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Contents

Editorial

This is the first issue edited entirely in Rome, with the floppy disk going to the printers in Dublin in January 1994.

With telephone and FAX, as well as the postal services of Ireland, Italy and the Vatican, it has not been very much more complicated than editing it in Blackrock. A new element, though, has been the helpful assistant-editing by Joseph Loftus in London, who took care of many phonecalls and other contacts.

St Vincent's Ideas on Retreats

Thomas Davitt

One of the main elements in Vincent's reform of the French priesthood was his introduction of pre-ordination retreats, but this article is not about that particular type of retreat. It deals with what he had to say about retreats for his two communities, and for laypeople, as a regular element in the growth of a person's relationship with God.

It is quite clear that Vincent regarded retreats as important. We see this in his own life as well as in what he taught others. Jacques Tholard, one of his priests in Annecy, had problems about hearing confessions. In a letter to him, dated 26 August 1640, Vincent quotes a story which a Carthusian told him when he was making a retreat in the priory of Valprofonde, and goes on to say that this story

> rid me of a rather similar temptation with which I was struggling in connection with the works of my vocation (II 107).

Two years later, on 1 April 1642, Vincent wrote to Bernard Codoing, one of his priests in Rome; he thought Codoing was too precipitate in making decisions, so he told him:

> The spirit of God moves gently and always with humility. Don't forget that both you and I are subject to a thousand natural impulses, and remember what I told you about what happened to myself when the idea of the Mission was only starting. I found myself worrying all the time, wondering whether this idea might be coming from either natural inclination or from the devil. I made a special retreat in Soissons so that God would be pleased to take away from me the feeling of satisfaction and urgency which I felt in this matter, and it was God's pleasure to grant me this, ridding me of both and allowing me to take up exactly the opposite attitudes. I think that if God gives any sort of blessing to the Mission, and that I may be less of a scandal to it, I attribute it, after God, to this, and I intend to continue in this frame of mind of never coming to a final decision about anything, or

> undertaking anything, as long as I feel these surges of enthusiasm, hoping for great results (II 247).

These two passages seem to be about the same retreat, not about two different ones. The retreat was in a Carthusian priory in the diocese of Soissons, down in the direction of Joigny; the de Gondi family had their principal residence in Joigny, the head of the family being Count of Joigny (1).

In 1652 Vincent, presumably remembering his own experience, advised an un-named confrere, who was thinking of abandoning his vocation, to make a retreat (IV 362).

In paragraph 10 of chapter X in the Common Rules Vincent says that each member of the Congregation is to make an annual retreat, and the seminarists are to make one every six months. We do not have his comments on this paragraph as he died before the series of conferences on the Rules reached chapter X.

Jean Gicquel and René Alméras kept a list of the conferences given by Vincent from 1650 to 1660 (XII 451-485). From this list we know that Vincent usually gave a conference on retreats each Autumn, in late September or early October, coming up to the annual retreat in St Lazare. This list usually gives the three main points of the conferences. It is not surprising to find that Vincent spoke of reasons for making the retreat well, of the way to do this and of the things which could prevent this; these three points, only slightly varied, occur in each case where the points are listed. The only notable variation is for the conference on 22 September 1656 where the second point was: "What things each one noted as being helpful in previous retreats or, on the other hand, what was ahindrance"(XII471).

In some letters to confreres, often superiors, written in the Autumn at the time of the annual retreat, Vincent deals with specific practical points which arose about retreats. On 14 October 1650 he wrote to Etienne Blatiron, superior in Genoa:

> As regards the retreat which Fr… wants to make in the house of the Discalced Carmelites you were certainly quite right in dissuading him; and I urge you not to give in, not only in this matter but with regard to anything contrary to our normal practice, preventing anything which goes beyond this (IV 96).

Later on in the same letter he says that any confrere who follows his own wishes, against those of the superior, in a matter of importance, such as going away from the house to make a retreat, is not to be

accepted back when he returns. For every one lost in this way God will give two more. And he ends the letter with this:

> This sort of strictness will frighten others off from allowing themselves to be carried away by such liberties.

This shows the importance he attached to confreres of a house making their retreat together as a community.

On 14 October 1656 Vincent wrote to the superior in Le Mans, Donat Crowley from Cork:

> I pray that our Lord will bless your retreat and strengthen the resolutions each one will have made during it so that practical results may be seen at the appropriate times. Since it is not the normal practice in the Congregation for local superiors to go elsewhere to make their retreats I am asking you to make yours in your own house and so give good example to your community; God will be more glorified by this and you will find it more satisfactory, I hope (VI 108).

That letter mentions resolutions. Vincent expected a retreat to have some practical consequences in a person's life. One way of trying to achieve this was to make resolutions during a retreat to change certain things in one's way of life afterwards. In volume XI of the Coste set there are some points made by Vincent about this at the retreats of 1632 and 1635, as noted by some unnamed confrere (XI 100-104). As would be expected, the points made concern vocation, ministry and community life. An interesting bit of advice is to avoid speaking bog Latin at recreation as this gives rise to silly giddiness (2).

On 2 October 1658 he wrote to Pierre Cabel, superior in Sedan:

> I praise God that he blessed your retreat and healed the sick. I am well aware that these eight-day retreats are inconvenient in the context of parish ministry, but you must make the best of it as in the past. To make the retreat in two instalments, or to make two five-day retreats in the year, would be to do something which is not done anywhere as far as I know, not only not in the Congregation but not in other communities either, apart from seminarists and novices. I ask you not to start anything new in this regard (VII 282).

As well as the annual retreat there were also, at times, monthly one-day retreats. On 30 October 1648 Vincent wrote to Etienne

Blatiron, superior in Genoa:

> I'm asking you not to continue with the monthly one-day retreats which you want your community to make. At the moment we are looking into whether we will continue the ones which we have here, because of some problems which have arisen from them (III 384).

Eleven years later, though, Vincent wrote to Jacques Pesnelle, Blatiron's successor in Genoa:

> I'm glad to hear of the idea God gave you to suggest to your community one-day retreats, and their good reaction to them, and the blessings God gave to them. Since God is not bound by time he sometimes gives more graces in one day than in eight, and people profit more from short retreats than from long ones, because they are more attractive and less boring (VIII 70-71).

Mark Cogley, from Carrick-on-Suir, was for many years superior in Sedan and on many occasions he came up with original ideas about which he sounded out Vincent, such as that Vincent should "leak" back to members of the Sedan community that Cogley had praised them (IV 486), or that violins should be permitted at weddings (V 153), or that the Sedan community should go out to eat in a restaurant, an idea he had put to a vote in the community and which was carried by a majority. Vincent wrote that he was somewhat surprised and distressed at this, and he told Cogley to discontinue it and also not to decide things by a majority vote but to decide them at meetings of his council (V 591). But to get back to retreats, Cogley also had the idea that he, as superior, should go away from the community every Friday to make a sort of weekly retreat. Vincent is not in favour of this and suggests that instead each Friday Cogley should be more recollected and more united to God when going about his ordinary duties (V 463).

Those excerpts are all that remain of Vincent's thoughts about retreats for his Congregation. They show that he regarded the annual retreat as important, that it should be made by the superior and the local community together and that it should be an eight-day one. He also recommended a special retreat for discernment at times of crisis, as he had personally found it helpful; we have letters in which he recommends this to three different confreres. In none of these extracts, however, does he spell out what he means by a retreat or what he expects from it, though in the letter to Donat Crowley he does say that

there must be some practical effect in one's life as a result.

Coste quotes an extract from Abelly's biography, a note which Abelly found in Vincent's handwriting, which deals with what Vincent meant by a retreat:

> By this expression spiritual retreat, or spiritual exercises, we should understand a withdrawal from all everyday affairs and from work in order to devote ourselves seriously to gaining a clear knowledge of our interior life, to a thorough examination of the state of our conscience, and to meditation, contemplation and prayer. In this way we prepare our soul to get rid of all our sins, and all our evil inclinations and habits, to fill ourselves with the desire for virtues, to discover and know the will of God and, having discerned it, to submit to it, to conform to it, to unite ourselves to it and so aim at, advance towards and ultimately arrive at our own perfection (XIII 143).

He also quotes another extract from Abelly, from a conference given by Vincent to his community:

> We will pray to God for those who have begun their retreat that he will be pleased to renew them interiorly and bring them to die to their own spirit and give them his. Yes, a well-made retreat is a total renewal; a person who has made a retreat properly passes into a different state; he is no longer what he used to be; he becomes a different man. We will pray to God that he may be pleased to give us this spirit of renewal and that, by the help of his grace, we can strip ourselves of the old Adam so as to put on Jesus Christ and carry out his most holy will in everything (XI 94-95).

When we look for what has survived of what he said to the Daughters of Charity about retreats we find, apart from brief passing references, only one paragraph, which is in a conference on 22 January 1645. He says that their rule calls for an annual retreat, or spiritual exercises:

> This is to recognise your failures in the past year and to rise up more courageously. These eight days of silence are harvest time. What a joy if you use this God-given time well for a heart to heart exchange with him. That's how our Lord keeps his promise to lead the soul out into the desert. That's why, girls, I ask you not to miss it. That's where you'll learn to be real Daughters of Charity, as well as learning how to serve the sick well. You'll go

> over in your own mind our Lord's activity on earth; you'll see that he spent a good part of his time in the service of others, and you'll make a resolution to imitate him (1X221-2).

The reference to the Lord's promise to lead the soul out into the desert is an allusion to Hosea 2:16.

In a letter to Louise, undated but placed by Coste between 1636 and 1642, Vincent gives her some points on how she is to spend her own retreat:

> Three half-hours per day are sufficient for your mental prayer, half an hour for each meditation, two in the morning at eight and ten-thirty, and another at four o'clock.
>
> I will gladly hear your confession. . . Go to mass every day. Have people told that you are busy, and put off until immediately after dinner those who need to see you, and be brief. Go to Holy Communion next Thursday, and draw only on the subjects of meditation which the bishop of Geneva puts at the beginning and end of his *Introduction.* Divide them so that they will be sufficient for you, and do all of them. You will be able to do some of them twice according to the attraction our Lord may give you. Read the New Testament in addition to the other readings I suggested. Every other day write to me briefly about what is taking place and about your disposition of body and spirit. Above all, try not to rush around, but do everything gently as you can imagine the good bishop of Geneva did (I 384).

We next turn to retreats for lay people. Men came to St Lazare, women to the motherhouse of the Daughters. All sorts of persons came to St Lazare to make retreats, so much so that Vincent said the place was like Noah's ark (3). In his chapter on retreats Abelly says that in the St Lazare refectory you would see, in addition to the community,

> a great number of other people from outside, persons of every age and social class, from the city and from the country, poor and rich, young and old, students and doctors of theology, priests, benefice-holders and men of varying ecclesiastical rank, gentlemen, counts, marquesses, procurators, advocates, counsellors, presidents, masters of requests and others of the legal profession; merchants, skilled tradesmen, soldiers, and right on down to pages and lackeys (4).

When Vincent spoke about giving retreats he frequently did not dis-

tinguish between the different sorts of retreatants, mentioning clerics preparing for ordination, priests and laypeople all together. In an undated conference to his community, taken by Coste from Abelly, Vincent said:

> There are some communities who recommend us to many of those who want to enter those communities, sending them to us to make their retreat here in order to test their vocation before their acceptance. Others come from ten, twenty, fifty leagues distant not just to be recollected and make a general confession but specifically to discern what state of life in the world to choose and to take the means for their salvation in that state. We also see a great number of Parish Priests and other priests coming here from all over the place… (XI 15-16).

In an un-dated summary of a conference given by Vincent on the ministry of retreats he dealt with how the director was to meet the person at the start of the retreat and to explain the order of day to him:

> After that you have to explain the purpose of the retreat: it is in order to become a perfect Christian and perfect in one's own particular vocation. A perfect student, if one is a student; a perfect soldier, if one is a soldier; a perfect lawyer, if one is in the legal profession; a perfect priest like St Charles Borromeo if one is a priest. To sum up, to perfect oneself in one's own vocation, or to choose one (XII 441).

Abelly, in speaking of Vincent's views on retreats, says:

> He well realised that their usefulness was not confined just to clergy but could also be extended to include lay people of all kinds, helping them in a practical way to lead a life in conformity with the obligations they undertook at baptism. For, considering how few Christians there are who pay due attention to these obligations and who live according to the truths and maxims of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and well realising that this neglect comes mainly from lack of reflection on, and thinking about, these truths and maxims he believed that it would be rendering a service pleasing to God, helpful to the Church and salutary for souls if he were to make, as far as he could, the practice of spiritual retreats easy and familiar. He regarded them as very suitable for rectifying this defect (5).

Retreats for those preparing for ordination were usually group retreats, whereas lay people normally made retreats as individuals. Vincent had drawn up a framework for such retreats. A priest of the house, or sometimes even a senior theology student, was assigned to each retreatant as director. This director would see the retreatant twice a day and give him points for meditation, suggest spiritual reading and answer his questions. As a guide for meditations Vincent selected a book in Latin by a Dutch Jesuit, Jan Buys; in French he appears as Jean Busée. To make it suitable for lay people Vincent got René Alméras to translate it into French and to make any necessary adaptations. He also had Francis de Sales' method of mental prayer printed at the beginning of it (6). Vincent also recommended retreatants to make use of the Ignatian idea of employing each of the three powers of the soul, memory, understanding and will, in connection with each meditation (XII 444).

In the note in Vincent's handwriting which Abelly found, already quoted, Vincent referred to a retreat as a "withdrawal from all everyday affairs and from work". That was the theory, but things did not always work out that way in practice. On 2 September 1631 he wrote to Louise that his retreat was starting as soon as he finished the letter to her, but two days later he wrote a letter to Fraçois du Coudray in Rome (I 120, 121).

In another letter to Louise a year or two later he wrote:

> I begin my retreat today and postpone everything until afterwards (I 172).

Again that is a statement of the ideal. In September 1638 he wrote to Charles de Montchal, archbishop of Toulouse:

> I very humbly ask your pardon for not availing of the honour of going to see you after dinner today, but I promised the bishop of Grasse, the bishop of Bayonne and Fr Pavilion to spend the after dinner period with them, even though I am on retreat, and I promised the Commander de Sillery to have a word with him later (I 390).

Perhaps a promise given to two bishops and a priest who was soon to be a bishop, and to a commander of the Order of Malta, constituted special circumstances.

This, however, apparently did not apply to nuns. In October 1638 he wrote to a nun in the first Visitation monastery in Paris:

> With regard to what you suggest, that I should go to your house and be present at your conference before the Reverend Mother arrives, that, my dear Sister, is something from which I beg you to excuse me, since I would scandalise our community if I went out during the retreat (III 63-64).

People making retreats in St Lazare were not asked to pay, though if anything was offered it was accepted. Apparently most people thought that there was some financial foundation to take care of the expenses of retreats, though this was not in fact the case. On 22 November 1658 Vincent wrote to Edme Jolly, superior in Rome, congratulating him on always having a good number of retreatants in the house. He then adds something probably learnt from experience in St Lazare:

> You should take into account that several people, on the pretext of making a retreat, are there only for the food. You find people who are quite content to spend seven or eight days quietly at no cost to themselves (VII 377).

Notes

1. Cf André Dodin in *Vincentiana* 1984, pp 546-7.
2. There is also an interesting mis-reading of the manuscript by Coste. His reading of it makes Vincent recommend exceptional pomp and solemnity at processions and children's communion. However, it appears that the word which Coste read as *faire* was, in fact, *fuir,* meaning that Vincent recommended *avoiding* such pomp. Dodin in his edition of the Conferences has made the correction (p 41). Cf also Felix Contassot in *Annales* 123, p 234, and Dodin in *Vincentiana* 1975 p 218.
3. Collet: *La vie de saint Vincent de Paul,* Nancy 1748, vol. I, p 207.
4. Abelly: *La vie du vénérable serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul,* Paris, 1664, livre 2, p 273. The facsimile reprint of this 1664 edition is now readily available.
5. Ibid., livre 2, p 270.
6. Roman, J M: *San Vicente de Paúl,* Madrid 1981, p 365. Italian translation p 314.

St Vincent and the Will of God

Richard McCullen

(Talk to Vincentian students, Le Berceau, 29 August 1993)

When Fr Renouard kindly honoured me with an invitation to come and speak to you here at the Berceau he suggested that I talk to you on the question of "St Vincent and the will of God". When I sat down to gather my thoughts and write this paper I asked myself: "Did Fr Renouard say 'The will of God and St Vincent' or 'St Vincent and the will of God'?" Not wishing to trouble Fr Renouard I began to wonder which title St Vincent might choose. "It is crystal clear. You must simply put the will of God before me… ". On that point I imagine he would be very firm. You will recall how in the second paragraph of the second chapter of the Common Rules he reminds us of the words of our Lord who said: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice and all these things which you need will be given to you as well". He then states that that principle will be the basis for establishing a set of clear priorities in which God and his will must hold the primacy. He spells that out in paragraph 2. The opening statement of paragraph 3 reads:

> A sure way for a Christian to grow rapidly in holiness is a conscientious effort to carry out God's will in all circumstances and at all times.

Let us turn for a moment to St Vincent's first biographer. It is interesting to note that Abelly, in the first edition of his work, singled out St Vincent's imitation of Christ as the principal key to his spirituality, while four years later in the second edition of his work he modified his view and stated that there were two salient features of his spirituality, namely imitation of Christ and conformity to the will of God. Later students of St Vincent's spirituality offer us variants on one or other of Abelly's assertions in their presentation of St Vincent's fundamental spiritual teaching. One of the more recent exhaustive studies on the question is the doctoral thesis which Fr Joseph Kapusciak of

the province of Poland presented some ten years ago to the Faculty of Spirituality in the Gregorian University of Rome. Fr Kapusciak set out to find a unifying principle between prayer and action in the thought of St Vincent de Paul. After a lengthy study of the corpus of St Vincent's writings his conclusion was that such a unifying principle was to be found in "the fulfillment of the will of God in imitation of Jesus Christ".

