COLLOQUE

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Contents

Editorial

This issue contains reflections on Convocation 1989 from the viewpoints of Ireland and Britain. There was also to be a reflection on it from the Nigerian viewpoint, by Urban Osuji, but unfortunately his typescript got lost in transit; it is hoped to have a copy of it in time to include it in the Autumn issue.

With our recent withdrawal from Armagh still fresh in our minds this issue prints an article on the Vincentian ethos of St Patrick's College, where so many confreres either were educated or taught.

The Congregation has a number of beatified confrères, none of whom seem likely in the near future to proceed to canonisation. There are also others whose causes for beatification have been introduced. Janez Frančišek Gnidovec, who died in 1939 as bishop of Skopje, Yugoslavia, is one of the most interesting of these and perhaps a tipster might rank him as one of the most likely to reach beatification. In this issue he is introduced in English for the first time.

A Word from Vincent

James C Sheil

(Reprinted from *Vincentian Yearbook 1972,*
with sources of quotations added)

For Vincent de Paul, during his early years, charity began at home – and remained there. He looked on his priesthood as a good means of bettering his own under-privileged condition, and that of his family. He set himself to do just that. His essential role as a Christian, and further as a priest, was brought home to him only after many years of failure, disappointment and even suffering. And it was only then that he really began to live, to allow himself to be urged on by the love of Christ, to continue the saving work of Christ, not for a self-interested motive but for the spiritual and material interest of others. The work he did, and got others to do, is continued today by the institutes he founded, the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, and by the Society of St Vincent de Paul which came later.

What kept him going? What keeps them going? The love of God, and the love of others for the love of God, expressed in the giving of self. This demands intimate union with Christ, and this union is kept alive and intensified by means of prayer. Vincent was convinced of this, and wanted his co-workers to be equally convinced. He insisted emphatically that activity on the purely human level was not sufficient.

Of course there is nothing new in Vincent's doctrine. He made it clear again and again that the one source of his teaching was Christ himself, just as the one source of his activity was Christ. He used to say that nothing satisfied him if it did not come from Christ. His programme for all those with whom he came in contact was that they should transform the society of his day by the love of Christ and the mercy of Christ. He knew that the world would always be desperately in need of Christ, so he founded his congregation of priests and brothers and, with St Louise de Marillac, the Daughters of Charity, whose one aim was to help fill that need in various ways. What was to be the stimulus? Let Vincent speak for himself:

> To work for the salvation of souls is to continue what Christ was given to do. Activity on the purely human level will only make a mess of everything if God does not take a hand in this work. Neither philosophy nor theology nor preaching can of themselves achieve men's salvation. Jesus Christ must associate himself with us (XI 343).

Today he would doubtless add "sociology"!

Vincent himself had his degrees in theology and canon law; he was eminently successful as a preacher; as a priest he lived an intensely active life, for the spiritual and material welfare of others; and yet he was convinced that all he did was effective only in so far as he lived in Christ and worked with him.

Those who set before themselves the Vincentian ideal of service of others might learn a lesson from this. Intimate union with Christ, Vincent says, is effected by prayer: "You must apply yourself diligently to have a deep intimacy with our Lord in prayer" (XI 344). Vincent's own life was an extremely full one; his working day lasted all of seventeen hours. But he took good care to set three of these aside for intimate converse with Christ in prayer. The activist might well think that these three hours could be more usefully employed in getting things done. But Vincent had his priorities right. You cannot bring Christ to others unless you are closely united to him yourself. Hence the need to lay all external activity aside in regular periods of prayer.

> Give me a man of prayer and you give me one equipped for everything. Such a man can assert with the apostle: "I can do all things in him who supports and strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). The Congregation of the Mission will last as long as it is faithful to the practice of prayer. Prayer is an impregnable bulwark which will protect its members from all kinds of attacks. It is a spiritual arsenal supplying them with all kinds of weapons, not only for defence but also for putting to flight the enemies of the glory of God and the salvation of souls (XI 83-84).

On other occasions he said:

> In prayer you raise your mind to God, and listen to him. One word from him accomplishes more than a thousand thoughts and supplications of your own… We must receive from God, if

> we are to give to others, just as Christ taught others what he had heard and learnt from his Father (Lk 10:22) (XI 84).
>
> We must not try to force ourselves to *feel* we are praying (XI 92).
>
> We must not weary the poor brain trying to formulate fine thoughts (XI 407).
>
> There should be little reasoning (XI 357).
>
> The main thing is to place ourselves in God's presence. (XI 404).

One final longer quotation:

> You must apply yourself with all earnestness to attaining close union with our Lord… Prayer will do that for you. You must ask God to enable you to live not only in fear of him but also in love of him. If you are so taken up with external works for others as to have no time for your own spiritual welfare you are heading for disaster… This will not happen if you are inseparably united to our Lord. Raise your mind and your heart to him frequently and say: "Lord, in my desire to save others, see to it that I do not lose my own soul. Be my guide. Do not deny me the graces you give to others through me" (XI 344-345).

These few brief extracts give the core of Vincent's teaching, of which the source-book was Christ himself. To his priests, brothers, students, to the Daughters of Charity, to the lay men and women who helped him in various works of mercy, he gave that same teaching. Fidelity to it has enabled his followers ever since to live their Christian vocation in all its fullness.

The popular image of St Vincent is, I suppose, that of a man of action. But it may be that we dwell too much upon what he *did,* and forget to ask what kind of a man he *was.* Humanly speaking many of the people whom he met were not the type one could like, let alone love. Failures, disappointments, opposition, criticism, all the trials that plague those who try to do good, these were his daily meat. At times, again humanly speaking, there seemed to be no sense in going on. On the other hand, he could equally well have made a name for himself in the world, again humanly speaking.

But it was precisely the way he treated people and met the situa-

tions of life that showed the kind of man he *was.* For him there was no question of "humanly speaking", no question of acting on the merely human level. He met life in all its aspects as a man inseparably united to Christ, and so with the mind of Christ and the love of Christ. That's the kind of man he was, a man of prayer: "Give me a man of prayer, and you give me one equipped for everything".

Convocation 1989: Opening Address

Mark Noonan

Let me begin by welcoming you all to Convocation. I want to welcome in a particular way the senior confrères who have made a very special effort to be here. I wish to thank them for the generosity of their support in being with us this coming week. We need the support and the prayers of those who have borne the heat of the day in the Province. We need also their wisdom and experience. Thank you for coming. I would like also to welcome our confrères from Nigeria, both Irish and Nigerian. The confrères in Nigeria have had to study St Vincent de Paul's vision of evangelization in order to develop his vision in Nigerian hearts. For that reason their insights into St Vincent are particularly valuable to us. We welcome them especially, and I trust that their stay in Ireland will be a very happy one.

I want to welcome our facilitators, Fr Jim Sweeney and Sister Una Collins. Jim is a Passionist who has been working with us on the Provincial Council and in other groups over the past twelve months as a facilitator. Sister Una Collins is a Holy Faith Sister who is currently a member of the Board of Management of St Paul's. I am very happy that this link with the Holy Faith Community is being maintained by Sister Una's presence with us. I want to thank her for agreeing to come at a very late stage and at short notice. Lastly, I want to express my appreciation for all the work which has gone into the preparation of the Convocation. Perhaps at the end I will have an opportunity to name all those who have been part of the preparation.

As far as I know this is the first time in the history of the Province that the whole Province has met. At the last Assembly there were requests from many houses for a general meeting of the whole Province. Fr Frank Mullan was very keen to have the last Assembly, which was the Mission Statement Assembly, an open Assembly, but there were some Constitutional difficulties and his hope did not materialise.

The signs of the times

This year we celebrate two hundred years of the French Revolution. Dickens said of the age of the French Revolution in *A Tale of Two Cities:*

> It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.
> It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness.
> It was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity.
> It was the Spring of hope, it was the Winter of despair.
> We had everything before us, we had nothing before us.

What Dickens said of the times of the French Revolution is also true of our present time. It is the worst of times. Many of the old symbols are gone. We are conscious of death and dying, and continuous change. We are short of vocations and personnel in Ireland and Britain. As Fr Hugh O'Donnell said during the retreat: "Something is dying. It is not the Church. It is not the priesthood, but something is dying. Something is also being born". Yet the present times are also the best of times, where there is new hope, new life, new boundaries to be conquered, new developments, new challenges, new strengths. A friend of mine said to me in Armagh during one of the farewell dinners: "Why are you getting so few vocations?" I said: "I wish I knew". She said; "Perhaps this is God's way of creating new life in the rest of you". It all depends on the attitude. In Rio de Janeiro at the Provincials' Meeting Fr McCullen, in his talk at the end, said that in today's Church there is a new continent to be discovered and conquered for Christ, and that is the continent of youth. Pope Paul VI said in *Evangelii nuntiandi:* "We live in the Church at a privileged moment of the Spirit".

Since the Vatican Council there is a new situation in the Church. Because the Church has changed there are many ramifications for religious life. The changes have left many religious, and many confrères, bewildered and confused. The change has been described by Cardinal Hume in the following way:

> Before the Vatican Council the Church was like a huge temple with many adornments and great solidity and great certainty. The Vatican Council calls us to leave the temple and return to the tent of Abraham. A tent can be moved. It is not very permanent. It's

> changing all the time, and it leaves people with much frustration, but we can find God more easily in the simplicity of the tent than in the solidity of the temple.

The change has also been likened to a desert situation. At the moment our Community, and most religious communities in the Church in the Western World, are in a desert situation because of the rising median age and a shortage of vocations. Thank God this is not true of Nigeria. Not only is the Community in the desert but the Church is in the desert too. Recently Dr Habgood, the Anglican bishop of Leeds, said on television that the besetting sin of the Church in its present desert situation was the frantic search for certainty. It is natural to look for certainty in an age of uncertainty. Yet the call is to live the cross of ambiguity, and to change. We can learn a lot about our own situation from the experience of the people in the desert. They wandered around for forty years, not knowing where they were heading for, and not understanding where they were going. Occasionally they sent out scouts to scout ahead and see if the way was clear. The scouts returned to the main body, and then the main body moved. There were also those who didn't want to move forward, who complained against Moses for having brought them into the desert and who longed to return to the certainties of slavery in Egypt. Yet God was more powerfully with the people in the desert than He was when they reached the promised land of certainty and security.

The present situation of religious life has been called "chaos" by Fr Gerry Arbuckle in his book *Strategies for the Renewal of Religious Life.* He makes the point in the book that chaos can be life-giving if we use it in the right way. But first we have to acknowledge the chaos and change our attitude to it, otherwise the chaos can be frightening. Much of the chaos is caused by a stage of transition which we are in at the moment, from a culture which was dominated and formed by authority, to a culture which is formed by experience; from a Church which was authority-centred and structured to a Church which calls for personal responsibility and accountability. The Church of the Vatican Council sees herself as the people of God, with the Holy Spirit working in every single person in a very unique way. That is why we need the views and the sharings of every single confrère, in order to discern where God is calling us. That is why there are meetings and meetings and convocations.

The context in which we meet

Allow me to put our meeting into some kind of context.

1. In the early 80s each region of the Province drew up a Charism Statement. That answered the question who we are. In the 1985 Assembly a Mission Statement was drawn up. That answered the question what we do. The next logical move is to work out the implications of that Mission Statement. We have to draw up a Provincial Plan for the Province. That is why, in the Working Document which you have all received, we have outlined one goal under Evangelization, Formation, and Community. Our meeting this week is to own that goal, and to draw up a number of Lines of Action to implement that goal.

2. Another context in which we meet is that of a certain amount of grief. We have lost eight confrères since last November – Fathers Bob Alien, Bill Meagher, Jimmy Sheil, Bernard Buckley, John Hurley, Frank Lyne, Charlie Sinnott and Denis Corkery. The sudden deaths left us very numb, and left me wondering what God was saying to us. On this occasion we have to acknowledge our grief at the loss which, as the Province community, we have suffered. We grieve too for the loss of two houses, Armagh and Celbridge. Armagh, where many of you received your vocation to the priesthood, and where many of us worked for many years. The decision to move out of Armagh has to be seen in the context of the educational scene of Armagh, where there were two small grammar schools with a constantly reducing school-going population. The need for some rationalisation there has been on the cards for the past twenty years. We have to acknowledge our grief at the loss of a home that was very special for many of us. We also have to acknowledge our shame and regret to leave Northern Ireland at this troubled time. We also grieve over the loss of Celbridge. The reason for the closing of Celbridge had to do with our reduced number of students. The financial and other implications of keeping a 26-bedroomed house for three or four students called for a smaller house of formation.

Alongside the grieving there are many developments for which I thank God. There is the house in Park View which was set up with a view to giving the younger confrères the kind of community living in which they were formed. The houses in Iona Drive and Enugu are being set up at the moment. There is also the development of the Mission experiment in Tooting, and the continuing development of

our work in Nigeria, especially the permanent mission. Thank God, too, for the progress which has been made in developing the Marian Vincentian Youth Movement.

There are many reasons why we have to meet. I wish to mention only three:

1. When people of faith meet, something happens. Where there is a meeting of minds and heart, there is always something of God:

> When Pentecost Day came round they had all met in one room when suddenly they heard what sounded like a powerful wind from Heaven, the noise of which filled the entire house in which they were sitting. And something appeared to them that seemed like tongues of fire. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4).
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> In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them "Peace be with you". The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord (Jn 20:19).

The disciples on both occasions were all gathered together and they experienced together the power of the Spirit and the joy of meeting the Risen Lord. I pray that during this week our meeting will have something of a Pentecost for all of us individually, and for the Province community.

2. The Second Vatican Council effected a revolution in Church governance, and in Church ministries. Each time there is a general upheaval in society or in the Church there is need for re-founding. In the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council we have to face the task of re-founding our Province. It is not the first time that the Community was re-founded. It was re-founded during the time of Father Etienne after the French Revolution. So the challenge for us is to renew St Vincent's vision, which took flesh in the Church of the Council of Trent, and to adapt it for today's Church. We inherit a very rich heritage, but we have to get in touch with it and adapt it in the light of the needs of today's Church in Ireland, Britain and Nigeria. That is a work which we have to do together. It is not possible for it to be done when people remain apart.

3. Another reason for our meeting is to face realistically our present position as a Province. In spiritual direction a spiritual director aims to get a person praying from where he is at now, not from where he would like to be. So a person is encouraged in spiritual direction to pray his anger, his fear, his joy, his sorrow, his frustration, his limitations. The same is true of the Community. We begin, in the words of Jeremiah, "in the land of our captivity" (46:27). That's where we are, and that's where we begin. What we should have done in the past, and what we should do in the future, can stifle the grace of the present moment.

At the meeting of Provincials in July Bishop Helder Camara spoke to us. Among the things he emphasised was that there was no place in the Church for pessimists. Our relationship with God must give us hope. Our meditation on the suffering and death of Jesus must give us the hope of a new life. In the words of Patrick Kavanagh, the poet, "We must allow God to surprise us". Recently at a CMRS Annual General Meeting in Dublin we were told that the great challenge to religious in the years ahead is not to work harder, but rather to change attitudes and work in a different way. It is a collaborative way, calling for a new generosity, freedom and creativity. Collaborative ministry is already functioning very well in many of our houses, especially in the colleges where there has been a long tradition of collaboration. For example in All Hallows, where All Hallows priests, a Dominican Sister, a Capuchin priest, lay people and others work side by side with our confrères. In Castleknock there is a lay Dean and a Board of Governors working very well and very closely with the community. In St Paul's, next year, please God, we will have a lay Principal in the school. A Board of Management is already in place and working very well. The same is true in many of our parishes and in our work for the Deaf and the Travellers. Collaboration is not something that happens. It has to be worked at. As we struggle towards collaborative ministry we recognise the necessity for toleration, healthy compromise, affirmation/encouragement, and a recognition that we are God's co-workers with other religious and lay people in the work of Evangelization.

