigidly adhered to.}

Since the \textit{iust proprium} of the Congregation of the Mission does not foresee the existence or the organization of Visitors’ Conferences, CEVIM enjoys a moral personality founded on the principle of mutual recognition.\footnote{At the time of the meeting in Graz, one of the decisions was to confer a moral personality on the group of Visitors, understood from the choice and approval of the name CEVIM: “A name was chosen and approved to designate our group and to confer on it a moral personality.” Minutes of CEVIM, Paris 1990, p. 1.} For this reason, the juridical situation of the Conference and the decisions it makes are limited. Their ratification is subordinated to the approval of the respective provincial councils, who maintain complete autonomy \textit{vis-à-vis} CEVIM.\footnote{Cf. art. 9.} The moral character of collaboration relative to the application of common
decisions is reinforced by the juridical obligation of having a simple majority, and a two-thirds majority in the case of modification of the statutes.\textsuperscript{15}

To conclude, it should be noted that the Conference works only occasionally, although the statutes foresee the existence of a secretariat, with, therefore, a permanent character.\textsuperscript{16} The Conference takes up this theme more and more often to assure an even better running of its affairs.

IV. The history of the meetings and their main themes

The meetings of CEVIM have taken place in a different province each year. The idea guiding the choice has been to know better the hosting province and, in the long term, all the provinces of the Conference. From this perspective, we have lengthened the time of the meeting, currently lasting about five days. Beyond the possibility of coming to know certain works of the host province, the program of the meeting includes common prayer, the Eucharist, and especially discussions about the theme proposed in advance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>France - Paris</td>
<td>Organization of CEVIM, statutes, common Vincentian formation of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Austria - Graz</td>
<td>Revision of the statutes; opening of Eastern Europe; pastoral work for emigrants; Islam; Vincentian formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Italy - La Verna</td>
<td>Development of the Vincentian session for the students at Dax (August 1991); vocation ministry; ongoing formation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Spain - Salamanca</td>
<td>Lay participation in the works of the Congregation; collaboration with lay volunteers; relations of Vincentians with Daughters of Charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Poland - Zakopane</td>
<td>Situation of the Church in Eastern Europe; Vincentian identity; vocation ministry; Vincentian formation</td>
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\textsuperscript{15} Cf. art. 7.
\textsuperscript{16} Cf. art. 10.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Topics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Ireland - Dublin</td>
<td>Spiritual direction; formation of clergy and laity; Vincentian lay volunteers</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Spain - Salamanca&lt;br&gt;<em>International Meeting of Visitors</em></td>
<td>The ministry of Visitors; acculturation of immigrants; interprovincial collaboration; international missions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>Germany - Niederprüm&lt;br&gt;Holland - Panningen</td>
<td>Interprovincial collaboration in view of the Vincentian presence in Brussels; care for elderly and sick confreres; awareness of the work of Kirche in Not, Königstein</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>Italy - Rome&lt;br&gt;<em>General Assembly</em></td>
<td>Vincentian Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>Lebanon - Alountoun</td>
<td>Formation of formators; vocation ministry; pastoral work for refugees; Vincentian presence in Brussels; Vincentian book of prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Spain - Madrid</td>
<td>Vocation ministry; interprovincial formation; popular missions; modern means of communication and the New Evangelization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Ireland - Dublin&lt;br&gt;<em>International Meeting of Visitors</em></td>
<td>Support of local communities; revision of Statutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Poland - Krakow</td>
<td>Interprovincial collaboration in view of the enlargement of the European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>Italy - Naples</td>
<td>Pastoral work for emigrants; collaboration with the Vincentian Family</td>
</tr>
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</table>

We should also note that at the time of the meeting, each Visitor can present the history and the current situation of his province. During the discussions, we likewise take into consideration the suggestions of the Superior General sent for this purpose to the Conference. At the end of each meeting, we draw up a final document, sent later to the General Curia, along with some brief information about the meeting.
V. Initiatives taken by CEVIM

As we can see from the outline of the topics discussed, the main concern, in fact at the heart of the Conference, is vocations and Vincentian formation. Currently, all the provinces of CEVIM are suffering either a lack of vocations, or at least a decrease in their number. Evidently, the main goal of a province's activity is not the care for the number of vocations but the desire to remain faithful to the mission for which the Congregation was founded. This conviction goes hand in hand with the hope that, if we remain faithful to the spirit of our founder, God will take charge of future generations of missioners ready to serve the poor, who are always with us, as he himself assures us.

Nonetheless, the Conference perceives the need of undertaking a pastoral mission for vocations. Without this, all discussion about formation will be meaningless. As to the promotion of vocations, the Conference has not begun any general initiatives, but it constitutes an important source of information about the possibilities of such initiatives, and it always tries to encourage them.

As to the question of formation, the Conference has much larger possibilities. This issue appears every year, either as a main topic or as a parallel topic. The common means of all the Visitors together are much more important in this area, both for initial as for ongoing formation.

During the first meeting of CEVIM in Paris, those present decided to organize a course of formation for our students to be held at the Berceau. Since the beginning, these annual meetings enjoyed a great popularity. They allowed the students to discover the places associated with the history of the Congregation of the Mission, and this led them to a deepening of the spirit of St. Vincent. They also give them a greater possibility of knowing each other better and sharing their experiences.

One other example of the initiatives undertaken by the Conference in the area of formation was the meeting of formators, which took place at the Berceau, 27 August to 2 September 2000. Its topic was “Vincentian Formation, today and tomorrow.” In their final document, the formators thanked the Visitors, and emphasized the usefulness of meetings of this type, noting the need to organize others in the future: “The meeting that we have experienced is the sign and the desire of a work of mutual collaboration. The spirit of

17 Thirty-seven conferees from Austria, Spain, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Slovenia, met for a sharing of experiences and a reflection on Vincentian formation at different levels, interprovincial collaboration, and Vincentian identity.
St. Vincent, common to all of us, invites us to be collaborators: 'What is seen elsewhere concerns me.' This is why, in order to pursue, deepen and broaden our common mission, we want to renew this type of experience.”

