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Contents

Editorial

The two numbers of COLLOQUE appearing each year have been labelled Spring and Autumn, but the Autumn number has usually been circulated to readers in Ireland just before Christmas, and to those outside Ireland early in the New Year. Starting with this number it is hoped to have the Autumn one appearing in early or mid-November if possible. The Spring number will continue to appear in late April or early May, giving approximately six months between issues.

The Pierced Heart: Saint Vincent and Jansenism

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Let us use the Little Method: Motives, Nature, and Application (Means). Why should we be interested in the relations of Vincent with Jansenism? What was the significance of Jansenism for him? Do we have to cope with "Jansenism" today?

1. *MOTIVES: Jansenism made Vincent show his feelings and values*

Jansenism began with a distinctive understanding of grace, and developed into moral rigorism and support for the national church (Gallicanism). It was a perfectionist, mainly bourgeois and intellectual, reform party seeking to influence Catholic minds and hearts from about 1635 onwards.[1] It is striking how Jansenism[2] cut Vincent to the heart, and forced him to reveal his feelings for some twenty of his most mature years, approximately 1637-1657. Its pessimistic Augustinianism drew from him his sole extant theological work, an autograph study on grace,[3] "the usual subject of my wretched meditations" (III, 331 — Leonard, 244). The intertwined politics of Church and State involved him in some unusual negotiations with Richelieu and Mazarin, and in mobilising both the French bishops and Rome against Jansenism. There was even an Irish dimension.[4] However, what most aroused my interest was his personal agony. He made some surprisingly harsh remarks about Saint-Cyran and Arnauld, used very strong language about Jansenist teaching and practice, relinquished intimacy with old allies inclined to the new movement, and expelled members of the Company with Jansenist sympathies. Consequently, I would like to explore how Vincent saw himself threatened in his identity and life-commitment by the seductive traditionalism and rigour of the Jansenist movement. I shall deal with this in two stages: the nature of Jansenism in itself, its dynamic (A); and the nature of Jansenism as experienced by Vincent (B). Lastly, I shall briefly reflect on the Application or Means, the possible lessons for us.

2. *NATURE: (A) The Dynamic of Jansenism*

Although the focus is on the Jansenism of 1635-1660, it is well to bear in mind that the movement continued in some form for more than two centuries after the saint's death.[5] Vincent's canonisation in 1737 was criticised by Jansenists (Coste 3, 429-432). Pierre Collet published his biography anonymously in 1748 outside France proper, in Lorraine. Jansenists played a minor role in the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1764 (Delumeau, 113). John Wesley (1703-1791) had some of Saint-Cyran's spiritual writings translated into English for the early Methodists. In 1830 the adolescent Pierre Julien Eymard knew the Jansenistic piety of the Upper Alps.[6] The Italian Risorgimento knew its influence (Delumeau, 125). The Old Catholic Church of Utrecht has Jansenist antecedents (Dupuy, 124-125, 128). Therefore, the Jansenist party was not without a continuity and life of its own.

Since Jansenists claimed to be Catholic Christians in the major Western Augustinian tradition, they had not, in theory, any special teaching (Dupuy, 128-129). Nevertheless, the Jansenist orientations of Vincent's time may be conveniently gathered under three headings: (1) *Grace,* or humanity before the grandeur of God; (2) *Living* with a demanding God; (3) the *Church* in all its local autonomy.

(1) *Grace:* Jansenist anthropology viewed humanity as utterly dependent on a supremely free God, powerless to carry out some commandments without the help of grace, and equally powerless to reject such help. We have not the capacity to choose between good and evil (liberty of indifference), but we can choose to sin (basic free will). We become free only when we realise our will is a desire for the infinite: "Love God and do what you will" (Dupuy, 138-139). Some are chosen to live with God; others are not. Such a savour of predestination explains Mazarin's quip, "reheated Calvinism" (Delumeau, 127). "Berullian humility was transformed into inability to keep the commandments or to resist grace. The sense of God's sovereign independence changed into a denial of the universality of his will to save" (Roman, 619; cf. pp. 172, 602).

This stress on overmastering grace and the reality of damnation chimed in with contemporary sensibilities; but, as we shall soon see, it antagonised the newer humanistic religion championed by the Jesuits. If the early Renaissance viewed men and women as angels, the later Renaissance saw them rather as animals.[7] Calvin, Montaigne, Pascal and Racine rejected the Stoic ideal of our being able to dominate our sensual nature through reason. The seventeenth century was haunted by

fear.[8] Along with Saints Peter Canisius and Robert Bellarmine, Vincent shared the almost universal belief that the majority of humankind would be damned*?* The head of the Sulpicians, Louis Tronson (1622-1700), thought the greater number of priests would end up in hell. Thus did Jansenists reinforce the pessimism then in vogue.

(2) *LIVING:* The frolicsome cherubs and lightsome joy of the contemporary early baroque churches signalled a growing optimism nurtured by Jesuit moral teaching and their notion of a good state of pure nature, which Matteo Ricci had exploited in China by adapting Christianity to the local culture. Casuistry and probabilism were the order of the day. The former seemed to accommodate the stern demands of the Gospel to human frailty. The latter enlarged the scope of human freedom by extending the boundaries of the permissible. In the one hundred years from 1564 to 1663 six hundred Catholic authors — French, Italian, Spanish and Flemish — composed treatises on casuistry.[10] The Jansenist stress on original sin and unmerited predestination, and on wholehearted devotion to hard truth and the will of God, clashed with the relative optimism and seeming laxity of the Society.

Jansenist sacramental and liturgical practice have a strangely modern ring. Baptism and Confirmation made a person a full Christian, who should educate himself or herself in the Scriptures and Church tradition. In Penance absolution was often deferred to test the sincerity of the contrition and purpose of amendment. Eucharist was not a remedy for sin (as some Jesuits thought), but delightful food for the virtuous. Since conversion and the struggle for perfection were ongoing, Communion could be postponed in order to quicken desire and encourage spiritual effort. Order, according to Saint-Cyran, made the priest superior to the angels and like the Blessed Virgin in producing and forming the Body of Christ. For this the cleric must have a personal vocation matching his mission by the Church at his presbyteral ordination.[11] Liturgical ceremonies should encourage the participation of the faithful by the use of the vernacular. French translations were made of the Roman Missal (1660), the New Testament (1667), and the Breviary (1688). Jansenists differed from Huguenots in revering the Mother of God and the saints, and by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In line with their stress on personal, continuing conversion and an enlightened faith, they ran schools remarkable for their child-centred pedagogy and use of French instead of Latin. This gained Port-Royal the soubriquet from some Jesuits of "the sect of the Hellenists".[12]

(3) *CHURCH:* Protestant support for the primacy of councils and the universal priesthood and call to holiness of believers was counterbalanced by Trent's advocacy of the primacy of Peter, the ministerial priesthood, and the reformed religious life (Delumeau, 15-23). The Jansenists accepted papal supremacy, but they looked askance at the growing Roman centralism after Trent. They upheld diocesan bishops and priests, but did not care for exempt religious who went over the head of the local hierarchy to Rome. A lay monastery under the guidance of the parish priest was a possibility, that is, individuals deciding to lead a retired life like some early Christians, without making vows or seeking ordination. In fact the Port-Royal estates hosted a number of such lay "solitaries." One of them, Antoine Le Maitre, whom Vincent had declined to direct, wrote a work on Christian alms in 1651 which supported the saint's efforts to relieve the war-damaged provinces; and Port-Royal sent 400,000 livres for this cause (Mezzadri, 55 n. 73; 98). This valuing of the local church, the lay state, sound scholarship, and personal decision and development are congenial to our age. But in the seventeenth century such independence and self-sufficiency appeared threatening to the centralising campaign of Richelieu. Later the absolute monarch Louis XIV will call Jansenists "republicans" because of what he sees as their anti-authoritarian stance.