The importance of Mission

Mission is of crucial importance. We are, after all, the Congregation of the Mission, and the nature of mission is to have nowhere to lay your head, and to be constantly on the move, communicating the message of God's love in various different ways. As soon as we begin to settle down, then mission becomes thin and we lose our raison d'etre. The

important thing is that we are doing God's work, not our own, and that the mission of this Province is part of the mission of Jesus Christ. The mission of Jesus is articulated in Lk4:18 when, speaking in the synagogue at Nazareth and quoting the prophet Isaiah, he said: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has sent me to preach good news to the poor".

St Vincent chose the Mission Statement of Jesus as the motto for the Community: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* The mission of Jesus is our mission too. What we have to discern in these next couple of days is where God is calling us at this time in the history of our Province. There is no easy answer, and there is no easy way of finding out what is God's will for us, individually or as a Community. If we are listening to each other, and listening to the Spirit of God in each other, then we have some chance of finding out what form our mission should take, and where God is calling us as a Community.

Hopes and fears for the Convocation

Before I finish I would like to share with you some of my hopes and fears for this Convocation.

First of all, *Fears:*

1. I fear that we may wish to re-open old scars and old wounds and relive the battles of yesterday.

2. I fear that we might get all concerned about where we should be, instead of the quality of our presence where we are.

3. I fear a certain unreal expectation from this Convocation and that some confrères may be disappointed.

My *Hopes* for the Convocation:

1. That this meeting would generate a new outpouring of God's Spirit. That it would be a new Pentecost for the Community, resulting in a unified mission thrust, especially to the poor.

2. That we could begin to communicate at a deeper level our experience of God in our work, and that this would lead to a strengthening of community bonds for the mission.

3. That the meeting would lead to a new awareness about ourselves as a Province, and a renewed conversion to Vincentian values and ideals, especially a love for the poor, prayer, the vows and the five virtues of the Community.

4. That we would take life from the chaos that is around us and focus on the good rather than on the bad.

5. I see the Convocation as a stage on our journey and that as a result of this meeting certain structures will be inbuilt into our Evangelization, Community Life, and Formation programmes, which will be on-going over the next few years.

Today is the feast of the Transfiguration. It's an appropriate day to talk about being transformed, and the transformation of the heart which Fr Hugh O'Donnell talked about in to-day's homily. Someone said to St Augustine: "The times are bad", and St Augustine replied: "What times? The times are you. Change yourself and the times will be good". The call of the Gospel to follow Christ is a call to conversion and change. That call is echoed by our Constitutions when they tell us that the end of the Congregation is to follow Christ, the Evangelizer of the Poor. Any kind of change is painful. To change even a single attitude is not easy, but we can change with the grace of God. Cardinal Newman said: "We cannot change ourselves. Only God can change us". In the words of St Paul: "It is all God's work" (2 Cor 5:18), and we need the grace of God if we are to be renewed in the spirit of St Vincent and Vatican II. With God's help this week will be a privileged moment of the Spirit for us, individually and as a Province community.

Convocation and After: One Viewpoint from Ireland

Eugene Curran

At a remove now of some four months as I write I find it hard to get down on paper my reflections on August's Convocation. It was something which affected me on many different levels and which inspired very mixed emotions within, feelings of affection and anger, of hope and frustration, of regret and of love. What follows is, therefore, very much a personal reflection and is not intended as a systematic critique of the process or its contents. One of the things which struck me most forcibly during Convocation was how differently we all perceive things, even though we share a common identity and charism. This is my perception.

I arrived in Clongowes feeling drained. The previous year had been a demanding one for us in St Paul's. The change to the Board of Management had taken place but not without placing an additional burden on the community. It was a year when I had felt that we had spent a great deal of time "busy about many things" and, of course, it had ended with the death of Frank Lyne in June. As a community this had numbed us and highlighted the toll death had levied on the Province over that year, and which was to continue.

Besides this, I arrived, as I am sure everyone did, with my own baggage; there had been deaths and illness in the family, close friends and family had emigrated, I experienced a certain amount of worry about what the future held for Paul's, and about my own career as a teacher; in short, the rag-bag of life that each of us carries about with him. The more immediate concerns had tended to put Convocation out of my line of vision and so, in some ways, I perceived it as an interruption of my summer schedule, and an unwelcome one at that.

But I also arrived after nine months of preparation in the Task Forces. Mine was that of Ministry of the Word, which I had chosen because of my belief that the task of preaching, of evangelizing, underpins all of our apostolates, and is more important than any one work in which it is expressed. We were a motley crew, but I found that stimulating. After years of studying with my contemporaries I

found it refreshing to hear other view-points, though some were polar opposites to my own. I found I was called on to re-think some of my beliefs and that I became more convinced of others. A recurring motif in our group was the need to improve communication, both in the communication of the Word of God to the people, and amongst ourselves. Perhaps we experienced what we claimed was true: that as a body we are more at ease in communicating thoughts rather than feelings, more at ease with slagging than sharing. Our group did suffer some vicissitudes; I was frustrated that certain plans and projects never came to fruition but, in the main, I was pleased with the way things went. Many of our sessions involved a sharing of the confrères' own experience of community, mission, formation, the Word, and prayer. We spoke too of the need to acknowledge and accept our own limitations, both personal and community; to recognise that we cannot be all things to all people.

So, August 3 saw me at Clongowes. I knew that many confrères did not know me well, and some not at all. My desire was that we would evolve a common sense of mission and would grapple with the very real limitation we were experiencing, especially in terms of human resources and their deployment, and the viability of our continuing wide spread of apostolates. I hoped we'd finally reach peace on what I perceived to be the contentious issue of our interpretation of the motto of the Congregation *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* I fervently hoped that the sessions, and the confrères, wouldn't be long-winded, and I wanted a cubicle away from all snorers!

My last ambition was dashed immediately, and a first memory of Clongowes will always be of lying awake in the early morning hours listening to the polyphony of slumber sounds, ranging from basso profundo snores to intermittent "peeps", and one very loud chirrup. The sounds were as many and varied as the attitudes and opinions of their originators were to prove to be. On one thing, though, I noted we were almost all as one: we have joined the ranks of the silver beards now; I even found a colony of grey hairs nestling on my own brow.

I found that the opening night of the retreat in some way set the tone for what was to follow; there was humour and warmth, but also a certain air of uncertainty and trepidation about what was going to unfold. I met men that I had never met before, and renewed some acquaintances. If for nothing else Convocation was valuable for bringing so many of us together for the first time as a group. In looking at the faces there was a recognition of our diversity, not only in age but also in culture and attitudes. During the week I certainly became

more aware of the wealth of talent that is in the Province, whether in individuals or in communities. This was very obvious when people spoke of their work and its outreaches; I was amazed, for want of a better word, to hear of St Pat's involvement in development education in the Third World, something I had known nothing about before. We need to be more conscious of all that is being done. But equally the talent was to be seen at the liturgies; we had some marvellous celebrations, and thoughtful inspiring homilies. Or who, once bitten, will ever forget Race Night? For myself, one of those moments I enjoyed was illustrating Convocation "buzz words" with Charlie Gardiner. My thanks to the organising committee for arranging that there would be a bar available; it ensured that there would be a heart to the place after 8 pm, whether confrères were deep in discussion or their papers, loud in Trivial Pursuits or quiet at cards, or smiling *à la recherche du temps perdu* looking at the photo albums. The old Emmaus walk made a return and at all hours of the day knots of people were to be seen walking the grounds, though at very different paces.

Yet the same faces told other stories too; there were some missing and there was sadness, both personal and communal. For myself, I found that painful, but it was well addressed by Hugh O'Donnell in his retreat. He spoke of the Paschal Mystery of suffering, death and rebirth. For a community that had experienced so many losses in different ways, this was timely. Yet, Hugh was full of hope for the morning. When he spoke of Frank, Denis, Charlie, James, John, Bernard, Bill and Bob he touched something in me and I think helped us to acknowledge how we were in entering the presence of the Lord. He pointed out that it is only in recognising our poverty before God that we can become effective ministers of his will. To quote Yeats: We

> Must lie down where all the ladders start
> In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart.

If, as Mère Guillemin said, *Les événements: c'est Dieu,* then God would be found in the coming week in a recognition of our poverty and limitation.

It was a personal pleasure for me that the retreat ended and Convocation began on the feast of the Transfiguration. Martin Rafferty, God be good to him, used to take us for English in the seminaire and introduced me to Muriel Spark's novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* in which one of the characters writes a book called *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace,* a phrase which, for me, has come to mean the

ability to see the glory of God in the detritus of daily life, and which echoes St Vincent's call to see Christ in his poor. I hoped we would be granted that grace.

And so, Convocation commenced, introduced by Mark recalling the opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities'*.

> It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.
> It was the spring of hope; it was the winter of despair.
> We had everything before us; we had nothing before us.

We had a week of hard work before us.

We broke into our groups which were to be a source of inspiration and anger for me for the next five days. As with the liturgies, the presentations were often original and humourous, but then again I found myself riled by what I perceived to be the obstinacy, the obtuseness of others, both within my own group *(pace* all former members of 4) and from others. Yet, though we were rarely in total agreement, and often disagreed loudly, I never experienced ridicule or put-down.

Still, all of this was to be tested on the first day. Speaking with Una Collins later she spoke of how struck she had been, not by our reactions to Eamonn Bredin (of the diocese of Kilmore) but by our reactions to our reactions. We have always prided ourselves on our gentleness and would, I think, consider it to be one of the marks of a Vincentian, and we were, it seems to me, shocked by how forthright our response to Eamonn was. Since this is a personal reflection I'll say that I'm glad events unfolded as they did, because an underlying anger was brought to the fore, which seems to centre on the relationship between certain of our current works and a commitment to work with the poor. I had missed the talk itself but I felt we expended too much energy on it, no matter which viewpoint we took. I feel we responded to Fr Bredin as a visiting lecturer whose dissertation was to be critiqued, rather than taking from it what was useful and relevant to our Vincentian mission, and discarding the rest. That said, his presence was not really in keeping with the spirit of Convocation, and served to deflect us from the critical point, which was, and remains, the centrality of our mission to evangelize the poor. However that may be, there was nothing staid about the proceedings from that point out.

One thing that struck me from all of this was the need to have further discussion among the confrères in order to move towards agreement and consensus. There is still a lot of hurt and anger from men who feel that their apostolate is being belittled, and from those who feel that

their position is being misunderstood. In our group, composed of men of different ages, regions and apostolates, I found that there were many things going on in the Province of which I am unaware, cocooned, as I can be, in my own labours and concerns. I would fear that, if we do not share our experiences and apostolates, then there is a danger of fragmentation and factions, as each house defends its, and each confrère his, own territories.

There were areas of growth; if old wounds were reopened and old battles recalled it was with the aim of bringing healing and peace. We came to recognise that each of us, in our differing posts, works for and with the poor, though there may be a need to refocus somewhat. In my own work I would say that I am now more than ever convinced of the importance of education as a work of the Province, but I would see my future role as being among the weaker students. I find it more personally rewarding to work with the "A" stream students, certainly there is more kudos, but, in the post-primary education system which currently exists in Ireland (with all its systemic faults) I would best express my Vincentian way by identifying with those of lesser academic ability, who are often those who are less materially wealthy. Yet all of this is in the context of a Vincentian school which accepts boys (if not yet girls) of mixed abilities and backgrounds, and I do not see any conflict of commitment there. We need to free ourselves from what seems to be a lurking belief that we must be all and do all; I am only one among 56 teachers in St Paul's.

This contact with the poor (for such they are) is in keeping with the goal on evangelization and still, I feel, I need to be conscious of efforts being made in other apostolates, and of systems of inequality which "cry out to heaven for justice". For this reason I would consider the proposed meeting on evangelization and the setting up, in whatever form it takes, of a justice and peace desk to be appropriate expressions of the goal, and an invaluable help to me in my priestly and Vincentian commitment (as well as keeping me sane!).

In terms of the goals and lines of action for "Community for Mission" and "Formation for Mission" I'd say we are already well under way. During Convocation our desire to live "after the manner of dear friends" was very much in evidence. This was something that Flannan Markham SS.CC had been very impressed by at the last Provincial Assembly. There was a real toleration for differing views and an awareness of the talents and giftedness of each confrère, something that both Jim Sweeney CP and Una Collins remarked on. Humour was perhaps the most obvious sign of this affection for one

another, whether in the return visit of St Vincent, Colm McAdams' sustained train of thought, or the heated discussion on sabbaticals (now to be known as "Con-vacations"). Here it is timely to insert a news report from St Paul's: after long months of worry and searching Tom Dougan has, at last, found his norms.

I found the Nigerian contributions stimulating and thought-provoking, though I was struck by their pointing out that they too have known loss and grief.

For someone coming from a house that had felt the hand of death that summer there were many signs of hope in Convocation, especially as we voiced the desire to go forward together. There was also great frustration. I had gone to Clongowes hoping that we would address "Mission" in a specific way and reach some consensus about manpower, resources and their future distribution. I felt, as I still do, that we needed to reach some definite common goals, and with a greater urgency than I currently perceive, or others would follow Frank Lyne. In my opinion we skirted issues in favour of stating ideal goals. We may all recognise that, whatever our works, we are, and are called to be, "Missioners", but what of the works themselves? Do we address ourselves to our current situation in terms of membership, which is both sad and hopeful, or do we continue as we are? It may not be the function of the body to make decisions, but are we going to express concrete goals? Is our gentleness, which is so real also, in some way a means of avoiding the less palatable aspects of our situation? Is it sufficient to say that we will deal with these issues in the future if, in the meantime, some of the brethren opt for ministries outside the community, or experience illness, or, as has happened, die? I was angered, too, that we still found it necessary to fight over definitions, especially that of the poor.

We allowed ourselves, as I saw it, to become side-tracked by considerations about procedure, for example with Eamonn Bredin, or, to a lesser extent later in the week, with Jim Sweeney's interjection.

There is a story I like about a German woman who sheltered Jews in her house in Bavaria during World War II:

> "Why", her friends asked her, "do you do this?"
> "I do it", she replied, "because the time is now and I am here".

In Clongowes I experienced a group of men who came some way to acknowledging that, whatever it is it has to do, it has to do it now and with the gifts, talents and limitations that are uniquely its own.

We cannot change the world by ourselves but we can bring something unique to our changing world. There are no miracle cures, but there is hope. At the bottom of the Pandora's box, which Convocation sometimes seemed to be, this hope remains. However frail we may feel we are there is great strength in our unity. We may not all like the pace at which we are moving, but we are moving and, though at times I wish things were done at my speed I am reminded of a saying of Frank Lyne's that "by patience and perseverance a snail may reach Jerusalem".

Convocation and After: One Viewpoint from Britain

Stanislaus Brindley

"Transfiguration holds promise for the future… But transfiguration is already taking place". Is this Teilhard de Chardin, or perhaps Marilyn Ferguson or some other prophet of the New Age? No, it is simply Hugh O'Donnell CM. He spoke these words at the opening of retreat mass on 6 August. For me they come close to summing up the message of the retreat and the ensuing Convocation. Without, however, suggesting that it was optimism all the way through.

Day One of Convocation was far from promoting optimism. Looking like an incisive young James O'Doherty, Eamon Bredin shook us out of our retreat-induced feelings of consolation. And made us experience what someone described as "no mere flea-bite of desolation". "The poor are the materially poor; no escape", he affirmed. Not an inch of ground was given by the author of *Disturbing the Peace.* He prioritised St Luke's version of what Jesus had preached, and left us to wrestle with what that implied for us.

Day Two brought us to a more peaceful acceptance of being disturbed. A useful verbalisation of this was proposed in my group: "The goal of our mission is to pursue our work of evangelization with the plight of the poor uppermost in our minds".