In the evolution of St Vincent's concept of the will of God three principal influences can be seen to have contributed to the crystallization of his thought. They can be taken in the chronological order in which St Vincent encountered them.

There is first Benet of Canfield (1). The life-story of this man reads as a rather good adventure. An Englishman born into an Anglican family, he became a Roman Catholic as a young man when he had been studying law. The history of his conversion is rather remarkable with seemingly chance incidents interspersed with some visions leading eventually to his becoming a Capuchin monk in France. Some time later he returned to England, but was apprehended and thrown into prison because of his Catholic faith. The influence of the French king and his ambassador in England secured his release and his return to France, where he published his work whose full title is: *The Rule of Perfection containing a brief and perspicuous abridgement of all, the whole spiritual life reduced to this only point of the will of God.* An English edition of the work was published in 1608 in Rouen, and in the following year a French edition of it was published in Paris. It was with this edition that St Vincent was familiar. It would seem that it was Dr Duval – a priest-professor at the Sorbonne and St Vincent's director at this time - who introduced him to this newly-published work.

Echoes of this work of Benet of Canfield resonate in the Common Rules and in St Vincent's conferences. For instance the third paragraph of the Common Rules, in which St Vincent states that doing the will of God consists mainly in doing four things, the first of which is

> rightly performing whatever is commanded and shunning whatever is forbidden, as often as it is known that such a command or prohibition comes from God, the Church, our Superiors, or from the Rules or Constitutions of our Congregation

is a straightforward summary of what Benet wrote in chapter V, part I, of his work – a section that is entitled "The Exterior Will of God". There are other implicit allusions to Benet's work to be found in St

Vincent's conferences, but lest I weary you with too many quotations I will pass on and introduce the second of the personalities who influenced St Vincent's formulation of the role of the will of God in the spiritual life.

To Cardinal de Bérulle St Vincent would have been indebted for orientating his thought towards the person of Jesus Christ in the fulfillment of the will of God. In the writings of St Vincent the phrase "the will of God" is invariably a near neighbour to Jesus Christ. The will of God is related to and interpreted by the living person of Jesus Christ and the actions of his life. St Vincent's teaching on the spirit of Christ and, of course, on the esteem one must have for the priesthood, would seem to have been caught by him from Bérulle. With Bérulle interior contact with the different states of Christ, as well as other acts that would keep the soul in a condition of awareness and constancy, held a prominent place. Experience and his particular spiritual *attrait,* however, would lead St Vincent away from Bérulle to a more concrete and practical way of fulfilling the will of God, namely the direct imitation of Jesus Christ in doing the task of the moment.

The third major and clear influence on maturing St Vincent's thought on the will of God is, of course, St Francis de Sales. From him he learned of the importance of something which sounds to our modern ears somewhat strange and almost alien - indifference. By qualifying the word "indifference" with the adjective "holy" the spiritual meaning of the idea behind the word "indifference" as used by 17th century writers may become more clear. These writers would have seen holy indifference as an expression of that active and loving abandonment to the will of God of which Père Caussade is the most celebrated exponent. The Salesian teaching on indifference is clearly behind the second of the four principles for fulfilling the will of God as outlined in the 3rd paragraph of chapter II of the Common Rules. To quote it:

> When there is choice open to us in matters neither ordered nor forbidden we should choose the less palatable rather than the more pleasing. This does not apply, of course, if the more pleasing things, being in some sense necessary, have to be chosen. Still though, in such cases, our motivation ought not to be that we like them, but simply that they are more pleasing to God.

There is some indication that St Vincent may have had a slight res-

ervation about what one might call "pure" holy indifference. It could run the risk of being interpreted too passively, leading to inaction.

Each of the three authorities to whom I have referred undoubtedly shaped St Vincent's thinking on the will of God and its centrality in achieving holiness. The originality of St Vincent's thinking on the subject is that he modifies to some degree the teaching of these three masters. In a conference of 7 March 1659 he alludes in turn to each of these masters – without naming them – and modifies for his own purpose, and for the scope and purpose of his institute, part of their teaching. The subject of the conference was conformity to the will of God, and St Vincent observes:

> It is to be noted that there are different exercises proposed by the masters of the spiritual life and which they have practised in different ways. Some have proposed indifference in everything, and perfection was considered to consist in desiring nothing and refusing nothing of all that God sends. It is a holy one, this exercise of indifference (XII, 152).

Here St Vincent would seem to be echoing St Francis de Sales. Then he continues:

> Others have proposed acting with purity of intention, of seeing God in eventualities, acting and suffering them with him in view. That is very subtle (XII, 152).

Here the reference seems to be to Bérulle.
Then it is the turn of Benet of Canfield:

> To sum up, the exercise of always doing the will of God is more excellent than all that, for it embraces indifference and purity of intention and all other methods that are practised and recommended. If there is any other exercise which leads to perfection, it will be found entirely in this one (XII, 152).

Of the three masters alluded to, the clearest allusion is that made to the work of Benet of Canfield. The saint, however, does not accept the teaching in its totality. References to what Benet calls "the external will of God" as regulating "the active life", and "the internal will of God" as regulating "the contemplative life" are absent. We know, too,

that St Vincent had reservations about the third part of *The Rule of Perfection,* which he expressed on one occasion to St Louise. What St Vincent accepts most from Benet of Canfield are the rules for the discernment of the will of God. It is clear, too, that St Vincent relates all these criteria for discerning the will of God to the person of Jesus Christ who is "the rule of the Mission" (XII, 130). As he expressed it in the third paragraph of the second chapter of the Common Rules:

> Our motive for putting the above three principles into practice is that they are God's will. It is in this way that we can imitate Christ, the Lord. Christ always lived by these principles, and for that very motive. He tells us this himself: "I always do what pleases the Father".

What I have set out above are largely the fruits of the labours of experts such as Pierre Deffrennes SJ (who wrote on the topic in the 1930s) and our confreres Fathers Dodin, Ibañez, de Dios, Mezzadri, Orcajo, Renouard and Kapusciak, as well as others.

One of the conclusions that would suggest itself is that in his teaching about role of the will of God in spirituality St Vincent was an eclectic pragmatist. I am using the word "pragmatist" in a very special and restricted sense, which perhaps is more easily understood by users of the English language than by others. I am not using the word in its philosophical sense. Understood by a philosopher pragmatism is a doctrine that asserts that the meaning of an idea is derived from its consequences when acted upon. When I say that St Vincent was a pragmatist I wish to indicate that in formulating principles of spirituality he was keenly conscious of the need that their validity should be tested and measured by the practical good effects they produced. Indeed St Vincent's pragmatism should be seen as a flowering of the virtue of Christian prudence, that virtue by which one transforms the knowledge of reality into the realisation of the good. I imagine he must often have reflected on our Lord's words to his disciples about how to discern true from false prophets: "You will know them by their fruits".

For St Vincent the practice of charity – the honouring and the fulfilling at every moment of the two great commandments of the law – was supreme, and these two commandments cannot be fulfilled without obedience, which of its nature will demand mortification. All this, of course, is to be carried out after the example of, and in union with,

Jesus Christ who is for us the way, the truth and the life. Because Jesus Christ brought good news to the poor and bound up their wounds, so shall we follow his example in continuing his mission to the poor.

It was spiritual pragmatism, as I have defined it, that made St Vincent veer away from any current that would carry him, or those whom he directed, into the realm of the speculative. Not indeed that he despised speculation. His lengthy letter outlining a case against Jansenism gives proof of his talent to reason speculatively, when the occasion demanded. The occasion, however, rarely demanded that from him. Rather he was keenly aware that his own vocation and that of his Congregation and of the Daughters of Charity was to give practical assistance – both spiritual and corporal – to Christ in the persons of the poor.

It was precisely the spiritual pragmatism of St Vincent that made him eclectic. Among the ancient Greeks the eclectic philosophers were those who selected such doctrines as pleased them in every school. When it came to setting forth spiritual principles St Vincent was, in the best sense of the word, eclectic. He chose from different schools of spirituality those principles which he considered best to secure that the gospel of Christ would be most effectively preached to the poor and their temporal needs best served.

It was his spiritual pragmatism that prompted St Vincent to outline for his community some of the practical effects of conforming oneself to the will of God. Seeking, accepting and fulfilling the will of God, as it expressed itself through different channels and in the seemingly fortuitous events of life, brought with it its own rewards. He outlines some of them:

> Do you not see, my brothers, the happy successes of those who are in this condition of indifference? They tend only to God, and it is God who leads them. You will see them tomorrow, this week, the whole year, and their entire life in peace, in fervour and continually tending towards God. They diffuse into souls the gentle and salutary effects of God's action in them (XII, 235).

And a happiness that comes from God:

> Is there any greater consolation than doing the will of God? You, who practise it, know that it is a continual banquet (X,24).

To Firmin Get he expresses his joy that this confrere's sore eye is better:

> I thank God for it, as also for the attachment you have to the will of God…, and that in everything you have a holy indifference. May it please God to establish us, such as we are, in this happy state (VII, 285-6).

Perhaps I should pass now to a few personal observations or reflections about the will of God in our thinking today. Let me pose a question to you: Have you heard often the phrase "the will of God" in homilies and in conferences since you entered the Congregation? I would be inclined to think that you have not heard it as often as some of us confreres of an older generation heard the phrase when we were in the seminary. Were we living in the St Lazare of St Vincent we would, I venture to say, hear the phrase fall often from the lips of M. Vincent himself. It would be interesting to calculate how many times the phrase is to be found in the writings of St Vincent. I would venture to say that you would arrive at three figures.

Perhaps indeed it may be that the phrase "the will of God" had been too easily invoked at times in the past to spare people the trouble of thinking more deeply about what was really the best thing to be done in particular circumstances and situations. Maybe at times the will of God was too facilely identified with the will of authority. Today we tend to speak more about discernment. Discernment is a process, more or less slow, of assuring ourselves that a particular decision to be taken is in accordance with the will of God.

We may think of the process of discernment as something that is entered into when there are major decisions to be made. In St Vincent's thought we are encouraged to give frequent thought to realising consciously the will of God, not just in the great matters, but in small ones as well. Our lives, which are made up for the most part of small decisions, are nothing if they are not partnered with Christ, who has a particular and personal will for each one of us and for our Congregation. I have been wondering if we think less about the will of God during the day, because we think less about the presence of God. It is not that we do not pray – that we are not aware of God. But the letting of our minds in many odd moments of the day drop and fall

into the great loving mystery that is God – in whom we live and move and have our being – perhaps that is not an experience that we give ourselves sufficiently often during our waking hours. I rather like the story of the little fish who met the big fish in the middle of the ocean and said to him: "Could you tell me where this thing called the ocean is about which everyone is talking?" And the big fish said: "Why, you are swimming in it". "But this is only water, replied the little fish" – and then swam off. Well, we are swimming in the living and loving presence of God every minute and every hour of our lives and, like the little fish, we miss the wonder of it, and we grow dull to the mystery that we are enveloped in a love and concern for our happiness of which we have but the dimmest of ideas. We are looking for God and talking about our search for him, and all the time we are living and moving and swimming in his presence.

Coming back to St Vincent, or rather to an official interpretation of a cardinal point in his spirituality, I would like to quote for you from paragraph 40 of our present Constitutions. The paragraph is on prayer, and synthesises what should be the general orientation of the prayer of any disciple of the school of St Vincent. I quote:

> Christ the Lord, remaining always in intimate union with the Father, used to seek his WILL in prayer. That WILL was the sole aim of his life, mission and giving of himself for the salvation of the world.
>
> He likewise taught his disciples to pray always in the same spirit, and never to lose heart.
>
> We, too, sanctified in Christ and sent into the world should try to seek out in prayer the signs of God's WILL and to imitate the responsiveness of Christ, discerning everything according to his mind.
>
> In this way our lives are changed by the Holy Spirit into a spiritual offering, and we become better disposed to participate in Christ's mission.

When you analyse that paragraph you will notice that the little word *will* occurs no less than three times. Christ sought in prayer the *will* of his Father. That *will* was the sole aim of his life, and of his mission. We, too, should try to seek out the *will* of God in prayer. Discerning

and fulfilling the *will* of God, we participate in the mission of Christ. The emphasis on finding or discerning the will of God and then carrying it out to the best of our ability is a theme on which St Vincent in his conferences and letters gives us a thousand variations.

There is one other point I would like to make before I finish. Given the sensitivity that St Vincent had to the voice of God as he listened to it through the teaching of the Church and of the Pope and bishops, he would readily accept a certain shift in the interpretation of religious obedience that has taken place since the Second Vatican Council. There is a very significant paragraph in Pope Paul VFs document *Evangelica testificatio* on religious obedience. In paragraph 25 of that document the Pope speaks of the relationship between authority and obedience. Let me quote a relevant part of it for you:

> Authority and obedience are exercised in the service of the common good as two complementary aspects of the same participation in Christ's offering. For those in authority, it is a matter of serving in their brothers the design of the Father's love, while, in accepting their directives, the religious follow our master's example and cooperate in the work of salvation. Thus, far from being in opposition to one another, authority and individual liberty go together in the fulfillment of God's will, which is sought fraternally through a trustful dialogue between the superior and this brother in the case of a personal situation, or through general agreement regarding what concerns the whole community… This labour of seeking together must end, when it is the moment, with the decision of the superior whose presence and acceptance are indispensable in every community.

What is interesting and significant in this paragraph is that obedience is presented as a search for the will of God not just by authority alone, but by authority and the individual in the community. It is a new dimension in the sources where one looks for a manifestation of the will of God. This paragraph could be said to be the basis of the practice of consultation which is now a feature of all religious obedience. One might say that prior to the Second Vatican Council the model for obedience was that of the pyramid, while in the post-Vatican II era the model is that of the circle. One would be totally mistaken, however, if one were to interpret that shift in models which I have outlined as devaluing or negating the existence and validity of all other organs

through which the will of God is made known to us, and to which St Vincent was, as I have said, so sensitive and respectful.

Today as in St Vincent's time conforming one's will to that of God is, in the last analysis, a challenge to listen. The word obedience itself means listening to (ob-audire), being attentive to something that is being said. Apart from the fact that the human ear is physically one of the least developed of the human organs, listening to what is being said by another is a more difficult task than is commonly imagined. Furthermore there is the tendency in most people to hear what they want to hear, and not necessarily what the speaker has to say. Growth in conforming ourselves to the will of God is, then, largely a refining and a sharpening of one's faculty of hearing the voice of God whether it be in the storm, or the fire, or the earthquake or, most mysteriously of all, in what one of the modern translations (2) of the text of the first book of Kings gives as "a sound of sheer silence" (1 Kgs 19:12).

Perhaps that last phrase is the voice of God telling me to stop and be silent. . .

Notes

1. Davitt, T: "An Introduction to Benet of Canfield", in *Colloque* 16, Autumn 1987, pp. 268-282.
2. New Revised Standard Version.

The Unitive Way: the Vincentian Way

Myles Rearden

1. *The unitive way*

The unitive way is the state of being in habitual and intimate union with God (1). The phrase itself is less often seen or heard nowadays than formerly, though there are some impressive articles on unitive spirituality in the recently published *Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality* (2). There are in fact quite a number of pointers in current discussion and practice regarding the nature and importance of the unitive way. This article aims to develop some of these pointers, and to show how important the unitive way is for Vincentian spirituality in particular.

First, some historical background. Right from New Testament times it has been recognised that there are stages of growth in the spiritual life. The Letter to the Hebrews, for example, distinguishes between Christians who are still "living on milk" and those "who can digest the doctrine of saving justice", that is, those who have been "trained by practice to distinguish between good and bad" (Heb 5:13ff). In patristic times these stages crystallised into three: beginners *(incipientes*, those making progress *(proficientes)* and those who are perfect *(perfecti).* In modern times (from the 16th century) these have almost universally been called the purgative, illuminative and unitive ways. So the unitive way is the stage of Christian maturity or perfection, and this maturity is recognised as being a relationship with God. Also in modern times, the three stages came to be correlated with different kinds of mental prayer: discursive prayer, active contemplation and infused or passive contemplation.

2. *Some Vincentian texts regarding unitive spirituality*

In the tradition of St Francis de Sales to which Vincentians belong, the terminology of the three ways is much less used than it is generally. The reason for this may be a preference in this tradition for a language, a practice and a theory of spirituality that are more accessible to lay-

people and their parish clergy. At the same time Vincent de Paul not only attained, but clearly expects others to attain, an extremely high degree of spirituality. The first of the pointers mentioned earlier that I would like to draw attention to is a set of Vincentian (i.e. CM) texts. They are:

a) (From a letter to Antoine Portail in 1653)

> Remember, Monsieur, we live in Jesus Christ through the death of Jesus Christ, and we must die in Jesus Christ through the life of Jesus Christ, and our life must be hidden in Jesus Christ and filled with Jesus Christ, and in order to die as Jesus Christ we must live as Jesus Christ. Now, once these foundations have been laid, let us give ourselves up to contempt, to shame, to ignominy, and let us disclaim the honours people pay us, the good reputation and the applause they give us, and let us do nothing which has not that end in view (3).

b) (From advice given to missionaries setting out for Ireland in 1646)

> Be united together and God will bless you. But let it be by the love of Jesus Christ, because any other union not bonded by the blood of this divine saviour cannot last. It is, then, in Jesus Christ, by Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ, that you should be united together.
>
> The Spirit of Christ is a spirit of union and peace; how can you attract souls to Jesus Christ if you are not united among yourselves and with him? It cannot be done… (4).

c) (From advice given by St Vincent to Antoine Durand when he was made superior of a seminary in 1656: Durand was only 27 at the time)

> What is the means of fulfilling the office of leading souls to God…? For certain, Monsieur, there is nothing human in it; it is not the work of a human being, it is the work of a God. *Grande opus.* It is the continuation of the activities of Jesus Christ, so that human efforts can only spoil everything, unless God is involved. No, Monsieur, neither philosophy nor theology nor teaching produce any effect in souls; it is necessary for Jesus Christ to involve himself with us, and we with him; for us to work in him, and he in us; for us to speak like him and in his Spirit as he did in his Father…(5).