The following contrasting columns are a partial summary of the preceding pages. They stress the differences between Jansenists on the left, and the mainline Catholics (including Vincent de Paul) on the right. Yet it must be recalled that Jansenists saw themselves as traditional Catholics, with a firm belief in the hierarchical visible Church, asceticism, the primacy of charity, and a truly personal sacramental life. They aimed at making Catholic Christianity work, at least for the serious minority chosen by God.

Jansenists	*Majority Catholics*
Pessimism; efficacious grace activating the human will	Mitigated pessimism; sufficient grace attracting human free will
Individuals and elites	Communities and the mass of Christians
Independence; personal decision	Interdependence; vows of religion
Theology drawing on Scripture and the Fathers	Doctrine elaborated by Councils, especially Trent, and proposed by Rome

Jansenists	*Majority Catholics*
Intellectual stress on education, vernacular liturgy, spiritual direction	Active stress on charitable associations, the familiar Latin liturgy, basic popular preaching
Ascetical approach to Penance and Eucharist; perfectionist	Penance and Eucharist seen as aids to sinners; weekly reception by the weak
Bishops; local church	Pope; power of Holy See
Diocesan priests; trained laity communities	Religious; new evangelising

(B) *The Significance of Jansenism for Vincent de Paul*

His experience of Jansenism will be treated under four aspects: Theological, Political, Pastoral, and Personal.

(1) *THEOLOGICAL:* The whole relationship between God and humanity is at stake — grace. Vincent requires that believers retain the power to resist and accept intimacy with God. Therefore, they can both sin and be converted by missions. Again the will of God to save us is universal. Consequently the abandoned, ignorant, and sometimes vicious poor, must be evangelised, assisted by Confraternities of Charity, and led by good priests. Nobody is outside the love of God. Of course without free will there is not merit, and no heaven and hell. "What merit has a convict from saluting the general of the galleys? A free country gentleman honours him more by a salute than do ten thousand galley slaves" (XIII, 145).[13]

Secondly, there are the attitudes to the moral and sacramental life. A rigorist slant such as that of Jansenism focuses on an elite, usually bourgeois and educated, with access to a spiritual guide. It is hardly surprising that Paris was open to Jansenist trends since it fulfilled these conditions (see IV, 181, 627). Vincent noted the diminution of monthly and Easter communions in some Paris parishes, attributing this — rather too quickly — to Arnauld's confusingly-titled work *On Frequent Communion* (provided you truly love the Lord!) (III, 322 —Leonard, 238; Mezzadri, 81; R. S. Poole, *Vinc./SIEV,* 729). The deferring of absolution was irreconcilable with the general confession which was the goal of the little Company's parish missions. The Berullian exaltation of the priest as the angel-like mediator, humble sacrificer, and beacon of knowledge clashed with the reality of probably rather more than 100,000 priests for rather less than twenty million Roman believers in France. Very

approximately there was one priest for every 180 Catholics—but what priests! Certainly Vincent's two-year pastoral formation "seminaries" would not come near Jansenist ideals. Theologically Vincent was true to the tridentine reforms promoting detailed confessions, frequent communion (Mezzadri, 72), and pastoral seminaries inculcating humility and zeal, with limited courses in moral, liturgy, and practical parish work such as preaching.[14]

Vincent aimed at forming disciplined, conscientious, modestly educated, and capable parish clergy. They were urgently needed, and there was no time for longer and more thorough personal, or even spiritual, training. Through the missions and Tuesday Conferences and retreats there was some provision for ongoing formation. Jansenist idealism delayed feasible solutions such as those pursued by Olier, Bourdoise and Vincent.

Thirdly, Vincent de Paul may have been ordained priest at the age of nineteen in 1600, against the rules of Trent (1565). Yet this was legitimate, since the council's decrees were not promulgated in France until 1615.[15] Subsequent experience taught him the absolute need of public order in Church and State. The agricultural crisis throttling food production, the waves of epidemics increasing the breakdown of families, local revolts over royal taxation, the ravages of marauding armies, and the growing pauperisation and vagabondage made almost any peace worth having.[16] He threw himself into the tridentine reform of the Church, under "the authority of the common Father of all Christians" (II, 454; in 1644). Again and again his letters to bishops and missioners refer to the Pope who "as vicar of Jesus Christ, is head of the whole Church and therefore the superior of the bishops" (IV, 207; 1651). The "Sovereign Pontiff' decides on matters of doctrinal dispute, as Trent envisaged (IV, 149). The letters to bishops Pierre Nivelle, and Pavilion and Caulet, are consistent pieces of sober ultramontanism: IV, 175-181,204-210. Later still, in 1657, he wrote to Jean Des Lions in an effort to win him back to the Church from Jansenism: "You may be waiting for God to send you an angel to enlighten you further. He will not do so. He directs you to the Church, and the Church assembled at Trent directs you to the Holy See regarding the matter in question, as appears from the last chapter of the council. You may be waiting for St. Augustine himself to return and explain what he wrote. Our Lord told us that if we do not believe the Scriptures, we will not believe what those who come back from the dead will tell us. If it were possible for this great saint to return, he would submit, as he did during his life, to the Sovereign Pontiff' (XV, 116; also VI, 268; 1657). Augustine must be explained by the Council

of Trent, and not vice versa, he tells Jean Dehorgny in 1648 (111,330—Leonard, 244). The quibbling of Arnauld beating a tactical retreat from the condemnationa of 1653 and 1656 (cf. VI, 88-89) clouded the issues, and weakened the decisive intervention power of the papacy.[17]

The Pope alone had the power to send missionaries throughout the whole world.[18] He it was who approved the Congregation of the Mission, and gave it the mandate to evangelise. It was consequently of the ultimate importance for Vincent that the authority of the Pope be respected, as appears from his conference on obedience less than one year before his death:

> To whom do we owe obedience? The rule starts with our Holy Father the Pope. He is the common Father of all Christians, the visible head of the Church, the representative of Jesus Christ, the successor of Saint Peter. We owe him obedience, we who are in this world to instruct the peoples about the obedience they should have, along with us, towards the universal Pastor of our souls. It is up to us to show them the example … "Peter, feed my lambs, feed my sheep." (He is the one to whom the) Saviour has given the keys of the Church. He is like a different species of human, so much is he above the others. Thus we should see him in Our Lord and Our Lord in him (XII, 430; December 19, 1659).[19]

His ecclesiology was not Gallican, but tridentine, with the evangelising thrust of the disciplinary decrees of that Council.[20] Having been directed by Andre Duval, the author of two works (1612 and 1614) defending the power of the Pope over the whole Church, and as a colleague of the ultramontanist Louis Abelly who published in 1654 and 1659, it is hardly surprising that Vincent can describe himself to Pope Innocent X in 1650 as "utterly committed and loyal … to your Holiness," and to describe the Company as "the least of all the congregations, and the most indebted and obedient to the Holy See" (IV, 65). The overriding need for church order, and clarity of mission and teaching, prohibited him from favouring the independence and diocesan autonomy of the Jansenists.