Day Three was Tree Day. Urban Osuji had placed a leafless but substantial bough of a tree in front of the altar to grab our attention as we arrived for our eucharist. The apparently dead tree was patiently awaiting the budding forth of the life contained within it, and it seemed to give the message: "Vincentians, please imitate". To this transfiguration reference Urban added a very fetching story of a tepid seminarian singing the variant; "I surrender *half*'!; an attitude not to be imitated.

Day Four, St Lawrence's Day, found us on the gridiron of goal clarification. For Deacon Lawrence the materially poor were the treasure of the Church. For we were trying to locate them in the centre of our goal without excluding the analogically poor.

Day Five was the Day of St Clare, and by extension the Poverello's Day. Sister Una Collins, in her colourful homily, stressed the fresh,

almost new-age, lifestyle inaugurated by the Franciscan pair: a perpetual challenge inviting us to be transformed, transfigured, totally renewed.

So, how is this transformation going? Is the transfiguration proceeding? Is a new age dawning for the Vins of this Province? Is Urban's tree in the process of bearing buds?

In approaching a response to these queries I find myself thinking of the vast accumulations of butter, wine, cereals etc., held in the EC "mountains". It took a long time for the poor to be allowed to benefit from these Community mountains. But this eventually did begin to happen… And, in fact, Vincentian laity were very much involved in the process of distribution.

Every analogy limps but, in my view, our days in Convocation built up a fine mountain of affirmation and goodwill. This I regard as Stage One.

One hundred and thirteen CMs had come together, the biggest ever percentage of the Province to assemble in one place. A great credit to our leaders and to each of ourselves. So the Lord had given himself a golden opportunity to speak to us whatever message he wanted. And what message did he speak? Was it a Jeremiad of condemnation with threats of extinction? Far from it. The words which the Lord spoke to us were challenging but full of affirmation. This came through in Hugh O'Donnell's retreat and in the liturgy and sharings of the Convocation itself.

In our 3 August opening eucharist the first reading (Ex 40:34) brought the *Kabod Yahweh* over our Assembly: "The cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle". On the first Friday and Saturday we had the Cure of Ars and our Lady, challenging figures of energetic Christian service. Then, as a climax to the retreat, the transfiguration of the Lord revealing the way he is empowering us to travel: through suffering into transformation. On Monday the apostles were enabled to provide bread for the needy people. Tuesday saw Peter (and ourselves) being urged to walk on the water. On Day Three the timidity of the spies returning from Canaan ("We felt like grasshoppers") was contrasted with the faith of the Canaanite woman. This challenge was followed by another on Thursday which contrasted the mistrusting Moses striking the rock twice with the Jesus who will entrust the keys to Peter. Friday: "The Lord… loved your fathers… he brought you out… openly showing his presence and his great power". Saturday recalled the *Shema* from Deuteronomy 6: Love God and our neighbour with all our heart our soul and our strength.

The punch-line of the gospel couldn't have been more appropriate: "If your faith were the size of a mustard seed… nothing would be impossible for you". And the building up of our faith was effected not merely by the words spoken but by the whole atmosphere of dignity, power and joy pervading our liturgical celebrations.

As for community up-building, the small group sharings and the recreational activities were powerful factors in enabling us to affirm one another in a great spirit of solidarity. I was really struck by this feeling one evening as I looked around the various groupings in the spacious foyer. *Pace* our young confrères I felt myself back in the Rock on a "free evening with amalgamation" when all seemed well with the world, or at least with the Vins.

So, through the process of Convocation the Lord had built up in us what I have called a mountain of affirmation and goodwill. A fine result for Stage One. But are we going to remain stuck at that stage? For how long a time fruitless, like the EC produce mountain? How long will the poor have to wait before they noticeably benefit from our Vincentian mountain of affirmation and goodwill? Are there any visible follow-on effects of Convocation? And, if so, what are they? I'm not sure if I'm in an appropriate position to answer that question. Initially it occurred to me to ask around among confrères in Britain about the after-effects of Convocation. But in his letter of 7 September Fr Noonan and his Council seemed to be taking that in hand. Besides, the pressures of getting used to a new job didn't leave me much time for research. So I just put down an idea or two of my own on the matter.

Before reading on, however, some of you enthusiasts might like to search around for pen and paper and set down some observations of your own which concretise any progress you have seen since our August sessions.

I believe there have been some individual movements outward towards the poor. But in order to increase this thrust I suspect we have first to move inwards. Getting in touch with the poor man in myself is the difficult bit.

> We are afraid of the poor as long as we refuse to face the poor man inside ourselves. The poorest man St Vincent ever met was himself. Having experienced his own poverty he was able to reach out freely to the materially poor without feeling threatened (Mark Noonan, quoting Hugh O'Donnell, in his September circular).

"The journey inwards is the most important journey of all" was Henry Miller's answer when asked to prioritise important journeys in his own experience. "But it is the most difficult of all". In present-day initial formation this inner journey receives a lot of attention, but for most of us it was not so. Therefore we find it hard and we satisfy ourselves by going on with our usual (good) outward activities, hesitant about inward journeys.

At Convocation we all took part in a sort of sharing of inward journeys. This was helpful and needs to be continued. In fact we committed ourselves to doing this. We approved thirteen *lines of action.* Taking one from each of these three headings: *Evangelization of the Poor, Formation for Mission, Community for Mission* we can reflect on the following list:

> Confrères to have personal contact with the poor; Experiences arising from them to be *shared;*
>
> Substantial contact with the unchurched, the poor, the alienated; and *shared reflection* on this experience;
>
> By working to make our communities open and *reflective* bases for a truly collaborative ministry.

Notice the stress on sharing and reflecting. Like Mary we are to ponder in our hearts. Like Vincent in his repetitions of prayer we are to encourage sharing among ourselves. This sharing and pondering leads easily enough into prayer. Pondering in the presence of the Lord as St Vincent did so fruitfully. Or, as the very first of the thirteen *Lines of Action* states: "A *deepening commitment to prayer as a primary means of evangelization",*

Actively listening to others and to our own deeper selves and to the Lord. Listening with a readiness to change, to become more flexible, to resemble more faithfully the "clay in the hands of the potter" of our Common Rules. This I believe will help us to progress from the "mountain of goodwill" stage to the stage of "distribution of help to individual poor men and women". How long before this process gathers real momentum?

The Vincentian Ethos in St Patrick's College, Armagh, 1861-1988

Kieran Magovern
(Prepared for a proposed commemorative volume)

In her book *The Story of The Vincentians* Mary Purcell describes the founding in 1833 of the Irish Province of the Vincentians, in a Church quickened by post-Emancipation fervour, by priests of the Dublin and Meath dioceses who had been students in Maynooth, with the help and support of the Dean and Vice-President Dr Philip Dowley, who afterwards became the first Irish Provincial.

The aim of these young founding fathers was to work as a community for the Church in Ireland which was "emerging from the underground where it had for so long subsisted". Since education was a crying need their first community work was a school at Usher's Quay on the banks of the Liffey. This school was transferred to Castleknock in 1835. Over a century and a half later it is hard not to be impressed by the dynamism and zeal of the founding fathers.

When Primate Dixon was looking for a community to take charge of the seminary (minor) in Armagh it is understandable that he would turn to the Vincentians, who from the time of their foundation in 1625 were "secular priests living in community". This would be an even more striking characteristic of the Irish Province since they originated within the National Seminary, Maynooth.

An overture

On 11 January 1854 Primate Dixon is writing to Fr Dowley with two purposes in mind:

> I am delighted with the news about Crossmaglen; and I agree in thinking that the summer days after Easter will answer the people of that Quarter best.

It is the Primate's second point which seems to be his principal point:

> I am delighted also to learn that there is no further objection to your taking possession of the Seminary, except that which arises

> from the want of subjects at present. As to this objection, of course it is hard to reply to it: but, of one thing I am certain that of all the projects connected with this diocese, this one of getting the seminary put under your care, is by far the most important. The building of the Cathedral is a mere trifle compared with it. It would be too long to go into all the reasons in a letter. For the present it is enough to say, that if this were effected, a neutral body of clergy would be established in the very heart of the diocese, belonging neither to the Northern nor the Southern part of the diocese, but having the confidence of both parts: and the good which this would effect for religion is incalculable, no one could describe it to you, and no one consequently could describe the joy, which it would give to all good men, to see the seminary in your hands. As to the means of support, I think that with an honest man to manage the fine farm of 50 acres, and the £50 per year which a clergyman will contribute, and the pensions of the ecclestiacal students, these will be enough even if they were not to admit any lay pupils. I trust that providence will soon get us over the only remaining difficulty now, that is, the want of subjects on your part.
>
> I hope to write soon to Father Kickham about the financial question.
>
> I am,
> My dear Mr Dowley,
> With sincerest regards and esteem,
> Yours affectionately
> † Joseph Dixon

It was to take Fr Dowley seven years to find suitable subjects for the Seminary in Armagh. Meanwhile the enthusiasm of the Primate did not dim. Indeed, reading between the lines, it would seem that he took his request to the Superior General in Paris. On 23 February 1861 he writes again to Fr Dowley:

> I heard some news in passing through Paris, which was most agreeable to me. I am very anxious to have a conversation with you on the subject. I hope, therefore, to see you, please God, about 2 o'clock on Wednesday next at Castleknock. You will be glad to hear that we have now 65 boarders in the same Seminary. I need not enter into any particulars now, as I hope to see you soon.

In the foregoing letter one senses that the Primate had secured backing from Paris and knows he is going to have his way.

We have no account of the meeting in Castleknock but on 4 June Primate Dixon is in correspondence with Fr Dowley about the mechanics of taking over:

> Our academical year here will terminate according to the old system on the 17th inst. That will be the day of the distribution – the examinations will commence, please God, on the 13th. It will be necessary for us to announce to the students on the 17th that the College will be re-opened on the 1st September according to the new arrangements.
>
> I was thinking that if you could send one of your good subjects to attend the examinations, it would give eclat to the affair, and having him here we could make the announcement in a more satisfactory way to the students.

The choice of the word "eclat" is interesting. In more competitive times, over a century later, some Armagh educational administrators have thought that they were the first to think of publicity and promotion policies for their institution; they were not. Primate Dixon seems to have had an instinct for creating the right "buzz". He was also shrewd enough to book the famous Fr John Gowan CM, a charismatic priest and co-founder of the Holy Faith Sisterhood, for the diocesan retreat at the end of July 1861. No doubt all this would help to win acceptance for the new administrators of the Seminary amongst the priests and people.

Thus the Vincentian apostolate in Armagh began in the way St Vincent always liked a mission to begin, i.e. as a response to the clearly expressed wish of the bishop. On 4 July 1861 an agreement was signed by the Primate of All Ireland, Dr Dixon, and the Provincial of the Irish Province of the Vincentians, Dr Philip Dowley CM. In the light of what might be termed a "misunderstanding" which occurred thirteen years later in 1874 it is relevant to note the contents of articles 3 and 4 of the agreement:

> *Article 3*
> Should the College be getting into debt, the responsibility of said debt is to rest with His Grace.
>
> *Article 4*
> Six months notice, on either side, to be sufficient, in any circumstances, to dissolve this agreement.

In attempting to sketch the Vincentian ethos I will rely heavily on the Visitation Reports, or Charges, and make only occasional references to a fragment of a notebook with miscellaneous entries dating from 1868 until 1882, compiled by an anonymous Dean. My task is not to compile a formal history but to outline the atmosphere of the College and the attitude of the community towards their work.

Visitation and Visitation Charge

Essentially a visitation is conducted by the Provincial, who is also sometimes called the Visitor. The purpose of the exercise is to examine a particular house and its work in the light of the ideals of the community, to correct any abuses or deviations from what might be called good practice, and, above all, to bring spiritual uplift and encouragement to the community.

The visitation lasts three to five days. The Provincial shares the common life and has a lengthy interview with each member of the community. At the end of the Visitation a "charge" is read, wherein the Visitor almost always praises the community and then directs their attention to areas where they could improve. Reading the charge is not a once-only exercise. Until the time of the following visitation it is read by the Superior to the community every three months; this helps to drive the message home.

Inauspicious beginning

After such efforts to bring the Vincentians into the seminary the beginning of their ministry was marked by the severe illness of the first President Fr Kearney. Since he was absent most of the time (he died in 1864) Dr Dowley conducts only an informal visitation in 1862; the two confrères who were keeping the enterprise going did not constitute a formal community. Dr Dowley writes on 24 August 1862:

> I feel it a pleasing duty to leave this line as a record of it and testify that I have been much edified and consoled by all I have witnessed at St Patrick's College, Armagh, kindly confided to our charge by His Grace, the Primate. The trials with which God has been pleased to visit this infant establishment, by the severe illness of our most dear and (– ?) confrère, Father Kearney, together with other difficulties inseparable from the commencement of such undertakings, have been met by our confrères in a truly admirable spirit and borne with a courage, submission to the Divine Will and devotedness to the best interests of the

> College which have edified all, including His Grace the Primate himself as he has assured me.

An interesting footnote to this informal visitation is the fact that the Provincial at the head of the letter allocates the classes for the coming year, saying that he has consulted Fr Kearney.

The interior life

All the charges refer to the spiritual life as the foundation of the apostolate. Fr McNamara, who replaced Fr Dowley as Provincial, writes on 8 April 1864:

> In consequence of the provisional order of things existing for some time as regards the confrères themselves some of the pious practices of the Congregation have suffered interruption in their regular observance. I trust the difficulties which have stood in the way will soon be removed, and, that as far as the circumstances of their position will allow, the children of St Vincent constituting the personnel of St Patrick's, Armagh, will give effect to the sincere love which they all have for their holy vocation by an exact and uniform observance of all the rules, usages and practices appertaining to the interior order and discipline of the Congregation of the Mission.

Expansion suggested

In 1866 Fr McNamara changes the order of day in St Patrick's so as to "bring it more into conformity with our central house of St Vincent's, Castleknock". Castleknock was to be the yardstick for good practice, both spiritual and educational. In the same year he also indicates to the community the need for extensions to the plant:

> Owing to the increased and constantly increasing numbers of students the Seminary Building does not provide accommodation as ample as should be desired and I would recommend the matter to be respectfully represented to the Primate with the view to obtaining His Grace's approval for enlarging the establishment as soon as may be convenient.

Pupil-teacher relationships

Contact with the boys outside class, conversation and interest in their amusements and games are essential to the transmission of values. This is the constant theme of Fr McNamara's successor Fr Peter Duff.

An extract from his 1868 charge is typical:

> Young persons attend more to what they observe in our ordinary contacts with them, than to the set instructions we may give them. Everything we say or do in their presence may be productive of lasting benefit to them, when we converse with them in a manner becoming our character…

Easy access

In passing, Fr Duff draws attention to how open the College is, and how persons from the town could reach not only the playground but even the most private places in the house. In the following years many a Dean experienced difficulties from both the easy access and egress!

From day to day

How was the life of the ordinary student at this time, one may wonder. Whilst the general routine was strict enough, with early rising, regular study and frequent prayer, in the notebook of the anonymous Dean it is surprising to read that the students are on the premises for Easter Sunday 1872. Breakfast consisted of two eggs per student, plus bread and butter; mutton was served for dinner; there were tea and cakes at supper. In the evening the boys performed plays; details of setting up the stage are given, plus the fact that the costumes were hired in Dublin and the band performed. At the end of the evening even the smallest boy was given a glass of wine! Later on in the same year the boys went on an outing to Benburb. The Dean makes a note that in future the names of those who prefer lemonade to porter should be taken, as some boys were disappointed when supplies of lemonade were short and they were forced to take porter!

The Dean notes also around the same time:

> It appeared from one of the boys' letters that during the vacation story telling went on in the dormitory occasionally till near morning. The consequences were that when the boys were called they could scarcely be got down in time for prayer.

Even in 1988 the scenario sounds familiar.