VI. Futures plans of CEVIM

Although the Conference, as a meeting of the Visitors of Europe and the Middle East, acts collegially at certain times, it is tending more and more to establish an institution with a permanent character. In 1999, at the time of our meeting in Lebanon, we discussed at length the possibilities of Vincentian presence in Brussels. This then came back in the final document of the Kraków meeting, in 2002, in which the accent was placed on the modern thrust of the proposition of the Superior General. The Congregation of the Mission could in this way speak out, in the heart of the European Union, in the name of the poor, and look to the adoption of laws to protect them. Given the imminent enlargement of the Union, the presence of the Congregation of the Mission in Brussels could be even more important.

During the Kraków meeting, 2002, the question was raised of establishing a permanent secretariat for CEVIM. We talked about a possible site in Trier, Germany, because of its nearness to Brussels. This would allow the secretariat to join its activities to a possible Vincentian presence in Brussels, the capital of the European Union. We are still looking at the possibilities of organizing such a secretariat, along with the tasks, or rather the hopes, associated with it.

The need to set up, within the framework of CEVIM, a permanent institution comes from the need of coordinating its works to more efficiently fulfill the initiatives already undertaken, and of communicating better within the Conference (a newsletter).

It should be noted that, until now, each of the planned formation meetings has taken place, despite the great diversity of languages.

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19 The Superior General indicated this possibility in his letter of 1999 written to CEVIM. In it, he asked the following question: “Is there something that we can do to make the ‘European voice’ of the Congregation of the Mission express itself more clearly in Brussels?” ROBERT P. MALONEY, “To the members of the European Conference of Visitors,” in Vincentiana 3 (1999), p. 148. The Conference was in favor of collaboration with the permanent secretariat of AIC, already existing in Brussels, or even for the establishment of a representation from the entire Vincentian Family. No matter what solution is adopted, it is important to designate a confrere for Brussels.
This shows that the will to work together and to undertake initiatives for the good of the European continent allows the conquest of difficulties stemming from language barriers and the multiplicity of provinces in the meeting. We should hope that it would be the same in the pursuit of initiatives, present since the beginning, and in the start of new initiatives proposed by the Visitors of CEVIM.

(JOHN RYBOLT, C.M., translator)
Statutes of CEVIM
Revised at the Dublin meeting, 2001

Article 1. The Conference of European Visitors is composed of the provinces of Europe and the Middle East (abbreviated CEVIM).

Article 2. CEVIM has as its goal the promotion of information and collaboration among these provinces in the area of formation and mission.

Article 3. CEVIM looks to a better understanding of the Vincentian Family, and to a deepening of the Vincentian spirit by promoting contacts and exchanges in the area of formation and missionary activity, and by developing methods and means for the initiation of youth in the Vincentian spirit.

Article 4. The council (troika) is formed of:
- The Visitor of the province where the meeting was held the previous year;
- The Visitor of the province where the next meeting will be held during the current year;
- The Visitor of the province where the meeting will be held the following year. This "new" Visitor will be chosen at the end of the annual meeting.

The Visitors jointly name a secretary, who is not a Visitor, for a term of three years, renewable once.

Article 5. The Council of the Three prepares the annual meeting after consulting all the Visitors.

Article 6. CEVIM meetings are held once a year. For the year when a General Assembly is held, and the year of the meeting of all the Visitors of the world, CEVIM will meet before or after these other meetings.

The annual meeting will take place the second week after Easter, beginning at least on Wednesday.

Article 7. Decisions will be made by simple majority vote of the Visitors present.

A two-thirds majority is, however, required in cases of modifying the statutes or of adding new articles.

Article 8. If, for reasons of sickness or for any other similar reason a Visitor or a Vice-Visitor cannot take part in the annual meeting, he may send his Assistant as a replacement, or some other member of his Provincial Council.

Article 9. The Council of Three will look to the application of decisions already made. Since each province maintains its autonomy, the decisions taken by CEVIM are not implemented in a province until the Provincial Council gives its approval.

Article 10. Travel expenses and lodging are the responsibility of each province individually. The expenses of the Council of Three and of the secretariat are the common responsibility of the provinces. Exceptions can be made for provinces in difficulty.

Article 11. Within the framework of the new evangelization recommended by the Holy Father, CEVIM will promote all kinds of pastoral collaboration among the provinces in the launching of new initiatives on a Europe-wide level, such as mission projects and language study, etc.

Article 12. CEVIM will set up links with the General Curia and with other Conferences of Visitors existing in the Congregation.

(JOHN RYBOLT, C.M., translator)
The History of the Asia Pacific Visitors Conference (APVC)

by Hugh O'Donnell, C.M.

Executive Secretary of the APVC*

The predecessor of the Asia Pacific Visitors Conference, which itself held its first meeting in April 1994, dates back 13 years to August 1981. The meeting was called the "Asian Provincials' Meeting," but by 1994 no one had remembered it, except through some pictures produced by one of the participants.

Asian Provincials' Meeting, August 1981. The minutes of the August 1981 meeting reveal, however, a substantive agenda with Fr. Richard McCullen, who was elected Superior General the previous year, attending the meeting. Fr. Paul Henzmann, the Secretary General, was with him. The provincials were four in number: Fr. Anthony Netikat from India, Fr. Rolando DelaGoza from the Philippines, Fr. I. Suharto from Indonesia and Fr. Keith Turnbull from Australia. The meeting was held in Sydney.

The Constitutions and Statutes had been completed a year earlier in the General Assembly of 1980 and the English translation was already in circulation among the confreres of the region. The principal theme of the meeting was how to help the confreres understand and appreciate the spirit and thrust of the Constitutions and Statutes, as well as how to foster the changes and transformations that would be called for in the provinces and the lives of the confreres. Since a principal means was to be a follow-up provincial assembly, considerable attention was paid to the ways of making the assemblies fruitful. On the agenda there were also three other topics for discussion: 1) the promotion of vocations, 2) the specific needs of the individual provinces, and 3) ways in which the Curia could be of help. It is clear from the minutes that regional collaboration, which was to become the focus of APVC, was not yet a central theme. In light of subsequent developments, however, it is interesting to note that there already was a longing for deeper formation in the charism of Vincent and Vincentian heritage.