(2) *POLITICAL:* Vincent never seems to have doubted that power should be in the hands of the great — the kings and aristocrats, the Pope and the bishops. People of the time took for granted the pyramidal and monarchical structure of Church and State. Paternalism and even authoritarianism characterised social relationships.[21] Defects were

attributed to persons, not systems. Structures were not oppressive; sin was. The rebellious peasants objected to the heavy taxes; the Fronde uprising was in great part directed against an unpopular Prime Minister, Cardinal Mazarin. But peasant and Frondeur cheered the king. He ruled by divine right, as did the Pope.

Two general statements of a widely political nature may serve as a framework. Jansenism was, by and large, a party of the city professional class, the bourgeois "nobility of the gown" asserting their independence over against the older "nobility of the sword," who were often the landed aristocracy and the courtiers (Dupuy, 112; Delumeau, 118; Roman, 618). Secondly, there was a wider puritanical reforming movement in Europe — one which cost Charles I his head.

Jansenism was aggressive from the beginning—dogmatically and politically with Jansenius and Saint-Cyran, morally with Arnauld. It challenged the status quo wherein Church and State were intertwined (II, 498-499; III, 182-183; IV, 181). In 1635 Jansenius fulminated against Richelieu's Protestant alliances and foreign wars in his *Mars Gallicus.* This compromised his colleague Saint-Cyran, who was more than capable of compromising himself. The latter collided with Richelieu (and Vincent) over his declaration that the marriage of Louis XIII's brother Gaston d'Orléans was valid; an opinion with considerable diplomatic complications. His teaching that absolution required full conversion and love of God (contrition), and not merely the enlightened self-interest of salutary fear (attrition), may appear innocuous. But if Louis XIII wished to be absolved for having thrown in his lot with the Protestants against the Catholic Hapsburgs, he would not merely have to regret his morality of compromise. He would have to reverse completely his (and Richelieu's) foreign policy.[22] Again, Saint-Cyran had inspired gifted men to opt out of public life, and quietly proclaim as solitaries the sovereignty of conscience even in an absolute state (Delumeau, 116-117). Even more politically disturbing were the views attributed to him that the Church was irremediably corrupt, and had not really existed for many centuries.[23]

Minor "political" moves by Vincent included asking Mazarin to install non-Jansenists in theology posts at the College of Navarre and the Sorbonne (II, 593-594; III, 40-41 — Leonard 234-235), and seeing that Lambert aux Couteaux counselled the Queen of Poland on matters raised by her active Jansenist confessor (IV, 355). Four of his major public operations were: in Spring 1648 he sponsored a reduction of Jansenius' *Augustinus* to five dogmatic propositions susceptible of condemnation by Rome (Coste 3, 152; Dupuy, 120-122); next he

canvassed the French bishops for signatures in their support (IV, 148-149, 171-172, 175-181,198,204-210, etc.); then he aided a delegation to Rome to argue the anti-Jansenist case by giving the members advice, funds, encouragement, and hospitality (cf. IV, 400-403, 607-613 — partially in Leonard, 260-262; Mezzadri, 101-105). All the time he strove on the Council of Conscience to have non-Jansenist bishops appointed. Vincent may have forbidden his Little Company any political activity, but the foregoing instances are not alone in exemplifying what many would consider political activity on his own part.[24]

(3) *PASTORAL:* By "pastoral" I mean Vincent's reactions concerning the double family, and his counselling and encouragement of private persons about Jansenism. Prime texts are Vincent's two long letters to the intellectually alert Jean Dehorgny, written within three months of each other in 1648 (III, 318-332, 362-374 — Leonard, 236-254). It is in these clearly documented, firm, if slightly alarmed, pages that some of the harsh phrases occur which will be dealt with in the following section, (4). The first letter says those who do not reject the opinions of the day should leave the Company, or be asked to do so (Leonard 243). The second letter ends with the unambiguous, "If you persist in holding these opinions, I beg you not to send me any reply on these matters" (Leonard, 253). Twelve years later the tables were turned when Vincent was receiving "extreme unction", and heard Fr. Dehorgny ask, "Do you believe all the Church says?" (XIII, 187). The saint had won out.

At Saint-Lazare Vincent watched over the theology teaching. Besides two or three Tuesday Conferences against Jansenism (Leonard, 245), there was the changing to another house of the virtuous and capable Jean-Baptiste Gilles who kept on coming out against the new opinions during the retreats for ordinands. This was balanced by the removal from teaching—despite the protests of the students — of the more exploratory Gabriel Damiens (IV, 355-356), and the expulsion from the Company of a theologian, M. Guilbert, as well as some thirteen other missionaries (Mezzadri, 117). He would not receive candidates tinged with the new opinions (VI, 533), or pass on any book from a Jansenist source ("boutique"; VI, 87-88; VII, 424; Coste 3, 168-169). His ears were open to the Sorbonne debates, two thirds of whose doctors, "and they the oldest and best, maintained the common teachings of the Church, which are far removed from those of the present age" (IV, 216 — Leonard, 260).

The Daughters were firmly under his control, and suffered very little from the ferment. We can follow the case of the sisters at Chars, where the

pastor was Jansenistic, and discouraged confession more frequent than once a week. The Daughters were accustomed to receive communion on Sundays and feast days, which sometimes meant twice in one week. Since confession preceded communion, they were in a quandary about their second confession in the same week. After some ten years this was resolved by withdrawing the Daughters, and vindicating the authority of the Church to regulate — and permit — frequent confession and communion.[25]

He also defended the cloistered Visitation sisters, who educated girls from the professional and noble classes affected by Jansenism (Coste 3, 171-172). To those in authority he urged prompt intervention. Lack of swift remedial action had allowed Calvinism to take root (IV, 180; cf. IV, 208 —Leonard, 258). The deposition of Jansenist professors could scotch the movement (III, 349-350, 630-631). Roman condemnations of heretical works had been effective (IV, 178; IV, 209 — Leonard, 259). To good effect "both fire and sword have been employed, and sometimes only too late, as well may happen here" (IV, 207 — Leonard, 257). Yet with individuals Vincent could be sensitive and gentle, as evidenced by his allowing absolution to a teacher of the new doctrine who had not subscribed to the Sorbonne censure of Arnauld in 1656, since the Pope had not yet condemned the points to which it was attached (V, 587). He played Jean Des Lions with a long line in Letters 86,88,90, 91 and 93 of the supplementary Volume XV. Unfortunately, he wriggled off the hook.[26]

(4) *PERSONAL:* I shall deal with Vincent's actions (i) towards his erring *friends,* (ii) with the uncharacteristically *strong language* he used regarding Jansenism and Jansenists and (iii) with the *truths of his life works* for which he was ready to die.

(i) At least five of his reforming clerical friends were attracted to the noble rigorism of the Jansenists, and taught his heart how to sacrifice. Saint-Cyran may have been Vincent's neighbour in Southwest France, but they were never really intimate due to contrasting temperaments — and options in the Church. During the period of his closeness to Vincent (about 1624-1635) Saint-Cyran aided the Little Company by persuading De Gondi to grant the Bons-Enfants, by rendering the Constitutions into Latin, and helping to obtain Saint-Lazare and the bulls authorising the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission (Coste 3, 115; Mezzadri, 44; Roman, 603; Andre Dodin, *Vine./SIEV,* 554). However, he thought little of the short retreats for ordinands, and considered some missioners too young and too casuistical in the confessional. The larger

story is in all the biographies of the saint. As Saint-Cyran grew more imprudent and extreme in his criticism of the Church, councils, and sacramental discipline, Vincent resorted to a difficult visit of friendly advice in October 1637 (Roman, 604-608). Later he saw him in prison at Vincennes, and during the few months left to him after his release in 1643. As a final touch he sprinkled holy water on his body during his wake. But the first fine careless rapture had died long before.