Fr Duff's term of office as Provincial lasted over twenty years. He was Visitor during the term of office of three College Presidents. By the time Fr Duffs successor Fr Tom Morrissey was appointed the College had become primarily a minor seminary. Fr P J Dunning notes in his concise history of the College (reprinted in COLLOQUE No. 18)

that during the Presidency of Fr Michael Carrigy (1886-1919) "there was a tendency to restrict the intake to aspirants to the Priesthood". The following extract from the Visitation Charge of 1891 is typical of this era:

> *Nemo dat quod non habet.* Two very important works engage our attention here. First the labour for our own sanctification. The calm and peace that surround this establishment and the little contact with externs give great aid to this our most important work… The second work may truly be called a great work. For what greater work can there be than to prepare ministers for the sanctuary…?

Two years later Fr Morrissey reminds the community, as did his predecessor, that

> the instruction of the students in science was but a part of the work that devolved on us. The formation of character and the training in virtue and piety are even more important.

Isolation

In 1927 Fr James Bennett warns the community:

You are so isolated here from the other communities of ours that during the summer vacation opportunity should be taken of mixing with confrères from other houses.

Mortification

As the thirties begin we find the same Fr Bennett reminding the confrères of the need for mortification and self-denial, saying that the petitions for permission to smoke which he receives are nearly always "flimsy".

Broadening the base

As the thirties progressed the exclusive Seminary quality of the College was in a manner of speaking being diluted. It was becoming less of a "spiritual hothouse". Although vocations were flourishing the educational aims were becoming wider. In 1936 Fr Harry O'Connor writes, *inter alia:*

> Whilst attending especially to spiritual training let us not forget the natural virtues. It should be our aim, too, to train the boys to be well mannered, polite and cultured.

In the centenary year, 1938, he notes with satisfaction:

> In my conversations with the confrères I learned that the College is full almost to capacity, that the discipline and conduct of the students are of a high standard and that the relations between the confrères and the students are most friendly.

A Catholic laity

In 1943 Fr James O'Doherty speaks at some length about the educated layman:

> A large percentage of your boys become priests and do credit to you and the collar they wear. There are many others who join the learned professions, take up careers of one kind or another. Whether it be a case of a young cleric or layman your eyes must ever be turned towards their future. You must forsee the difficulties they will be called to face. These difficulties are moral, religious and social. You must try to get a sympathetic understanding of the life, first of a university student, later of a professional man.

On the eve of the 1944 Education Act the College is no longer exclusively a Minor Seminary.

Expansion

Expansion to the College began in the twenties under the presidencies of Frs Edmund Cullen and John Campbell, continued through the thirties and into the forties under Fr Tom Rafferty. Fr Gus Sheridan made major extensions in the fifties. It was Fr Sheridan's successor, Fr P J Dunning, who was responsible for the major development which came to fruition and was consolidated under the presidencies of Frs John Doyle and Mark Noonan.

In the late seventies and first year of the eighties the enrolment of the College reached beyond 400 students. From the brightness of noon to the fading of the light is an inevitable cycle. Even as the numbers in the school were at an all-time high the Provincial, Fr Richard McCullen, a past student of the College, had to indicate to the Primate that after 1984 the Vincentians' administration of the College would be a major difficulty. With the appointment of Fr Fergus Kelly, at his own request, to a more pastoral role as chaplain to the deaf in Glasgow, and the present writer's appointment in his place as President, the withdrawal of the Vincentians from the Armagh scene became, albeit

in utter secrecy, my principal task. Whilst Cardinal O Fiaich had been pondering the rationalisation of boys' secondary education for some time he moved swiftly when Fr Frank Mullan informed him that the community would definitely withdraw as soon as a viable structure had been devised.

From 1985 onwards regular and urgent meetings were held in Ara Coeli with the headmasters of the three boys' secondary schools, so that options might be examined. The basis for discussion was a survey of the Armagh second level education scene compiled for Fr Mullan by Frs Noonan and McCann in 1981. In addition to these meetings both the Boards of Greenpark (the Christian Brothers' school) and the College were discussing rationalisation at virtually every meeting. Irrespective of any community staying or withdrawing it no longer made educational, economic nor religious sense for two small Grammar Schools to be competing for a dwindling pool of students.

A comprehensive solution to the problem was very seriously considered, but it failed narrowly to get a majority vote from the Boards of Greenpark and the College. Amalgamation of Greenpark and the College was the desired solution. It is satisfying to note that the combined pupils of the College and Greenpark have fitted into the College site with not a sign of temporary building. This is still not ample accommodation which is essential for educational pursuits, and a major expansion is in the pipeline.

The College celebrated its 150th birthday on St Patrick's Day 1988 in its last year of existence, theoretically. In the context of a concelebrated mass in the cathedral His Eminence Cardinal O Fiaich and the priests of ten dioceses paid warm and generous tribute to the generations of Vincentians who had staffed the College. Afterwards a plaque was unveiled in the entrance hall, and a buffet dinner was enjoyed by all. The last representatives of the Vincentians have cause to be sincerely grateful for the support of the Cardinal who, once he had accepted the inevitability of the personnel situation, spared no effort to ease the transition. Also, from 1984, the clergy of the diocese in the persons of Frs J Clyne, G McAleer, J McGoldrick and K Donaghy, joined the Vincentians and ensured that the College finished as a prosperous going concern.

On 23 August 1988 the last member of the Vincentians, that "neutral body of clergy" quietly left Armagh and its Seminary, which was once again preparing to open its doors "according to the new arrangements."

Janez Frančišek Gnidovec

Thomas Davitt

In 1978 *Vincentiana* reported that on 1 July 1977 the Sacred Congregation for the Causes of the Saints had given the *nihil obstat* for the introduction of the cause for beatification of Janez Frančišek Gnidovec CM, bishop of Skopje in Yugoslavia, who had died on 3 February, 1939, aged sixty-six. (His first names are the Slovene forms of John Francis, the final syllable of his surname is pronounced "vetz"). The Pope ratified the decision of the Sacred Congregation on 1 December 1977.

In 1986 *Vincentiana* reported that his cause had been initiated in Yugoslavia in 1978; the Diocesan Process, in Ljubljana (where he died) and Skopje, had taken about six years, and the cause was then introduced in Rome in 1985.

The diocesan offices in Skopje were destroyed during the second world war and post-war conditions in Yugoslavia were difficult for the Church, so it was not until nearly forty years after his death that any formal moves were made for the starting of his cause.

Reputation for holiness

A cause for beatification can be introduced only if there is evidence that the person in question, if not a martyr, had a reputation for holiness among those who knew him. After Bishop Gnidovec's death in 1939 the *Annales de la Mission* gave twelve pages to him, (Tome 104, 1939, pp 355-366). In these pages a Franciscan said that there was one saint less on earth, and a university student in Ljubljana said the bishop had been a spiritual giant. The first comment might at first look like nothing more than a merely conventional turn of phrase on the death of a good bishop, but it seems clear that it was meant in the more technical sense of someone who should be canonised, literally a spiritual giant as the student said. In another account, not in the *Annales,* an Orthodox bishop was quoted as saying that if Bishop Gnidovec had been one of theirs he would be quickly regarded as a saint, and a Moslem official said that if the bishop was not in paradise then no one would ever get there. In another account a member of a parish where Fr Gnidovec had been curate said that one previous priest

was remembered because he had built the seminary, the old school and a belfry; another was remembered because he taught the local people about the cultivation of vines and because he had been good at financial management; Fr Gnidovec, however, was remembered because of his holiness. It,was said that the Parish Priest was for business and the curate was for souls. The sacristan in the other parish where he had been curate remembered the long periods which Fr Gnidovec spent in prayer in the church.

When he entered the Vincentian internal seminary in 1919, twenty-three years after his ordination, the director wrote to the Superior General and said that the new seminarist was already regarded as a saint by his fellow-priests.

In 1928 an eighteen year old Albanian girl from Skopje, Agnes Gonxha Bejaxhiu, went for the bishop's blessing before she left to start her novitiate in Ireland; later she became known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and she regarded Bishop Gnidovec as a saint. King Alexander of Yugoslavia, who knew him when he was bishop, was of the same opinion.

In the old breviary what is now called the Office of Readings used to be known as Matins. It was normally divided into three Nocturns, each with three psalms and three readings. The readings of the Second Nocturn, in offices of saints, were hagiographical, and often so unrealistic that they were sometimes facetiously used as a yardstick of mendacity: "To lie like a Second Nocturn"! The reason for such cynicism was that these readings often tried to show that the saint in question was totally devoid of faults .and, in the case of many of them, had shown signs of holiness from earliest childhood. The average reader knew that the reality must have been very different, especially with regard to the first point.

With regard to the second point, though, the reader needed to be more discerning; could it, in fact, be true that a boy or girl may have shown signs of real holiness, a holiness which continuously grew and developed from childhood through adolescence and adulthood, right up till death? It is not a question of what might loosely be called a "good" boy or girl, one showing external conformist, though not necessarily hypocritical, piety. What is meant here is genuine holiness, and statistically such cases are obviously few, but they do occur. John Gnidovec would seem to have been one of them.

So, what signs of holiness did he show in boyhood and adolescence? There seems to be plenty of evidence of the basics, a deep awareness of the reality of God, a recognition of a real need to pray,

an understanding of the importance of the eucharist, both as celebration and reserved sacrament. And there was also the realisation that in some way the importance of these things had to be made known to others, and that some element of personal asceticism was called for.

Seminary and later studies

On completing his secondary schooling in 1892 John Gnidovec was accepted, at the age of nineteen, into the major seminary for the diocese of Ljubljana. At that time Slovenia was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire so Laibach, the German name of the city, was used as well as the Slovene one. He was ordained, with a dispensation from the age requirement, in July 1896, two months before his twenty-third birthday.

From 1896 to 1899 he was a curate, in two different parishes. At this time the bishop of Ljubljana was building a big secondary college which he hoped would produce both priestly vocations and well-educated Catholic laymen. In 1899 he sent John Gnidovec to Vienna, the capital of the Empire, to study for a diploma in languages; he chose Latin, Greek, German and Slovene. He stayed in Vienna until 1904, returning home with a doctorate. During his stay there he used some of his free time for the pastoral care of Slovenian chestnut-sellers in the city. He visited them in their lodgings, and celebrated the main Church feasts with them. At the end of the chestnut season he often paid the fares home for some of them, as they had not saved anything.

On his return from Vienna he was appointed rector of the newly opened college, dedicated to St Stanislaus Kostka. It opened with only younger pupils, ninety-six of them, and as these moved up each year more younger ones were taken in below them. It had the full range of classes by the academic year of 1912-1913, with three hundred and forty-nine pupils. Under his leadership it became an outstanding college, noted for both the cultural and spiritual development of its pupils.

College rector and army chaplain

One of his outstanding achievements was that he successfully campaigned, not without difficulties, for breaking with the practice of teaching through the medium of German and replacing it with Slovene. This was the first college in which this was done. It gave him much extra work as he himself had to provide the necessary Slovene translations of textbooks. The college was officially recognised by the Empire and authorised to confer official certificates of education.

He encouraged extra-curicular activities, such as drama, hobbies and games. He took a personal interest in each of the students, seeing them regularly on a one to one basis in his office, and showed real interest in their families. He never spoke about vocations to the diocesan priesthood, but between 1905 and 1919 seventy-six past students of the college became priests. In July 1914, because of the war, some parts of the college buildings were requisitioned for use as a military hospital, with accommodation for six hundred wounded. He volunteered as an army chaplain, though he refused to accept a salary. In May 1915 more space was taken, to double the capacity, with between a thousand and thirteen hundred wounded arriving each month. He had to stand up to the military authorities to prevent the entire college being taken over and the students sent home. In spite of not having a chaplain's salary he helped many soldiers with his own money, as he had done for the chestnut-sellers in Vienna. In order to give better spiritual care to these soldiers, who were from different parts of the Empire, he learnt enough Hungarian, Polish and Czech to converse with them and to hear their confessions.

On Sundays, after mass for the soldiers, he spent two to three hours going around bringing communion to the bed-ridden. On one occasion a Hungarian soldier was behaving disrespectfully so Fr Gnidovec immediately assumed his other role as Captain Gnidovec, the rank he held as chaplain, and ordered the man to behave properly. The Hungarian said he was not a believer. The chaplain left and began to pray for him. Three days later the Hungarian was converted and received communion. This incident was reported by the acolyte who had accompanied Fr Gnidovec on his rounds.

In August 1916, in recognition of his work for the soldiers, he was invested with the Knight's Cross of the Order of Franz Josef and awarded a medal for military valour.

Vincentian

In 1919 he realised that he had already given of his best to the college and that the time had come to hand over to someone else; his resignation was accepted by the bishop. He asked to be allowed to become a Vincentian and the bishop of Ljubljana himself brought him to the Vincentian house in the city. There is nothing on record as to why he chose the Vincentians, and apparently this was something about which he himself did not speak. He would have known of them as missioners and he also knew of the Daughters of Charity, who worked in the college where he was rector. On completing his two

years in the internal seminary he was appointed assistant director of students, and two years later director of the seminarists. During these years he was also a part-time missioner.

Bishop of Skopje

In 1924, aged fifty-one, having been recommended to the Nuncio in Belgrade by the bishop of Ljubljana, he was appointed bishop of Skopje, the chief city of the province of Macedonia. This was far from his native Slovenia, away down in the south of the newly-formed post-war country of Yugoslavia. The city of Skopje is about forty miles east of the border with Albania and about ninety north of that with Greece. The diocese was about half the size of Ireland. It is largely mountainous territory and rudimentary agriculture was carried on by a very poor population; travel facilities were primitive.

At his episcopal ordination in Ljubljana on 30 November 1924 John Gnidovec took the additional name of Francis, in honour of St Francis de Sales. His episcopal motto was *Omnibus omnia factus,* that he would be "All things to all persons", the Pauline idea which St Vincent introduced into the Common Rules (1 Cor 9:22, CRII12). On his episcopal coat of arms he incorporated both sides of the Miraculous Medal, and the figures of Saints Cyril and Methodius. He used to say that in accepting episcopal ordination he was repeating what had happened to Simon of Cyrene.

There is a certain resemblance between his episcopal ministry and that of St Justin De Jacobis nearly a century earlier. To appreciate what Justin achieved one needs a certain acquaintance with the political and religious situation in Ethiopia in his time. To appreciate the pastoral work of John Francis Gnidovec one also needs a certain amout of knowledge about the political and religious situation in the diocese of Skopje in the years between the two world wars. Until 1918 the area had been part of the Ottoman Empire; it then became part of the newly-created Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

Most of the inhabitants of the diocese were either Orthodox or Moslem. The Orthodox tended to be suspicious of the Catholics and thought that they were not loyal to the King. The Catholic minority, about 15,000, was mainly Croatian and Albanian.

For the first ten years, until 1934, the new bishop lived in the smaller town of Prizren, about forty miles north-west of Skopje. Prizren was not in Macedonia but in neighbouring Kosovo. He took up residence there rather than in Skopje to avoid any suggestion of neglecting the Albanian Catholics who were in the majority there. The Jesuits were in

charge of the parish in Skopje and as long as this parish was well run the bishop was content to continue living in Prizren. In 1934, however, he moved to Skopje and took over the running of the parish himself; he had not been satisfied with the ministry of the last Jesuit Parish Priest. At this time the Jesuits left the diocese for good.

At the time of Bishop Gnidovec's arrival the diocese had seventeen parishes. There were not many Catholic churches and they were generally in poor condition. There were only nineteen priests, twelve diocesan, five Franciscans and two Jesuits. The Franciscans were mainly from the Albanian Province and were somewhat suspect in the eyes of officialdom. There was no seminary in the diocese and students were sent to Albania, where they were taught, through both Albanian and Italian, in a seminary run by Albanian Jesuits with pro-Italian sympathies. The diocese of Skopje had four students, three of whom were eventually ordained in 1930,1931 and 1932; the fourth transferred to another diocese.