Vincent is not in these passages using the technical language of ascetical theology, but he is certainly talking about being in union with God in Jesus Christ. It is the same in the introductory letter to the Common Rules where he writes:

> My idea was that men who are called to continue Christ's mission, which is mainly preaching the good news to the poor, should see things from his point of view and want what he wanted. They should have the same spirit that he had, and follow in his footsteps (6).

3. Other pointers to the importance of unitive spirituality

A second indication of the importance of unitive spirituality is the present-day insistence on religious experience. Not too long ago sanctifying grace was what was mostly spoken of in relation to the spiritual life, and its "ontological" rather than "experiential" character was insisted on. But it is rare nowadays to hear or read about sanctifying grace, which a popular catechism of some years ago identified with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (7). The indwelling Spirit cannot be known experientially, but the three stages of the spiritual life, purgative, illuminative and unitive, certainly can.

Union with God as an advanced stage of the spiritual life must be different from the union with God which every Christian receives in baptism, and from which the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and indeed of the Holy Trinity, stems. It is different in being psychological or experiential. Unitive spirituality is union with God on the level of heart, mind, will and feelings. It is something conscious, even if, like many other conscious things, it is not always or even usually in the focus of rational consciousness. The most natural expression of conscious unitive living is to want to say "I live now, not I, but Christ lives in me" (8). Anyone in the state of sanctifying grace can truly say that. But to really want to say it, with feeling, is a mark of the unitive way. This point is made in a very striking quotation that Tanquery gives from Jean-Jacques Olier at the start of his treatment of the unitive way:

> The first and last aim of this Institution [a seminary] is to live supremely unto God, in Christ Jesus Our Lord, so that our inmost hearts may be penetrated with the interior dispositions of the Son of God, and each may be able to say what St Paul truly said of himself: I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me (9).

A third pointer to the importance and the nature of the unitive way in the spiritual life comes from a pair of books with rather frightening titles, *The Experience of No-Self* (10) and *The Path of No-Self* (11). They are by an American woman writer, Bernadette Roberts. A married woman with four boys, she is an associate of Abbot Thomas Kinsella, himself a leading figure in the centering-prayer movement. (Centering prayer corresponds to what older writers call active contemplation, and can be described, I suggest, as an authentically Christian form of transcendental meditation). Bernadette Roberts is one of the comparatively few popular writers to use the expression "unitive way", and what is particularly striking is her saying that the unitive way is, in God's plan, the normal way for a Christian to live (12), and that it should be attained within six or seven years of someone's starting seriously to live a Christian life (13). However, there is nothing sensational about unitive living, in her account. "[U]nitive life is utterly real, common, ordinary and unspectacular; it may even be boring. It is not easy living" (14).

A good deal of the experience of spiritual living recounted by Ms Roberts is her books is, as one would expect, special to the kind of person she is - a rather cerebral person, as it happens. But it seems only reasonable to agree with her that the unitive way is the normal Christian way, since it could hardly be normal for Christians to live their conscious lives in a way that did not correspond to their actual ontological condition of union with God. It is the ordinariness of the unitive way that clears the way for accepting it as genuinely Vincentian.

A fourth pointer in this direction is found in an article by Fr Gerard H Luttenberger CM entitled "Active Apostles and the Fourth Mansion" (15). He sees the fourth of St Teresa's seven mansions as of special significance for those who (like most Vincentians) live as priests in an apostolic community. He writes:

> From the fourth stage onward, persons given to prayer experience God in a new way. They are drawn into the contemplative experience of God. At this stage it becomes clearer that the growth takes place largely because of God's personal and free initiative. It is God, in God's own love, who has been drawing them and will continue to draw them (according to the divine will) to God's self. It is God who will be the source of all personal growth and integration (16).

This stage of prayer, he explains, brings an expansion of heart, a growth in virtue and an energizing of faith which are of particular value for the person in the apostolic ministry (17). But it is a stage of the unitive way, and so confirmation that the unitive way is the Vincentian way. The more interior mansions of the castle St Teresa writes about are, it should be added, even more apostolically alive than the fourth. About the soul in the seventh mansion she writes:

> all its concern is taken up with how to please Him more or how or where it will show Him the love it bears Him. This is the reason for prayer, the purpose of this spiritual marriage: the birth always of good works, good works (18).

A fifth pointer to the congruence of unitive and Vincentian spirituality comes from the relationship between the paschal mystery and the unitive way. In the four-week schema of the Ignatian Exercises the first week corresponds to the purgative way, the second week to the illuminative way, and the third and fourth weeks, which are devoted to the paschal mystery, correspond to the unitive way. Vatican II states that living the paschal mystery is at the centre of the spirituality of the pastoral priest (19). Sharing the inner dispositions of the suffering and risen Jesus cannot therefore be far from the centre of a Vincentian spiritual life.

Taken together, these rather fragmentary indications point towards unitive living being the Vincentian way of life, even if neither Vincent nor Francis de Sales says so in so many words. In the next section some of the things that frequently *are* said in the Vincentian tradition will be considered, to see how they point in the same direction.

4. *Simplicity*

It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance simplicity has in the Vincentian view of how to live. Vincent himself calls it his "gospel" (20), which is a very strong word from such a gospel-minded person. He puts it first among the qualities of a true missionary. What is more, he makes it an extremely strong requirement: "Cum Dominus Jesus a nobis *exigat* columbae simplicitatem…" (since the Lord Jesus *demands* of us the simplicity of the dove…). And he gives an extremely clear definition of simplicity: "Consistit turn in nuda declaratione rerum, ut se habent in corde, et absque inutilibus reflexionibus, turn in rebus sine fugo aut artificio agendis, Deum solo intuendo". The definition is

given here in its original Latin because the extraordinary vigour of the words and the balance of the sentence are easily lost in translation. As the late Fr Jerome Twomey pointed out (in a community conference in Blackrock), it is the three concluding words that control the whole sentence. This sense of control has unfortunately been lost in our latest translation, with the definition being divided between two sentences, and the phrase "our intention being focused entirely on God" tucked away at the end of the second sentence, which begins with the very weak word "also". When that phrase is allowed to exercise its proper control it indicates the kind of things in the missionary's heart that he is to declare "nakedly", and the kind of things he is to engage in "without any double-dealing or manipulation", namely the things of God. So it is not merely to an engaging candour that the missionary is being called, but to something essentially spiritual and evangelical, deriving from his rootedness in God. Rootedness in God is meant, and is meant by Christ himself, to have a controlling influence on the missionary's whole conscious life, both what he says and what he does. What else is that, only unitive spirituality?

The definition Vincent gives of simplicity contains one phrase which has always posed problems for translators into English: absque inutilibus reflexionibus. Literally it means "without useless reflexions". The phrase qualifies what is said about how the missionary is to speak, in particular. There are some points in Monsignor Ronald Knox's celebrated book *Enthusiasm* (21) that suggest the phrase may have a definite and important meaning, from the viewpoint of unitive spirituality.

What Knox shows is that the word "reflexion" had a technical meaning in the quietist literature of the last decades of the seventeenth century. The quietists had, as he puts it, a "horror" of reflexion (22). In his account this means that people "in the way of faith must never *reflect* on what is happening to them" (23). The quietists advocate total detachment, not only from all consolations in prayer, but from everything that can be experienced, so as to rely entirely on "the invisible and insensible hand of God" (24). This exaggerated negation of the natural human mind seems, to judge by quotations that Knox gives from Bérulle and from St Jane Frances de Chantal, to have been present not only at the end of the seventeenth century but also at the beginning, and in Vincent's own circle. Bérulle espouses it, and "writes off sensible consolations as *choses basses, très infirmes et pueriles"*. St Jane Frances on the contrary opposes this excessive

negativity and says: "There is some lack of humility in making so much of serving God by aridities" (25). However, a much milder form of it was accepted by quite orthodox spiritual directors such as those in the tradition of St Francis de Sales, who repeatedly "warn against the danger of self-consciousness, of *repli sur soi"* (26). It looks as if what we have in this phrase of the Common Rules is an endorsement of the Fransalian position: neither a total rejection of all reference to self and to personal experience, nor any encouragement to wallow in one's experience, but a moderate directive to refrain from *useless* reflexions. From the standpoint of unitive spirituality this amounts to a warning against focusing more on oneself than on God, and encouragement to trust one's spontaneous responses to God. It can perhaps be seen as anticipating the warnings of modern spiritual writers against self-absorption, and their encouragement to take one's own religious experience seriously (27).

Taken all together, then, what Vincent says about simplicity in the Common Rules looks like a call to unitive spirituality, and a very precise directive about how to respond to that call in the circumstances of his day. His warning about useless reflexions may also be an anticipation of what he says in the following paragraph about prudence, which he presents as the obverse side of simplicity. Vincent's account of prudence is couched in the same powerfully unitive language as his account of simplicity: "We should make it a sacred principle then, admitting of no exceptions, that since we are working for God we will always choose God-related ways for carrying out our work, and *see and judge things from Christ's point of view* and not according to a worldly-wise one, and not according to the feeble reasoning of our own mind either" (28).

5. *Vincent's own spiritual growth*

Probably the only way we could be certain about the stages of Vincent de Paul's spiritual growth would be if he wrote a spiritual autobiography. But it is almost a defining quality of his spirituality that he would not do that. Many of those who have written about him agree that the decade 1610-20, when he was in his thirties, was decisive for Vincent's spiritual growth. Various markers are put down: the accusation of theft (1609) (29); the donation of 15,000 *livres* to the Charity Hospital in 1611 (30); the temptation against the faith (31); the way his language changed from being solidly theological to being tender and devotional

(32); his period of eighteen months as parish priest of Clichy, when he was "happier than the Pope" and began to be called Monsieur Vincent (33); the mission at Folleville and the founding of the Charity at Châtillon in 1617 (34); the retreat he made at Soissons in 1621 when he asked for and received the grace of a change in his "harsh and moody" character, which Madame de Gondi had reproached him for (35).

Even if the above series of events charts Vincent's decisive movement into sanctity, his spiritual development did not stop then, when he was forty. It is not difficult to think of many events in the second half of his life which may be markers of his further spiritual growth. But, as in the famous Sherlock Holmes story where the significant clue was that a dog did *not* bark, it may be that the most notable fact about Vincent's mature life is the deliberate humility with which he surrounded himself. For his humility "is the basis of all holiness in the Gospels and the bond of the entire spiritual life" (36). So it is reasonable to expect that the root of his holiness should be an on-going striving for humility rather than one or more incidents and experiences.

If there is any document that allows us to get a sense of Vincent's personal humility it must be his conversation, already referred to, with Antoine Durand, who had just been appointed superior of the seminary at Agde (37). In that document there is no feeling of two spineless people talking together, but rather of great strength of mind and character, and mutual respect. But as well as that the document expresses the convictions that the work to be done is God's work, that prayer is the principal means of accomplishing it, and that proceeding on any other principles is as foolish as trying to breed sheep from cattle. What the Common Rules say about humility is devastatingly radical, perhaps more so than what is said on the subject anywhere else. But in his forthright and confident advice to Antoine Durand Vincent shows that his attitude is nothing to do with abasement or diffidence. It is absolute dependence on God.

Humility seems therefore to be, for Vincent, as unitive a quality as simplicity is. The reason why the two qualities are equally deep, and why gentleness, mortification and zeal, the other "faculties of the soul of the entire Congregation" (38), are no less deep, is perhaps that they are quite simply "the Vincentian unitive way". To see them as forming an organic unity could be most important. There is a tendency in some recent Vincentian thinking (39) to present the "five virtues" as

somehow functional and utilitarian, but there is no need to do this if they are seen as an organic unity including zeal. Zeal keeps humility, mortification and the rest practical, and simplicity, humility and the rest keep zeal unitive.

6. *Vincent or Tanquery?*

Even today Tanquery's *Spiritual Life* is probably the best-known and most comprehensive one-volume work on spirituality, at least in English. But its very comprehensiveness robs Tanquery's work of a clear focus. His treatment of the unitive way consists almost entirely of long sections on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, infused contemplation and extraordinary mystical phenomena. It would not be surprising for his readers to conclude that the unitive way was not for them.

By contrast, Vincent's personal spirituality and that he gives to his followers is based entirely on union with God in Jesus Christ, and is entirely practical. It is focused, like that of Ignatius Loyola, on the person of Jesus, and its practical programme is a humility which is also gentleness, zeal, mortification and simplicity. Taken separately these "five virtues" lead into each other, and taken together they constitute a clear and tangible set of means for attaining union with God.

Notes

1. Cf. Tanquery, A.: *The Spiritual Life,* Journal, 1930, p. 601.
2. Downey, M. (ed): *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality,* Collegeville, 1993.
3. St Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents, Vol. I Brooklyn, 1985, p. 276.
4. Dodin, A, (ed): *Saint Vincent de Paul: Entretiens Spirituels,* Paris, 1960, pp. 93ff.
5. *Ibid.: pp.* 306ff.
6. *Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission* (English translation), Philadelphia, 1989, pp. 102ff.
7. McCabe, Herbert, OP: *The Teaching of the Catholic Church,* London, 1985, p. 10, q. 35.
8. Gal. 2:20.
9. Tanquery; *op. cit.,* p. 601. The work of Olier which he quotes is entitled *Pietas Seminarii.*
10. Boston, 1985.
11. Albany, 1991.
12. *The Path to No-Self,* p. 7.
13. *Ibid.: p.* 207.

14. *Ibid.: p.* 205.
15. *Review for Religious,* vol. 50 (1991), pp. 738-748.
16. *Ibid.: p.* 739.
17. *Ibid.: p.* 747.
18. "The Interior Castle" in *The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila,* trans. Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, Vol. 2, p. 446
19. *Optatam totius:* n. 8.
20. SVIX, 606.
21. Oxford, 1950.
22. *Ibid.: p.* 273.
23. *Ibid.: p.* 274.
24. *Ibid.*.
25. *Ibid.,* both quotations.
26. *Ibid.: p.* 257.
27. Cf. Barry & Connolly: *The Practice of Spiritual Direction,* San Francisco, 1982, ch. 4.
28. Common Rules: II, 5. (Emphasis added).
29. Cf. Román: San *Vincenzo de Paolo,* Milan, 1986, pp. 77ff.
30. Cf. Coste, P: *The Life and Works of St Vincent de Paul,* trans. J Leonard, London 1934,vol. I, p. 50, and Poole & Slawson: "A New Look at an Old Temptation" in *Colloque* 25 (Spring 1992), pp. 5-23.
31. Abelly: *La Vie du Venerable Serviteur de Dieit Vincent de Paul,* Paris 1664, livre lll, pp. 117-119.
32. Dodin, A: "Monsieur Vincent et la Bible" in "Le Grand Siècle et la Bible", Paris 1989, p. 629.
33. Román: *op. cit.:* pp. 91ff.
34. Román: op. *cit.:* pp 101-117. Cf. McGing, A: "1617 – A Crucial Year for St Vincent" in *Colloque* 17 (Spring 1988), pp. 356-366.
35. Román: *Op. cit.* pp. 130ff.
36. Common Rules II, 7.
37. SV XI, 342-351.
38. Common Rules II, 4.
39. For example, in a booklet entitled *Vincent Depaul, son Expérience Spirititelle et la nôtre* [produced in preparation for the 1980 General Assembly], p. 60.

St Vincent and the French School

Andrew Spelman

Introduction

Both of these words must be carefully examined in the context of the spiritual thinking in the France of St Vincent. The word "school" would seem a misnomer if we wish to designate a collection of people writing of religious experience in a particular era. Likewise the term "French" refers to a geographical region in no way coterminous with the France of the years 1600-1660.

The perplexity is increased by the addition of the word "spirituality", which in fact made its appearance only at the end of the 17th century, when all the spiritual writers involved in St Vincent's time were dead. Besides, since the beginning of the present century, the term "spirituality" has been used in senses and contexts vastly differing from one another.

Given that "spirituality" means spiritual teaching we know that it depends essentially on the Holy Spirit – what St Paul refers to on 164 occasions as being "in Christ Jesus".

A "spirituality" is best defined by the religious experience of the founder, inspirer or "institutor" of the particular movement. Note that these three terms are by no means synonymous. Who, for instance, is the "founder" of our Congregation? Certainly not St Vincent. It is Monsieur and Madame de Gondi, and Jean-François de Gondi. St Vincent is indeed the inspiration and, subsequently, the "institutor" (director) who for 35 years guided the religious development of his disciples. Take the case of Francis de Sales. He was involved with the Visitation nuns for merely eight years. The time of operation of the "institutor" is vital, as is also his religious experience; for there are many "directors" who can in no way be regarded as inspirational.

So, in discussing the French School we would do well to ignore the word "spirituality". A perusal of the history of the Church in France, and of its religious communities in particular, shows the vast differences between those who are regarded as leaders of the French School.

Is St Francis de Sales, for instance, a member of that body? No, for two reasons: firstly, because he was a Savoyard, and at that time Savoy was not part of France. Secondly, Bremond puts him in another category, that of "devout humanist".