The other four were less outstanding. Antoine Singlin (1607-1664) was Vincent's protégé, who rose from being a draper's assistant to confessor at Port-Royal for almost twenty years. In a letter to his great correspondent on anti-Jansenism, Alain de Solminihac, Vincent calls Singlin the "patriarch" of the movement alongside Arnauld (IV, 621; 1653). Bishop Augustin Potier of Beauvais suggested holding retreats for ordinands (i.e., crash courses in priestcraft), and recommended those at Saint-Lazare to the area bishops (I, 65, 541). He erected Confraternities of Charity, took part in diocesan missions (I, 241), and was the model bishop dear to Vincent's heart. But on the Council of Conscience he urged moderation towards Jansenism. For some years before Potier's death in 1650 there seems to have been little contact with Vincent. The archdeacon of Beauvais, Jérôme Duchesne, was one of the saint's earliest missionary companions, who was so touched by his sermons that he made a general confession to him (Abelly Bk 1, ch. 25; XI, 35). He assisted him with the very first retreat for ordinands, held at Beauvais (I, 66), and could be depended upon to help set up a Charity (I, 245). However, Duchesne was one of the small Jansenist delegation sent to Rome to defend Arnauld's *On Frequent Communion*. What a souring of memories this must have been!

We do know the emotional reaction of Vincent to his Parisian dirige Nicolas Pavilion (1597-1677; bishop of Alet from 1639). Pavilion was employed by Vincent in catechesis, missions, Charities and retreats for ordinands (I, 57 n. 3). In 1638 he was counselling Louise de Marillac's son Michel (I, 461). He had his seminary staffed by missioners, and was a fine reforming prelate. His zeal led him into Jansenist ways. Vincent's long, closely-argued letter to him and the bishop of Pamiers is given in full by Leonard on pp. 255-259 (June 1651). A passage in the latter half gives the core of Vincent's visceral horror of Jansenism:

> There has only been too great a delay in rooting out this doctrine, inasmuch as it is not merely a matter of theory but of practice, with the result that men's consciences can no longer endure the mental stress and unrest arising from the doubt which

> is being formed in the hearts of all, as to whether Jesus Christ did or did not die for them, and other such-like questions. There are some persons here who, on being told that others have said to the dying, in order to console them, that they should put their trust in the goodness of Our Saviour, Who died for them, have told the sick that they should do no such thing, because Our Lord did not die for all men (Leonard, 258; cf. XIII, 152).

Pavilion thanked him for the "charitable, heartfelt and fatherly communication," but declined to subscribe to the appeal to Rome (IV, 265-266). In a letter to Jean Dehorgny a year after Vincent's death Gilbert Cuissot recounts how Alain de Solminihac described being in a gathering of bishops where no one was so cool and antagonistic towards M. Vincent as Nicolas Pavilion. On hearing this, Vincent began, "O Sir! it is dreadful when those whom one has served ..." But realising he was going to pour out his heart to Cuissot, he stopped short through interior mortification, and made him change the subject, saying "Let's drop it" (XIII, 195). That was in 1651. Six years later Vincent wrote a very courteous and humble letter inviting Pavilion to stay at Saint-Lazare on his imminent visit to the capital. He writes that saints liked to stay in hospitals (with the overtone of poorhouses), and only Saint-Lazare can offer this (VI, 170-171). Regrettably the bishop did not come to Paris. We know of no final healing of their relationship.

(ii) Vincent speaks vehemently of Jansenism: "manifest heresy" (III, 365); "this pernicious doctrine" (III, 631); "frightening division . . . irreparable desolation" (IV, 176); "this little monster that is starting to ravage the Church, and will end up by devastating her, if it is not strangled at birth" (IV, 180); "so in line with the errors of Calvin" (IV, 181); "polluted spring" (VI, 89). More surprisingly he comes out with cutting irony and harsh criticism of named or identifiable individuals: Jansenius follows the condemned Baius (III, 320,323 — Leonard, 237,239); Saint-Cyran, "an author of heresy," said one thing to some and different to others (III, 366 — Leonard 248); he was the leading actor *(coryphée)* pronouncing the Church had not existed since the early centuries (III, 364 — Leonard 247); he said Calvin was partly right, and the present Church must be allowed to collapse, and he intended "utterly to destroy the present constitution of the Church, and to bring it under his own sway" (III, 319-320 — Leonard, 237; cf. VIII, 334-335; XI, 355). With blinded minds he and his "cabal" rejected Pope and council (IV, 178). Arnauld imitates Calvin by speaking with a double tongue (III, 365 — Leonard, 248); he makes communion so sublime

that he puts off the laity and priests, but he displays his humility by frequently boasting that he says Mass daily (III, 370-371 — Leonard, 251); the school exalts penance by postponing absolution, but Vincent knows of no act of penance on their part (III, 372 —Leonard, 253); "heresy … heresy … (heretical)" (III, 371 — Leonard, 251); Vincent publicly thanked God that Arnauld was censured by the Sorbonne in 1656 (XI, 322). The pastor of Saint-Merry is a "flying-buttress" of the new doctrine (IV, 621).

Why this verbal asperity?[27] The purism of the new opinions threatened him. His profound and lifelong fear of falling into heresy never prevented him from talking with Huguenots, or impelled him or his followers to polemicise about Catholic truth (cf. I, 295; II, 447; III, 328 — Leonard, 243; Mezzadri, 117). But his most "immediate vision of hell" was a married couple fixated on their own Jansenist opinions, "wishing to believe one's miserable brain, a deluded judgement, rather than accept the decision of the Pope" (XI, 399^400). His horror of heresy is a dimension of his concern for order and unanimity, guaranteed by the teaching and disciplinary authority of the Roman Pontiff. Vincent's France was in enough economic, political, religious and moral disorder for him to fear some fresh party might arise and embrace the new opinions, and split the country still further, and perhaps lead to the annihilation of the Church in Europe (III, 182-183).[28]

(iii) The conclusion of his second great letter to Jean Dehorgny in 1648 is arresting: "I am now going to celebrate Holy Mass that God may be pleased to let you see the truths I have just set before you, truths for which I am ready to lay down my life" (III, 373 — Leonard, 253). The reference to Mass clashes with Arnauld's seductive asceticism of eucharistic self-denial. Here is the cultic priest of Bérulle and Olier. Yet, I suspect, the truths are not primarily the academic ones discussed in the body of the letters. They are these *truths as giving life to his works,* and therefore to his ordinary life. The following provides an outline of these life-shaping truths which draws on some of the foregoing pages, especially the theological and pastoral significance of Jansenism for Vincent.

THE LITTLE COMPANY — Jansenist stress on the local church and the personal quest for truth in the heart could weaken the supremacy of the Pope who legitimised the Congregation, authenticated its teaching, and gave it its missionary mandate. Saint-Cyran's insistence (taken up, indeed, by the Oratorians and Sulpicians) that the sacerdotal state itself sanctifies reinforced his criticism of the vowed life flowing from the secular, diocesan ecclesiology of the Sorbonne. This undermined the

vows giving stability and evangelical commitment to the lay brothers and Daughters of Charity as well as to the priests of the Mission.[29]

CONFRATERNITIES, LADIES AND DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY — Vincent was himself evangelised by the poor, a sector of society whom he never blamed or feared. They are all within the saving love of God. If they are more often damned, it is not due to some inscrutable predestination, but because they are not properly evangelised and absolved.[30] Saint-Cyran favoured aid for the poor as part of detachment, as a good act of the giver (Mezzadri, 97-98). Vincent regularly testifies that the giver becomes a receiver, and is evangelised by the poor.[31] To make anyone doubt the universal saving charity is not evangelical:

> … it seems to me to be a matter of very great importance for all Christians to know and to believe that God is so good that all Christians can, with the grace of Jesus Christ, work out their salvation, that He gives them the means of doing so through Jesus Christ, and that this fact greatly manifests and magnifies the infinite goodness of God (III, 327 — Leonard, 241-242).