Difficulties with priests

For all the fifteen years he was bishop the priests in the diocese were one of his biggest problems. Although his episcopal motto was "All things to all persons" he was not perceived in that light. Some of the priests thought he was trying to Serbianize the diocese while others thought exactly the opposite, that he was pro-Albanian. Some got too involved in politics: one was murdered and three fled to Albania. Sometimes the bishop was bluntly refused entry to priests' houses, and once he was threatened with a revolver. On one occasion when he had organised a eucharistic congress in a certain town some priests organised another one in a neighbouring town, on the same day, with a sermon in Albanian. He held more than one diocesan synod but their decrees were simply ignored by most of the priests. Under the Turks priests had not had much to do with state officialdom, and also had a certain amount of freedom, in practice, from ecclesiastical officialdom. In the new kingdom they came into much more contact with state officials, in the matter of registering marriages and so on, and this immediately caused problems because of the insistence on the use of Serbian for such registrations. Their previous relative freedom from ecclesiastical red tape was also interfered with by the new Code of Canon Law.

In the whole area to the west and south of Skopje there was not a single Catholic parish in 1924. The only Catholic institution in that area was seventy miles south of Skopje, in Bitolj, known as Monastir

when it was in the Ottoman Empire, a house of the Constantinople Province of the Vincentians. This house had been opened in 1856 as a school, teaching through the medium of French. It usually had two priests, almost always French, though when it finally closed in 1931 the sole remaining confrère was Italian; he moved into Albania.

In the first year of his episcopate Bishop Gnidovec asked for some confrères of the Yugoslav Province, and for most of his years he had one or two. Relations with the Provincial, though, were somewhat strained as the bishop wanted these priests to give their services gratuitously, because of the poverty of the diocese; the Provincial wanted them to receive the normal financial support.

The small number of priests in such a widespread diocese was always a problem. He thought of looking for men from other religious communities but a Jesuit warned him that he would have foisted on him priests who had always been misfits elsewhere.

Another way in which he attempted to solve the problem of shortage of priests was to try to rehabilitate some men who had abandoned the priesthood. In many cases he was successful in this, though not in all. He was too trusting in the goodness of others and this inevitably led to some disappointments. He also successfully encouraged a number of late vocations.

After five centuries of persecution by the Turks, the Catholics were not well instructed and were still somewhat fearful. For this reason the new bishop regarded personal visitation of Catholics by himself as his primary pastoral tactic. He got to know individual Catholics very often better than their local clergy knew them, and was known to have a very retentive memory for persons. In the diocese there were also army personnel, police and civil servants from different parts of the new kingdom of Yugoslavia, and therefore of different languages, sent by Belgrade for the administration of the area. About 3,000 of these were Catholics and they were always included in his pastoral visits. On one visit to an army barracks the bishop explained to the commanding officer the reason for his visit and the officer was so impressed that he issued an official military order that all Catholics were to avail of the bishop's ministrations; nothing the bishop said about freedom of conscience could change the officer's mind.

The Turkish Moslem domination had produced a rather extraordinary group of people called, in the Latin of curial documents, *Laramani;* there does not appear to be an English word for them. These were people who during the day conformed to all Moslem requirements, but at night were secretly practising Catholics. During

the period of the Ottoman Empire they were often visited secretly by Jesuits in disguise, sometimes even disguised as women. There were eight or ten thousand of these in the diocese and they became one of Bishop Gnidovec's major pastoral problems, a problem which probably shortened his life.

When the new bishop took up residence in Prizren the Parish Priest was elderly and his zeal was imaginatively described as being "on standby". The bishop therefore, for all practical purposes, became the active curate, visiting the house-bound sick and aged, and spending hours hearing confessions in the parish church. When the Parish Priest of a neighbouring parish died the bishop had no one to replace him so every week he made the two hour journey on foot to that church to celebrate the Sunday mass; he kept this up for two years. Immediately after his appointment as bishop he had started learning Albanian and Serbo-Croat and was soon able to preach in both languages.

Because of the vast extent of his diocese, and the scattered Catholic population, he had to do an enormous amount of travelling. Some of this was by train, some on horseback. Sometimes he was lent a car by the military authorities, and towards the end of his life he used planes when necessary. However, most of his travelling was on foot. Priests who accompanied him on these journeys, often younger than himself, could not understand how he was physically able to do what he did, and they could not match him. He took the minimum of food and sleep and was able to keep on walking without apparently tiring. He admitted that this was a grace he had received from God and he did not try to make others copy his lifestyle; quite the contrary, in fact, as he recommended others to eat better and take better care of themselves. Because of migraine and poor eyesight he could not find relaxation in reading. In winter he did not put on any heavier clothing and was tormented by chilblains. His horse-riding was another source of pain because of piles. On journeys by himself he often slept at night at the side of the road. On one such occasion he woke up and found a policeman guarding him. In that area there were two different types of nationalist bandit groups, Bulgarian and Albanian; his comment to the policeman was that no bandit would have found anything on him to steal.

"Official" opposition

At what might be called the "institutional" level he met with much opposition from both the Orthodox and the Moslems. The former said that there should be no Catholics in Serbia, the latter said that to call

Jesus "Son of God" was an insult to Mahomet. At inter-personal level, though, very many Orthodox and Moslems were helped, financially and otherwise, by him. Many also came to hear him preach, even when they did not understand the language; they said that to see him preaching, or celebrating the liturgy, was to witness his holiness. He himself regarded good celebration of the liturgy, as well as well-organised solemn processions for feasts such as Corpus Christi, as one of the best means for making converts from the Orthodox Church. On occasions when he was openly opposed by Orthodox officials, lay or ecclesiastical, he stood on his authority as someone whose appointment had been ratified by the King. He was highly regarded by the King and had been received at court.

When he thought it necessary he fearlessly opposed state policy. He repeatedly complained about official harassment of Albanians in his diocese. He was the only member of the Yugoslav hierarchy to demand that state officials' work schedule should not be such that they were unable to attend Sunday mass. He also opposed, though it is not clear why, the introduction of the Czechoslovak "Sokol" system of physical training in schools, even though the king himself tried to dissuade him from this. (At about the same time that the bishop was opposing this system in Yugoslavia the present author was being subjected to it in Xavier School, Donnybrook!).

As bishop he had to make many decisions on his own. He once told one of his priests that he reflected on the matter in the presence of God, and then came to a decision which he judged to be in accordance with God's will. If later on he discovered he had made a bad decision he was never worried as he was satisfied that at the time he did what he thought was correct. He said that if John Gnidovec ordered something to be done it did not matter whether it was done or not, but if Bishop Gnidovec ordered it then it had to be done as the authority of God was involved.

Complaints

A somewhat unusual cause for complaints against him was that he was not living in the style which people expected of a bishop. His soutane was compared unfavourably with that of a certain monsignor. The Nuncio reported to Rome: "He is a missioner, an apostle, but not a bishop". As a bishop he received quite a large salary from the state. This was supposed to be for his personal use but he spent some of it on the diocese and more in alms. During the fifteen years he was bishop of Skopje he built nineteen new churches or chapels, which is somewhat

of a rebuttal of the charge that he was bad at financial administration. After his death the Vicar Capitular reported that the account books of the diocese had been meticulously kept. One somewhat cynical comment was that the Albanians would have preferred a millionaire bishop. During the time when the diocese was in the Ottoman Empire they had received financial help from both Austria and Italy. They had thought that with the advent of a bishop from Slovenia this would continue. Another way in which he differed from the expected stereotype of a bishop was that he did not keep "office hours" but was always available, another application of his episcopal motto.

Instruction

In his pastoral letters and other writings which have survived his method of instruction is more "heart" than "head". He dealt with fundamental matters such as God's love for people, the obligation of gratitude to God, devotion to the Eucharist. He urged his priests to take their spiritual life seriously, to make their annual retreat and to make use of the sacrament of penance. He was very conscious of the need to instruct both adults and children in the main points of the faith.. He himself constantly did this on his pastoral visits, and he urged the priests to do the same. He made use of lay catechists to help in this, because of the extent of the diocese and the shortage of priests. Some of these were salaried, paid by himself. During his years as bishop the number of nuns in the diocese also increased. The majority worked as nurses in the state hospitals, but some also managed to do various other types of pastoral work.

Death

At Christmas 1938 he was complaining a lot about being unwell, with frequent severe migraine, and some mental confusion. This was due, apparently, to a developing brain tumour. He celebrated mass and preached on the feast of the Epiphany, but was unable to do so again two days later on the feast of the Holy Family. He told Fr Alojzij Plantaric CM, who was with him in Skopje and who had been superior in Ljubljana in 1919 when he entered the Congregation, that he could not pray and that his holiness about which people spoke was all hypocrisy. He felt abandoned by God and was convinced he would be damned. Apparently he was undergoing a final purification of the sort described by St John of the Cross. Fr Plantaric, having sought advice, decided the bishop should go up to Ljubljana and into hospital there. After a far from comfortable train journey he arrived in Ljubljana late

at night on the 10th, and was brought to the Vincentian house. The next morning he neither celebrated mass nor received communion, and asked to see the bishop of Ljubljana; the bishop prepared him to receive communion. His physical, psychological and spiritual suffering continued for a month until his death on 3 February. A local newspaper reported his death under the headline: “The Saint, the Bishop, is Dead”.

Forum

Morning Prayer for the Pupils at Castleknock College

When all our pupils were boarders we had no difficulty organising times for prayer and various devotions in common. So, for example, the junior dean had morning prayers in the dining room, and the senior dean led night prayer in the college chapel after study. There were prayers at meals, as well as frequent benediction, rosary, confessions and class masses. Pupils were also encouraged to develop a habit of personal prayer, and many of them were greatly helped by prayer meetings, work with the St Vincent de Paul Society, and outings to places of pilgrimage and retreat. With boarders it was a straightforward matter to organise such things, but things were to change.

We started taking in day pupils in 1987 and we looked at various options for daily common prayer, in addition to the morning mass which day-boys, as well as their parents, and the boarders are welcome to attend. Morning assemblies of school pupils are well established in Britain, and some Irish schools also use them. Many headmasters use their public address systems to relay live or recorded programmes of reflection and prayers. In a lot of cases these have to be very carefully designed to cater for different religious allegiances within the same school. That was not going to be a problem in Castleknock. We decided against having a large communal exercise in the chapel or hall, because of the difficulty of creating a good atmosphere. The public address idea seemed to have possibilities, and we had just set up a small studio in the old power house for what became known as the College Radio.

So I was asked to provide a broadcast on the public address system to each class-room in the last five minutes of the first class period each morning. The reason for this was to ensure a quiet atmosphere for a small group with their teacher present. Boys are creatures of habit and tend to resist change unless they have asked for it themselves, so, at first, the only rooms wired to take the service were those used by boys new to the school. Older pupils, therefore, couldn't complain about compulsory prayers. But I found that another curious bit of schoolboy psychology operated to my advantage. Many of the older ones asked me why they weren't getting Morning Prayer. They were curious, and

felt they were missing something. I used this curiosity as part of my marketing strategy.

Fr James Murphy wrote the early scripts, and we asked a pastman working in the RTE newsroom to record them for us. These were quite successful, and from time to time we did some special topics "live", for example when there was a funeral, and on these occasions the whole school was connected up. Staff and pupils appreciated these broadcasts and gradually the interest grew in having Morning Prayer for all, every day. I didn't rush into this because I felt we were not ready. We extended the service slowly as the day-boys progressed year by year up through the school.

Summer 1989 was a turning point because that was when the Junior School was re-structured. All the upstairs dormitories were converted into class-rooms, and a new public address system was put in. An important element in the production of Morning Prayer is the music, which often carries part of the central thought or message. So I decided that this must be heard at the same quality as a person would expect from a good stereo at home. This meant fitting the best speakers and amplifiers. Incidentally, the work was done at minimum expense because I was helped by a few young offenders allowed out on work parole from a Dublin prison. (I do some work with prisoners, but that is another story).

September 1989 brought a real challenge because, for the first time, I had the entire school as a captive audience at ten o'clock every morning, six days a week. It brought me back to my Radio 2 days, from which I still have all the scripts filed and computerised. Adolescent interests and allegiances can be notoriously fickle, so it was make or break time. New commercial radio stations were coming on the air clamouring for the attention of the young, with bright crisp sounds and new voices and ideas. Morning Prayer would have to be bright and topical with FM quality sound. The boys would have to feel that it was in some way their own. I introduced a new format which had a less formal sound, and used music from the current charts, in addition to folk and classical, and whatever suited the topic of the day. The idea was to be topical, relevant and friendly. All classes and all teachers were invited to produce scripts, and musicians were asked to record suitable solo pieces. I want to teach the pupils that prayer is a natural part of everyday life, and they can use all sorts of skills in praying. Young people love stories, and so do the teachers. Each day has a fresh story or reflection lasting about two minutes, followed by vocal prayers including the Our Father and Hail Mary. The topics

include the background to feast days, life-stories of great people who were born or died "on this day", and topical news items.

I should perhaps explain that the College Radio was a genuine radio station for over a year when the air-waves were almost a free-for-all for unlicensed stations. In a neighbouring house of the Daughters of Charity another station was putting out Christian programmes 24 hours a day, and two Dublin priests ran a music station with spiritual messages interspersed, and the Dominicans in Tallaght provided premises for a local community station with plenty of religious input. The College Radio was seen as a modest venture with a range of just a few miles, taking in the village and its surrounding area, but the evening programmes were very popular with our day pupils and their friends and families. At the time of writing Community Radio in the Castleknock area is about to begin and it is hoped that the College will participate by producing programmes in our own studio, and there is a possibility of getting a special type of limited licence for institutions, allowing us to broadcast from time to time over a small area.

At the moment we use a very weak FM transmitter which allows the use of a radio to pick up Morning Prayer. This is very useful for some outlying areas and rooms that don't have the public address network. This works on the same principle as the cordless microphone used in many churches.

How effective is Morning Prayer? I find it difficult to assess and I suppose it is a case of *nemo sibi judex.* The reactions so far have been generally good. The staff frequently say that they find it helpful; student opinion has come by a more roundabout route. People who come in to give retreats have heard spontaneous comments of approval during discussions. I think the real fruits will be long-term and not easy to quantify. If the boys learn how to pray; if they come to know that God loves them and wants to hear from them; if they see prayer as something simple and straightforward, and relevant to their interests, then I think it will be worth all the effort that goes into researching the scripts, and the recording, and the editing and so on. Perhaps we won't really know until the present boys' sons (or, dare I say, daughters?) are sitting in their dads' places.

Jack Harris

Miscellanea

Edward Ferris

Since I wrote my original article on Edward Ferris in COLLOQUE No. 7 I have always been on the lookout for further details about him, especially about any contacts which he may have kept up with the Congregation after he took up his post in Maynooth in 1799. I included some items in No. 18, and have since come across a few more in the nine-volume *Mémoires de la Congrégation de la Mission.* As these volumes do not have an index quarrying has to be done in places which seem likely as context for references to Ferris. In Vol. VIII (Paris, 1866), on page 53 there is reference (not a direct quotation) to a letter from Lazare-Marius Dumazel in Peking to Joseph-Mansuet Boulangier; it is not stated where Boulangier was, nor is a date given:

> Before leaving Italy Dumazel had been tempted by his friends and fellow-countrymen to give up his idea of going to China and to devote himself to the sanctification of the French. Fr Ferris enlightened him about the merit of obedience and strengthened him in his determination to go.

On page 89 there is a direct quotation from a letter of 3 September 1802 from Jean-Joseph Ghislain in Peking to Boulangier; the brackets are in the original:

> (Fr Lamiot has just told me that it was not to the General he sent these items but to Fr Ferris; he thinks you are no longer in England).