* At the time of publication of this issue of Vincentiana, the new Executive Secretary is Fr. Maurice Sullivan, C.M.
The Asia Pacific Visitors Conference. The first meeting was held in Sydney, Australia in April 1994. At that meeting the Visitors established a simple set of guidelines to govern the conference's business, which goes by the name “A Minute of Understanding.” Basically the Visitors committed themselves to meet annually. The meetings were to be rotated through each of the provinces. In the years in which there was either a General Assembly or a Visitors Meeting, the annual meeting would be held before, during or after these gatherings. As the meetings rotated through each province, the provincial of the host province would become the chairperson for the year and would be responsible for eliciting the agenda and chairing the meeting. In the 1999 meeting in Taiwan it was decided that an Executive Secretary should be appointed who could follow up the work of the annual meeting and deal with the ongoing business of APVC working in collaboration with the Chair for the current year.

The broad goals of the Conference are to know each other's situations, to share with one another at the provincial level, to support each other, and, finally, to organize events and take initiatives that will cooperatively advance the charism of Vincent and the mission of the Congregation in the Asia Pacific Region. The decision-making process is entirely by consensus and mutual agreement. The foundational element in each meeting is the sharing by each provincial on the status, hopes, needs and plans of his province, which is then open for dialogue and discussion. Each provincial is invited to submit items for information, discussion or deliberation in advance of the meeting, but these items can also be introduced during the meeting.

One of the most important reasons for rotating the meetings has been to introduce the members of the conference to the life, customs and realities of the host province through personal experience. During the five-day meeting there are usually a couple of days or parts of several days devoted to visiting confreres and their works, to visiting the Daughters of Charity and their apostolates, and in a special way getting to know the local people firsthand. In addition, the host provincial usually creates an option for those who can come early or stay late to have a further experience of the people and culture of the host province. This has been very successful.

The meetings to date have been in Australia (1994), Indonesia (1995), Salamanca (1996), Orissa, India (1997), Rome (1998), Taiwan (1999), Lebanon (2000), Dublin (2001) and the Philippines (2002). The next scheduled meeting will be held in the province of Southern India in March 2003. Then the rotation will begin again.

How the meeting was held in Lebanon in the Holy Year is a story by itself and has to do with the reach of the Asia Pacific Region. The members of the APVC are the provincials of the Provinces of
Indonesia, the Philippines, North India, South India, Australia and China. In reality the members comes from both Asia and Oceania. Gradually the Visitors became aware that the Province of the Orient, though geographically distant, is in fact an Asian province. They also became aware that the Province of Madagascar shares many interests with Asia, since a significant minority of their peoples is of Asian ancestry. This led to an invitation to the provincials of Lebanon and Madagascar to attend the 1999 meeting in Taiwan. They were interested and when they came they shared their status, hopes, needs and plans along with the other provincials. At the end the question of membership was addressed. Since these provinces have strong and natural bonds with Europe and Africa respectively, everyone recognized the value of having them remain in their present regions. At the same time, everyone also agreed that it was mutually beneficial to invite them to APVC’s annual meeting. Then, because of the Millennial Holy Year of 2000 and with the offer of visiting the Holy Land, the APVC accepted the invitation of the provincial of Lebanon to hold its annual meeting there and to visit the holy places.

The Assistant General for the Missions, Fr. Victor Bieler, has faithfully attended the meetings and his presence has been an important bond with the Curia and the Congregation internationally as well as a support for all the provincials. In addition, of course, his Asian experience has been of special benefit to APVC. Fr. Maloney participated in the 1999 meeting, which confirmed the direction taken by APVC and at the same time raised the consciousness of the members to larger international concerns.

Formation of Formators Workshop. The most important initiative to date of the APVC has been the biennial Formation of Formators Workshop. Vocations are numerous in a majority of the provinces, namely in Indonesia, the Philippines and North and South India, and promising in Fiji. In 1994, at the first meeting, it was acknowledged that the formators were doing a good job and efforts were being made to send them away for specific training in formation. At the same time it was recognized that they generally were young and often lacked adequate support for this demanding ministry. To address this need and to enable confreres in formation throughout the Asia Pacific Region to know and help each other, while at the same time to pursue ongoing professional development, the Visitors decided to establish the biennial two-week Formation of Formators Workshop.

The first session was held in the Philippines in 1996, the second in Indonesia in 1998, the third in Orissa, India in 2000 and the fourth in Fiji in the summer of 2001. The fifth is scheduled for Taiwan, February 9-19, 2003. Beginning with the workshop in Fiji we are on an 18-month rotation. The Superior General and the Council had urged each region to have these workshops annually. However,
because APVC’s area is so large and covers both the northern and southern hemispheres an 18-month rotation was agreed upon, which allows us to schedule the meetings during the summer months in the respective hemispheres. The sessions have had a facilitator and the reports have been thorough and complete, practically book length. In Orissa, the Indian confreres and the students in formation were invited. Everyone thought this was a valuable move. In the future the confreres and seminarians of the host province are invited. Since most of the candidates of the Australian province are Fijian, the 2001 workshop was held in Fiji.

The Vincentian Center for Asia Pacific. At the invitation and with the support of the Visitors of APVC, Adamson University in Manila established the Vincentian Center for Asia Pacific on the campus of the University. Adamson and the Philippine province have been generous in providing prime space, equipment and staff.

The center will serve the needs of the Vincentian mission in Asia Pacific. In the beginning the emphasis will be on Vincentian resources and service to the participating provinces. The first four immediate goals are:

- First, establish the Asia Pacific Identity of the Center by collecting and displaying documentation and pictures regarding our apostolates and mission from each province. This should also include current reports on meetings, events, etc.

- Secondly, manage the website and link it with the Asia Pacific websites. The goal is to provide information and a means of communication in the region as well as to make resources available on line.

- Thirdly, collect and gather Vincentian resources (books, periodicals, audio-visual, etc.). Four general categories are suggested: 1) the letters, conferences and documents of St. Vincent, our saints, etc.; 2) biographies, studies of Vincent and our saints, as well as historical materials, with special emphasis on the Asia Pacific region; 3) Vincent’s world; and 4) our world of Asia Pacific in relation to our mission.