MISSIONS — Unlike Saint-Cyran, Vincent was keen on the integral, personalising confession of Trent — so keen that Pierre Coste heavily censored a letter of his on the subject.[32] An ascetical separation of absolution from confession until penance was performed was out of the question during a short rural mission. Similarly, any dissuasion from communion would rob the preaching of its community flowering. Whereas the Jansenist nuns of Port-Royal practised static perpetual adoration, Vincent was a pioneer of festive, public First Holy Communion, which would touch the heart of sinners (III, 118-119; XI, 104).

SEMINARIES — As a son of his age and nation, Vincent had a "dionysian" cultic sacerdotal piety (III, 371 — Leonard, 252); but his formation for the pastoral presbyterate was "Augustinian".[33] It went far beyond chant, rubrics, and formal prayer. On his deathbed he wondered if the Company's students needed to study scholastic theology, because "we must go for the practical" (XIII, 185-186, "il faut aller a l'utile"). The standards of preparation for sacerdotal mediatorship of Saint-Cyran and Arnauld were too rigorous, too interior, and too time-consuming with their novel emphasis on discerning one's personal vocation to the exalted state. When Arnauld made the retreat for ordinands in 1641 at Saint-Lazare, he wrote to Saint-Cyran for direction, rather than rely

on the priest of the Mission, who was "courteous . . . not wanting in intelligence" (Coste 3, 140-141). Disciplined and apostolic parochial clergy preaching simply, and administering Penance, Eucharist, and consoling Extreme Unction, were Vincent's priority in his largely pre-critical and tridentine time, and pre-literate, peasant place.

3. *APPLICATION: Where is "Jansenism" today?*

There is no straightforward lesson of Means for us. Jansenism cannot be equated with any current non-historical traditionalism (such as that associated with Archbishop Lefèbvre), or with the serious pursuit of mortification and the interior life found in the Catholic renewal movement. However, the above warns us against cultivating any elitism or individualism, at the expense of the Great Church and popular religion. The network of basic communities need not tend in this direction, if it coincides with diocesan life. Another application could be to the widespread fascination with inner states and psychological analysis of the graced life. Jansenists had an articulate psychological religion. But they needed to learn from the ignorant and the poor, and to be more engaged in the social apostolate. Let us leave the last word with St. Vincent, who was incited by Jansenism to embrace more closely the truths of Gospel praxis for which he was ready to lay down his life.

Notes

1. In text and notes the following abbreviations are used:
Bremond — Henri Bremond, *Hlstoire littéraire du sentiment religiewc en France.* Volume III, *La conquête mystique * L'Ecole Française;* Volume IV, * * *L'école de Port-Royal*. Paris: Bloud et Gay, 1923. The fourth chapter of Vol. Ill, on Vincent and Bérulle, is translated in J. Leonard, *Letters of St. Vincent de Paul,* 1-30, with notes on pp. 497-502.
Coste — Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Labours of Saint Vincent de Paul*. Three volumes translated from the 1932 French by J. Leonard. London: Burns Gates & Washbourne, 1935. Especially Vol. 3, pp. 113-181.
Delumeau — Jean Delumeau, *Catholicism between Luther and Voltaire: a new view of the Counter-Reformation*. Translated by J. Moiser from the 1971 French. London/Philadelphia: Burns & Gates/Westminster Press, 1977. Pp. xviii, 294.
Dupuy — Michel Dupuy, S.S., "Jansénisme" in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* (1972), columns 102-148.
Leonard — Joseph Leonard, C.M., translator and editor, *Letters of St. Vincent de Paul, with an Introduction by Henri Bremond of the French Academy.* London: Burns Gates & Washbourne, 1937. Especially pp. 228-263 on "Jansenism and Jansenists".

Mezzadri— Luigi Mezzadri, *Fra Giansenisti e Antigiansenlsti: Vincentde Paul e la Congregazione delta Missione (1624-1737).* Pubblicazionidel "Centrodi Studi …" dell'Università degli Studi di Milano, Serie I, No. 10. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1977. Pp. ix, 197.

Román — José María Román, C.M., *San Vicente de Paúl, 1. Biografía*. Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 424. Madrid: La Editorial Católica, 1981. Pp. xxiii, 707; esp. pp. 171-173. 598-625.

Vinc./SlEV— *Vincentiana* 28, fasc. 4-6 (1984): SIEV, Vincentian Month.

Pierre Coste's standard 1920-1925 French edition of the Letters, Conferences and Documents (and A. Dodin's Vol. XV of 1970) are referred to by volume and page number, e.g. Ill, 328.

2. "Jansenism" is a derogatory formation from the name of Jansenius, author of the *Augustinus,* after the manner of Calvinism from Calvin. Jansenists called themselves disciples of St. Augustine. Besides the treatment of Jansenism in Coste, Dupuy and Román (cited in the previous note), see the summaries by Luigi Mezzadri, C.M., and R. Stafford Poole, C.M., in *Vine. I SIEV,* 390-392 and 726-730.

3. XIII, 147-156. These pages have not been published in English. This "documented and lucid" (Román, 617) study is solid, but (as one would expect from its author and period) not original. The most personal touch among the citations of authorities from manuals (one may suppose), is the two references to examples of "the blessed bishop of Geneva" in his *Treatise on the Love of God* (pp. 152-154). Vincent's experience of God as boundless goodness — an experience incarnated for him in Francis de Sales — simply does not allow him to believe any individual would be denied the graces required for his salvation (p. 152).

   How accomplished a theologian was Vincent de Paul?— Bremond is lavish in his praise of the saint's five pages to Jean Dehorbny on Arnauld (Bremond III, 237 — Leonard, 13). On the other hand Jansenists propagated the idea of his unenlightened zeal (Mezzadri, 66, 98 n. 72; Román, 608). More correctly and soberly Mezzadri writes, "Behind the academic titles St. Vincent's theological knowledge is limited. For instance, when he tries to deal with questions then in debate, such as those involved in the dispute over Jansenism, he does not outstrip the average understanding of the time" *(vinc./SIEV,* 308). Compare Maurice Roche and J. M. Ibanez cited by Myles Rearden in *Colloque* 10 (Autumn 1984), 278-279.

4. Further in Coste 3, 173-174; Mezzadri, 99; Mary Purcell, *The Story of the Vincentians* (Dublin: All Hallows College, 1973), 14-16; and the article by Thomas Davitt to appear in *Colloque 15.*

5. In the course of his treatment of "Monsieur Vincent and Jansenism" in *Saint Vincent de Paul* (London: Burns Gates, 1952), 199-210, Jean Calvet writes: In the first phase of its development, down to 1653, it can be considered as an unduly severe form of religion, as an approach to God which, though somewhat disquieting, commands attention by the very loftiness of its conception. From 1653 until the end of the century it was a party which refused obedience to the authority on which it continued officially to depend, entering on controversy to demonstrate that it was

right in its attitude to that authority. In the eighteenth century it was a heretical sect, in full revolt and completely in error (p. 201).