Later there is a very long letter from Ghislain in Peking to François-Florentin Brunet, Vicar General, in Rome, dated 10 September 1802. An extract on page 95 seems to indicate that as late as 1802 Ferris was still regarded as the senior Assistant:

> Last year the English company sounded us out about whether we would agree to send subjects of that country (from our Congregation, obviously) to Peking and the provinces, giving us to understand that many advantages would come from this, as well as special protection. Given the state in which I believed France to be, and not having any knowledge of your existence, Most Honoured Father, I wrote to Fr Ferris, pointing out that in the present circumstances this idea could not fail to be of great benefit to us. Fr Clet, however, thinks we must not trust it.

Anthony Reynolds

The four Dublin diocese students in Maynooth from whose original idea the Irish Province developed were James Lynch, Michael Burke, Peter Kenrick and Anthony Reynolds. Lynch and Burke persevered with the idea. Kenrick, the superior-designate of the group, dropped a bombshell at the end of the retreat prior to the initial opening of St Vincent's Seminary, Usher's Quay, by announcing that he was withdrawing from the project; he went to America and died as archbishop of St Louis.

Anthony Reynolds is unique as being the only member to die while still on the staff of Usher's Quay. When revising the Necrology I was unable to find out his age at death. Later on I asked our students Paschal Scallon and Dan O'Connell, who were attending Maynooth every day, to see if they could get some lead on him. They discovered his burial place, and a lengthy inscription on his tombstone included his age.

He is buried in a small old cemetery called Balfeighan, situated on the right hand side of the road from Kilcock to Trim about half a mile from the junction with the main Kilcock to Enfield road; it is just over the border into Co. Meath. The tombstone was originally in a vertical position on the wall of the ruined church, but it has fallen to the ground, though without breaking. The inscription on it is in Latin, which translates as follows:

> Rev. Anthony Reynolds, with firm faith awaiting the resurrection of the dead, accepted death, devoted to God, on 8 January 1835. He spent the early years of his youth studying the humanities in Carlow seminary. Deciding to take the Lord as the portion of his inheritance he applied for entry to Maynooth where, after completing the academic course with great distinction he was ordained priest. In the priesthood he showed himself to be a faithful minister and singleminded worker through all that he tirelessly did for everyone, especially for the poor. Thus progressing daily in love of God and the neighbour he took up, together with other unusually devoted priests, the way of living according to the rule of St Vincent de Paul, following a common decision they had earlier made. Shortly after fulfilling this promise he died of consumption at the age of 27. May he rest in peace. Amen.

TD

Father Denis Corkery CM

Fr Denis Corkery died rather suddenly at the Lazarist house in Addis Ababa on Wednesday, July 19, last, at the sadly premature age of sixty-two years. Many readers of this Vincentian magazine will be more familiar with his full curriculum than the present writer. I know that he had served for some years in Ireland and in England, as well as on the missions in Nigeria and Alaska. Indeed some might be tempted to think that he lacked that ancient religious attribute of *stabilitas in cow.* But those of us who knew him during the last five years of his life in Ethiopia were in constant admiration of his steadfastness in the lonely mission he had accepted in Nekemte, forming a group of minor seminarians with whom he scarcely shared a common language, in a house where the presence of a fellow priest was a rare occurrence.

Having reached the official age of "retirement", without any further need of a government work-permit as a condition of staying on in Ethiopia, Denis freely offered his priestly ministry to the communities of Sisters in the capital, and would gladly have taken on a formal appointment as English-speaking Assistant in one of the city parishes. That was not to be, but he did provide a much appreciated service in the suburban convent of the Daughters of St Anne, for the various religious communities and many of the laity who were deprived of their weekly mass because of the ban on Sunday driving.

During this last year Denis also worked part-time with us here in the Apostolic Nunciature and was most helpful to me in covering the many conferences and seminars that are a feature of life in this city. At one such seminar he discovered the special niche he was convinced that God had reserved for his remaining years in Ethiopia. He would undertake the pastoral ministry of consolation to victims of AIDS, and to this purpose he set off for an orientation trip to Uganda. He was scarcely back when he was offered, and accepted, the additional charge of resident chaplain for the Galilee Retreat Centre in Debre Zeit.

Greatly encouraged and excited by this prospect of a doubly challenging apostolate Fr Denis started planning for his leave. He had been losing weight and was complaining, mildly as was his manner,

of "indigestion". Friends advised a visit to the doctor but he promised to have a check-up at home in Ireland. His exit and reentry visa finally came through on July 20 but, as one Sister wrote to me: "Denis had already gone the day before with the visa stamped by God. He left us as he had lived with us, quietly, gently, priestly and peacefully". His mortal remains rest here in Ethiopia, one more witness to that spiritual dilemma of the *Deóriocht: "*…to die at home, but God knows best". I doubt if Denis would have wanted it otherwise.

As you can see, what I have written reflects mainly my working contacts with Denis during the last year or so. There is probably much more I could have said about him as a person – his cheerful disposition, never failing courtesy and the special gentleness that attracted all sorts of people to him. During leave he would go out of his way to visit families of missionaries he had met in Ethiopia. On our little golf course in Addis he was, as always and everywhere, the perfect gentleman in dress and manner, no match, I'm afraid, for the rest of the Irish mafia when it came to bargaining for strokes or setting the bets on the first tee, but holding his own nicely through the green.

But what was truly remarkable was the warmth of the greeting he always received from shy Swedes or inscrutable Orientals. A Korean doctor cried at his funeral, and a Britisher, with whom some months earlier he had shared tears over the tragic events in Sheffield stadium, sent a floral wreath draped with a Liverpool scarf. If pressed, on St Patrick's Day, or at some other hosting of the clans, he would sing his party piece "Lonely the house now", and I can still hear his light tenor rendering with feeling the final line: "It's time I were moving, it's time I passed on".

May he continue to look kindly on all who are left to mourn him; may he rest in peace.

† Thomas A White
Archbishop of Sabiona
Pro-Nuncio in Ethiopia

Five days before his sudden death Denis and I had a long talk in Addis Ababa. He looked trimmer and fitter than he had appeared at our last meeting in Dublin, twelve months previously. On that occasion he had told me of his decision to leave Nekemte and return to Addis Ababa where there was some talk of his becoming chaplain to the expatriate community. Twelve months later things had not worked

out as Denis had planned. He had been living in the Lazarist mission, worked two or three days a week in the office of the Pro-Nuncio, his good friend Archbishop Tom White, given some English classes to different groups of Ethiopian students and religious, and had been available to offer mass for different groups on request. One Sister remarked to me the day of his funeral: "Denis would never refuse to say mass for us when asked". But, in his own words, it had been a year of bits and pieces.

Around Easter he had attended a conference on AIDS, had become interested in a possible ministry to AIDS sufferers and had been deeply moved by a visit in May to an AIDS project in Uganda run by the Medical Missionaries of Mary. He was full of that experience and I remember musing at how a man with a traditional Irish Catholic theological outlook could be quite radical in seeking a new channel for his priestly ministry.

He spoke also that evening of the proposed new retreat centre at Debre Zeit, near the capital, and was quite enthusiastic at the possibility of his being asked to administer the centre - he would not have seen himself as necessarily giving the retreats, but running the place and available for mass and the sacrament of penance. Two things were really very clear to me that evening: Denis had no wish to leave Ethiopia, and I was listening to a priest searching for a way of serving the Church in that country.

After his ordination in 1951 Denis was appointed to St Patrick's College, Armagh. At that time I was a second year student there. He was fair haired, slim, boyish looking with a strong and clear speaking voice. Always athletic, he was a good tennis player, making a big impression on all, not least the local convent girls! He was to remain there for four years acting as bursar, in which capacity he was an occasional visitor to my home, as dean of discipline for a year, and he took some classes in etiquette and religion. Years later he would admit to the fact that his year as dean might not have been his finest hour; he would go further and acknowledge that his years in Armagh had not been without some difficulty. He was never really cut out for a school. But his years in the North gave him some insight into the situation there and an affection for the place and people he was never to lose.

Denis had a good presence, much acting ability and a strong voice, so it came as no surprise when in 1955 he joined the Vincentian mission team attached to St Vincent's, Solly Street, Sheffield. The following nine years were spent on the road throughout Britain and Ireland, conducting parish missions and retreats. He gained much

experience, confidence and those human and public relations skills which proved so useful in later years.

The first team of Vincentians had left for Nigeria in 1960 and Denis joined them at Ikot Ekpene in the autumn of 1964. His work there was again that of parish missions and retreats. When he had first thought of priesthood he had contacted All Hallows Missionary College, becoming interested in the community only when asked to discern for a year with a confrère in St Vincent's, Sunday's Well. Mission was in some way at the core of Denis Corkery. Something came to life in him during the time in Nigeria which would never leave him. His experience there came to an end with the collapse of Biafra, and he was among the many missionary personnel who found themselves expelled from Nigeria. Before deportation they were all under detention in Port Harcourt in somewhat adverse conditions; Denis delighted in telling the story to any willing ear. I recall one occasion in Mill Hill: he was in full flight as he carved the roast in the presence of a much younger man who had himself served with distinction in Port Harcourt during the post-war era. At a pregnant moment in the story the younger confrère expressed his interest and surprise at learning Denis had been in Nigeria. The stunned silence, and the expression on DJ's face at that moment have remained with me!

In 1970 Denis returned from a short period "on safari" in the United States to become Parish Priest of Sacred Heart, Mill Hill, responsible for a complex cosmopolitan London parish. The transition was not easy. The following year I joined him there as curate. I remember the letter of warm welcome he sent me when the appointment became public; our paths had crossed again. My memories of those days are of a happy and open presbytery in which there was much laughter. Denis loved people, and was greatly loved by them in return. He also had a great love of life itself; and it showed! The composition of the parish was such that it demanded all his considerable diplomatic skill and personal charm, apart from the grace of God. Denis could arrive, just in time, always smartly dressed, not a hair out of place, with bright eye and smile, pumping calm reassurance like a Thames fire tug pouring foam on burning waters. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't! Life was many things in those days – dull, never! I can still hear the sound of him singing "He ain't heavy, he's my brother" coming from his office; always a sure sign that something was wrong. In many ways the song was an expression of his approach to people, a quality of brotherly care for all those who were in any kind of trouble. People in difficulty made for him like moths for the bright light, confident that

they could safely confide in him without being rejected. Those who came were not just members of the parish. His appeal was to a much wider constituency, people of all faiths and none. What they would experience at his hands was the care of a brother. That was true for all with whom he came into contact. True, too, for his two sisters Mary and Brid and their respective families. True for the young Ethiopian Daughter of Charity who said after his death: "I remember Abba Denis; he brought me to my first mission and carried my bag".

Yet for all his confidence and self-assurance he was a man who could be deeply hurt, especially if he felt let down by those from whom he might have expected support and understanding. Not many might know of it but there could be a deep ache behind the bright smile. The great gift he had was his ability to relate with people. As with all gifts, there too was to be found the clue to weakness.

Life however was not all work! Denis loved his game of golf; he was a stylish and accomplished player. Golf opened up for him a whole world of friendship with brother priests, and through the game he made a multitude of friends among those who would never darken the door of any church. With a wink he would announce his departure for "a touch of apostolic endeavours"; his code for the round of golf.

Those who lived with him would have noticed a restlessness which would surface from time to time; he would talk of Africa and the missions. For all his confidence he was seemingly never fully at home in a complex urban parish scene.

A year after finishing in the Sacred Heart he went back to St Vincent's, Sheffield, as Parish Priest in 1977. The post-war movement of population had burnt itself out and brought big changes to the old parish. Denis began the difficult, and still unfinished, task of re-organising the parish. He oversaw the sale of the old presbytery in Solly Street and the move to the new house on Howard Hill. People don't like changes in greatly loved parish structures and his six years there were not easy ones for him. Before his term was complete he was looking for a way back to Africa and the missions. To those who knew him it came as no great surprise to learn that, on the invitation of Fr Jan Ermers, at that time Vice-Provincial of the Vincentians in Ethiopia, he was going to work in Nekemte, about two hundred miles to the west of Addis Ababa. He was to remain there for five years. Others are better able to evaluate his contribution there where, amongst other things, he was involved in the preparation of young men for the priesthood. Fr Jan Ermers could write of his time with Denis in Nekemte:

> He responded as he was: great hearted. We laughed a good deal together. We prayed a good deal together. He gave me twice the last sacraments. He was a man of great qualities, one of them being his joy in life. He wasn't a complicated person whom you had to approach in a special way. Denis could be approached directly, and he would react directly. No fuss, no complications. I saw him caring for the poor, giving away money, giving what he had; a good priest and joyful confrère. I'll miss him.

The confrères would have dearly loved him to continue there, but by the spring of 1988 Denis felt he had given what he had to give, and in the autumn he took up residence in Addis Ababa on what was to be his final mission.

Just a few days after his death I found, on the top of his desk, two pages of notes in his own clear and distinctive handwriting. They were by way of preparation for a homily he was to preach at mass for the recently deceased Sister Anne McDermot DC, who had been working down the road from him in Dembidollo. His notes ended with the following quotation from St Vincent:

> For one missionary who has given his life out of charity the goodness of God will raise up many who will do the good left undone (XI 413).

Six days after preaching that homily Denis too was to be numbered among those who had given their lives.

The only faces I knew at his requiem were those of Sister Zoe O'Neill and some of the Daughters, but there was a full church: the cardinal presiding, Dutch and Ethiopian confrères, priests and students, staff from the Nunciature, Fr Jack Finucane and many Concern volunteers, diplomatic personnel and parishioners. Peering down the incense-filled church I wondered how they had known the man and priest we all mourned, and in what way he had been part of their lives during his short time in Addis. They were part of the "bits and pieces" year he had talked about. Could it be that we are all more apostolically effective in the bits and pieces of our lives, when most conscious of our pilgrim status, and content to walk shoulder to shoulder with brothers and sisters who know themselves to be pilgrims too?

In the Spring 1988 issue of COLLOQUE Denis had written an account of a journey he had made in northern Ethiopia "Not quite in the footsteps of St Justin De Jacobis". His account ended with the

words: “and as we went along we felt drops of welcome rain on our faces”.

May the God who called Denis and sent him to speak a word not his own to a distant people reward him with peace. May he again feel the drops of welcome rain on his face at the end of the journey.

Eamonn Cowan CM

DENIS CORKERY CM
Born: Dublin 23 June 1925.
Entered the CM: 7 September 1944.
Final Vows: 8 September 1946.
Ordained a priest in Clonliffe College by Dr McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin, 19 May 1951.

Appointments
1951-1955 St Patrick’s, Armagh.
1955-1964 St Vincent’s, Sheffield.
1964-1970 Ikot Ekpene.
(1968-1969 Alaska).
1970-1976 Sacred Heart, Mill Hill.
1976-1977 Heythrop College *(adscriptus* 293, Waldegrave Road).
1977-1983 St Vincent’s, Sheffield.
1983-1988 Nekemte, Ethiopia. 1988-1989 Addis Ababa.

Died 19 July 1989.

Father Edward Lyons CM

A belated but genuine tribute to Ed Lyons from the Australian Province and Australia, for a varied and lasting contribution to the missionary and pastoral apostolate.

Following his ordination in 1921 he came to Australia at the request of Bishop Andrew Killian of the Port Pirie diocese in South Australia. After nine years of service he made the decision to join the Congregation of the Mission because of his ardent desire to do mission

and retreat work in Australia. He returned to Ireland for his year's novitiate.

It was in 1932 that Ed was welcomed to the Australian Vincentian mission field and the impact was immediate. Three years in Genoa and the pastoral years proved invaluable. Based at Ashfield NSW, Malvern, Victoria and Southport Qld, he gave missions, and retreats to priests, religious and schools in city and country.

Then came an interlude. He responded to a request to favour St Columba Minor Seminary, Springwood NSW, as spiritual director for a brief time, complementing the work of confrères John Souter and Laurence Kinsella.