- Fourthly, make these resources available to individual researchers, to the Vincentian Family in Asia Pacific and other interested parties. In this connection, it might be possible to establish a Vincentian Bookstore for materials otherwise only available outside the region.

There is also a future goal, which at this time is in the order of a hope and a dream, and thus awaits future deliberation and action. The hope is that the Center can offer courses and eventually a
Certificate or even a Degree Program in Vincentian Studies through Adamson University. The courses might take the shape of weekend seminars, intensive courses over a couple of weeks or semester courses.

**The Charism and Culture Committee.** For at least two years the Conference has been aiming at the establishment of what was originally called “An Asian Vincentian Forum.” The hope has been to establish an annual meeting on Vincentian topics to which members of the larger Vincentian family may be invited. The goal would be to bring people together to reflect on the Vincentian charism in the Asian context. Recent considerations of a Vincentian Theological Forum have expanded the vision. The two goals have been combined and the work has been given to a committee called “The Charism and Culture Committee” which is scheduled to meet in February 2003. The directions given to the committee are:

1. **To advance the process of inculturing the charism** of St. Vincent in the Asia Pacific Region (this will complement the work of CIF which has done so much to put us in touch with our roots and history);
2. **To provide a forum in which all members of the Vincentian Family** can deepen their understanding of St. Vincent’s charism precisely within the realities of their local cultural situations;
3. **To stimulate research and reflection** on Vincent’s charism within Asian Pacific perspectives and to **promote the growth of Vincentian literature** in the region;
4. **To undertake these tasks in dialogue with the poor, the culture and other religions**, not in Catholic and Vincentian isolation.

In conclusion, it can be said that timing and a spirit of easy collaboration among the Visitors have been special blessings in the first ten years of APVC.
"Statutes" of APVC

Sydney (Australia), 11-15 April, 1994

Minutes of Understanding *

We are a Conference of Visitors of the Asian-Pacific Region representing at present the CM provinces of Australia, China, Southern India, Northern India, Indonesia and the Philippines.

Our general objective is to carry the spirit and charism of St. Vincent de Paul into the evangelizing of peoples and cultures of the Asian-Pacific Region.

To carry out this General Objective we set these specific objectives:

1) to foster interior renewal and ongoing formation for the mission in our region;
2) to search for common lines of formation and action;
3) to foster inter-provincial cooperation;
4) to exchange vocation and pastoral experiences;
5) to foster meetings between provinces;
6) to create an Asian-Pacific community conscience.

To ensure the realization of these objectives, we propose

1) that we meet annually, except in the years when there is a General Assembly or a worldwide meeting of Visitors; at these times and places we shall look for an opportunity to meet either before, during or after the said assembly or meeting;
2) that we explore possible sources of funds to establish a scholarship; use of these funds shall be authorized through a resolution by the conference;
3) that we rotate the chairmanship of the Conference each year:

* "The 'Minutes of Understanding' constitutes our by-laws. We considered this sufficient for the size of our group and the informal and friendly nature of our cooperation." (Cf. A letter from Fr. Hugh O'Donnell to General Curia, 26 April 2001).
• the chairman holds office in his own province;
• he is in charge of preparations, hosting the meeting of the Visitors and finally submitting the minutes and resolutions of the conference;
• he is the conference’s liaison with the General Curia.
The History
of the Conference of Visitors
in Africa and Madagascar (COVIAM) *

by Janusz Zwolinski, C.M.
Province of Congo

The origin of COVIAM goes back several years, and is linked to the numerous African vocations to the CM, which generally began in the 1980s. By that time, some missions had already begun projects for collaborating in the formation of our candidates, such as Congo (then called Zaire) and Cameroon. The Vincentians of Cameroon had sent some young men to the Internal Seminary of the Vice-Province of Congo in Bokongo, and others to the scholasticate of Saint Vincent in Kimwenza. But they wanted to do more at the pan-African level and, for that purpose, they did their best to patiently look for adequate ways to collaborate.

During the Meeting of Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission in Rio de Janeiro, July 1989, the Visitors with confreres in Africa sought to set up certain structures to allow interchange and collaboration among the Vincentians in Africa in the field of formation. For this reason, and with the encouragement of the General Curia, the Visitors of Africa and Madagascar decided to organize a meeting for Vincentian formators in 1990 in Kinshasa (Congo). This meeting was actually held in the “Theresianum” of the Carmelite fathers, from 19-22 April 1990. It was the first important meeting of Vincentians working in Africa to be devoted to the formation of our candidates.

The participants in that meeting were Frs. Léon Lauwerier, Assistant General for the Missions, along with representatives of seven provinces or regions. These were Cameroon: Claude Lautissier,
Visitor of Paris, and Hubert Lignée, Superior of the Cameroon Mission; Madagascar: Pedro Opeka, Director of the Antananarivo Scholasticate; Ethiopia: Leonardus Dobbelaar, Vice-Visitor; Eritrea: Berhane Meskel, Director of the Asmara Philosophy Scholasticate, and Hagos Tewolde, Director of the Internal Seminary at Heho; Mozambique: Luciano Costa Ferreira, Vice-Visitor; Nigeria: Matthew Barry and Urban Osuji, respectively Director and Vice-Director of the Ogobia Internal Seminary; Zaire: Jan Van Broekhooven, Vice-Visitor, Henk de Cuijper, Assistant Director of the Bokongo Internal Seminary; Stanislaw Szczepanik, Spiritual Director of the Kimwenza Scholasticate and myself, at that time Rector of the same Scholasticate.

During this meeting the participants had the opportunity to come to know each other, to share opinions on the questions related to the formation of our candidates in Africa. They also strongly expressed their desire to collaborate in that field. The participants in this meeting particularly wished that:

a) a commission of formation composed of the Assistant for the Missions and the representatives of each province and region be created;

b) they start planning to establish a common theologate for Africa, starting in Kinshasa for African students who would study theology at the OMI (Oblates of Mary Immaculate) theologate.