6. See André Guitton, S.S.S., "Pierre-Julien Eymard," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 12/2 (1986), 1679-1693, at col. 1679.
7. Further in Franklin L. Baumer, *Modern European Thought: Continuity and Change in Ideas 1600-1950* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 80-81.
8. This is amply shown by the magisterial 1231 page treatment by Jean Delumeau, *La Peur en Occident (XIV^e^-XVIII^e^ siècles): Une cité assiégée* and *Le péché et la peur: La culpabilisation en Occident (XIII^e^-XVIII^e^ siècles)* (Paris: Arthème Fayard, 1978 and 1983). During Vincent's lifetime and afterwards missioners played on the fears of their audience: sin, strict divine justice, shame hindering confession, horror of bad confessions, relapse into bad habits, death, judgement, purgatory, and hell. See *Le péché et la peur,* 538 — sixty percent of the C.M. mission sermons drive home guilt; and Luigi Mezzadri, *Vincent de Paul (1581-1660)* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1985), 134-135.
9. The first theologian, as distinct from spiritual writers such as Francis de Sales, to teach as a probable opinion that the considerable majority would be saved was G. M. Gravina, S.J., of Palermo. He published in 1762, and was put on the Index in 1772. See *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 4 (1911), at cols. 2353-2357.
10. J. Delumeau, *Le péché et la peur,* 351; also Joseph H. Crehan, S.J., "Jansenism" in *A Catholic Dictionary of Theology* 3 (London: Nelson, 1971), 146-153, at pp. 147-148,
11. A. Barnes, "Duvergier de Hauranne," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 4 (1967), 1126-1127.
12. David Maland, *Culture and Society in Seventeenth-Century France* (London: B. T. Batsford, 1970), 181; F. Ellen Weaver, "Port-Royal," *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 12/2 (1986), cols. 1936-1937.
13. The question of how free is the human will may seem rarefied for a man like Vincent; but Luther, Calvin and Trent had discoursed on it. The new humanism required that the natural man be appreciated, however Jansenists might protest. (Indeed, four out of five of their condemned propositions in 1653 deal with free will). In his deposition in 1628 at the process of beatification of Francis de Sales, Vincent called his *Treatise on the Love of God* (1616) "an immortal and wholly noble work … truly admirable" (XIII, 71). In it Francis several times treats of free will, e.g. Bk 2, ch. 12: "If someone said our free will does not co-operate, consenting to the grace God provides, he would contradict all scriptures and the ancient fathers, and experience; and would be excommunicated by the holy Council of Trent." Since Vincent was also nourished on Benet of Canfield, who stressed conformity with the will of God, it is hardly surprising that the phrase "give oneself to God" is found 563 times in the 8573 pages of the extant Vincentian documents, according to André Dodin, *En prière avec Monsieur Vincent* (Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1982), 242 n. 47. Vincent's good relations with the Jesuits, the butt of Jansenist taunts about laxity and calculating self-will, was one of the many factors inclining him against the

new party (Mezzadri, 29-30).

14. Further in Myles Rearden, "Nigerian Seminaries: A Vincentian Perspective," *Colloque* 10 (Autumn 1984), 271-285, at pp. 275-280.
15. Luigi Mezzadri does not let Vincent off so lightly. His home diocese of Dax received a reforming bishop in 1598. Vincent seems to have anticipated the clampdown on early ordination by getting dimissorial letters from the Vicar General of Dax on September 13, 1599. He used them a full year later to enter the presbyteral order at the hand of an eighty-four year old bishop of another diocese, who belonged to the older less scrupulous school. "Vincent was tricky *(malin),* both by temperament and as a Gascon. His instinctive desire was to sell himself … Our ordinary heritage does not include trust in providence and discernment of the will of God. These are hard-won gains" *(Vincent de Paul,* 16).
16. Further in Brian M. Nolan, "The Poor Country People of Seventeenth Century France," *Colloque* 5 (Spring 1982), 5-13.
17. See Myles Rearden on Vincent's championing of Trent and papal supremacy in "Saint Vincent and Church Renewal," *Colloque 2* (Spring 1980), 5-12, at pp. 6-10.
18. Gerard van Winsen, C.M., "St. Vincent and Foreign Missions," *Vincentian Heritage* (Jamaica, New York) 3 (1982), 3-42, at pp. 7-10. The article appeared originally in French in *Vincentiana* 22 (1978), 150-182. Note also the same author in *Vincentiana* 28 (1984), 519-520.
19. The passage continues with a theological distinction relevant to our own day: "We owe obedience to our Lords the Bishops. According to some the authority of the Pope is dispensed to them; according to others they have the authority of Jesus Christ himself. We will not pursue the matter." It is interesting that Vincent leaves open the second opinion, that bishops are not just delegates of the Roman Pontiff. Such was the Jansenist position (note Bremond IV, 112-114). That was also the opinion of Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, paragraph 27.
20. See John P. Prager, C.M., "St. Vincent and the Laity," *Vincentiana* 29 (1985), 303-316, at pp. 307-309.
21. The seventeenth century patriarchal ethos in France and in the Common Rules has attracted recent interest: Jean-Francois Gaziello, C.M., "La communauté selon Saint Vincent," *Vinc./SIEV,* 616-653, at pp. 644-646; Aidan McGing, "St. Vincent, Vatican II and our new Constitutions," *Colloque* 12 (Autumn 1985), 431-446, at p. 440; Jim McCormack, "The Jose Maria Roman Seminar, London, 4-8 November 1985," *Colloque* 13 (Spring 1986), 19-24, at p. 23. Further in L. Mezzadri, *Vincentde Paul,* 81, 84, 98, 109, 180. Jean Morin warns of the stress of Pierre Coste on the disciplinary and moral instruction of Vincent, at the expense of his dogmatic teaching, in the elaboration of the general Index that is Volume XIV: "'De la dévotion à 1'analyse historique'," *Vinc.lSIEV,* 393^06, at p. 399.
22. D. Maland, *Culture and Society in Seventeenth-Century France,* 180.
23. The interrogation of Vincent about his relations with the imprisoned Saint-Cyran is treated at length in such works as Bremond IV, 70-83; Coste

3,129-139; Roman, 609-611 and 614-617. Vincent's deposition (XIII, 86-93) in 1639 is "a minor masterpiece of charitable exegesis" of Saint-Cyran's behaviour (Bremond, 75). In contrast to his attitude after 1647, Vincent in 1639 explained in an orthodox fashion Saint-Cyran's advanced views with enormous mental flexibility. He had the most regrettable lapses of memory at key junctures. Bluntly, Vincent was evasive. At this earlier stage he very probably considered Saint-Cyran imprudent and in personal danger rather than dangerous. This was a civil case, before any sign of disapproval from Rome. His followers were few. The "oracle of Notre-Dame cloister" deserved the benefit of every possible doubt, since he had been a helpful friend, who could still be brought to see the error of his ways. Vincent gave no ground for condemning him, although he did distance himself from him. Neither did he ingratiate himself with Saint-Cyran's gaoler, Cardinal Richelieu.