What about Bérulle, Olier, Jean Eudes? Do these persons view the future in the same perspective, do they exercise the same functions, do they have anything in common? We can see quite clearly that they each have a different perspective. For instance, certainly after 1614, Bérulle would not even have dined with St Vincent, and vice-versa! Eudes had left the Oratory, probably because he did not feel able to remain in it. Olier had founded the Sulpicians, whose object was to form a company of parish clergy to promote a good liturgy. Even though the Sulpicians later set up seminaries they remained in a fairly narrow parochial perspective. So it would seem that these three, together with St Vincent, could scarcely be said to form a school (community) of religious thought unless a wider definition were given to it. Thus Bremond links them together, as he does, indeed, Marmion and Mgr Guy in the 19th century.

Fundamental principles

So as not to leave the matter uncertain and unresolved we must state certain principles which are fundamental to a discussion of the experience of the inspirers and directors of the religious movements commonly associated with the French School.

Every school of spirituality, if one wishes to use the term, has five basic principles which accord it legitimacy, solidity and assure its orthodoxy in the Catholic religion. These principles are of vital importance in safeguarding Church movements under the above headings. They are: 1. Their end and object, which is surely union with God and can be nothing else, certainly not a cosy club distinguished from all others, nor a grouping of characters of similar disposition. 2. The necessity of the mediatorship of Jesus Christ, and the example given by his life on earth. The exclusion of Jesus is the most powerful indication of error. In passing we might refer to certain editions of *The Rule of Perfection* of Benet of Canfield which have been criticised for omission on this point. Note, however, that a particular edition, a copy of which is kept in the mother-house, 95, rue de Sèvres, Paris, contains a re-insertion of reference to devotion to Christ, neglected in other editions. 3. Supernatural dynamism. Progress of the soul in virtue depends solely on divine grace and the divine gifts. This dependence is totally opposed to a sort of atheistic humanism, a reflection of which can be seen in many efforts to turn St Vincent into a "philosopher" pure and simple. 4. The double objective of St Paul, i.e. his insistence on the putting away of the "old man" with its purely human perish-

able character, and the putting on of the "new man" in Jesus Christ, (cf St Paul "In Christo Jesu"). 5. The acceptance of our material and temporal condition which rejects all "angelism" and emphasises the abiding permanence of God in our world.

Any "school" or "spirituality" is only the expression of the Church and of Jesus Christ, and is, therefore, Catholic, an adaptation to the changing circumstances of space and time. Our food, our means of communication, to mention but a few mutabilities, are different from those obtaining for St Vincent and demand that we adapt the "natural" circumstances to the supernatural (fixed and unchanging) and equally cause our "supernatural" to infiltrate the world around us, that is, that we bring whatever in us is of God to bear on this human milieu.

The above five principles are vital in recognising a "school", in separating clearly a movement or mere tendency from an institution, which has at its base a religious experience, such as these five principles, which are objective, abstract and find room for application solely thanks to the religious experience of the founder. Thus it is difficult to discern the fundamental religious experience of many congregations, v.g. that of the Montfort Congregation, or of the Sulpicians.

It is in this fundamental experience of the founder that we must seek the guiding spirituality, because it is his experience which permits his disciples to be his heirs. What the "inspiring founder" has experienced keeps the disciples in the proper continuity of his spirit. If, for instance, we glance at the introductory letter to our Common Rules we find the word "mission" very clearly indicated. It is "to continue the mission of Jesus Christ", it is a question of continuing what Christ has done in St Vincent, but in following the examples and inspirations that they (i.e. Christ and St Vincent) have given us. It is the "inspirer" who maintains the life of a congregation.

Without being too malicious it might be possible to say that many religious have reached the stage of having a very large portrait of their superior general, almost the same size portraits of other superiors, and only a small replica of their founder. They have relegated him (or her) to the background. Many female religious, for example, have St Vincent de Paul as their patron; they celebrate his feast with magnificence, both liturgically and mensally, but the teaching of St Vincent is too demanding for them. Why? Because he simply demands of them that they be Christians.

The idea of tradition is, of course, of immense importance also. It is not merely a matter of copying what one's founder has done, but

also of paying attention to what he has taught, and in this respect, of course, we are very well equipped.

Down through the ages and into our own time we have been privileged to have among us confreres who avoided errors in seeking to live out the experience of our founder.

Perhaps it may be helpful to mention St Vincent's feelings about the contemporary communities with which he was in contact, as expressed on the 16th and 18th of September 1660, eleven and nine days before his death. In the first instance he has been told of a mission just given by the Eudists, a great inspiring mission which gained a great measure of publicity. He said:

> I acknowledge that these good men are animated by a lively and ardent spirit. May God grant that God is all we seek, and that a similar spirit be kept at bay from our community (XIII 184).

And in the second instance:

> There are in Paris four houses which are doing the same work, the Oratorians, St Sulpice, St Nicolas-du-Chardonnet and that miserable little Collège des Bons Fnfants. The people at St Sulpice do their utmost to repress "spirits", keep them safe from earthly affections, raise them to great heights of illumination, exalted sentiments, and we see that all those who have gone through that institution set great store by all that. In many of them that idea grows or sometimes diminishes. I do not know if they do any scholastic theology.
>
> The people in St Nicolas [with Fr Bourdoise and Fr Féret] don't aim so high but deal with the work of the vineyard, forming men who will be hard-working in church ministry and, for that reason, keep to practical matters, always low-key, sweeping, doing the washing-up, scouring etc. And they have the means to do this because, by and large, they are there free.
>
> Let us go on. As to the Oratory, let us leave them there and say nothing about them. Of all these four houses the one which succeeds the best, without any argument, is St Nicolas where there are so many little "suns" all around. I have never heard any complaint about it, but edification everywhere. There is the most useful one and the one we should try to imitate. You know that they do no scholastic theology but only moral, and practical lectures, and I am very much of the mind that we should be asking God for the grace to imitate them (XIII 185-6).

Becoming a Bishop and Remaining a Vincentian: the Struggles of Archbishop John Joseph Lynch CM

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Introduction

The Congregation of the Mission proved a rich source of bishops as the rolls of the early American hierarchy testify. A study of the lives of some of these men reveals their efforts to avoid the burden of the episcopate, to heed the needs of the Church manifested in the mandate from Rome, and to preserve their Vincentian heritage (1). Their reluctance to assume the episcopate reflected the tradition of the Congregation of the Mission not to seek ecclesiastical dignities.

During the first half of the nineteenth century the general assemblies of the community reaffirmed this ideal several times. The eighteenth general assembly (1835) echoed this tradition when it declared:

> The Assembly especially laments at this time the very frequent promotion of members of our community to the episcopate, which inflicts great loss both on the spirit and the body of the Congregation. Therefore it earnestly begs the Very Reverend Superior General to exhort our confreres to be mindful of the humility of St Vincent de Paul, our Father, and chapter three of the Common Rules, where it is forbidden to seek an ecclesiastical dignity under any pretext whatsoever (2).

The nineteenth general assembly (1843) discussed the same problem. The delegates went a step further, however, and imposed a sanction on those who accepted episcopal office without the consent of the superior general. The assembly decreed that Vincentians "who

accepted the episcopal office will not enjoy the accustomed suffrages [for the dead] unless they have received the permission of the superior general" (3). The twenty-first general assembly (1861) endorsed the same provision.

The delegates who gathered for the twenty-second general assembly (1867) rescinded this sanction. In the interim Rome had intervened. On 17 September 1862 Rome directed that the suffrages be restored to Vincentian bishops who had accepted the episcopate without the general's permission. The assembly unanimously revoked the decree of 1843 "in order to give a new sign of the filial obedience and reverence which the Congregation of the Mission has always shown the Holy See" (4).

This action was taken as a result of the initiative of John Joseph Lynch CM, the third bishop and first archbishop of Toronto, Canada, who had incurred the sanction when he became coadjutor bishop of Toronto in 1859. His exclusion from the community and the suffrages offered for deceased Vincentians troubled him deeply. He successfully challenged the decree of the nineteenth general assembly to assure the restoration of his Vincentian heritage. He carried his case to Rome and won.

John Joseph Lynch was born on 6 February 1816 near Clones, Co. Monaghan, Ireland (5). During his early childhood his family moved to Lucan, near Dublin, where he began his education. In 1835 he enrolled in Castleknock College, Dublin, which the newly founded Vincentian community in Ireland had just opened. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1839 and was sent to Paris for his novitiate and studies. Lynch remained in Paris for three years and returned to Dublin in 1842 as a deacon to teach at his alma mater. He received priesthood on 10 June 1843. In early 1846 John Mary Odin CM, vicar apostolic of Texas and later bishop of Galveston and archbishop of New Orleans, visited Dublin to recruit volunteers for his mission which had been confided to the Vincentians (6). Lynch answered the call. He laboured only a short time in Texas where he became very ill. While recuperating in New Orleans he ministered to the wounded from the Mexican war. Since his poor health prevented his return to Texas, he went to St Mary's, the Barrens, where he taught and eventually became superior. In 1856 at the invitation of John Timon CM, first bishop of Buffalo, he founded the seminary of Our Lady of the Angels, Niagara Falls, New York. In 1859 he was appointed coadjutor bishop with the right of succession to Bishop Armand-François de Charbonnel, who had

ruled Toronto since 1850 (7). The latter had long sought a coadjutor to assist him in meeting the demands of a diocese burdened by debt, rent by clerical strife, and buffeted by an aggressive and powerful Protestant community. Charbonnel resigned immediately, and Lynch became bishop of Toronto in 1860. When the archdiocese of Toronto was created in 1870, Lynch became its first archbishop.

The search for an auxiliary in Toronto

As the Catholic Church in Canada spread westward it frequently turned to the French-speaking clergy of Canada and France to find bishops. The appointment of French-speaking bishops did not pass without protest from the English-speaking, Irish clergy who served the dioceses of Ontario, then called Upper Canada. At times during the 1850s French-speaking bishops ruled all four dioceses of Upper Canada: Toronto, London, Kingston, and Ottawa.

This practice moved the clergy of Kingston, Upper Canada, to protest to Rome what they perceived as French domination. Their memorial of 4 September 1855, while conceding the virtue of the bishops, faulted them for their poor English. The document reminded the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith that the inhabitants of Upper Canada were mainly English and Irish. The signers complained that the hierarchy of Quebec, whom the Congregation consulted, recommended "for the episcopate men from France rather than [men] from Ireland or England to rule a clergy and a people completely different from them in character, language and education" (8).

The memorial dwelt on the language deficiency of the bishops. This, it alleged, provoked ridicule, led English-speaking priests to leave dioceses, and deprived the Church of competent spokesmen to defend its interests. The document faulted especially Bishop Charbonnel of Toronto who, it charged, jeopardized the cause of Catholic education by his lacklustre defence of Catholic schools (9).

The plaintiffs circulated the memorial among the bishops. Bishop Eugene Joseph-Bruno Guigues of Ottawa (10) wrote to Rome on 29 October 1855 to neutralise the effect of the memorial (11). He spent most of his energy attacking its authors. He felt obliged to rescue Charbonnel "against whom this memorial seems to be especially directed". He listed the achievements of the bishop of Toronto, the reduction of the diocesan debt, the foundation of new parishes and schools, the introduction of the Christian Brothers into the diocese,

and the doubling of the number of the clergy. Significantly he omitted any reference to the prelate's command of English. He closed the letter with a warning certain to carry weight in Rome buffeted by the liberal winds of the Risorgimento: "If the democratic spirit causes so many evils among ine laymen of America, its consequences are much more disastrous among ecclesiastics".

What Bishop Guigues omitted in his brief to Rome he confided to a fellow bishop. Like Charbonnel he was a native of France and had to learn English in order to serve his bilingual diocese. He noted that Charbonnel began to study English late in life and confessed that he was "far from speaking it well enough; it is said he makes one rather weep" (12). He admitted that Charbonnel's lack of a command of English had prejudiced the cause of the Catholic schools. And he observed that the prelate had frequently asked Rome to name a coadjutor to assist him in Toronto.

Charbonnel. the son of a French nobleman, became the second bishop of Toronto, Canada, in 1850. He found the diocese burdened with considerable debt, served by a factious Irish clergy, and, as capital of Upper Canada and the seat of the provincial parliament, the scene of the heated debate concerning public taxes for Catholic schools. Long before the complaint of the clergy of Kingston. Charbonnel realised his shortcomings and had requested a coadjutor. On 3 June 1852 he wrote to Bishop Guigues asking for his signature on such a petition. He pleaded: "I have the greatest need of an assistant… He must be an Irishman" (13). He unsuccessfully recruited Patrick Dowd. a Sulpician from Montreal, for the post (14). Dowd refused episcopal appointments on three different occasions despite the pressure from both Rome and the Canadian bishops that he accept (15).

During 1857-58 Bishop Charbonnel spent Iwenty months in Europe. He visited Rome to present his plea for a coadjutor directly to Pius IX. He described his emotional meeting with the pope to whom he confessed "my great difficulty and sometimes my inability to understand English, to speak it and to write it as my position demands… [Pius IX] stopped my sobs by telling me to nominate my Vicar General [Jean-Marie Bruyere] despite his French background and he promised him as my coadjutor" (16).

The Canadian bishops again refused to second Charbonnel's plans. He returned to Toronto greatly disappointed and shared his frustration with his flock in a surprisingly candid pastoral letter which ends on a note of desperation:

> Pius IX was induced by what we said of our insufficiency, and directed us to appoint our present Vicar General with the hope of promoting him as coadjutor Bishop. The Most Eminent Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith was similarly disposed. However… Archbishop [Gaetano] Bedini, the Secretary of that Congregation, and the Bishops of Canada were consulted on the matter; and in their opinion we did not need any coadjutor bishop (17). You have been doomed to receive me again… as your sole Bishop (18).

A Vincentian candidate: John J Lynch CM

At the time the Catholics of Toronto were in an uproar. A group of Irish led by disaffected priests posted placards throughout the city attacking Charbonnel (19). The besieged prelate continued to search for a collaborator who would attract the support of his fellow bishops. In March 1859 he broached his new plan to Bishop Ignace Bourget of Montreal (20). Charbonnel had served in Montreal during the decade prior to his appointment to Toronto and presumably shared the ultramontane and francophile sentiments of Bourget. Charbonnel mentioned that he had been urged to turn to the Congregation of the Mission for a coadjutor. He was convinced that

> the Lazarists would be the best door at which we could knock in order to have a good Irish missionary bishop for Toronto. It is certain that their community in Dublin is the most regular. I was edified there. The superior, Father McNamara, is the confessor of the archbishop. In the United States they have given two holy bishops of Buffalo and Galveston, Timon and Odin. There is a Lazarist, Father Lynch, superior of a college on the American side near Niagara Falls, who preached our last diocesan clergy retreat in September. All the priests were very happy with him. I esteem and love him greatly for his good sense, zeal, spirit of poverty and his facile and practical speaking (21).

Although Charbonnel preferred John Joseph Lynch to other candidates advanced by his Canadian colleagues, he stated his willingness to leave the choice to others. He suggested enlisting the services of the archbishop of Dublin to negotiate the matter with Rome. He concluded with yet another plea for the support of the Canadian hierarchy.

Three months later with the process for the appointment of Lynch well advanced, he defended his choice of Lynch with none of the indifference he had shown earlier. He indignantly denied the charge of having revealed his plans to Lynch. At the same time he reminded Bourget of the impatience that Rome had with candidates refusing appointments. In view of that Charbonnel opined, evidently referring to Lynch's nomination, that it would have been better "to be assured of the consent of our first candidate before sending his name to Rome. His superior in Paris has promised to leave him free" (22).

The embattled prelate had evidently succeeded in placing Lynch at the top of the *terna.* In addition he had secured the support of at least some of his fellow bishops, notably Bishop Bourget of Montreal. This new effort to procure a coadjutor met with surprisingly quick success. On 17 October 1859 he wrote to Bourget to announce the reception of the papal bull appointing Lynch coadjutor bishop "with the right of succession". The same letter included the plans for the episcopal ordination on 20 November 1859 (23). With evident personal relief he announced the news to the diocese. "Thank God, at last we have a coadjutor of Toronto, *cum futura successione* in the person of Rev. Jn Lynch CM, Superior of the College of Our Lady of Angels, N.Y." (24).

On 20 November 1859, the twentieth anniversary of Lynch's entry into the Congregation of the Mission, Bishop Charbonnel, assisted by Bishops John Timon CM, of Buffalo, and John Farrell of Hamilton, ordained Lynch bishop of Echines *in partibus infidelium* (25). The *Toronto Globe* noted the event and the large number who attended, and reported that "the selection of Mr Lynch is said to be looked upon with great favor both by the clergy and laity" (26).

Charbonnel left Toronto shortly after the ceremony never to return again. He turned over the administration of the diocese to Lynch "with all my faculties and full jurisdiction in temporal and spiritual concerns" (27). He went to Rome "with a common letter signed by all the bishops of the Province mentioning the object of our application to the Holy See for an ultimate decision" (28). The "application" which he carried to Rome was his petition to resign the see of Toronto and enter the Capuchins. With undisguised relief Charbonnel reported to Lynch from Rome that "yesterday [2 May] the Holy Father granted everything I desired: my renunciation of Toronto and of the new plans for New Orleans, and my becoming a Capuchin… I shall have a decree dispatched on this matter which will be sent to you and establish you as Bishop of Toronto" (29).

The Roman documents appointing Lynch the bishop of Toronto arrived within the month, and he took possession of the see on the feast of Corpus Christi, 7 June 1860.

Lynch's campaign to remain a Vincentian

In Lynch's mind, however, the process of becoming the bishop of Toronto was not complete. He had asked Charbonnel, as he passed through Paris, to inquire at the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission about the letter he had sent to the superior general, Jean-Baptiste Etienne CM (30). He had evidently requested the general's permission or at least his blessing for becoming a bishop. Lynch had received no response before his episcopal ordination. Charbonnel informed him that "Father Etienne assures me that he had responded to you in a timely fashion and that since his letter had not reached you, [he] has written again" (31).