To respond to these desires, the Superior General, Richard McCullen, asked that the Visitors most interested in the project of an inter-African theologate should hold a meeting, that is, involving Nigeria, Cameroon, Zaire (Mozambique was also interested but that Vice-Province had no students in theology yet). Their purpose would be to study more precisely the practical ways for its implementation. This meeting took place in Paris on 16 December 1990 and had as participants: Frs. Léon Lauwerier, Assistant for the Missions, Claude Lautissier, Visitor of Paris and Jan Van Broekhooven, Vice-Visitor of Zaire. Mark Noonan, Visitor of Ireland, did not attend this meeting. He communicated by fax that Nigeria would not participate in this project since the OMI theologate was not affiliated to a Roman university.

The meeting was informed of the measures taken by Zaire (the acquisition of a building site near the Scholasticate of Kimwenza, the agreement of the local bishop) and made the following decisions (but without much conviction, since Nigeria was not participating):

a) the construction in Kimwenza of an autonomous theologate separate from the scholasticate, with a capacity of 40 students;
b) a gradual beginning; in 1993 students for the first year of theology would start by attending courses at the OMI theologate;

c) that the Superior General would exercise the ultimate responsibility for this interprovincial scholasticate (theologate), and that he would appoint the formators.

Later, in February 1991, Fr. Myles Rearden, from Ireland, in charge of the Nigerian mission, visited Kinshasa and became enthusiastic about the project. He had learned that the OMI theologate had started the steps to be affiliated to a Roman university. In fact, the final decision was left to the Irish provincial council. While that decision was being awaited, it was only on 28 February 1992 that the Assistant General for the Missions, rejected the idea. Then the Province of Zaire proposed the following:

a) that the Visitors concerned propose to the Superior General the names of candidates for the formators team;

b) after that, that the Superior General appoint the rector, who would promptly start to develop the program of formation and contact the provinces to establish a fund for construction and functioning;

c) finally, that the construction of the buildings should begin at first with a small house of some 12 rooms, so that the seminarians could begin in October 1993.

During the General Assembly of 1992, the Visitors and Vice-Visitors of Africa and Madagascar discussed the project again and clarified the ways of bringing it about. It was also during this Assembly that they decided to create COVIAM (the Conference of Visitors of Africa and Madagascar) by assigning me the responsibility of president, with the specific task of preparing the Statutes of this organization.

On 1 May 1993, after reading the Statutes of similar bodies (CLAPVI, CEVIM) and after having consulted a few Visitors, I sent a draft of the Statutes to the Visitors, Vice-Visitors and Regional Superiors of Africa and Madagascar, asking for their reactions and proposed amendments. In the same letter, I also wrote about the initiative of Fr. Victor Bieler, Assistant for the Missions, to plan the next meeting of Visitors interested in the project of a common theologate, in order to confirm or not the realization of this project, because of the very confused and uncertain socio-political situation that had developed for some time in the Republic of Zaire.

Such a meeting was organized by the Superior General, Robert P. Maloney, and by the Assistant for the Missions, Victor Bieler, on 29 June 1993 in Paris. Unfortunately, because of the difficult
situation that Zaire was facing, the decision was made not to begin the theologate yet, but to continue to study other possibilities of collaboration. During that meeting, the Superior General expressed the desire to assemble in Kinshasa, in June 1994, the Visitors of Africa and Madagascar to discuss the problems that the Congregation was facing in this part of the world.

This first assembly of COVIAM took place in Kinshasa from 24-30 June 1994. Those who participated in this assembly were: Robert P. Maloney, Superior General, Victor Bieler, Assistant for the Missions, and representatives of the following provinces, vice-provinces and regions: Cameroon: Yves Danjou, Visitor of Paris; Mozambique: Luciano Costa Ferreira, Vice-Visitor; Nigeria: Timothy Njoku, Regional Superior and Michael Edem; Madagascar: Gonzague Danjou, Visitor, and François Benolo; Eritrea: Zerajohannes Weldemariam, Vice-Visitor, and Zeracristos Yosief; Ethiopia: Theo Van Ruijven; Zaire: Janusz Zwolinski. Several presenters developed the theme of Vincentian identity in Africa and Madagascar.

This conference adopted the Statutes of COVIAM and elected as its executive council: Frs. Janusz Zwolinski, president; Timothy Njoku, vice-president; and Zeracristos Yosief, secretary. This executive council received the task to set in motion a certain number of decisions that could favor the inculturation of the Vincentian charism in Africa and collaboration among the Vincentians working there. For that reason, in a letter dated 30 June 1994, this council asked the Visitors, Vice-Visitors and Regional Superiors in Africa and Madagascar:

a) to think about how to inculturate the Vincentian charism in each province or region and to send the results of that reflection to a commission, composed of Frs. Jean-Baptiste Nsambi-Mbula, François Benolo and Michael Edem, responsible for preparing a synthesis. This document would serve as a base during the next assembly of COVIAM, in June 1996;

b) to allow the formators to study carefully a particular point of inculturation, namely community life in the African context;

c) to favor mutual understanding by exchanging news and formators, and by setting common missionary efforts.

This commission on the inculturation of the Vincentian charism in Africa and Madagascar, established during the general assembly of COVIAM in 1994 encountered many difficulties. Nevertheless, it did its work and presented its results during the 1996 assembly. This assembly took place in Rome on 30-31 May. Those who participated in that assembly were: Frs. Victor Bieler, Assistant for the Missions,
The History of the Conference of Visitors in Africa and Madagascar

Thomas Davitt, translator, Luigi Elli, Visitor of Madagascar, Luciano Costa Ferreira, Vice-Visitor of Mozambique, Jan Ermers, Visitor of Ethiopia, Zerajohannes Weldemariam, Vice-Visitor of Eritrea, Yves Danjou, Visitor of Paris (for Cameroon), Chacko Panathara, Superior of Tanzania and Janusz Zwolinski, Visitor of Zaire. Fr. Timothy Njoku, Regional Superior of Nigeria was absent. The Superior General, Robert P. Maloney, also took part in the assembly on the morning of 31 May and gave a conference entitled: “This is the hour of Africa a very important moment in the life of the Church.” In his conference, he sketched three challenges:

1) that Africa be fully missionary;
2) that our lives be coherent;
3) that we give gratuitously.