24. Other interventions with a political flavour may be recalled. According to Abelly (Bk 1, ch. 35), somewhere between 1639 and 1641 Vincent begged Richelieu on bended knees to restore peace to France, and mount an expedition against Cromwell in Ireland — which the Pope would support financially. During the Fronde, in January 1649, he urged Mazarin to resign, and help end the rebellion (III, 402-403). He wrote to Innocent X pleading for assistance to terminate the war ravaging France (IV, 455-457; 1652). He hoped to contribute to stamping out the aristocratic custom of duelling to the death by obtaining a papal brief (V, 618-620 — 1656). And there was the continuing saga of his companions holding the office of consul in Barbary. This political work by cle rics was never approved by Propaganda according to T. Filesi in G. van Winsen, *Vincentian Heritage* 3 (1982), 29 n. 82. Mezzadri *(Vincent de Paul,* 147) may be rather kind in speaking of a tacit agreement between Vincent and Rome in this matter.

25. The story of the Daughters at Chars unfolds through letters and the minutes of two community councils at Paris: III, 298-299 (1648); XIII, 678-679 (1651); IV, 536-537 (1653); and XIII, 733-737 (1657).

    Trent stresses the need of devout preparation for communion. But it also states it is desirable that those who assist at Mass should communicate (Session XXII, ch. 6). Logically, those who go to Mass every day may receive communion daily. But since the practice (consonant with the prevailing feeling of guilt and "culpabilisation") was to confess before communion, daily confession became the custom of some, including St. Vincent. In keeping with the contemporary sense of sin and human wretchedness, neither St. Francis de Sales nor Vincent de Paul counselled daily communion for the laity (cf. Mezzadri, 71-74). Actually there was little difference between the frequency of communion at Port-Royal and Saint-Lazare, according to Mezzadri and R. Stafford Poole, C.M., "Major Developments in the History of the Congregation of the Mission," *Vinc./ SIEV,* 717-742, at p. 730. To complicate matters, the C.M. Common Rules (which were not precisely the text used by Vincent) enjoins on the priests daily Mass, but confession twice or at least once a week (Ch. X, paragraph 6).

26. These letters date from 1656-1657. Further in Coste 3, 176-177. Some indirect tactics to win over a priest, "Damasus," from Jansenist leanings appear in XIII, 170-172.
27. "It is hard to think of an unsympathetic element in Monsieur Vincent, unless it be his uncompromising dislike of Jansenism, for he was one of those who worked hard for its condemnation," writes A. G. Dickens, *The Counter Reformation* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), 176. Vincent distinguished Jansenism as a system he energetically opposed from Jansenists, whom he treated gently. We have seen his loyalty and courtesy to Saint-Cyran and Nicholas Pavilion. From at least 1648 he forbade missioners to speak for *or against* Jansenism (HI, 328 — Leonard, 243; IV, 355-356). After the condemnation of 1653 he viewed those persisting in the new opinions as rebelling against the Church. However, he visited both the solitaries at Port-Royal to encourage submission, and his own orthodox allies to urge restraint in victory (Coste 3, 163-164). This is not the behaviour of an "unsympathetic" person.
28. Vincent speaks in various contexts of the need for uniformity and closing ranks, e.g., I, 112-113; IV, 176,179-180; VII, 424-425; XI, 156; XII, 245-246; and Jean-François Gaziello, C.M., "La communauté selon Saint Vincent," *Vinc./SIEV,* 616-653, at p. 646. On his fear(s) see James Dyar, "'To Listen like a Disciple' (Is. 50:4)", *Colloque* 9 (Spring 1984), 172-182, at pp. 174-175; L. Mezzadri, *Vincent de Paul,* 157, who recalls that Vincent dubbed the missioners, "men of the Gospel of the last times," so strong was his sense of the Church in crisis.
29. Mezzadri, 45,51-52; *Vincent de Paul,* 158,171; Miguel Pérez Flores, CM., "Del equipo misionero a la Congregacíon de la Misión," *Vinc./SIEV,* 679-716, at pp. 690-694, 705-706 (citing VII, 221).
30. Thirteen references are given by André Dodin, *En prière avec Monsieur Vincent,* 238 n. 62; also J. Delumeau, *Le péché et lapeur,* 319.
31. See Jaime Corera, C.M., "El pobre, según San Vicente," *Vinc./SIEV,* 578-586, at pp. 583-585; Robert P. Maloney, CM, "Five Characteristic Virtues: Yesterday and Today," *Vincentiana* 29 (1985), 226-254, at pp. 237-238 and 245-246.
32. The unabridged text is given in English by Thomas Davitt, "Saint Vincent as Spiritual Adviser," *Colloque 9* (Spring 1984), 206-215, at pp. 212-215; also Mezzadri, 51, on Saint-Cyran's criticisms.
33. The "dionysian" signifies the cultic mediator-priest so beloved by the French school of spirituality (e.g., Saint-Cyran, Bérulle, Olier, Jean Eudes). The reference is to the hierarchy of spiritual beings, whose upper levels illumine the lower, of Pseudo-Dionysius "the Areopagite." The communitarian, pastoral "Augustinian" model is elaborated by Franco Molinari, as cited by Myles Rearden in *Colloque* 10 (Autumn 1984), at pp. 274-275. Note also James Cahalan, "Saint Vincent and the Priesthood," *Colloque 1* (Spring 1983), 51-58, at pp. 51-54; Eamon Flanagan, "The Ministry of Priesthood for St. Vincent and his Congregation," *Colloque* 11 (Spring 1985), 333-345, at p. 334 (reference to A. Orcajo and M. Perez Flores); L. Mezzadri, *Vinc./SIEV,* 377-378.

The Five Characteristic Virtues

Thomas Davitt

(Paper read to Vincentian Study Group 13 February 1985)

Introduction

In the Constitutions which were approved in 1984 §5, §6, §7 and §8 each makes mention of the spirit of the Congregation:

> The spirit of the Congregation is a sharing in the spirit of Christ himself as understood by St Vincent… The spirit of the Congregation therefore comprises those intimately personal attitudes of Christ himself which the Founder recommended to the confrères right from the start... The Congregation, furthermore, tries to express its spirit in five virtues drawn from its own special way of looking at Christ… Each confrère will aim at a continually developing understanding of this spirit by re-examining the gospel, St Vincent's teaching and his example, remembering that our spirit and our ministry should each strengthen the other.

The argument of these paragraphs may be set out in three steps:

1 The spirit of the Congregation is a sharing in Christ's spirit as understood by Vincent;

2 The living-out of this spirit is summarised in five virtues;

3 Therefore the individual confrère should deepen his understanding of these virtues as they are exemplified in the gospel and in the life and teaching of Vincent.

The Constitutions, in the section quoted above, mention "those intimately personal attitudes of Christ". In a conference to the St Lazare community on 16 December 1658 Vincent said:

> When we say that the Holy Spirit is at work in someone this means that this Spirit dwelling in such a person gives him the same inclinations and dispositions which Jesus Christ had on earth, and they cause him to act in the same way; I don't say with

> equal perfection, but according to the measure of the gifts of the divine Spirit (XI 108).

To deepen our understanding of the virtues the Constitutions refer us to the gospel and the life and teaching of Vincent. Vincent's teaching is found in the Common Rules, in his letters and in his conferences. In his conferences on the virtues there is a sort of rough pattern. He defines the virtue, or at least makes a statement about its fundamental meaning. Then he spends most of the conference developing just one aspect of the virtue, and very often this is not the most important aspect of it. The reason for this, of course, is that he was not giving a systematically developed theoretical lecture on the virtue, but a spiritual conference to a specific group of men in a specific place at a specific time, and it can be presumed that what he stressed was what he thought needed to be stressed in that particular set of circumstances.