Lynch wanted to preserve his bond with the Congregation. By accepting the episcopate without the permission of the general he had incurred the sanction of the decree of the nineteenth general assembly which excluded from the suffrages for the dead members of the community those who acted as he did. He prized his Vincentian heritage and wished to keep it to the extent his new office permitted.

His studies in Paris from 1839 to 1842 had created a special bond of affection for the motherhouse. This affection Lynch showed by the frequent and lengthy letters he wrote to the superior general as a missionary in the United States. In addition he had represented the American province at the assemblies held in Paris in 1849 and 1855. His letters reveal a deep attachment to the community and his reverence for the superior general. After returning from the sexennial assembly of 1855 he wrote to Etienne revealing his regard for the general and his attachment to the motherhouse. "I had the consolation of opening my heart to my Father and my Superior General. Thanks be to God the two principal temptations of which I spoke to you have diminished" (32). He went on to express his conviction that Etienne should visit the American province to have first-hand knowledge of conditions and to initiate reforms. He supported the general's proposal that the American students be sent to the motherhouse for their formation and studies. This proposal led him to exclaim: "What a new life for the Congregation in this country if it had its members formed at St Lazare!".

The American authorities opposed sending novices and students to Paris for formation. As a compromise Lynch brought from Paris the

rules of the novitiate which were introduced at the Barrens where he was superior. After he left for Buffalo, James Buysch CM, an ally of Lynch, reported to Etienne about the new novitiate programme and Lynch's part in it:

> Finally the Seminary has been set up in the same way as that of Paris, in so far as it is possible. I nourish the quiet hope of seeing one day in our seminary a true copy, so to say, of that of Paris. I assure you, Most Honored Father, that if Mr Lynch had a fault in this regard, it was that he showed too much attachment to the motherhouse of Paris, that he did not hide it enough from the eyes of those who, it was known, were less than enthusiastic for an intimate union with France (33).

In view of his known attachment to Paris and his support of the proposals of the superior general, Lynch could have expected that his Vincentian identity was above reproach. He evidently hoped for a favourable reply from Paris even though he knew, presumably, of the negative response his fellow bishop and friend, John Timon, had received (34). In addition he was probably encouraged by the assurance given to Charbonnel that Lynch's Vincentian superiors "would leave him free". This freedom, of course, meant neither that he had the general's approval for his decision to accept the episcopate nor that he would remain a member of the Congregation with the privilege of the suffrages for the dead.

Lynch soon realised that he had incurred the sanction of the decree of 1843 as had his fellow Vincentian bishops, John M Odin and John Timon, one of his consecrators, the preacher at his episcopal ordination, and his spiritual director.

On 3 May 1844 Etienne asked his council in Paris its advice in the face of the imminent consecration of Odin as vicar apostolic of Texas. The council advised that he be not permitted to accept the office for fear that "this would establish an unfortunate precedent. And if Monsignor Odin decides to accept without permission, he will find himself, by that action, outside of the Congregation" (35). This decision evidently fashioned the policy which Etienne adopted with regard to the requests of other American Vincentian bishops.

In 1847 Timon informed the superior general that he had accepted the see of Buffalo. He asked to continue be considered a member of the Congregation and receive the usual suffrages at his death. The general council in Paris reviewed his petition but concluded as it had

for Odin. Since he had accepted the episcopate without having asked permission, it was of the opinion that Timon's petition "ought not to be granted, in accord with the decree of the nineteenth General assembly" (36).

The issue was raised again with Lynch's nomination. He wrote to Etienne for the superior general's permission to accept this appointment. He waited more than two months for the response which never arrived. Later Lynch recalled that at the time archbishops and bishops pressed him to accept the call. Among those who urged him to proceed with his episcopal ordination without the blessing of the superior general was Timon (37). It is reasonable to surmise the bishop of Buffalo had informed his fellow Vincentian of the negative response he had received from the superior general when he had made a similar request a dozen years earlier.

The appeal to Rome

If and when Etienne eventually responded to Lynch's petition is unknown. The young bishop, however, soon realised that he had fallen under the same sanction which had cut Odin and Timon from the Vincentian community. Unlike his Vincentian episcopal colleagues Lynch did not accept the general's decision as final. He turned to Rome. He took his case to the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith.

Prodded by Lynch's complaint Cardinal Alessandro Barnabo, the Prefect of Propaganda, wrote to Etienne for an explanation of the decree of the nineteenth general assembly (38). The superior general responded at length to the prelate. He expanded on the basis and motives for his refusal to extend the privilege of suffrages to the North American prelates (39).

After quoting the decree of the assembly of 1843 Etienne pointed out that Timon himself had requested the decree while a delegate at the assembly. He added: "despite this [he] accepted the bishopric of Buffalo, without the approval of the Superior General". He went on to emphasise that the suffrages were not granted by the "Rules or Constitutions" of the community but by a decree of a general assembly as a "favour to members of the family who have edified it by their virtues and aided it by their works".

Etienne explained further that the assembly felt that a number of Vincentians secured the episcopate in ways "which the spirit of their state could not approve". Ambition in this matter "had become danger-

ous and risked altering profoundly the spirit of St Vincent who was characterised by humility". The assembly believed it was its duty to remedy this disorder in whatever way possible.

He added that the assembly believed that some Vincentians were raised to the episcopate although "their conduct and disposition made them hardly worthy of this and it [the assembly] wanted to free the Congregation of all responsibility for the consequences that might result". Etienne noted that some of those who became bishops even turned hostile to the Congregation. Hence the assembly believed that it should not grant to these prelates a favour "which belonged to the true children of St Vincent".

Finally Etienne appealed to the constitutions of the Congregation "approved by the Holy See [which] forbid the Superior General to accept any ecclesiastical dignity without the consent of a general assembly. It [the assembly] believed to be acting in the spirit of these Constitutions by demanding that a missionary not accept the episcopate without the authorisation of the Superior General". He then assured the cardinal that the assembly intended in no way to inconvenience the "Sovereign Pontiff to whom our entire Congregation is committed without reserve".

Etienne's view of his role in episcopal appointments

Etienne then proceeded to sketch what he saw as his role in the process of designating Vincentians for the episcopate, a role which probably raised the eyebrows of the Roman authorities.

> The Superior General will always consider as his sacred duty that he himself designate for him [the Pope] the subjects most suitable to serve the church when he judges that circumstances demand that he choose them in order to raise them to the episcopate. He knows that he must be able to make sacrifices when it is a question of procuring the general good of the church. As much as he is disposed to enter into the views of the Holy See in this regard, he is grievously affected when missionaries are raised to so high a dignity whom he does not judge worthy of his confidence and to whom he would not dare confide the direction of the Daughters of Charity. When Your Eminence asked me to prod M. Amat to accept the bishopric of Monterey, I hastened to urge his consent because I saw him as capable of all the services to this church (40). I shall always be disposed to act in a similar manner when the same circumstances present themselves.

In this response Fr Etienne fashioned for himself a role in episcopal appointments which went far beyond the rather modest wording of the decrees of the general assemblies. He found in them the basis for his being actively consulted when Rome planned to raise Vincentians to the episcopate. He evidently believed that he should judge of the suitability of the candidates and the needs of the diocese they were to govern. The "consent of the superior general" looked not only to the spiritual welfare of the Congregation and its members but assumed an ecclesial dimension. In Etienne's eyes there was more at stake than the grant of suffrages to Vincentian bishops.

An examination of the text of the decrees makes clear that their goal was to preserve the spirit of humility among the members of the Congregation and to save for the works of the Community its talented members. The eighteenth general assembly (1835) gave but one reason for its action, "the great injury to both the soul and body of the Congregation" which episcopal promotions from its ranks caused.

The nineteenth general assembly (1843) mandated the withdrawal of the suffrages and spoke for the first time of the consent of the superior general with regard to episcopal appointments. Again the only motive for the action of the assembly was concern for the loss suffered by the Congregation by episcopal appointments. Both assemblies focused on the internal needs of the community. One finds no support for a claim to a role for the superior general in the process of episcopal appointments.

No transcripts or summaries of the discussions of the assemblies which passed these decrees exist. Etienne's letter to Cardinal Barnabo mentions for the first time that a concern for the quality of those designated for the episcopate moved the assemblies to take the action which they did.

On 22 April 1839 Etienne, not yet superior general, wrote to Timon about American Vincentians becoming bishops. He discussed the rumours surrounding Timon and Odin as candidates for the episcopate (41). He complained that the efforts of Bishop Joseph Rosati CM to secure Timon for St Louis showed that Rosati had "very little zeal for the Congregation". He concluded with the hope that should they be nominated "God would inspire in the both of you the generosity to refuse a dignity which would inflict such a terrible blow to our mission in America". At this time Etienne's only concern was to preserve for the works of the Congregation its talented members. He does not see any role for the central administration of the Community beyond

exhorting the members concerned.

Jean-Baptiste Nozo (42), superior general, echoed the same concern when he wrote to Timon a month later on the same subject (43). He saw the appointment of Timon as a threat to the future of the American Vincentian mission. He begged his confrere to refuse the appointment and supported his plea by appealing to the "general assemblies, especially the last one". The superior general's authority at this point did not go beyond exhortation.

These and other letters dealing with the same subject give no hint on the part of the administration in Paris of a concern for anything but the preservation of a tradition of not seeking or accepting ecclesiastical dignities in order to foster humility and to husband the personnel for the works of the Congregation.

As noted earlier, by 1862 Etienne had fashioned for the superior general a much more ambitious role in the designation of Vincentian bishops. He saw it as a "sacred duty" that he "propose" to Rome the Vincentians he deemed suitable for the episcopal office. In addition to judging of the suitability of candidates he expected the superior general to take an initiative in the process. While he recognised the need to make sacrifices for the common good of the Church, he claimed the right to judge whether the needs of the Church warranted such action. In addition it is clear that any dialogue concerning episcopal appointments would take place between the superior general and the Holy See, not between a subject and the Holy See. He cited his intervention in the appointment of Thaddeus Amat in 1853 as a model of how he conceived his role. He also gratuitously questioned the suitability of unnamed Vincentians who had been made bishops without following this scenario.

Rome responded directly to the question of the suffrages and made no judgement concerning the pretensions of the superior general in the matter of episcopal appointments. Cardinal Barnabo directed Etienne to abolish the decree and restore to the Vincentian bishops the right to the suffrages which had been denied. Always obedient to the Holy See Etienne complied. The cardinal informed Lynch of this on 7 January 1863. "M. Etienne… affirms that the said decree was abolished according to the sanction of His Holiness given on August 30. I am sure that you will be pleased at my acquainting you of the favourable result of an affair which concerns your Lordship"(44).

Etienne and Vincentian bishops

One may conclude that both Timon's and Lynch's petitions to Etienne failed to receive a favourable response because neither had followed the pattern of Amat's appointment. Unlike Amat they both wrote to Paris to inform Etienne of their appointment and to request that they continue to be considered members of the Community with a right to the suffrages for the dead. The general was not asked to "consent" to their accepting the episcopate. Amat had written Etienne to request that he block his nomination (45). Rome intervened and asked the superior general to press Amat to accept. In this case the general was involved in the judgement concerning suitability of the candidate as he was not with Timon and Lynch.

With regard to the appointments to Buffalo and Toronto Etienne apparently received no consultation from Rome. He evidently thought that the "consent of the Superior General" implied more than approval of *a fait accompli.* And while he might not attempt to block their advancement, he wished to avoid giving any indication of his approval of promotions in which he believed he should have been involved and from which he was excluded.

Lynch maintains Vincentian connections

It appears that the superior general never informed Lynch of the restoration mandated by the Holy See. More than a year later on the occasion of writing to a friend at the motherhouse in Paris Lynch reflected with some bitterness:

> I enclose the copy of the letter of Card. Barnabo. I presume I need add nothing from myself. St Vincent had too much reverence for Rome and Bishops to suggest any other course to his successor than to conform to the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff. I get no information of the death of any of our confreres and of course, mine will not be noticed either… Whether our poor confreres in Purgatory will rejoice in their not getting a Bishop's Mass for their benefit, I leave to the theologians to decide. Still when I hear from the newspapers of the death of any of them, I celebrate a Mass knowing that some will rejoice in it (46).

Despite this clash with the superior general Lynch maintained as close ties as possible with his Vincentian confreres. He corresponded frequently with his fellow Vincentian bishop, John Timon. He visited him on occasion, travelled to Rome with him for *ad limina* visits, and

celebrated the last sacraments with Timon when the bishop of Buffalo died in 1867.

Lynch received letters from his Vincentian brothers. No doubt he was heartened by the likes of the one he received from Hyppolyte Gandolfo CM, with whom he had laboured in Missouri. Gandolfo wanted to cheer a

> poor bishop who believes still that *filii matris meae pugnaverunt* and *pugnant contra me.* At any rate I send you a small purse for the carrying of the B. Sacrament… that the frequent use of it may in some measure mind [sic] you that *non omnes pugnant contra te…* I hope that this my short preaching to you who should preach to me will determine you to come [to visit in Emmitsburg, Md.] and then wine, wine, wine and wine, macaroni, macaroni, etc.
>
> Excuse my impertinent and rather funny way, but I can't help it, as somebody say [sic] you are still my good, old Johnny that was used [sic] to live at Barrens and once in a while trot to St Genevieve. I give you permission to laugh at these my *sottises,* [jests] provided I have your benediction.
>
> P.S. I heard that at the next big Sanhedrin to be held in Paris they will strike out that odious, I should say between our two noses, ridiculous *statutum,* the author of which has been *ab initio* our good, old John Timon (47).

"Their next big Sanhedrin to be held in Paris", of course, was the twenty-second general assembly which met in August 1867 and formally repealed the decree of 1843 against which Lynch had fought. One has little difficulty in sensing the bonds of affection which bound Lynch to his Vincentian community. He showed this by his attempt, ultimately unsuccessful, to establish a Vincentian house in his diocese (48). At times he returned to the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels which he had founded for ordinations and celebrations. At the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the seminary he delivered a major address (49). In 1874 he travelled to the Vincentian motherhouse in Philadelphia to ordain Vincentian candidates for sacred orders (50).

Lynch's formal rehabilitation

Unfortunately Lynch had to wait until the year before his death to receive from Paris official word of his rehabilitation in the Congregation. A letter from Antoine Fiat CM, the superior general,

officially informing him of his restoration moved him deeply (51). In his response to Fiat the aging prelate recalled the circumstances of his episcopal promotion and the tension, if not anguish, he experienced before accepting the episcopate:

> I received with great pleasure and gratitude your New Year's greetings… I am very grateful to you, Most Honoured Father, for the external rehabilitation which you have given me in our dear Congregation. His Holiness, Pius IX, however, had already assured me that I possessed all the privileges of one of its members. It caused me very great pain to think that after having worked constantly for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, I had been cut off for the sole fact that I had consented to become a coadjutor bishop without the permission of the Superior General.
>
> Before making my decision I waited more than two months for the response and counsel of M. Etienne. I only gave in following the advice and the almost formal order of my holy confessor and confrere, Bishop Timon as well as other archbishops and bishops. One of them went so far as to say that I would commit a mortal sin if I refused to submit (52).

Lynch described his prayers to discern the will of God, the repugnance he felt in leaving his beloved community to assume the life of a diocesan priest, and the aversion he experienced in surrendering his American citizenship to become once again a subject of Great Britain. He suffered great spiritual turmoil in arriving at his decision, which only dissipated when he surrendered himself to the will of God.

He went on to assure Fiat that he still lived like a missionary and found great pleasure in reading the *Annales* and "your letters so full of edification". He recalled with affection the Vincentian priests, brothers, students, and novices with whom he had lived at the motherhouse from 1839-42, many of whom had died. He closed with the protestation that "my affection for our dear Congregation is not lessened in any way and my devotion for St Vincent and his works is as lively and ardent as ever".

The superior general did not allow this protestation of filial piety and Vincentian devotion to pass without response. Fiat testified to the edification he experienced in reading Lynch's letter. He added that "I have always considered the bishops chosen by the Holy See in the bosom of the family of St Vincent as living intimately united to it

in spirit and heart and for that reason I have determined that they be listed in the *Catalogue* in a place of honour, at the beginning of the provinces to which they belonged" (53).

Vincentian bishops and the Congregation

This correspondence in the evening of Lynch's life makes clear that Etienne never informed the prelate personally of the rehabilitation mandated by the Holy See and unanimously approved by the twenty-second general assembly. The annual catalogues of the personnel of the Congregation did not reflect this restoration during the Etienne regime and for the following decade. The names of some Vincentian bishops found a place in catalogues. Those named held some office in the Congregation, usually that of superior and in some cases visitor of a mission. In addition these bishops laboured in missions staffed by the French provinces, for example Persia and China. Etienne apparently was satisfied with the selection of these bishops and the role which he may have played in their appointment. He apparently could not expand his vision of Vincentian episcopal ministry beyond this French missionary matrix.

Etienne did show some flexibility in this matter. In 1847 he extended to Bishop Ferdinand Girardi CM (54), of the province of Naples, "the favour of continuing to be part of the Congregation and to enjoy its suffrages after death" because Girardi had been promoted before the decree of 1843 and continued to be devoted to the Company (55). His name, however, never appeared in the catalogue as did those of the French missionary bishops. The same must be said of Thaddeus Amat whose episcopal promotion Etienne had seconded at the request of the Holy See. Amat's name disappeared from the personnel catalogue as did those of Odin, Timon and Lynch, who failed to win the general's approval.

One can detect a change in the attitude of Etienne toward the appointment of American Vincentians to the episcopate after the assembly in 1867. The *Annales* (56) carried the letter which Stephen V Ryan CM wrote to Etienne to announce his appointment to succeed John Timon in Buffalo (57). Ryan spoke of his reluctance to accept the office and his desire to remain "always a humble and devoted child of the Little Company". The general noted with approval Ryan's elevation which he had accepted only after having received a formal order from Pius IX (58). It does not appear, however, that he played any role in the appointment.