A greater part of the assembly was focused on reflection about inculturation. After considering different aspects of our vocation and mission, the assembly decided to offer these thoughts to those responsible for the formation in different provinces. The latter would have to think about this as a team and send their suggestions before the end of the year to Fr. Jan Ermers, who, together with the conferees of Ethiopia, was to prepare a program for the meeting of formators in Addis Ababa at the beginning of 1997. Among other recommendations of the Assembly, we may cite:

a) the encouragement to continue and develop the exchange of news bulletins;
b) the invitation to develop an inter-African collaboration like the experience of mutual help among Zaire and Cameroon and Mozambique, or between Cameroon and Madagascar;
c) the insistence that African Vincentians learn English and French.

Finally, the assembly elected a new executive council: Frs. Janusz Zwolinski, president for a second mandate of three years, Jan Ermers vice-president. The secretary, however, after the modification of Article 7 of the Statutes, would be appointed by the president (Fr. J. Robert Bonenge of Zaire was appointed).

During the General Assembly of 1998 in Rome, the Visitors, Vice-Visitors and Regional Superiors of Africa and Madagascar met several times. Their exchanges essentially focused on the possibility of organizing either an Internal Seminary or an inter-African theologate, according to the propositions of the meeting of formators of Addis Ababa of 1997, without reaching a satisfactory solution. The interested Visitors preferred to move slowly, for the moment did not seem right.
The next meeting of formators would be asked to reflect about a common Internal Seminary program in Africa and Madagascar that each province would follow in its own formation program. Moreover, they were committed to support the partial initiatives taking place (or which might take place) in this domain and intended, for example, to exchange formators and students among the provinces. Ongoing formation was also taken into consideration. Several confreres desired a structure like CIF, but more modest, for Africa and Madagascar.

The Visitors also discussed their experiences of developing collaboration among provinces. At the same time they wished to see these experiences multiply and intensify. Finally, they reconsidered the executive council of COVIAM, offering the presidency to Fr. Urban Osuji and the vice-presidency to Fr. Girmay Abraha.

During this assembly, we were given the opportunity to try to draw up a balance sheet of the last ten years. If I can give my own point of view, I think that even if the objectives of COVIAM are still far from being reached, we have made some progress. Contacts among the Vincentians of Africa and Madagascar are increasing. Visitors and formators meet regularly and, therefore, we know each other much better than at the beginning of the 1990s.

The Province of Congo would propose, during this assembly, other meetings of interest to Vincentians who work with the Vincentian Family. The initiatives of collaboration continue to develop. Some are already being accomplished, others should be established in the near future, and still others are being studied. The more frequent use of Internet and e-mail even in Africa will facilitate, in the days to come, news exchange and will bring us closer to one another.

Although the attempts to establish an inter-African theologate or a common Internal Seminary for all the provinces have not been realized, I am convinced that we will not give up. On the contrary, we should go on thinking together. Perhaps we shall set a structure for Vincentian formators like CIF, an idea already suggested during the last General Assembly in 1998, and which our province intends to consider again under the supervision of Visitors, Vice-Visitors and Regional Superiors present here.
Statutes of COVIAM

2000

1. The Conference of the Visitors of Africa and Madagascar (abbreviated as COVIAM) is a not-for-profit body whose objective is the promotion and coordination of activities in various provinces, vice-provinces and missions in Africa and Madagascar.

2. The general purpose of COVIAM is to update the charism of St. Vincent, while taking into account the specific situation of the African continent; and to promote the unity, brotherhood, and collaboration of the Vincentians who work there.

3. To reach that purpose, COVIAM is committed to:

   a) promoting information and collaboration, especially in the area of formation and of [missionary] activities;

   b) reflecting on the problems of the continent and on our presence and mission in Africa;

   c) looking for global solutions to common problems.

4. COVIAM will hold a general assembly at least every two years.

5. The general assembly of COVIAM is made up of representative members (Visitors, Vice-Visitors and Regional Superiors or their delegates). Also members of the general assembly, with voting right, are the Superior General or his delegate, and the Assistants General, if any are present. By way of exception, other persons, Vincentians or not, can also be admitted to the general assembly as experts or observers. They enjoy only the right to be present but not the right to vote.

6. The two languages used are English and French.

7. The general assembly of COVIAM elects for three years a president and vice-president, and an executive secretary who may be chosen from outside the members of the assembly. In this case he should be present at the meetings but without the right to vote.

8. The executive secretary is responsible for carrying out the decisions taken by COVIAM, and for distributing such information as may interest the Vincentians of Africa and Madagascar. With the agreement of the president and the vice-president, he will prepare the general assembly and other meetings that it decides to hold.
9. The executive secretary will also look after the decisions once they are taken. Each province will preserve its autonomy, and the decisions of COVIAM will be implemented in a province only after approval by the provincial council.

10. The executive secretary of COVIAM will keep in touch with the General Curia and with other Regional Conferences of Visitors.

11. Fees related to travel are the responsibility of each province or mission. The expenses incurred by the secretariat and by other activities of COVIAM are covered by a budget adopted by the general assembly.
History of the National Conference of the Visitors of the US (NCV)

by John Sledziona, C.M.

Visitor of USA - New England
President of the NCV

In December 1973 Fr. James Richardson, CM, Superior General, met with the Vincentian Provincials of the US and expressed the desire that they take responsibility for translating into English the 14 volumes of St. Vincent's Correspondence, Conferences, Documents. From all accounts this meeting was the unofficial beginning of the National Conference of Visitors in the US.

The five American Visitors began to meet annually. After their meeting in Chicago with the Superior General in 1973, they met in Dublin with the English-speaking delegates of the General Assembly in 1974. The 1975 meeting was held in Emmitsburg, Maryland, and the city of St. Louis was the site for the 1976 meeting.

