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Presentation

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FEATURE: Provincial Treasurer's Meeting
Rome, 4-9 November 2002

Presentation

At the urging of the Superior General a meeting of all the Provincial Treasurers of the Congregation was organized and took place in Rome from November 4-9, 2002. This was the second meeting of all the provincial treasurers. The first meeting took place in Paris in May 1995. Since 75% of the current treasurers have been named since that meeting, it was felt that it was time to repeat the experience.

This meeting had several purposes. It was a chance for the treasurers to show mutual support in their important ministry for the community. Also, it was an opportunity for ongoing formation in their role as administrators of the community's goods. Finally, it was an opportunity for me, as treasurer general, to meet all the treasurers and discuss with them any questions or concerns they might have.

The session was organized by a Preparatory Commission consisting of: Fr. Teodoro Barquín (Facilitator), Fr. Stefano Anguili (Provincial Treasurer, Naples), Fr. José Luis Fernández (Provincial Treasurer, Peru), Fr. Bernard Meade (Provincial Treasurer, Ireland), and Fr. Elmer Bauer III (Treasurer General). This Commission chose the themes to discuss and the methods to follow in accordance with the information given by the provincial treasurers in a previously completed survey.

Many diverse topics were covered from the role, function, and relationships of the provincial treasurer to more technical aspects of the administration of the goods of the province. A complete list of topics can be found in the program of the meeting which is included in this issue. These topics were treated in a variety of ways from conferences and panel discussions to small group sharings and plenary sessions. Due to the size of this issue and the technical nature of some of the presentations, it is not possible to publish all the conferences. However, I would like to thank all the invited speakers and treasurers who shared their experience for their valuable contributions to the meeting.

At the time of the evaluation, all the provincial treasurers expressed a very positive opinion of the meeting. Though the treasurers came with a varied range

of experiences and knowledge, I think each one left with something valuable to further enrich his ministry in service of his province.

Of course this issue will be of particular interest to provincial treasurers, local treasurers, members of Provincial Finance Committees, and other confreres who assist directly in the administration of the goods of the community. However, it should also be of interest to a wider audience. The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission state clearly: "Since all goods are in common, members are co-responsible, according to the norm of law, for the acquisition, administration, and use of the temporal goods of the house and province to which they belong. This principle applies, on a proportionate basis, even to the goods of the entire Congregation." (Const. 149) All of us, as members of the Congregation, share in the responsibility for the administration of its goods. The importance of this responsibility is heightened when we consider that we administer these goods not as owners, but rather as stewards of the patrimony of the poor. It is this reality which prompted the Editor and Editorial Staff of *Vincentiana* to compile these conferences of the *Meeting of Provincial Treasurers* in this issue and I am delighted to present them for your enrichment.

The Chronicle by Fr. Hugh O'Donnell gives a good idea of the program followed for the meeting and the many topics that were covered. He highlights certain elements of the program he found of particular interest and importance.

The conference of the Superior General, Fr. Robert P. Maloney, is both an encouragement and a challenge to all those involved in the administration of the community's goods and, in particular, to the provincial treasurer. Through a reflection on St. Vincent and administration he draws out four fundamental convictions that guided St. Vincent's administration and serve as challenge for us today. His examination of our Constitutions and Statutes provides us with nine principles that we should observe in our administration of goods. He concludes with some practical guidelines to encourage us in practicing good stewardship.

In his conference "The Spirituality and Sense of Mission of the Provincial Treasurer" Fr. Philippe Lamblin offers a number of "faces" (Joseph, Thomas, Martha and Mary, St. Vincent) which help us discover the underlying spirituality and attitude necessary for the ministry of treasurer. He also considers four virtues (temperance, justice, prudence, and courage) important to anyone who acts as steward.

Fr. Jaime Vergara's treatment of the relationship between the Provincial Treasurer and the Visitor and his Council examines the pertinent Constitutions and Statutes to uncover the nature of this relationship. He then highlights a number of practical elements which should serve as the basis of a good working relationship: dialogue, confidence and support, mutual discernment,

transparency, healthy relationship with professional advisors, non interference, effectiveness and fidelity.

Fr. Marceliano Oabel offers us his own experience as provincial treasurer of the Province of the Philippines and its program for training local treasurers to address the topic “The Relationship between the Provincial Treasurer and the Local Treasurers, Formation of Local Treasurers.” He concludes that this relationship should be characterized by listening, witnessing, and caring.

The conference of Br. Peter Campbell introduces us to the Vincentian Solidarity Office. This new office of the Congregation offers to assist the poorer provinces and missions of the Congregation in seeking funding for their needs and works with the poor. Br. Campbell’s presentation outlines how this exciting new service will operate.

I hope you find these conferences as inspiring and helpful as we did at the Meeting of Provincial Treasurers.

Elmer Bauer III, C.M.
Treasurer General