Conclusions

One is warranted in concluding that Etienne failed to show a breadth of spirit in this entire affair. It is not clear how he responded to the petitions from his American subjects who sought his approval for their episcopal appointments. Charbonnel testified that Etienne claimed he had answered Lynch's petition in due time, although no trace of or reference to this response exists (59). In addition Lynch had some reason to anticipate a favourable reply from Paris in 1859 since Charbonnel in the days before Lynch's consecration reported that "his superior in Paris has promised me to leave him free"(60).

Moreover one has to say that Etienne complied only minimally with the directives from the Holy See. While the twenty-second general assembly ratified the papal decision by rescinding the noxious statute, Etienne never mentioned the revocation in his long circular letter which described the work of the body (61). Nor did he have the graciousness to inform those affected by the revocation of their changed status. Lynch had to depend on the Holy See for this information. Furthermore Lynch served as one of the consecrators of Bishop Stephen V Ryan and presumably knew of Etienne's response to Ryan's letter informing the general of his elevation to the episcopate in circumstances very similar to those which surrounded Lynch's promotion nine years earlier. Yet Etienne allowed Lynch's status in the Congregation to go without official notice on his part.

Finally the revocation of the decree had no effect on the annual catalogue which listed the members of the Congregation. Lynch and his fellow non-French bishops had to await the 1880s for their names to reappear. And only in 1878 did the annual necrology of the Congregation carry the names of deceased non-French bishops when it reported the deaths of two Americans, Bishops Thaddeus Amat and Michael Domenec.

Little more than a year after his formal reconciliation with Paris, on 12 May 1888 Archbishop John Joseph Lynch CM died. As was his wish his name appeared on the annual necrology of deceased Vincentians (62). He is buried beside the cathedral of St Michael in Toronto where he had served and preached for almost thirty years. He left his Vincentian mark on his final mission. He had adopted as his episcopal seal the seal of the Congregation of the Mission. It graces the stained glass window above his grave and for many years served as the quasi-official seal of the archdiocese of Toronto.

Notes

1. Editorial staff, Vincentian Studies Institute, "A Survey of American Vincentian History, 1815-1987", pp. 43-45, and "Appendix D: Vincentian Bishops", pp. 475-81, in *The American Vincentians. A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States 1815-1987,* John E Rybolt, ed.. Brooklyn, 1988.
2. *Collectio Selecta Decretorum Conventuum Genralium Congregationis Missionis,* Paris, 1837, p.80. Unless otherwise noted all documents have been translated by the author.
3. *Collectio Selecta Decretorum Conventuum Generalium Congregationis Missionis,* Paris, 1845, p. *75.*
4. *Collectio Selecta Decretorum Conventuum Generalium Congregationis Missionis,* Paris, 1882, p. 165.
5. H C McKeown: *The Life and Labors of Most Rev. John Joseph Lynch DD, Cong. Miss., first Archbishop of Toronto,* Montreal & Toronto, 1886; Charles W Humphries: "John Joseph Lynch", *Dictionary of Canadian Biography,* Toronto, 1982, 11:535-38 (hereinafter cited as *DCB.* These should be read in the light of a "Sketch of the Life of Archbishop Lynch", Nd, by J F McBride, Secretary of J J Lynch, Archives of the Archdiocese of Toronto (hereinafter cited as AAT), and "A Synopsis of the Chronology of the Life of J J Lynch to 1849" written by J J Lynch (AAT, JJLBoxI).
6. Jean-Marie Odin (1801-1870) was born in Ambierle, France. He studied at the seminary of St Sulpice, Lyons, where he was recruited for the mission of Louisiana. After he arrived in the United States he entered the Congregation of the Mission. He engaged in pastoral work in Arkansas and Texas. He declined the see of Detroit on the advice of John Timon CM. On 16 July 1841 he was elected vicar apostolic of Texas. He became bishop of Galveston in 1846 and archbishop of New Orleans in 1860. While attending Vatican Council I he fell ill and returned to his home, Ambierle, France, where he died 25 May 1870. See H C Bezou: "Odin, John Mary", *New Catholic Encyclopedia.* New York. 1967, 10:643-44 (hereinafter cited as *NCE}.*
7. Armand-Francois-Marie de Charbonnel (1802-1891) was born at Chateau du Flachat near Monistrol-sur-Loire on 1 December 1802. He was the son of a nobleman who had supported the royalist cause during the French Revolution. After studies at St Sulpice, Paris, he entered the Sulpicians. He came to Montreal in 1839. On 2 May 1850 he was consecrated bishop of Toronto by Pius IX. He resigned Toronto in 1860 and returned to Europe where he entered the Capuchins. He served as auxiliary bishop of Lyons and died in Crest, France, on 29 March 1891 (Murray W Nicholson and J S Moir. "Charbonnel. Armand-François-Marie de", *DCB,* Toronto, 1990, 12:182-85).
8. "Epistola Sacerdotum Diocesis Kingstoniensis Scripta in Conventu Habito die 4 Septembris 1855", Archives of the Archdiocese of Ottawa, Registre des Lettres III (1850-1860), 156-60, (hereinafter cited as AAO).
9. Franklin A Walker: *Catholic Education and Politics in Upper Canada,* Toronto, 1955, pp. 76-212.

10. Eugene Joseph-Bruno Guigues (1805-1874) was born at La Garde, near Gap. France, on 26 August 1805. He joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate. After pastoral work in France he came to Canada as visitor in 1844. In 1848 he became the first bishop of Bytown, renamed Ottawa in 1855. He sided with the ultramontane party in the Canadian hierarchy headed by Bishop Ignace Bourget, who had recommended him for the episcopate. He died in Ottawa on 8 February 1874. See Gaston Carriere: "Guigues, Joseph-Bruno", *DCB.* Toronto 1972, 10:322-34.
11 "Epistola Sacerdotum Diocesis Kingstoniensis. . . die 4 Septembris 1855". AAO, Registre des Lettres III (1850-1860), 156-60.
12. AAO Dioceses: Toronto, Eveche, 1848-1860, 11 October 1855.
13. Ibid., 3 June 1852.
14. Patrick Dowd (1813-1891) was born in Dunleer, Ireland, on 24 November 1813. After studies in Ireland he went to the Irish College, Paris. He was ordained in 1837, engaged in pastoral work in Ireland, and joined the Sulpicians in 1847. He arrived in Montreal in 1848 where he became the pastor of St Patrick's church. For more than half a century he laboured energetically in the care of the Irish immigrants in the city. In addition to declining the appointment to Toronto he also turned down the offers of Kingston and Halifax. He died in Montreal 19 December 1891. See Bruno Hard: "Dowd, Patrick". DCS (Toronto, 1990), 12:266-68.
15. Charbonnel to Bourget, 13 August 1855, Archives of Archdiocese of Montreal 255.104:855-6 (hereinafter cited as ACAM).
16. Charbonnel to Bourget, 18 October 1857, ACAM, 255.104;857-9.
17. Gactano Bedini (1806-1864) was born at Singaglia, Italy, on 15 May 1806. After ordination he served in the papal diplomatic service and the administration of the Papal States. In 1856 he was named secretary of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. He was raised to the see of Viterbo-Toscanella in 1861 and shortly thereafter became a cardinal. He died at Vitcrbo 6 September 1864. Sec J F Connelly: "Bedini, Gaetano", NCE 2:219.
18. Pastoral, 12 June 1858, AAT Charbonnel III, 1856-1860.
19. ACAM 255.104,858-859; AAT Charbonnell III, Nd (c. 1857).
20. Ignace Bourget (1799-1855) was born in the parish of St Joseph (Lauzon), Quebec, on 30 October 1799. After ordination he served as secretary to the bishop of Montreal and in 1837 was named auxiliary bishop with the right of succession. He became bishop of Montreal in 1840 and directed the expansion of the diocese to meet the rapid growth of the city. He led the ultramontane party in Canada, echoed the views of the French ultramontanes who clustered round Louis Veuillot, and is reported to have been praised by Pius IX as "the guiding light of the Canadian episcopate". Declining health and the controversy over liberalism which embroiled the Canadian church led to his resignation in 1876. He died at Sault-au-Recolleton 8 June 1885. See Philippe Sylvan: "Bourget, Ignace", DCB, Toronto, 1982, 11:94-105.
21. Charbonnel to Bourget, 5 March 1859 ACAM, 255,104:859-3.
22. Charbonnel to Bourget, 24 June 1859, ACAM, 255.104:859-12.

23. Charbonnel to Bourget, 17 October 1859, ACAM, 255.104:859-23.
24. "Circular to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Toronto", 21 October 1859, AAT, Charbonnel III.
25. AAT, Letters Vol I, 247-248.
26. *Toronto Globe,* 21 November 1859.
27. Charbonnel to Lynch, 28 January 186(1, AAT, Letters Vol I, 249.
28. Charbonnel to Lynch, 21 December 1859, AAT, JJL Box I.
29. Charbonnel to Lynch, 3 May 1860, AAT Letters Vol I, 256- 257.
30. Jean-Baptiste Etienne CM (1801-1874) was born at Longeville-lez-Metz on 10 August 1801. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1820 and was ordained on 24 September 1825. He served as procurator general and secretary general of the Congregation during the stormy generalate of Jean-Baptiste Nozo and was elected to succeed him on 4 August 1843. He died in Paris on 12 March 1874. See *Recueil des Principales Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux de la Congrégation de la Mission,* Paris, 1880, Vol 3. pp. 1-4.
31. Charbonnel to Lynch, 7 March 1860, AAT Letters Vol I. 257-258.
32. Lynch to Etienne, 21 May 1856, Archives of the Congregation of the Mission. Paris (hereinafter cited as ACM).
33. J Buysch to Etienne. 25 June 1857, ACM.
34. John Timon (1797-1867) Was born in Conewago Township. Pennsylvania, on 12 February 1797. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1823 and was ordained on 23 September 1826. He taught and engaged in missionary work. especially in Texas. He served as first visitor of the American province from 1835-1847. After turning down six attempts to raise him to the episcopate, in 1847 he agreed to become first bishop of Buffalo for fear that he appear intractable and later be ordered to accept a diocese in a slave state. He died in Buffalo on 16 April 1867. I F Mogavero: "Timon, John", *NCE* 14:165.
35. Meeting of 3 May 1844, in Felix Contassot: "Extraits des Registres du Grand Conseil", Rome, 1966, p. 31.
36. Meeting of 2 November 1847, ibid., p. 40.
37. Lynch to A Fiat, 4 March 1887, ACM, *Dictionnaire du Personnel,* 2e serie, 1801-1850, vol. J-M.
38. Alessandro Barnabo (1801-1874) was born in Foligno on 2 March 1801. He filled various posts in the papal administration and became a cardinal in 1856. He served as prefect of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and prefect of the Congregation for the Affairs of the Oriental Rites. He died on 24 February 1874.
39. Etienne to Barnabo, 23 July 1862, ACM, Correspondence de M. Nozo et M. Etienne. Lettres importantes aux externes 1831-1873, 239-241.
40. Thaddeus Amat (1811-1878) was born in Barcelona on 31 December 1811 and entered the Congregation of the Mission at the age of twenty. He was ordained 23 December 1837. He came to the United States and served in missions and seminaries. In 1835 he was named bishop of Monterey and was consecrated in Rome 12 March 1854. He died in Los Angeles on 12 May 1878. See N C Eberhardt: "Amat, Thaddeus", *NCE,* 1:367-68.

41. Etienne to Timon, 27 April 1839, The Vincentian Collection at Notre Dame University, reel 2.
42. Jean-Baptiste Nozo (1796-1868) was born at Albaincourt in the diocese of Amiens on 4 January 1796. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1820 and after ordination taught in seminaries and served as director of the internal seminary in Paris. While serving as visitor of the province of Champagne he was elected superior general on 20 August 1835. After a troubled administration he resigned on 2 August 1842. He died on 24 June 1868.
43. Nozo to Timon, 29 May 1839, The Vincentian Collection at Notre Dame University, Reel 2.
44. Barnabo to Lynch, 4 January 1863, AAT, Roman Correspondence II.
45. Amat to Etienne, 20 May 1852, Letters to the Superiors General From Early Confreres in the U.S.A. 1816-1915, Reel 5, 534.
46. Lynch to Mariano Mailer, 12 May 1864, ACM.
47. Gandolfo to Lynch, 18 May 1866, AAT, JJL Misc. Rel. Orders, Sisters of Charity.
48. Lynch to Mariano Mailer, 12 May 1864, ACM.
49. [L A Grace]: *History of the Seminary of Our Lady of the Angels and Niagara University,* Buffalo, "l906, pp. 43-55.
50. AAT, JJL Seminary Papers 1850-1911: Ordination in Germantown 1874.
51. Antoine Fiat (1832-1915) was born in Auvergne on 29 August 1832. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1857 and taught in seminaries after ordination. He filled several posts at the motherhouse and was elected superior general on 4 September 1878. He resigned in July 1914 because of sickness and died 1 September 1915.
52. Lynch to Fiat, 4 March 1887, ACM; *Dictionnaire du Personnel,* 2e serie, 1801-1850, vol. J-M.
53. Fiat to Lynch, 22 March 1887, AAT, JJL Box VII.
54. Ferdinand Girardi (1788-1866) was born 2 October 1788 at Lauria in the diocese of Policastro, near Naples. He served successively as bishop of Sant'Angelo dei Lombardi (1842-46), Nardo (1846-48) and Sessa (1848-66). He died in Genoa 8 December 1866.
55. *Recueil des Principales Circulates* vol. 3, pp. 123-4.
56. *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission,* Paris 1869, vol. 34, pp. 36-7.
57. Stephen V Ryan (1826-1896) was born in Almonte, Ontario, Canada on 1 January 1826. His family moved to Pottsville, Pennsylvania and after studies in St Charles Seminary, Philadelphia, he entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1844. Following ordination in 1849 he taught in seminaries in Missouri. He was named visitor in 1857. He was consecrated bishop of Buffalo on 8 November 1868 and died in that city on 10 April 1896.
58. *Recueil des Principales Circulaires,* vol. 3, p. 419.
59. Charbonnel to Lynch, 7 March 1860, AAT, Letters, vol. I, 257-258.
60. Charbonnel to Bourget, 24 June 1859, ACAM, 255.104;859-12.
61. *Recueil des Principales Circulaires,* vol. 3, pp. 392-413.
62. *Lettres du Superieur Général 1878-1910,* Paris, Nd, I, p. 297.

Some Addenda on John Joseph Lynch

Thomas Davitt

Confreres of the Irish Province are acquainted with the portrait of Archbishop Lynch which hangs in the boys' refectory in Castleknock. In fact it is probably the only likeness of him which they know, as photographs of this painting have usually been used whenever an illustration was needed, as, for example, in *A Century of Irish Vincentian Foundations,* 1933, (1), and the *Castleknock Centenary Record,* 1935. In the photograph album of Malachy O'Callaghan CM (1825-1913), which is in the archives of St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork, there are two photographs of Lynch which have never, as far as I know, been reproduced. One is of him in later life, looking rather like he does in the Castleknock painting, though it is full-length. The other, reproduced as the frontispiece of this issue, is from the early years of his episcopate. It is inscribed on the back: "To Very Rev. Dr Dowley, V.C.M., Ireland, Castleknock, St Vincent's. Affection and gratitude of +John Joseph Lynch". It looks as though some further writing at the bottom has been cut off, leaving only the tops of some letters visible; perhaps this was a date. The photograph is somewhat faded and facial details are not too clear.

He was ordained bishop on 20 November 1859, and Fr Philip Dowley died on 31 January 1864, so the photograph falls between those dates. It was taken in Paris. At the invitation of Pius IX Lynch went to Rome to attend the canonisation of the Japanese martyrs in 1862 (2). He visited Ireland on that trip, and very probably Paris, so that would seem to be the time when the photograph was taken, as he was not back in Europe again until 1869, for the first Vatican Council (3).

When Lynch is spoken or written about in the Irish Province the phrase "the first archbishop of Toronto" is usually appended to his name. That is, of course, factually correct, but it is not the only "first" to his credit. He was the first boy to arrive in Castleknock when the college opened, arriving a day before the official opening: "I came on the Sunday before the opening Monday, and had time to roam about the hills and inspect everything" (4). When he left the college in 1839 (aged 23) and went to Paris to join the Vincentians he was the

first student to join from Ireland since before the French Revolution; all his predecessors in the 1830s had been priests when they joined. Finally, in 1879 when he was received by the Prince of Wales and Prince Arthur he was the first Catholic bishop received at court since the reign of James II. He had come to Europe for his *ad limina* visit, and visited Ireland and England. The High Commissioner for Canada in London, Sir Alexander Gait, expressed the wish to present him at court. Lynch consulted Cardinal Manning, who advised acceptance. He had previously met both the Prince of Wales and Prince Arthur in Canada (5).

When he was giving a mission in Blackrock, Co. Dublin, in 1846, he had finished his sermon and was praying in the church when he was "startled from his quiet, and somewhat astonished, by a gentleman throwing his arms around him and whispering in his ear: 'for God's sake come with me to Texas'" (6). This was Jean-Marie Odin CM, who was in Europe looking for volunteers for his mission.

In 1965 I was conducted round places in Toronto connected with Lynch by the author of the preceding article, who at that time was doing research on Lynch as a possible subject for a thesis. He told me that the archbishop had chosen the site of his own grave. Along one side of the cathedral was a path, used by very many people as a short-cut. Lynch thought that if he was buried at the wall of the cathedral beside this path he would have the benefit of the prayers of many of the passers-by. Unfortunately, shortly afterwards one end of the path was closed off and there were no more passers-by! We cannot control the future. His grave, when I saw it, was weed-grown and neglected.