In 1977 the meeting of the English-speaking Visitors was held in Houston, Texas. Present at this meeting were the five American Visitors, Fr. James Richardson, CM, Superior General, Fr. Rafael Sáinz, CM, Vicar General, Fr. Farid Jabre, CM, Province of the Orient, Fr. Richard McCullen, CM, Province of Ireland, and Fr. Keith Turnbull, CM, Province of Australia. At this meeting Fr. Richardson reminded the participants that he had suggested regional meetings of Visitors at the General Assembly of 1974. At that time there was not much response to his suggestion so in later communications to the provinces the Superior General said that he and the assistants were prepared to attend regional meetings. The presence of the Superior General or his delegate at the annual meeting of the American Visitors has continued to this day.

In 1978 the five American Visitors formed an association called the Vincentian Conference. It was decided at that meeting to initiate a three-year cycle for meetings. The first year the American Visitors would meet by themselves; the second year the Visitors of Ireland and Australia would be invited and in the third year, which will alternately coincide with the General Assemblies, a meeting of the five American Visitors and the Visitor of Ireland with the Visitors of
Asia would be proposed. The Conference decided to name its president on a rotating annual basis.

Even in these early days of the Conference, the possibility of interprovincial cooperation was discussed in the following areas: formation program, vocation recruitment, seminars on Vincentian spirituality, rural ministry and exchange of personnel. By the October 1979 meeting in Los Angeles, California, the American Visitors reviewed and approved the Constitutions and Bylaws of the Vincentian Studies Institute. Also at that meeting Fr. James Richardson, Superior General, stated that the authority for the project of the translation of the works of St. Vincent lies in the hands of the American Visitors.

The first meeting of the VSI was in March 1980 in Northampton, Pennsylvania, at which the Visitors expressed the desire to meet more regularly with the Visitatrixes of the Daughters of Charity. Discussions began on possible future cooperation in formation programs, handling investments in accord with social justice, programs of continuing education and vocation recruitment. One can see in hindsight the beginnings of a discussion of a national mission plan.

By this time in the history of the Conference, the American Visitors agreed that their annual meetings were very helpful as times for mutual sharing, for focusing on the present situation, and for planning for the future. Such is the narrative history of the National Conference of Visitors. These early years of the National Conference of Visitors in the US planted seeds for our present garden in the year 2002.

From the beginning of the Conference until 1992, the Visitors met once a year. With the inclusion of the five Visitatrixes from the Daughters of Charity of the US on the governing board of the Vincentian Studies Institute the meetings began to be held twice a year. After the General Assembly of 1998 it was decided that the Visitors and Visitatrixes should include representative leaders from the branches of the Vincentian Family in their meeting.

With the passage of time the NCV has continued to expand its workload. Ongoing involvement includes the following: the Vincentian Translation Project, the Vincentian Studies Institute, the Common Novitiate, a relationship with CLAPVI, meetings of formators, a National Convocation, etc. In 1997 at a meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, the Superior General, Rev. Robert Maloney, CM, asked the Visitors to begin considering some form or reconfiguration of the American Provinces. A national committee was formed, and for the next three and a half years many surveys, town meetings, and other forms of consultation occupied the time of the Visitors and all the confreres in the US. At the end of 2001 each confrere in the US
had the opportunity to respond to a questionnaire about the reconfiguration of the provinces. The responses from the confreres were given to the Superior General at the National Convocation in San Antonio, Texas, in January 2002.

After examining with the members of the General Council all of the letters and responses to the questionnaires, the Superior General invited the five Visitors of the USA, as well as two Visitors-Elect to come to Rome for a final consultation. The result of that final consultation was the establishment of the National Conference of the Visitors of the US (NCV). In making this decision the Superior General had the unanimous consent of the members of the General Council and also the unanimous support of the five Visitors and the two Visitors-Elect. The central mandate for the Conference is given in Article 4 of the decree. "Within the next three years, using a broad based consultation process, the National Conference will develop, and provide a report to the Superior General on, a mission-driven plan for: a) the renewal of community prayer and community life in the houses of the Congregation of the United States; b) the Apostolic works of the entire United States; c) vocation, ministry and formation in the United States." The National Conference of Visitors will now have a President appointed by the Superior General for a three-year period. It will also meet at least three times a year, rotating its meetings throughout the five Provinces. "While respecting the right of individual provinces to initiate and pursue plans of their own in regard to interprovincial collaboration or reconfiguration, the National Conference, at some time within the next five years, will formulate a recommendation to the Superior General about the next step, if any, to be taken in the process of reconfiguring the provinces of the United States" (Article 6).

At the October 2002 Conference meeting in St. Louis with the Superior General present the Visitors approved the Statutes for the Conference and began the planning for the implementation of the national mission-driven plan called for in the Superior General's decree, which was effective July 2002.
Statutes of NCV

I. Introduction

In mid-December of 1973, Very Rev. James Richardson, C.M., Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, met with the USA Visitors and requested a new and modern translation into American English of all the extant works of St. Vincent de Paul. The USA Provinces of the Daughters of Charity were immediately invited to participate in the work, which is known as the “Vincentian Translation Project.”

After this meeting with the Superior General, the USA Visitors began to meet annually as a group in order to discuss the progress of the Vincentian Translation Project. Over time, these regular meetings evolved into a national conference for the Visitors.

In May of 2002, Very Rev. Robert Maloney, C.M., Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, having consulted with the USA Visitors and with his own Council, established the National Conference of Visitors of the United States as the successor organization to the Conference of the USA Visitors. This action was taken in response to the consultation that he made of the Provinces of the United States during the discussion relative to the reconfiguration of the provinces.

II. Name, Purposes, Nature, and Rights

A. Name: The name of the Conference is “The National Conference of the Visitors of the United States” or NCV.

B. Purposes: The purposes of NCV are:
   1. To develop interprovincial cooperation with a view to possible reconfiguration.
   2. To foster collaboration with the Daughters of Charity and the Vincentian Family.
   3. To handle other items of national business.
   4. To provide mutual support for the Visitors.

C. Nature: NCV is an organization created by the Superior General to achieve the purposes stated above in B. Purposes. NCV respects the juridical independence of each province and the authority of each Visitor.