There was not to be a dull moment. The war years called for further adjustment. Marsfield, adjoining St Joseph's Seminary, a station of Eastwood parish, was placed in the care of the Congregation and Ed became the pastor of St Anthony's parish. There his Genoa experience proved so productive with the Italian community. He was a member of the St Joseph's community and it was there that we students were to profit from his talents and qualities. He was our Prefect of Sacred Eloquence - you know what I mean! After two years as pastor he resumed the apostolate for which he felt he was destined. He joined the mission staff at St Vincent's, Ashfield. From that base he faithfully satisfied a penchant for mission and retreat work.

Ed Lyons has been an impressive example. His zeal, fired by a great faith and enthusiasm, came through in his preaching. Always well prepared, he was direct, simple and doctrinally correct, only rarely favouring a flair for coloured imagery that he discouraged in his pupils. It was my privilege to team with him following a term in a mission school at Eastw.ood – an inspired impulse of the new Provincial Nicholas Rossiter. It was a satisfying experience to work with and learn from Ed, John Hall and Barney O'Hea. Their years of experience proved invaluable and served me well for another twenty years. Preparation was meticulous. He called it a Council of War before the attack. He would view the particular scene and there would be a discussion about the approach: possible change in selection of subjects; a valuation to accommodate a congregation or locality. He could read the pastor well and coped with likes and dislikes so well. And that could be an amusing element in our nostalgic reminiscences later on.

He told me he found school retreats difficult. Likewise, preaching to small congregations in outstations of rural parishes, an important part of the scene in our country. However, his qualities of endurance

and flexibility adequately dealt with that problem. A good team man; the helpful suggestions were timely. He had his moods, but the inevitable faith and sense of humour restored equanimity. His retreats to priests and religious are still remembered. As recently as 1987 I was speaking to a Josephite sister in the Sale diocese. A Golden Jubilarian, she fondly recalled retreats in Brisbane and Sydney: "I well remember Fr Lyons on prayer and our Lady". A good assessment of Ed's spirituality.

He did not adapt easily to community life at first. However, his appreciation of the bond was so helpful. He did not make friends readily; a certain shyness perhaps partially explained that. He valued so much the vacation and recreation with the confrères, always a good community man and pleasant company. He loved a game of golf. However, the departure from some rules would not be approved by Royal St Andrew's or Christy O'Connor; for example, the leather chip shot to a better lie. The day-off round was not ruined by the score - it was not kept! That suited the opponent who never lost. He loved the surf, and the Christmas holidays was the occasion. Some were spent in my hometown, a seaside resort on the south coast of New South Wales. The family still recall the confrères' visits. They always speak of Fr Lyons with warm affection, the enthusiasm for the golf and the surf.

I missed him when he returned to Ireland. We were teamed on a fortnight's mission in a parish of Sydney archdiocese in 1949. On that mission he asked me, the junior, to make the arrangements; I knew something was not right. Only later I learned the decision he had made. Some years before this Michael Mannix had had his trip home to Ireland and had decided to stay. When Ed's time came he told the Provincial, Nick Rossiter, he would make up his mind when he was in Ireland and choose to remain or return. By this time Nick had had it: "No", he said, "Decide now". The irascible Ed said: "I'll stay in Ireland", and I think he regretted his decision immediately. I gathered that from a letter from him later. But that was Ed.

And now he has completed the seventy-two holes of life's round, holds the trophy aloft. There is no replay. He has survived the turbulence of heavy seas unharmed and is safely on the Golden Sands. We have known some fine missioners: Richard Ryan (later bishop of Sale), Richard Macken (Provincial), Stan Power, Johnny Ryan, John Carroll, and have lived and worked with one who brought a fresh quality and dimension to an apostolate St Vincent would have loved. Thank you, Ed Lyons; thank you, Ireland.

Myles M Hyland CM

Had Fr Lyons lived till June 1990 he would have reached the age of 95.1 often marvelled how many times a day when well over 90 he would race up to his room on the top corridor of St Peter's without pause to draw his breath. This greatest of temporal gifts he used to good effect during his missionary career as a priest for 70 years.

Ted was born in Blackrock, Co. Dublin, and remained a genuine "Dub" all his life; you dare not say a word against the "Hoops" (Shamrock Rovers) whose fortunes he followed, never missing a game.

His earlier studies were done in Mungret College, which has given many priests to the Church, and he went to All Hallows in 1917 with Paddy O'Donnell, later archbishop of Brisbane. Both of them went to Collegio Brignole Sale in Genoa to complete their course, and Ted was ordained in 1921 for the diocese of Port Augusta, or Port Pirie as it is called today, in South Australia.

South Australia may sound attractive and almost romantic and, indeed, in part it is. Adelaide, the state capital, is arguably the loveliest city in Australia. Nearby Barossa valley with its vineyards, founded by refugees from Bismarck's Kulturkampf bringing their expertise from the Rhineland, is a kind of dreamland with its superb wine. Far different, however, is Port Augusta. It is real outback country, vast expanses of territory. Distances are measured not in miles but in hundreds of miles, with huge parishes where Ted worked. Horseback or horse and buggy were the sole mode of transport, and it was not unusual to travel 50 miles between masses. Roads were dirt tracks, and living conditions pretty grim. The summer heat was appalling and dust storms often blotted out the landscape.

After over eight years in Port Pirie Ted felt attracted to the Vincentian way of life he had known in All Hallows and in Genoa, so he joined the Australian Province and came to Blackrock in September 1929. After one year's seminaire he went back to Australia, where he gave missions and retreats, as also in New Zealand. In 1949 he joined the Irish Province and was engaged in the same work in Britain and Ireland till about the mid-sixties. He was a popular and effective preacher in the traditional style.

He was a member of the community in St Peter's from 1949 so he was well known in Phibsboro, where he was a popular confessor. Like many others he did not find it easy to adapt to the Post-Vatican II Church. Such innovations as ministers of the eucharist and communion in the hand ran counter to his early training, but he did come to terms with such changes to a limited degree. Seeing a lady in church

with her head uncovered was another *bete noire.* A girl, a nurse, told me recently that just before he went to St Vincent's, Fairview, she was paying a visit one evening. Fr Ted came in and "let her have it" for coming into church with head uncovered!

He was a zealous priest, which showed itself in a variety of ways. A great supporter of the foreign missions he attended bingo every Friday night and never failed to go up to the organizers at the end to enquire how much was made for the missions. His active work in the Legion of Mary, as well as his annual pilgrimage to Lourdes, was evidence of his devotion to our Lady and his zeal in promoting it.

He had a great sense of humour, with a facility for repartee that remained with him to the end. I visited him a few days before he died. "How are you?", I began. "All right", was the reply. "I see you are having a bite to eat", I said. "I'm having two", he replied. "I think you are having three", I said. Back like a flash, with a twinkle in his eye, "Don't be counting the food I'm eating!"

He was blessed in his declining years since 1987 to be cared for so devotedly by the Daughters of Charity in St Vincent's, Fairview, where he died peacefully on Christmas Day 1989. God rest his priestly soul.

Thomas Fagan CM

EDWARD LYONS CM
Born: Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 4 June 1895.
Ordained a priest for-the diocese of Port Augusta, in the crypt of St Columbanus' basilica, Bobbio, by Count Pietro Calchi Novati, bishop of Bobbio, 21 May 1921.
Entered the CM, in Blackrock: 7 September 1929.
Final vows, in Ashfield: 14 July 1932.

Appointments
1921-1929 Diocese of Port Augusta.
1929-1930 St Joseph's, Blackrock. Sept.
1931 Back in Australia.
1932-1944 St Vincent's, Ashfield.
1944-1947 St Joseph's, Malvern.
1947-1949 St Vincent's, Ashfield.
1949-1989 St Peter's, Phibsboro.

Died 25 December 1989.

Father Kevin Condon CM

Some of peculiar genius,
All touched by a common genius,
United in the strife which divided them.

To generations of All Hallows students he was "Kilty", the reason disappointingly arbitrary. To some senior staff he was for a while, on his arrival, "Tiger": an early recognition of a fire in the belly and a certain behavioural autarky that would defy conventional domestication. But eventually to his colleagues he was simply "K" – a spare designation that picked up on the laconicism that was such a feature of his personality; as well as having echoes of Kafka's eponymous anonym - an allusion that would not have gone unsavoured. For mystery is where one wants to begin with Kevin, if only to acknowledge it. His was the sort of persona around which the stuff of mythology naturally adheres. Myth was a word he used a lot – always favourably; it was a sort of conceptual black hole down which he elusively ruminated. Someone eventually put it to him that K Condon was a myth: he smiled appreciatively. Quite simply, he was an original: a unique class of an off-beat genius: scholar, author, editor, teacher, raconteur, horticulturalist, dendrologist, photographer, handyman, tobacco-grower, oenologist, and much else – a bit of a scientist: you wouldn't know where to start or where to stop; but you would have to say that a high degree of skill and a singleness of purpose were brought to bear on all his enterprises; and they would be characterised by "style", that ineluctable quality he was constantly demanding in the work of others.

Physically he was a handsome man, masculine, broad-shouldered, well put together; and retaining a full head of jet-black hair to the end – something which occasioned jocose speculation. He was inclined to sit through such *ad hominem* jocularity with little or no comment; abstracted, as though unaware it was directed at himself. There was an immense solidity about him, though he wasn't heavy either in manner or in touch. Rather, he was firmly rooted, self-contained, unhurried, calm, absorbed, full of common sense, unselfconscious, of very considerable mental and physical energy, and entirely his own man. He could be most gracious and charming in feminine company, and women warmed to him. His daily rhythm was naturally holistic: disciplined in a relaxed sort of way; his desk work came first, but there

was always time for a game of golf or a celebratory *soirée',* for he had a real capacity for enjoying life. I suppose scarcely a day passed that he was not grubbing around in soil for one reason or another.

Though he could seem but semi-attached to the Vincentian community, and facetiously would be asked at times if he would be joining up fully on his death bed, there was probably no other way of being a priest than that of an Irish Vincentian that would have given him as much scope for his talents and temperament. For while he was highly individualistic, belonging to a community suited him. That said, the community he felt most immediate loyalty to was All Hallows, and he would sometimes assert forcefully that the College had been a far more influential force in the Church than had the Irish CMs. He also maintained that the long-serving *gigantes* of the past, O'Donnell *et al.,* had been the "real Vincentians". In fact K liked meeting the confrères from other houses - and he knew many from other provinces - and was very much at his ease among them. He took every man as he came: there was no side to him when it came to anyone's social, professional, religious or academic background. He could talk to anyone because he was always himself; he did not have to worry about what others were thinking.

Though very at home in the world of scholarship and higher ecclesiasticism, the company he enjoyed most, I think, was that of the ordinary and the homespun. The Christmas parties for the kitchen staff were occasions of vast satisfaction: he joined fully and unself-consciously in the merriment; he loved the crack and the dancing, and could always be prevailed upon for a song – his party-piece written out and produced, a bit coyly for K, from some soutane recess. Indeed he enjoyed all celebrations, as he enjoyed life: he loved good food and good liquor; and though not a wine buff as such, he certainly knew his Château de la Mission from his Blue Nun – as befits any confrère of distinction. After a festive meal he would expand, glass of cognac to hand, fine Havana smouldering, eyes twinkling, reminiscing good-humouredly – perhaps about his student days in Rome and his associated treks through the Mediterranean and the Near East: he was a most resourceful traveller. I asked a contemporary of his in the Leonianum what he had been like at that time, and he muttered something about the Irish Mafia: K, the opportunist, throve in the black-market economy pertaining in post-war Rome. His memory was quite exceptional, and seen to best effect on Christmas evening when, year after year, he gave a slide show featuring his extensive wayfarings, meetings with pastmen in far-flung missions, and personalities of

All Hallows in days of yore. Nostalgia at its most acceptable; K at his most accessible.

He had so many virtues, not least, after his fashion, the five especially recommended by St Vincent by which infernal Philistines might be confounded. He could surprise you with unexpected acts of generosity. Simple too – and it was surprisingly easy to take a hand out of him – he lived simply. He scarcely had a change of clothing, and his only personal possessions worthy of the name were a set of golf clubs and a camera. On his own matter-of-fact-admission, he had never been a pious man, and I retain pleasant memories of his off-the-cuff observance: the sign of the cross, a vague scribble; genuflection, the merest deviation from the perpendicular; and once I saw him – it was so typical – as he shuffled up to receive from the chalice, sudddenly break ranks, grab a water jug, do the rounds of the potted plants, and then, quite unaware, resume his place in the line; no doubt deep in the thought of the sacramental inter-connectedness of things. For if he wasn't pious, he certainly was religious; and it was his constant lament that it was precisely a sense of the religious, formerly our greatest asset, that had been squandered through the rationalism of modern theology, spirituality and liturgy. Rationalism was an all-pervasive enemy: ultimately everything was rationalism: exegesis, metaphysics, psychology, theology – whatever. Once I heard him ruefully admit, with a degree of self-insight I wasn't expecting, that he himself was the supreme rationalist. His disdain for modern thinkers was all but total; only Max Weber escaping censure. Oddly, I never heard him give his thoughts on Newman, though the affinities of outlook are obvious.

True religion was the only antidote to rationalism, and when he spoke about the religious spirit, and the mystery in which it subsists, he was at his most original and, for me increasingly, most persuasive; though he tended to underscore too heavily the shadow side: sin, judgement, accountability to God. The simple enunciation of this latter word could extend for a full five seconds in a low throaty growl. His relationship with this God was very private, like everything else about him, but you would never doubt its reality. That privacy concealed a widespread ministry of charity and pastoral concern, of which one picked up but occasional clues, and that by chance: visiting the sick and elderly at home and in hospital, often I think people who had been associated with the college: families of pastmen, former staff of all sorts, and so on. At the funeral a Dublin priest remarked to me that more than once on a winter's night K had cycled the six miles out to

his church to hear confessions. He himself never spoke of such ministrations.[1]

In fact speech was something he severely rationed, especially with someone like myself with whom rapport was minimal. At table his silences could be epic - once allegedly spanning an entire papal pontificate. But they were silences, one sensed, full of deep cogitations in distant galaxies. Sporadically, there would be an ineffable, subterranean *gongusmos* (Ex 16:7). A *"murmurasne, K?"* from his computer programmer and *agent provocateur non pareil,* would evoke a distant smile, or a groan that something or other was a "damn shame": this could be anything from the decline of "The Times", to a light that had been left on all night. Waste was a great bug-bear. The more precious the commodity, the more heinous the crime. Did ever any man more dextrously salvage the last drops from a whiskey glass? A commonplace of breakfast in All Hallows, especially in the former dining room, was to have the proceedings suddenly plunged into semi-darkness: K, having finished, had hit the lights on his way out. Nor could any remonstration deflect him from such ingrained practices. He was a law unto himself. I suppose about one morning a week, on average, on lifting a newspaper to consult the death notices, one would find oneself peering through a hole where K had torn out, albeit neatly, a notice that had caught his eye – probably about someone connected with All Hallows. You were then sent rumaging through the other papers to discover if one of your loved ones had passed over. An impenetrable stratum of armour-plating parried all arrows of reproach. Delightfully, I was once on the receiving end of a perplexed lament from the director of a leading Dublin photographic studio: K many years previously had infiltrated the workings, and ever after, particularly when the *Annual* was falling due, appropriating its amenities with untfettered licence, like some Karsh of Ottawa. Could his religious superiors not do something about this? I had to assure the complainant that neither things present nor things to come would alter a Condon habit; the infestation was unto death.