Notes

1. Cullen, E J (Ed.): *The Origin and Development of the Irish Vincentian Foundations, 1833-1933,* Dublin, 1933. This is the title on the title-page. The title on the cover is: *A Century of Irish Vincentian Foundations 1833-1933.*
2. McKeown, H C: *The Life & Labors of Most Rev. John Joseph Lynch DD, Cong. Miss. First Archbishop of Toronto,* Montreal & Toronto, 1886, p. 114. (Some years ago I found a copy of this in Kenny's bookshop in Galway; I have left it in the archives in 4 Cabra Road).
3. McKeown: *op. cit.,* p. 115.
4. *St Vincent's College, Castleknock, Centenary Record 1835-1935,* Castleknock, 1935,p. 71.
5. McKeown: *op. cit.,* pp. 115-116.
6. McKeown: *op. cit. ,* p. 22.

The Maternal Face of Jesus: A Note on Vincent de Paul

Robert P Maloney

There is much that one could say about Vincent de Paul's relationship with women. Among his closest friends and collaborators were two women saints, Jane Frances de Chantal and Louise de Marillac. Other women played a very significant role in his life, and he in theirs: from the unlettered peasant girl, Marguerite Naseau, to the Queen of France, Anne of Austria.

Some have even suggested tentatively that, in his role as a leader, St Vincent related better to, and had a more significant influence on, women than men (1). While that judgement may be difficult to sustain, given St Vincent's formidable array of male friends and counselees, he surely did have an impressive list of female admirers and collaborators: Madame de Gondi, Jane Frances de Chantal, Louise de Marillac, Madame Goussault, Mademoiselle du Fay, Anne of Austria, Marie de Gonzague – just to name a few.

It would be a mistake to think that his relationship with these women was "purely business". He related to them with warmth and affection, without, as he might put it, "the slightest suspicion of unchastity" (2).

His letters contain some lovely passages filled with human warmth. In October 1627 he tells Louise de Marillac:

> I am writing to you at about midnight and am a little tired. Forgive my heart if it is not a little more expansive in this letter. Be faithful to your faithful lover who is our Lord. Also be very simple and humble. And I shall be in the love of Our Lord and his holy mother… (I 30).

On New Year's Day 1638, he concludes his letter to her:

> I wish you a young heart and a love in its first bloom for Him who loves us unceasingly and as tenderly as if He were just beginning to love us. For all God's pleasures are ever new and full of variety, although he never changes. I am in His love, with

> an affection such as His goodness desires and which I owe Him out of love for Him, Mademoiselle, your most humble servant… (1417-8).

To Jane Frances de Chantal, he writes:

> And now, my dear Mother, permit me to ask if your incomparable kindness still allows me the happiness of enjoying the place you have given me in your dear and most amiable heart? I certainly hope so, although my miseries make me unworthy of it (I 566).

In another letter to her, he describes St Jane Frances as someone who is

> so much our honoured Mother that she is mine alone, and whom I honour and cherish more tenderly than any child ever honoured and loved its mother since our Lord; and it seems to me that I do so to such an extent that I have sufficient esteem and love to be able to share it with the whole world; and that, in truth, without exaggeration (II 86-7).

From his writings it is evident that Vincent's esteem for women was very high. He was inclined to think, for instance, that women are apt to be better administrators than men (IV 71). He had no doubts about God's wanting them to have an equal role in the service of the poor. In his famous conference on "The End of the Congregation of the Mission", given on December 6, 1658, he states:

> Did the Lord not agree that women should enter his company? Yes. Did he not lead them to perfection and to the assistance of the poor? Yes. If, therefore, our Lord did that, he who did everything for our instruction, should we not consider it right to do the same thing? … so God is served equally by both sexes (XII 86-7).

But the purpose of this brief note is to focus not so much on St Vincent's way of relating to women as on one of his ways of relating to Jesus. To put it simply: for Vincent, Jesus, while he conies among us as a man, also has a maternal face. Vincent writes to Nicolas Etienne, a cleric, on Jan. 30, 1656:

> May it please God to grant the Company to which you belong the grace … to have a deep love of Jesus Christ, who is our father, our mother and our all! (V 534).

The following year he writes to a priest of the Mission whose mother had died, saying that he has recommended to the prayers of the Community

> not only the deceased mother, but also her living son so that the Lord himself might take the place of his father and mother and might be his consolation (VI 444).

In 1659, upon the death of the mother of Marin Baucher, a brother in the Congregation, he writes:

> I ask our Lord to take the place of your father and mother (VIII 55).

The most striking passage of all appears in a letter to Mathurine Guérin, written on March 3,1660, just after the death of Monsieur Portail and just before that of Louise de Marillac:

> Certainly it is the great secret of the spiritual life to abandon to him all whom we love, while abandoning ourselves to whatever he wishes, with perfect confidence that everything will go better in that way. It is for that reason that it is said that everything works for the good of those who serve God. Let us serve him, therefore, my Sister, but let us serve him according to his pleasure, allowing him to do as he wishes. He will take the role of father and mother for us. He will be your consolation and your strength and finally the reward of your love (VIII 256).

Two ideas emerge from these texts:

1. *Vincent sees the maternal face of Jesus.*

St Vincent wrote to the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, with his characteristic simplicity, about both the father and the mother in the human personality in Jesus. In doing so, he makes it evident that he had appropriated into his own spirituality a basic scriptural truth.

The Old Testament unabashedly depicts God as a mother. “Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you” (Is. 49:15). Yahweh complains: “I have looked away, and kept silence, I have said nothing, holding myself in. But now, I cry out as a woman in labor, gasping and panting” (Is. 42:14). The Psalmist rests in God with deep

confidence: “I have stilled and quieted my soul like a weaned child. Like a weaned child on its mother’s lap, so is my soul within me” (Ps. 131:2).

In the New Testament, Luke’s gospel likewise does not hesitate to use the image of a mother in describing Jesus’ deep sorrow over the infidelity of Jerusalem. Jesus laments: “How often I wanted to gather your children together as a mother bird collects her young under her wings, but you refused” (13:34).

In reflecting on the scriptures and seeing Jesus as a mother, Vincent was surely not alone among the saints. One is reminded of the striking words of Anselm of Canterbury (3):

> But you too, good Jesus, are you not also a mother?
> Are you not a mother who like a hen gathers her chicks
> beneath her wings?…
> And you, my soul, dead in yourself,
> run under the wings of Jesus your mother
> and lament your griefs under his feathers.
> Ask that your wounds may be healed
> and that, comforted you may live again.
> Christ, my mother, you gather your chickens under your
> wings;
> This dead chicken of yours puts himself under those wings…
> Warm your chicken, give life to your dead one, justify your
> sinner.

In this age, when, under Jungian influence, people often speak of the *animus* and the *anima* within us (4), and when there is considerable writing on a male and female spirituality (5), it is interesting to note how naturally St Vincent wrote of both the father and the mother in Jesus.

2. *Vincent’s view of providence has a maternal face.*

All of the letters cited above in which Vincent describes Jesus as a mother deal with tragic events. In some of them he appeals explicitly to the need to trust in providence; in others, the appeal is implicit. In each case, he is saying basically to his correspondent: God reveals, in Christ, that he loves you like a Father, but also like a mother - like your own mother or like Mademoiselle Le Gras.

He is concerned to assure the readers of these letters that God accompanies them, in Christ, as a mother accompanies her child, that he is concerned about their future, and that his love is warm and ever present.

In a conference given on June 9, 1658, he tells the Daughters:

> To have confidence in Providence means that we should hope that God takes care of those who serve him, as a husband takes care of his wife or a father of his child. That is how – and far more truly – God takes care of us. We have only to abandon ourselves to his guidance, as the Rule says, just as "a little child does to its nurse". If she puts it on her right arm, the child is quite content; if she moves him over to her left, he doesn't care, he is quite satisfied provided he has her breast. We should, then have the same confidence in Divine Providence, seeing that it takes care of all that concerns us, just as a nursing mother takes care of her baby… (X 503).

Reflecting on the texts cited in this brief note, one might suggest that St Vincent's recognition of the father and mother in Jesus enabled him to develop both the father and the mother within himself. Like the Jesus he meditated on, he had a full share of the qualities usually associated (6) with the "fatherly" side of the human personality (showing anger in the face of injustice, demonstrating formidable organizational skills in the service of the poor), but like him too, he could turn a warm, compassionate, provident "maternal face" toward the members of his congregations and toward the poor.

Notes

1. Cf Jaime Corera: "St Vincent and Human Formation" in *Vincentian Heritage 9* (1:1988), 79.
2. Common Rules IV 1.
3. Cf "The Prayers and Meditations of St Anselm" trans. by S Benedicta Ward (New York: Penguin, 1973), 153-6; as quoted in Elizabeth Johnson: *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroads, 1992), 150.
4. While commonly employed Jung's analysis is much disputed today. Cf Sandra Schneiders: *Beyond Preaching* (Paulist Press, 1991), 85-89; also John Carmody: *Toward a Male Spirituality* (Twenty-Third Publications, 1989) 94-108. Carmody wisely comments (p 94) that "no single formula will set the sexes into tidy traffic patterns". So far, it seems to me, we have not come up with a proper analytical tool for speaking of masculine and feminine qualities, since it is not easy to discern what is in us "by nature"

and what is "learned". Nonetheless, almost everyone continues to use some conceptual framework for discussing this question. Non-scientific frameworks are usually based on our concrete experience of the persons we know. For a very interesting discussion of these issues, cf E Johnson, *op. cit.*, 47-57.

5. In addition to the works cited in the note above, cf also: William O'Malley: "The Grail Quest: Male Spirituality", *America* 166, No. 16 (May 9, 1992), 402-6; O'Malley: "A Male's View of Female Spirituality", *Human Development* 14, No. 3 (Fall 1993), 33-38; Sally Cunneen: "What if the Church is a Mother?", *America* 165 No. 17 (Nov. 30, 1991), 407-410. Cf Also Patrick Arnold: *Wildmen, Warriors and Kings. Masculine Spirituality and the Bible* (New York: Crossroads, 1992).
6. As stated in note 4 above, I use the terminology "qualities usually associated" with being male or female purposely, since such attribution is quite culturally conditioned.

Editor's Note:
Nicolas Etienne is mentioned in this article. He provides an interesting example of how Vincent can reverse an earlier decision when he considers there is good reason to do so. NE was born in 1634 and received into the Congregation in 1653. Six years later Vincent wrote to Edme Jolly, superior in Rome:

> "Earlier on we sent you a picture of Brother Etienne's left hand, which is so deformed that it hardly looks like a hand; it's like a lump of round flesh with only the stumps of a thumb and one finger, though he can use these for some things. When we received him into the company it was on condition that we would never have him ordained, and he still does not expect that".

But NE always had the idea he'd like to go on the foreign missions, and Vincent thought he was called to that, so in his letter to Jolly he asks him to try to get a dispensation from this irregularity so that he can be ordained. But if this is not possible Jolly is to try to obtain

> "at least
> 1) permission to baptise in church with full ceremonies, if no priest is available;
> 2) to handle the sacred vessels and other sacred objects;
> 3) to read forbidden books;
> 4) to exorcise the possessed;
> 5) to receive the four minor orders;

6) to preach in church;
7) to carry the Blessed Sacrament on his person, as used to be done in the early Church, so that he can receive communion in the absence of priests" (VII 553-4).

Vincent also says in this letter: "Perhaps we'll forward you a pencil-drawing of this irregular hand, at the earliest opportunity". Three weeks later, though, he writes to Jolly: "I told you, I think, that we would send you a pencil-drawing of Brother Etienne's hand, but we're not going to do so, for a certain reason" (VII 583). One wonders what this reason might have been.

NE got his dispensation and was ordained in 1659. For various reasons he did not get to Madagascar till September 1663. In February 1664 he was invited to a meal by a local chief who imprisoned and murdered him (V 533, n.l). In volumes VII and VIII there are letters to and from NE and many references to him in other letters.

Forum

IN SEARCH OF THE CHARISMS

In April 1993 a group of Vincentian Volunteers, accompanied by Sr Maureen Tinkler DC and Fr John Concannon CM, went from Scotland to Paris in search of the charisms of Vincent, Louise and Frederic. It was not only an encounter with the history of the Vincentian family but also an encounter with poor persons, families and areas, as well as their 1993 Vincentian servants and works. The author, unhappy with the word " Vincentian " as it excluded Louise, devised a shorthand to describe an encounter with their tradition, Loucent.

We were David, Francis, Martin, Oonagh, Scan, Simon, Maureen and myself. Our pilgrimage began in Scotland and the long train journey to London enabled us to get to know each other a little better. God's creation from the train window was also enjoyable. The community of the Daughters of Charity in Carlisle Place, London, gave us a warm hospitable welcome. There we celebrated our first eucharist together, recognising Jesus as RISEN, alive and…? Later a walk to the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Bridge was a grace-filled opportunity to recognise Jesus in the begging people, some no doubt homeless ones. Three of our number spent a few hours with Sr Mary, Padraig [Regan CM] and their team at the night shelter. They found it a good and enlightening experience. Our Victoria to Paris coach journey allowed me a gradual introduction to France on this, my first visit.

That evening some of us went for a walk around the old centre of Paris. I was moved to see places that Vincent, Louise and Frederic saw, but that experience was mostly a touristy one for me. We did stumble on our Loucent constituency, namely two youths being arrested by police. Seeing the police with guns gave me a momentary sense of being in Belfast.

Early on Thursday morning I went with Maureen to Notre Dame. The inside, seen for the first time, was both impressive and touristy. We could hear a celebration of the eucharist going on in the distance, but were (rightly) not allowed to enter that holy of holies. After breakfast the whole group went to the rue du Bac. The chapel was an experience! A multi-cultural congregation praying together. There

were black and white, native and foreign, rich and poor. In our eucharist at the main altar the challenge of communicating the mystery in a new way was very great. The Alleluia seemed to register best with the congregation, the eucharist adoration in many people's faces spoke loudest. Being there, in the chapel, I felt the need to be more in touch with Mary, Catherine, the medal. After our eucharist we began a long search for a certain McDonald's. O mon Dieu! En route we saw a mother and child begging; a young lad and a girl asleep in a doorway, and this was about twelve noon! The contrast was very stark.

The church of St Nicolas-des-Champs looked to be in a poor state. But there were attempts to communicate the Good News. The kids' stations of the cross, on A4 paper stuck to the pillars, sharply contrasted with the old paintings and stained-glass windows. Praying at Louise's Pentecost experience place was very moving. The chapel itself was very disappointing, a "poor" painting of Louise, stuck on to a rough unpainted frame. A painting of St Vincent dominated one wall. The most alive thing in the chapel was a statue of Catherine. There were no worshippers in the church. A youngish curate tried to find lights for us. Then he quickly went away again. The situation begged the questions: Why is Louise so neglected here, and how do we do her and God greater justice?

The church of St Laurent was more alive. There is an excellent stained glass window of Vincent and the galley-slaves. There are also windows of the baptism of Clovis (Severin), as well as Louis XIII consecrating France to Mary. This event was remembered with a big annual procession through Paris. The Louise chapel was good too. There were some worshippers. Later there was the funeral of an Englishwoman, for which Maureen Tinkler and I returned. It was a very dead liturgy; there was no involvement of the mourners. An organist and singer, both booming into a microphone, dominated. The undertakers also dominated the movements and the activities, with heaps of flowers and a late hearse. The little priest, who was very wrinkled, was a bit pathetic in his leading of the service. With my poor French I tried, in vain, to talk to him.

It seems to me that St Vincent would have been very pleased with the St Vincent de Paul church on the site of the old St Lazare farm. It had a Good News ethos about it. There was a good welcoming service *(Accueil* as the French call it) offered by a layman and a recently-ordained priest. There was good pilgrim awareness shown by the range of leaflets available, including some in English. There was a chart of

Vincent's story: dates, his central questions, his responses. The display was compiled by a layman, using a Dodin book.

We ended our long day's pilgrimage at the Sacré Coeur. En route we saw ten prisoners in two police vans. I wondered who their '93 galley chaplain is? Vincent's chapel at the Sacré Coeur was very dull and dead compared to the adjacent statue of St Anthony, surrounded by heaps of wax and lighted candles. The call and challenge of Vincent is so demanding compared with the devotional "call" of some of the other saints. Are we inventive enough in communicating the spirit and charism of the Christ of the gospels? It seemed to me that the best way of communicating the spirit and charism is through '93 Loucent servants of '93 poor persons, families and areas.

Friday morning brought an experience of the Central, where many poor and homeless people receive hospitality from the Daughters of Charity and the Society of St Vincent de Paul. The service revolves around a Sr Marie and a Sr Jean (who has experience of Thai refugees). We didn't meet any of the SVP there. Despite the influx of nine people on them the Sisters coped well. The volunteers got enthusiastically stuck in, preparing sandwiches etc., and then carrying the food baskets to the folks waiting in an outside courtyard. I helped make up and wrap some sandwiches and then, empty handed, mingled with some of the guests. I spent most of the time with two groups of three, each with a few fringe people on the edges. Allowing for the language difficulties they made me feel at home. Some spontaneous groups in the Passage Day Centre in London have made me feel the same. Their French homeless brothers and sisters seemed interested in me and all of us. A shared interest in footballer Eric Cantona helped break the ice. The experience for the volunteers was mixed. They felt more at home in the SVP centre we visited the next day.

St Lazare felt very institutional and inhospitable when we visited there that afternoon. Fr Paul Henzmann and Br Georges partly redeemed the situation. Paul's introduction and commentary in the Relic Room was good - gentle, informative and unassuming. He showed a lot of love for Vincent. My best sense of being in touch with Vincent's spirit and charism was through his letters, crucifix, alb, soutane and prayer book. As we began our eucharist about ten elderly handicapped people came into the chapel. We brought them into our celebration, giving it a more Christo-Loucent flavour. It was a moment of glad grace to witness the interest and concern the seven showed in our lords and masters by the way they included them in our mass.