D. Rights: Following the ordinary procedures for transfer and in light of the overall mission plan, NCV has the authority and
right, delegated by the Superior General, to move confreres from an apostolate in one province to an apostolate in another province.

III. Membership

A. Membership: The members of NCV are the Visitors of the Provinces of the Congregation of the Mission in the USA.

B. Rights of Members: The rights of members are:
   1. To be present at all meetings.
   2. To have an opportunity to submit agenda items prior to meetings.
   3. To approve beforehand invited guests to meetings.
   4. To receive the agenda and materials at least one week in advance of meetings.
   5. To make decisions on Conference activities.
   6. To be consulted and informed about important matters between meetings.

C. Obligations of Members: The obligations of members are:
   1. To attend, prepare for and actively participate in meetings.
   2. To carry out the decisions and tasks agreed to at meetings.
   3. To share in the financial support of Conference activities.
   4. To distribute materials sent by the Executive Secretary for the confreres of the provinces.
   5. To abide by the statutes.

IV. Meetings

A. Regular Meetings: NCV holds at least three meetings annually. Ordinarily, the Superior General or his delegate is invited to attend the October meeting.

B. Special Meetings: If needed, NCV arranges special meetings or conference calls between regular meetings in order to handle pressing business.

C. National Meetings: After one of its regular meetings, members attend two national meetings on the following two days:
   1. Meeting of the USA Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission and the USA Visitatrixes of the Daughters of Charity (Governing Body of the Vincentian Studies Institute).
   2. Meeting of the National Leadership of the Vincentian Family in the USA.
V. Decisions
A. Decisions: In arriving at decisions, the Visitors will seek to achieve consensus but a vote of 4-1 is sufficient for any decision. A quorum demands that every Visitor be present either himself or by a delegate.

VI. Projects
A. Projects: NCV sponsors various short-term and long-term projects for achieving the purposes of the Conference.

VII. Finances
A. Finances: The provinces share all Conference costs. Projects are approved only after a plan with a budget has been submitted. The costs of projects budgeted at $10,000 or under are split evenly among the provinces; costs above $10,000 are divided proportionally among the provinces — based on the total number of incorporated conferees in the USA in each province.

VIII. President of NCV
A. Selection: The president will be nominated by the National Conference, from among its members, and appointed by the Superior General with the consent of his council.
B. Term: The appointment will be for an initial three-year period, which can be extended.
C. Duties: The duties of the President are:
1. NCV Meetings
   a) To chair meetings.
   b) With the Executive Secretary to prepare the agenda and materials for the meetings.
   c) To arrange the rotation of the meetings among the provinces.
   d) To do the follow-up work after Conference meetings with the assistance of the Executive Secretary.
   e) To convoke special meetings and conference calls as needed.
   f) To keep the Superior General informed of the work of the Conference and the progress of projects.
2. Conference Business
   a) To handle any ordinary Conference business between meetings.
b) To consult and inform the other Visitors about important matters and correspondence between meetings.

3. Conference Newsletter
   a) To conduct the final review of the newsletter before publication.
   b) To write a brief letter for each issue of the newsletter.

4. Executive Secretary of NCV
   a) To act as the supervisor for the Executive Secretary.

IX. Executive Secretary of NCV

A. Selection: The Visitors select the Executive Secretary of NCV.

B. Time, Commitment and Term: The Executive Secretary is a part-time staff person appointed for a renewable term of three years.

C. Supervisor: The President of NCV is the supervisor for the Executive Secretary.

D. Duties: The duties of the Executive Secretary are:

1. NCV Meetings
   a) To send out a draft copy of the agenda and schedule for review and comment by the Visitors prior to meetings.
   b) To assist the president in preparation of the agenda and materials for the meetings of the Conference.
   c) To mail the agenda and materials to the Visitors at least one week in advance of meetings.
   d) To attend and be present for all parts of Conference meetings as the recording secretary and as staff to the Conference, except for that part of the meeting which is the exchange of information between the Visitors about their provinces.
   e) To prepare reports and recommendations for the Visitors.
   f) To mail the final copy of the minutes for the previous meeting and the draft copy of the minutes for the current meeting to the Visitors after each Conference meeting.
   g) To provide administrative assistance to the President of NCV for the follow-up work after meetings.

2. National Meetings
   a) To attend the annual meetings of the USA Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission and the USA Visitatrixes of the Daughters of Charity (Governing Body of the Vincentian Studies Institute) and the National Leadership of the Vincentian Family in the USA as an observer.
b) To provide administrative support, e.g., preparing the agenda, mailing meeting materials to participants and acting as recording secretary, etc., to the Visitors who chair these national meetings.

3. President of NCV
   a) To review the work of the secretariat with the President of NCV (supervisor) on a regular basis.
   b) To assist the President of NCV with any administrative tasks.

4. New Visitors
   a) To orient the newly elected Visitors about the work of NCV before they come to their first Conference meeting.

5. Conference Newsletter
   a) To edit a newsletter for publication twice a year.
   b) To provide a draft copy of the newsletter to the President of NCV for final review before publication.
   c) To mail copies of the newsletter to the provincial offices for distribution to the confreres.
   d) To mail copies of the newsletter to the Superior General, Secretary General, representatives of the other regional Conferences in the Congregation of the Mission, USA Visitatrixes of the Daughters of Charity, National Leadership of the Vincentian Family in the USA, Editor-in-Chief of the Vincentian Translation Project and Presiding Officer of the Vincentian Studies Institute.

6. Organizing Interprovincial Projects
   a) To assist the Visitors in defining, planning and implementing projects that promote interprovincial cooperation in the USA.

7. Secretariat of NCV
   a) To manage the financial accounts for the Secretariat of the Conference of USA Visitors.
   b) To prepare the year-end financial report and annual budget of the secretariat for the review and approval of the Visitors at the October meeting.
   c) To maintain the archives of the secretariat.

X. Amendments to the Statutes

A. Amendments: The Statutes of NCV can be amended at anytime, preferably by consensus of the members; however, a 4-1 vote is sufficient for amendment.
In the next issue

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Vincentianiana

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