That was K; doing it his way; always marching to his own drumbeat; never quite in step. He confirmed his identity, or at any rate asserted it, by being different. Rules, systems, and the conventional were each important: from these he got his bearings, which would be as far removed from the norm as possible; leaving him outrider to the common herd, or trailing a cussed leg in the ditch while his fellow pilgrims jogged naively towards the next rationalistic mirage. No matter how much the main celebrant varied his pace, K contrived to

be exactly one word in arrears. Temperamentally he needed to be at the periphery, emotionally at the centre. Staff meetings were not a preferred mode of social congress – always arriving late for them; adopting a physical tangentiality to the proceedings; and at the first hint of business being wound up, was on his way to real business. Throughout, he seemed switched off, but intermittent rumblings indicated that he kept his antennae tuned for innovational static. His letter box was stacked high with unread agenda papers, minutes, and improving hortatory circulars, all bedding down over the years to the low-grade mulch he had taken them to be in the first instance.

For a while he himself seemed to be bedding down into a Goodbye Mgr Chips role: the man of letters, content, eccentrically, to plough nostalgic furrows in distant Golden Ages. But the new regime of 1982 onwards proved too provocative a bait. Something twitched in the old tiger, and Chips became Guevara. The new dispensation was stalked, harried, harassed, flouted, ignored. A doughty adversary, he was caught in the dilemma of subverting what was now the established order at the risk of finally toppling that which he loved most. You felt at times during his gloomiest moments that Samson Agonistes-like he wanted to bring everything down around his ears rather than that it should continue on its new course.

Some relief was found in writing the college *History* – actually commenced just before this in 1981. There was an openly declared agenda, as he warmed to his task, of showing all these Johnny-come-latelys what All Hallows had really been about. I have to say at this point that I remain unconvinced by Condon the Historian. The *History* Vol. 1, while a typically stylish production, did not receive the critical acclaim he had hoped for - though there was some. It scarcely established the case, which he himself reckoned beyond discussion, that All Hallows was *the* missionary college *par excellence* – at the very least in Ireland, if not in the Church universal. Arguably the work lacks a fully-rounded missiological and ecclesiological contextualisation – a consequence of his having only an *ad hoc* conversancy with contemporary scholarship in these areas; and while it brings a not uncritical eye to bear on internal administrative problems, it lacks a real critique of actual missionary enterprises undertaken. All of which is not to say that it is not a very interesting production, and one to which even the professional historian might turn for light.

But the fact is that Kevin's real charism was as existential ruminator on the Word of God. For this had he been trained and he took to it as a natural – with his deep religious spirit, his creative theological

cast of mind, his intellectual curiosity, his flair for languages, his transcultural ease, his concern for the values of religion, and his empathy with ordinary people and respect for their wisdom. All this, and then his appointment to All Hallows, an academic and social milieu where such talents could flourish prolifically. As indeed they did. Here, with his enthusiasm, hard work and originality he left a deep mark as a teacher, while on a wider front he certainly did his bit as scripture scholar, whether as writer, lecturer or committee man. Yet at some point, momentum was lost; not that his exceptional work-rate slackened, but he ceased to be energised by his first love. He was unlucky, of course: his Mercier translation of the Gospels – what a lovely book it remains – was too late to be considered for liturgical use when the vernacular was introduced; and eventually work on the Pauline *corpus* was suspended. This, and other setbacks after similar expenditure of effort, coming at a time of life when a man needs a new challenge and prefers to be in charge of his own, including publishing, destiny, may have helped to steer him down the apparently lesser road of college historian and archivist. But this seems circumstantial rather than causal. And his general reaction to the wider issues of theology, scripture and formation in the ferment of the 60s and 70s suggests that the explanation of his later bias must be sought more deeply in the dynamics of personality – a search which would take a serious biographer back to any man's family roots and beyond: something which cannot practically be pursued here.

At all events, his cast of mind long before the end was to look backwards. Like so many of the clergy he was most comfortable with the retrospective. His visionary eye embraced the past: there was no future. In fact there was little present. A future historian will vainly consult the *Annuals* he latterly edited for information about what was currently happening in the college. Quite simply, nothing was happening – or nothing that was really All Hallows. His withering scepticism of the contemporary ranged far and wide: the spiritual bankruptcy of the West; the instability of the world's money markets; the depletion of fossil fuels; and in general, "the distress of nations and perplexity whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road". Eliot was a great favourite, and I believe of decisive influence in how he came to understand, shape and formulate his religious vision. It must also be acknowledged here that amid all his doom and gloomery, which was never far away from teetering over into self-parody, he retained a capacity to smile at himself.

Because K's early theological *élan* had promised so much, and had

continued fleetingly to tantalise us, one is left with a feeling of having been short-changed, despite his overall productivity. I heard him say once that when he had the *History* completed, he would write a book which would definitively sort-out modern theology. How characteristic of him to see it in terms of a joust. Whereas, it was when he eschewed the polemical – and his vision was really too Catholic to have him thought of as a theological controversialist in the old-fashioned sense - and did what he was best at, that he was at his most authoritative. Glimpses of his spiritual vision glint desultorily: in the *Annuals;* in the scholarly journals; in a recent piece on the Suffering Servant couched in the form of letters to a student *(The Furrow,* Dec. 1987). Last All Saints Day, in the course of an extended sermon (which he had prepared carefully and typed out) he struck a seam of the purest gold for four or five minutes. He was expounding the notion of the "holy", and it was spell-binding: you wanted him to go on and on in the same vein. He didn't, of course; he was off into something else, making some point he thought we might profitably hear, rather than anything we wanted to hear. Actually I don't think he had a good sense of when he had our full empathetic attention and were willing him on. Or possibly it disconcerted him to have others in agreement. I have been looking again at his edition of some of William Purcell's spiritual conferences *(Between the Unseen and Seen):* the two men seem closer in spiritual kinship than I had at first imagined; and I wonder if K felt that his distinguished predecessor had already said much of what he felt he needed to say himself.

As far as the pastmen were concerned, the appearance of the *History* was very opportune and they received it well. K was in noticeably better form for having got it out of his system – as though vindicated: honour satisfied; and he enjoyed the ensuing limelight and banter. With typical stealth he embarked on a couple of victory sweeps: one through Britain; another through Australia and New Zealand, and back by the States. And he was sufficiently energised to set about Vol. 2, of which he seems to have more or less completed about one-third. In the few days before his death he was once again in the States, this time at a pastmen's convention in Orlando, which he addressed in the manner they had come to expect and enjoy. His final word, and one which by now, ironically, would not have come easily to him: "All Hallows is worth saving".

His relationship with the alumni was at the core of his ministry. Many of them have been speaking of his death as the end of an era. For them he was the common bond with the past: their own past, and

all sorts of other pasts; a bond which in his own mind spun a spell and wove a seamless robe that enveloped the greater All Hallows, living and dead, in some unique mystical union of faith and love. Even pastmen who had few dealings with the college felt somehow included in him and through him. Like a successful politician, he seemed to effortlessly garner the popular vote. His natural empathy was with the honest-to-God unpolished student, especially if he had gardening or DIY leanings. For it was one of the paradoxes about him that though he railed against the world, no man was more comfortably earthed in it, or better knew how to make his way in it. I never heard him speak ill of a pastman, and if he had disappointments about any of them he kept these to himself. His knowledge of their whereabouts and goings-on was comprehensive. I suppose it would be excessively Hibernian to suggest that the highlight of their life for him was their leaving of it: certainly he had unusual energy about deaths, funerals and obituaries, and these latter were an especial feature of his editorship of the *Annual.* He was reticent about sharing news about pastmen in conversation. In fact there was a decided possessiveness in their regard. This was his territory, and one could sense oneself being warned off. They were his constituents; and many of them as they turn to All Hallows in the future will be dis-oriented: he who was always there, the custodian of the *genius loci,* the spokesman for its finest values, will be there no more.

When I think of K now, I think, not of the scholar at his desk, smoking his pipe, guarding the deposit, but of a man on the move: whether by stiff-legged plod to the garden; by bicycle, slicing boldly through the traffic, cutting the corners; or by greyhound bus on the grand tour. And an image comes to me from Australia, a continent that gripped him: the history, the All Hallows primitive mission, the pioneering spirit, the man's world of the outback; the sheer phenomenological otherness – all seemed to pluck some primordial chord in his inner and outer horizons. And the most extraordinary feature of Australia is its sublimely talented native population, whose sad decimation is at least as great an anthropological blow to mankind as, say, the destruction of the rain forests is an ecological one. Every Australian Aboriginal has a Dreaming, of which there are many hundreds; its begetter a totemic ancestor, who at the beginning moved around scattering a trail of words and notes, the Songlines, creating the country as he went; singing it into being. For his descendants to go Walkabout, is to participate in this creation myth: it's to be a co-creator. As he goes, the Blackfellow treads in the footprints of his Dreaming, singing the

ancestor's verses without changing a note or word, for the original composition was perfect. This is the most sacred duty of Religion: if the songs are forgotten and not sung, the land dies. So all energy is brought to bear in walking in the Dreaming, singing up the territory, keeping the land just as it was in the beginning. (Rationalist whites were forever trying to change the world to fit their mercenary illusion of the future).

I said at the start that K was an original; Aboriginal would be better. His was an All Hallows mission Dreaming. His life's Walkabout down the Songlines – internal, external; at home, abroad – in the footprints of the ancestors, was singing up the territory; preserving the All Hallows creation in its original perfection. And, as a work of co-creation it was, by definition, absolutely dynamic. It is an elusive and mysterious image, as it would have to be for K; with resonances of those unfinished symphonies which teased us; of his being "in and out of time" (a fugue whose exploration by Eliot allured him); of the communion of saints; of Religious faith as against rationalist knowledge; of the attained and the yet-to-be, held in creative tension.

When all is said and done, we remain mysteries: to ourselves as well as to others. One riddles the evidences of another's life till it is more or less intelligible – and I can think of few greater humiliations in prospect than to be the object of such fumbling scrutinies – but after these constructs there remains that to which Newman alluded: things "awful and known only to God". K's mystery abides. But it was one helluva colourful Walkabout. *Deo gratias.*

Jim McCormack CM

KEVIN CONDON CM
Born: Achonry, Laragh, Co. Sligo, 7 March 1921.
Entered the CM: 7 September 1939.
Final vows: 8 September 1941.
Ordained a priest in Clonliffe College by Dr McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin, 31 May 1947.

Appointments
1947-1950 Casa Internazionale, Rome.
1950-1990 All Hallows.

Died in Brooklyn 6 January 1990.

Brother Michael O'Sullivan CM

After the funeral mass in Castleknock College one of Brother Michael's long-standing friends was overheard to comment: "There goes the last of the great *seanchaís"*. Brother Michael will always be remembered for his stories. With ease he could move from the realm of reality into that of fantasy, and back again. Invariably most of his stories centered round the War of Independence and the part he played in it. He loved a car journey through the country and saw it as an opportunity to tell yet another story. Every ditch, stream or hill-top was a strategic point from which he and his colleagues launched a successful ambush against the Black and Tans. Although his stories were colourful they all had a grain of truth, and he quickly dismissed anyone who might question his veracity. Once at the community table, when Brother Michael was talking eloquently about life in the United States, one confrère dared to query him and asked: "Brother, were you ever in America?" Without batting an eyelid, and much to the merriment of his audience, Michael quickly responded: "Father, I was conceived there", and continued unabashed.

In his earlier days he was a member of Fianna Eireann and subsequently joined the Free State Army for a brief period, before coming to work in Castleknock. From there he entered the community at St Joseph's, Blackrock in July 1925. He always liked to shroud his origins in mystery and could best be described as a Melchisedech figure. The community personnel catalogue gives his birth day as 15 August 1904, while his birth certificate gives his it as 5 August 1903. In recent years he spoke of an old family home in Glanthane. His birth certificate shows he was born in his father's house in Knockansweeney, which is a townland near Glanthane, not far from Mallow. However, Michael looked upon himself as a Kerryman. He was a regular at Croke Park and should the Kerry team be playing he was to be found near their dressing room or accompanying them onto the field. Every O'Sulivan that appeared on the team was either a nephew or a cousin.

After some months doing his seminaire in Blackrock Michael was transferred to Dax, the birthplace of St Vincent, where he took his final vows in the Congregation on 8 December 1928. Whenever he was asked about the move he put it down to a personality clash between him and his Superior in Blackrock because of the part he played in the Civil War. Michael continued to live with the community in France and there was some talk of his joining the mission to Madagascar. In

his final years in France he worked in the Irish College, Paris, before returning to Castleknock in 1937. Michael became a fluent French speaker and years later he loved to demonstrate his prowess when the occasion arose. Once while in a restaurant in Sneem, Co. Kerry, he addressed the waitress first in French and then in Irish, and finally condescended to speak in English. When on a pilgrimage to Lourdes he convinced the local people of his active part in the Resistance and was dined and wined on the strength of it.

On his appointment to Castleknock Michael worked mainly on the farm, but also assisted the dean by supervising the boot-room and shower area. He is best remembered among pastmen for his nightly cry: "Turn off them drippers" as he insisted that every tap be turned off. During his free time he loved to tend his bees. Once when a swarm landed at the foot of a goal post Michael was called on. It was an opportunity not to be missed. With bare hands he pulled the swarm apart until he found the queen bee, examined her carefully before placing her ceremoniously in a matchbox, which he in turn placed in his pocket, before cycling back to his garden, followed by the swarm, with his dog, Rebel, barking at his heels. One July evening a cavalcade of motor cars entered the college grounds. Not even the President knew what it was all about. The mystery was soon resolved when Michael was seen demonstrating his skills to the Beekeepers Society of Ireland. He was also a noted water-diviner and was very much in demand in counties Dublin and Meath. Again, he loved to exaggerate his escapades with the divining rod, and would always talk about how the electricity and magnetism affected his stomach. The ready remedy was always a glass of brandy! In his latter days he graduated from a push bike to a moped, and finally to a Honda 50. This gave him greater mobility and an ever increasing circle of friends.

It became increasingly difficult to tie him to a work schedule, and those who worked with him remember him for his giftedness and unpredictability. In the early sixties he built a very fine stone wall near the school building. Years later he was very chuffed when people admired it, but was very quick to respond that it was nearly the death of him, as the superior at the time kept him at it through the severe winter months despite his (alleged) frequent colds, flu, pleurisy and pneumonia! Another example of his fine handiwork were the various crest formations he created with stones and cacti in his garden.

In his latter days Michael suffered a lot from arthritis, but never complained about it. His only reference to it was when he was predicting the weather. He became a keen television fan and never missed *The*

Virginian, and was a frequent visitor to nearby Dunboyne to observe the filming of the TV series *The Riordans,* but was disappointed that he was never filmed as a stand-in, or in the crowd scenes. However, he did make his TV debut in an RTE documentary on the role of the clergy in Gaelic games, entitled *The Men in Black.* He was very proud of the fact that the camera zoomed in on him and showed him in profile as he sat behind the bishops and politicians on the Hogan Stand.

In September 1987, because of his poor leg movement, the doctor recommended a wheelchair. At first Michael was very happy with it, but once he realised that Fr John Carroll was joking about it he promptly rejected it. Instead, he asked it to be placed outside John Carroll's room, stating that the old man might make more use of it. During the Christmas of 1987 he was confined to bed, and in January of 1988 he was transferred to Rickard House. While there, he endeared himself to all the staff, and was blessed to receive such wonderful care and attention in his final years.

His comment, when passing through the old St Joseph's on his way to Rickard House, still rings clear: "We're back where we started from". He still had two more years to go, but now after more than 60 years in the community he has returned to his Creator. We are the poorer for his going. We miss his contribution to community life, his regularity at prayer, with his faith-filled responses at the mass. He was a most colourful character, enjoying life to the full and only too ready to share that joy with others. Whenever confrères will meet to reminisce, no doubt some of Michael's stories will be part of the lore. May he rest in peace.

Kevin O'Shea CM

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN CM
Born: Glanthane, Mallow, Co. Cork, 5 August 1903.
Entered the CM: Blackrock, 24 July 1925.
Final vows: Dax, 8 December 1928.

Appointments
1928(?)-1937 Irish College, Paris.
1937-1990 St Vincent's, Castleknock.

Died 9 January 1990.