Clichy on Saturday was the highlight of our pilgrimage visits for me. I liked its multi-racial context. The Cure's welcome was "fair". We began our eucharist at the font, renewing our baptism goodness and grace, where Vincent did likewise and baptised many. We brought some of the blessed Clichy Easter water home with us. Our singing and readings (Easter Saturday), eucharistic prayer IV and communion brought the walls and the rafters, the font and the lectern, Vincent and altar, really alive. GREAT!!

Sadly, we did not have any of the Clichy people, whose fore-fathers and -mothers so renewed and enlivened Vincent in 1612-13. The plaque to the visit of Ozanam and his companions here in 1833 for Vincent's spirit was a sacramental for me.

I then walked solo around the town and on to Sacré Coeur. All an *omnes gentes* experience, en route meeting many Arabs and Africans. Then, within the basilica, throngs of sightseers and worshippers. I joined in for the final five minutes of a Holy Hour. I know of no other place that so responds to the needs of tourist-sightseers and worshippers under the same roof.

The vigil eucharist at St Vincent de Paul church was a good experience. The hundred-strong congregation was a mix of tourists and locals. The priest-celebrant communicated very little of himself or the mystery to me. In sharp contrast the cantor, younger and black, was good. One of the readers greeted us very enthusiastically after mass, as did the cure, who "floated around" both before and after. A little girl, poor looking, joined in at the gospel. Her mum, with a few other kids hanging out of her, tried to entice her away. But the little girl held out till the sign of peace. I found that a heart-warming experience.

On Sunday I prayed early before walking around the Sorbonne area. I visited St Etienne-du-Mont, where Frédéric worshipped and in 1833 established the first SVP conference. Sr Esther and myself met for the eucharist at St Lazare. Br Philippe was an enthusiastic cantor, using a well-arranged singing leaflet which was distributed and practised beforehand. The eucharistic president was very formal, but conveyed a rich sense of mystery to me. His homily was on the origins of our Sunday assembly/eucharist/Easter.

SVP president Amin, Madame Morain and secretary Christel were most welcoming and informative at their HQ. They enthused about Vincent and Frédéric as they showed us round the picture gallery and museum. Their love for the members and works throughout the world was Kingdom of God stuff. We did not have any CM parallel experi-

ence, however. Sisters Pauline and Esther gave us a little taste of the world-wide DC story and works.

The volunteers related well to the lay call, life and works of the SVP. Does it suggest that our charisms have become too religious?

On Monday Mlle Remon, SVP (with Aberdeen roots), then brought us to a SVP hostel/centre for homeless guests. This somehow touched me in a similar way to our Clichy experience. Br Jean-Claude gave an introductory talk. His sincerity, and his longing for better services for the poor guests, were so convertingly transparent. Serge, a religious SVP brother, was the other mainstay of this project. It was initiated six months previously by ten SVP conferences. Their emphasis was strongly on "relationships" in response to the felt needs – loneliness, low self-esteem, etc. – of the unemployed, and often homeless persons, who came. Each guest was encouraged to relate to one volunteer as their "key person". They speak of "hours of relationship" rather than of "numbers attending". We spent some time in prayer in the quiet room. Our meal together lasted about two and a half hours. The whole event and ethos was very Frederic-Rosalie-Vincent-Louise-like. We all came away more enthusiastic to visit Frédéric's tomb and pray for his canonization. That part of the day was a bit rushed. The historical experience came second to the existential experience of meeting '93 poor persons and their "helpers" and exchanging our stories, as we did during our meal at my end of the table.

Walking home I stumbled upon St Severin church. Very uplifting in architecture, ethos and welcome. The cure asked me to pray for the return of St Nicolas-du-Chardonnet church, taken from them by the Lefevre followers. Going there was one of my saddest experiences. The pains caused by that Church split of our times were very real to me. Later Maureen and I returned there, during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the rosary, with the Latin gloria. This was Louise's home parish until 1636. The first Daughters' community was set up in her home, on 29 November 1633. The side-chapel commemorating this grace-filled event was a bit pathetic. The plaque, dated 1899 with Louise as "Venerable", was never up-dated. Thence to adoration and evening eucharist at St Etienne-du-Mont.

Coming back to Britain was an experience. We arrived at London-Victoria two hours early! Padraig Regan's arrival at the door of the Passage at 05.45 was a very welcome blessing. Again, the Daughters' hospitality was very Loucent and gospel-like. The eucharist in Westminster Cathedral at 06.30 was very prayerful. Breakfast included

a meeting with Bishop Malone. Some of the seven "flaked out" in the community room. There are not many communities, especially of men, that allow for that kind of homeless. Martin and myself joined a meeting of the Passage Prayer Group for Homeless Folk. It was yet another moment of glad grace, recognising our Risen Lord Alive in some of the personal suffering, yet hope-filled sharings. The London-Lanark train journey was an opportunity to catch up on lost sleep. For me it was also a long journey back to such a different ethos and life-style.

My dominant feeling at the end of my trip was one of gratitude. How can I repay Maureen, the seven volunteers and all the others, who helped me discover more of Vincent, Louise and Frederic, and how they responded to God's call, doing so much for and with our least brothers and sisters? It was good to have been there. My experience with the volunteers restored again some of the joy and vision of my youth, 30-35 years ago.

There was a certain apprehension at first, doubting whether I belonged here. My suitcase - alone among the casual bags -underlined the generation-gap at first. But Maureen and the seven quickly made me feel at home. Their sharings, e.g. on Debbie's First Sacraments celebrated at the Easter Vigil, somehow bonded me to the VVC (Vincentian Volunteer Community). This was deepened in and through our liturgies. Our eucharists were special, but I sometimes felt more part of the group when one of them was leading. There were some glad moments of prayer in the latter for me. Their concern for some of the poor persons we met was also inspiring, reviving memories of my early SVP laity days. Maureen's friendly way of chatting with our fellow-travellers to Paris elicited the comment: "It's great how Maureen gets right in there!". Greater still was how our Holy Trinity was right in there with us in so many different ways during the eight days, trying to get more into the spirit and charism of Vincent, Louise AND Frédéric.

John Concannon

Father Felix McAtarsney CM

(Homily at funeral mass, Mill Hill)

I remember the first time I met Felix. It was the early 1970s and I was giving a retreat to the Daughters of Charity in England during the school holidays. In those days we in Ireland saw very little of the confreres working across the water. I can still picture Felix as I saw him then, walking slowly in the garden reading his breviary. I often saw him like that in later years, especially in Nigeria, walking slowly and quietly, praying the breviary or rosary.

Felix began his life in May 1921 in Trim, Co. Meath. His father was an RIC man stationed there, and a few years later, on his retirement, the family moved back to their home in Armagh. It was here that Felix put down his roots and he remained very definitely an Armagh man for the rest of his life. He didn't reveal much to his confreres about his home or family life, but his eyes would light up at the mention of Armagh. He often talked of his friends among the clergy there, and especially of the late Cardinal O'Fiaich, and he had a particular bond with two sisters of the Medical Missionaries of Mary, both from Armagh, who lived near him in Ikot Ekpene. Those early roots were never pruned, and remained strong in him all his life.

Felix met the Vincentian community in St Patrick's College, Armagh, where he received his secondary education as a day pupil. Eventually he decided to join the community and went to Dublin for his formation and studies. He was entered for a Classics degree in University College, Dublin, and proved himself a brilliant student of Latin and Greek. But when it came to his final examinations he ran into difficulty with the subsidiary subject, Ancient History, which was compulsory at the time, and because of this small failure was never awarded his degree. It was a strange, providential, experience. Felix himself was very disappointed, but if he had been successful he would probably have spent the rest of his life in the rather confined world of the Classics. As it happened, through this so-called failure God called him to a completely different life, one which touched the lives of so many different people, especially poor and handicapped people, a life which led him out of Ireland to England, Scotland, Ethiopia, India and

Nigeria. Felix responded to this experience in the way Helder Camara invites us: "Say 'Yes' to the surprises which interrupt your plans and crush your dreams, giving your day, and perhaps your life, a completely new direction".

Felix was ordained by Archbishop McQuaid of Dublin in 1948. His first appointment was as chaplain to the deaf, in Dublin for four years and then in London for a further fourteen years. Just as he had put down his roots in Armagh so now he put down additional roots in the world of the deaf and they became part of his life from then on. He never lost his concern for them and even in recent years in Nigeria was very interested in St Louise's School for the Deaf in Ikot Ekpene. Felix was particularly interested in ways of communicating with deaf people and he became fluent in their sign language. In fact this was so much part of his everyday life that we would often tease him about it and say that he never stopped using signs even when talking to hearing people. In a remarkable way this brilliant scholar of Greek and Latin entered deeply into the private world of deaf people. He was able to understand them, to feel with them, their frustrations, their loneliness.

In 1967 Felix was appointed Director of the Daughters of Charity, first of the Province of Great Britain and Ireland, and then, after the division, of the new British Province. He held this post for the next thirteen years. Many of the Sisters still speak of his wise guidance, his gentle touch, his great humanity. Through the Daughters of Charity he now became involved in all their works for the poor, covering the length and breadth of Britain and reaching out as far as their mission in Ethiopia.

By this time Felix had become a man for the poor. This does not happen easily and he was not just one of those who give a few coins to poor people to get rid of them. The poor at this time held a very important place in his life. You could have no doubt about this if you met him, even briefly. Like St Vincent he was touched by his contact with the marginalised, and he would never be the same after that experience.

It was at this time, too, that Felix made the first of several visits to Ethiopia. The people were experiencing all the horrors of a severe famine, and he saw with his own eyes many of them dying of starvation. This, understandably, made a deep impression on him. He loved Ethiopia and the people there, and often expressed a wish to visit them again.

Another event which helped form this man for the poor was a short visit he made to India in 1978. He was asked to go there to give some

courses to the Daughters of Charity, and again he met horrific sights of poverty which touched him very deeply. As a result of this visit he gave up smoking. I remember him saying that he could no longer in conscience waste money on cigarettes after what he saw the poor suffer in India.

In 1980 the final phase of his life began. With great courage Felix, who was by nature a "home bird" and not a comfortable traveller, answered a call to work in Nigeria. He was now almost sixty, a time when most people are making plans for retirement. But Felix began a very fruitful twelve-year mission in which once again he reached out to an amazing number of people. His primary work in Nigeria was in the formation of our own Nigerian Vincentian students. He became their guide, confessor, spiritual director. In addition to this he worked with the students in the huge St Joseph's Major Seminary nearby, with the students in the Minor Seminary and in the very large Federal College. He reached out also to the hospital run by the Medical Missionary Sisters, and to a variety of works for the poor in the area under the direction of the Daughters of Charity. He was also a popular confessor for many priests of the diocese. And, perhaps closest to his heart, he brought his compassion and wisdom to the inmates of the prison in Ikot Ekpene.

This was, by any standard, an extraordinarily full and fruitful life - a life in touch with so many and such a variety of people. And yet, for all that, Felix remained a very private person, a quiet unassuming man. He greatly underrated himself, and I think others who didn't really know him did the same. His work and influence were in areas that cannot easily be measured. He wasn't a builder or a writer of books or a creator of institutions. Perhaps the image of Mary at Cana gives us a good picture of the man. As St John tells us, in the midst of the wedding crisis and the crowd gathered, without fuss, without looking for attention, simply: "the mother was there". When the rest of us were running all over the place, Felix was there. When the students or anyone else needed guidance or help, Felix was there. When some emergency arose, a frequent occurrence, Felix was there. And when he decided last year to call it a day in Nigeria, I remember Fr Mark Noonan, our Provincial, saying on the phone: "You will find it difficult to replace Felix", and that was absolutely true.

Felix will be remembered for many things, not least those lovely human qualities that were his gifts: his wonderful sense of humour that bubbled up and was infectious. I can still see him in Ikot Ekpene,

surrounded by a group of students in uproar, as he cracked jokes with them. He was known to everyone for his wisdom. So many came to him for advice and direction. At a meeting lie didn't say much, but when he spoke we all listened because we knew that what he had to say was worth hearing. He was a great reader, very much in touch with the latest in theology and spirituality. He would not miss the weekly *Tablet* for anything, and the news times on the BBC World Service were sacred. He was a very up-to-date man, and yet his most treasured possession was his well-thumbed Greek New Testament. He was also a man of remarkable sensitivity – a great ability to feel with other people, to empathise with them. This was a gift which drew him to poor people, and drew them to him. It was a gift that also, as always, caused him suffering. Perhaps it was this sensitivity which made the long hours lie spent in the confessional so important and valuable to him.

One other quality I must mention – in the long run, his most important one. Felix was, in the true sense of the word, a holy man. He was a man of deep faith, of deep spirituality, a genuine "man of God". His was not an ostentatious piety, he never showed it off. Nor was it something extra or superficial. Rather it was deeply embedded in the man like the proverbial yeast in the loaf. He carried this gift lightly and you might not have noticed it unless you got close to him.

The end was not easy for Felix; it was a hard struggle. We wonder why. and we cannot have any easy answers, except that the master Felix chose to follow did not have an easy end either. And I am certain that, given the choice, Felix, the man of faith, would not have chosen any other road.

Those of us who knew him and were fortunate enough to live with him over the years, can only thank God for the life of this wise, humourous, sensitive, loveable and saintly man. May he enjoy that peace which Christ promised him, a peace that he himself passed on to so many during his life.

Matthew Barry CM

FELIX McATARSNEY CM
Born: Trim. Co. Meath. 5 May 1921.
Entered the CM: 7 September 1940.
Final vows: 8 September 1942.
Ordained a priest by Dr John Charles McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin. St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, 22 May 1948.

APPOINTMENTS
1948-52 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1952-54 St Mary's, Strawberry Hill.
1954-66 Sacred Heart, Mill Hill.
1966-67 St Joseph's, Blackrock.
1967-80 St Vincent's, Mill Hill.
1980-83 St Justin's, Ogobia.
1983-1993 Blessed Ghebre-Michael's, Ikot Ekpene.
Died 16 October 1993.
Buried: Mill Hill.

Father John Henry Smyth CM

It seems to be the custom, when writing of a deceased confrere, to list all his appointments in the Congregation. There are difficulties in doing this in Harry's case - they were so numerous. Harry himself was well aware of this and once wryly remarked to me that if folk ever raised an eyebrow about it they should be told to put it down to versatility! And versatile Harry was.

He was ordained in 1948 and in the space of little more than a decade served in Blackrock, Phibsboro. Lanark and Sheffield. He was on the mission team, being a natural for the job with his remarkably strong voice. Like all missioners he was possessed of a most retentive memory, and years after the event he could regale us with anecdotes of parishes and the quirks of parish clergy… and of his fellow missioners.

When our foreign mission to Nigeria began in 1960 Harry volunteered for the cause and, as often happens in such cases, was duly sent in 1961. His brother Father Reggie, of the Kiltegan Fathers, was already in the field in Nigeria. It wasn't long before everybody, people and missioners alike, became aware of the striking dissimilarities between the two of them. The Nigerians asked in bewilderment: "Same father, same mother?"

Reggie, like most of us, tended to put less than an absolute value on qualities like housing standards, personal dress and appearance, not to say hygiene. Harry was different; he saw no virtue in shoddiness. Through the force of his example he raised the rest of us to some modest heights of civilised living.

At the out break of civil war in Nigeria Harry returned to Ireland a bit restless and unsettled. He decided that the cure was to go with Denis Corkery to the rather different pastures of Alaska! After a couple of years there he turned his sights on Asia and studied for a year in Manila in the East Asian Pastoral Institute there.

The Second Spring, I think, in Harry's life was his return to Nigeria in the seventies where he was appointed regional superior of our mission there. It was a courageous step to take as conditions for missioners, after the civil war, were very different from the halcyon days of the early sixties. He became renowned for his hospitality. He believed in keeping open house for all, and to this day many a Kiltegan, Holy Ghost or SMA missioner can still recall the warmth of the welcome they invariably received from Harry in our house in Ikot Ekpene.

Courtesy and kindliness distinguished Harry throughout his life; he really was a perfect gentleman. He took great pride always in his family and community. At his funeral one of his sisters was heard to remark: "Harry was a great brother". We in this Province can say the same of him.

His last appointment was in Dunstable in Bedfordshire. Here it was sad to see the great decline in health that overtook him; sight and hearing both gravely impaired made things very difficult for him, yet he was still very proud to serve as an RAF chaplain in Henlow Air Station.

I can think of no greater tribute to Harry's memory than the following lines from a letter written to me by the RAF commanding officer:

Father Harry was a very popular figure who readily endeared himself to all who met him… His Christian faith and witness were a great source of inspiration and encouragement. Father Harry will be greatly missed here… We give thanks for his life and work among us.

Francis Mullan CM

JOHN HENRY SMYTH CM
Born: Dublin, 21 January 1922.
Entered the CM: 7 September 1940.
Final vows: 8 September 1942.
Ordained a priest by Dr Patrick Dunne, auxiliary bishop of Dublin, All Hallows College, Dublin, 20 June 1948.

APPOINTMENTS
1948-49 St Joseph's, Blackrock.
1949-50 St Vincent's, Sheffield.
1950-52 St Vincent's, Castleknock.
1952-53 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1953-54 St Vincent's, Sheffield.
1954-58 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1958-61 St Mary's, Lanark.
1961-67 Ikot Ekpene.
1968-70 Anchorage, Alaska.
1970-71 Manila (studies).
1971-72 Our Lady's, Hereford.
1972-76 Otukpo. 1976-80 Ikot Ekpene.
1980-81 St Vincent's, Cork.
1981-93 St Mary's, Dunstable.
Died: 25 October 1993.
Buried: Glasnevin.