Simplicity

The five virtues are listed in §14 of chapter II of the Common Rules, with simplicity heading the list. Simplicity is mentioned earlier by itself, in §4, and much misunderstanding about it stems from the way in which it is mentioned there. The paragraph introduces simplicity by saying that it consists "not only in plainly speaking the words of our mind …". Even though it is modified by the words "not only" that phrase about "plainly speaking" is what is taken by many people to be the important element in the virtue. Vincent himself must accept much of the blame for this; the wording of the paragraph is his, and almost all the references to the virtue which have survived in his letters and conferences deal only with this aspect of it.

On the other hand he explicitly pointed out more than once that this is *not* the only element in the virtue, and some of what he said clearly shows that he did not regard it as the most important element. After the "not only" phrase in §4 comes the balancing one "but also in referring our actions to God alone". That is the essence of the virtue in summarised form; but what was it that he was summarising?

He dealt with §4 and §5 of chapter II in a conference on 14 March 1659. He said that there is a type of simplicity which bears some resemblance to God:

> God is a simple being, not incorporating any other being, a sovereign and infinite essence not admitting of anything being amalgamated with him; he is pure being, never undergoing any change. Now this virtue of the Creator is found in some creatures

> by communication and is rooted in them in the way envisaged by the rule … I realise, of course, that simplicity is usually taken to mean truth, or purity of intention; truth, in so far as it makes our speech or other mode of expression actually reflect our thought; purity of intention, in so far as it makes all our acts of virtue tend directly towards God (XII 172).

He then goes on to say that he will treat of only one element in the virtue, namely the avoidance of deceit, cunning or duplicity in word and action. He says that this is what is envisaged in §4; it would have been more accurate if he had said "In the first part of §4, the 'not only' part".

The five virtues are listed in §14 of chapter II and the conferences in St Lazare reached that paragraph on 22 August 1659 (XH 298 ff). This paragraph says that we should live up to the teaching of all the gospel maxims, but especially those which "recommend in a special way" these five virtues which are "more suitable" for our Congregation. He said that our motive for doing this "should stem from the nature of holiness and the practicality of the virtues". This led him on to an examination of the nature of holiness. Holiness, he said, is

> the withdrawal and distancing of ourselves from earthly matters and at the same time being intent on God and uniting ourselves with the divine will. That, in my opinion, is what holiness means.

After a rather rambling elaboration of this he says that the gospel maxims are the best means for growth in holiness

> and from them, because there are so many, I have specially picked out those which are more suitable for missioners; and which ones are they? I have always believed and thought that they are simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal for souls.

The steps of his argument here are:

1 Holiness is being intent on God and aligning ourselves with his will;

2 Maxims drawn from the gospel are practical guidelines for this;

3 From the large number of such maxims five are the most practical for us.

Putting together what he said in these two conferences we see that his understanding of simplicity is based on the immutability of God

which, "by communication", can be shared by us. This sharing takes place when we are "intent on God" and aligned on his will. In the old office for the 19th of July the sixth lesson of Matins said that Vincent was "Deo iugiter intentus, cunctis affabilis ac sibi semper constans".

An important factor in our living out the implications of all this will be the quality of our intention in anything we do, and Vincent's ideas on this throw light on his understanding of simplicity. As he said, God is a simple being, devoid of complexity. This can be shared by us if we try to direct our actions wholly towards following God's will, with no element of self; there must be "total elimination of self (XI 46). He said that making the intention of directing our actions towards God is like the form of words added to the actions in administering baptism; without them the actions would be ineffective (XI 315).

After a Repetition of Prayer on 17 October 1655 Vincent said:

> Perfection is not a matter of ecstasies; it is accomplishing the will of God. What exactly, then, is perfection? It seems to me that it means something from which nothing is missing (XI 316).

Later on, on the same occasion, he asked and answered the question: Who is the most perfect?

> It is someone whose will is most in conformity with that of God, so that perfection really means uniting our wills with God's so that, strictly speaking, his and ours are only a single act of willing and non-willing (XI 318).
>
> The practice of the presence of God is very good, but I hold that getting into the habit of doing God's will in everything is even better, because it includes the former (XI 319).

Just over two years later, on 11 November 1657, this came up again after a Repetition of Prayer. A student had said that it was not enough just to do what God wants but that it should be done from the motive of the love of God. When the student had got that far Vincent interrupted, as he so frequently did:

> You've just said something to be pondered and reflected on … It's not at all enough to do what God asks of us; on top of that we must do it well, for the love of God; both do his will, and do it according to his will. In other words, in the way our Lord did his Father's will when on earth (XI 435-6).

In a conference to the St Lazare community on 21 February 1659 he said:

> We must sanctify these works by seeking God in them, and carry them out in order to find him in them, and not just to get them done (XII 132).

As examples of what he meant he instanced celebrating mass, being present at mass (for the brothers, students and seminarists), keeping the rule, anything we do or have to put up with (XI 436). On another occasion he mentioned, as an example of the latter, having to put up with himself giving a conference (XII 162).

That was in the conference of 11 November 1657, a conference in which he covered some by now familiar ground:

> Is there anyone who could have greater purity of intention than wanting to do, and doing, everything God wills and in the way that he wills it? If we compare all these practices we'll find that God is more glorified in the practice of doing his will than in any other (XII 152).

He then mentioned praying the divine office, mental prayer, preaching and working, and said that all these are useless without this approach: they are "counterfeit coinage on which God does not see his portrait".

In the conference of 22 August 1659, already mentioned, Vincent draws all these strands together:

> Simplicity, which consists in doing all things for the love of God and in having no other end in view in all our actions except his glory, that's really what simplicity is ...
>
> Simplicity, then, is to do everything for the love of God, rejecting all contamination because simplicity implies the absence of any complexity. It's because there is no complexity in God that we say he is pure and simple act. So, we have to stop being mixed up and set our sights on God alone (XII 302).

But, he said, simplicity alone is not enough; humility must be there as well.

Humility

When reading what Vincent says about humility it is important to keep separate what he said about the virtue itself and what he said about its practical implications; some of the latter would not, probably, be acceptable to contemporary thinking on spirituality. For example, in the context of humility he often deals with humiliations; he says that deliberately-sought humiliations are helps to humility. Thomas Merton

suggests that they might more likely be a manifestation of pride. Abelly said that Vincent's habit of speaking disparagingly about himself struck his contemporaries as a bit odd: "II paraissait un peu singulier" (Livre I, ch. XIX). In view of Abelly's hagiographical approach to his subject that statement is significant. On the other hand, unsought humiliations which come our way will probably be coped with more healthily if we have real humility.

Vincent's understanding of the virtue itself is the orthodox one of having a correct appreciation of what we have gratuitously received from God and the danger of arrogating to ourselves alone what he has accomplished in or through us.

In an early letter to an un-named confrère, dated 15 January 1633, he wrote about the success of a recent mission:

> … we recognise that this abundant grace comes from God, something he keeps on giving only to the humble who realise that all good achieved through them comes from God … You may take it as absolutely certain that God will take his grace away from you the moment you give in to any feeling of foolish self-congratulation, taking credit yourself for what belongs to God alone (1182).

Twenty-six years later when he came to deal with humility in the conference of 22 August 1659 he went straight to the core of the virtue:

> Humility consists of the annihilation of self in the sight of God, destroying self so that God may be received into our hearts … Humility causes a person to eliminate self so that only God is seen and glory given to him …

Then he voiced an impromptu prayer:

> You alone, my God, ought to reign, and if there were in me the desire to have something which is not in you, my God, I'll willingly get rid of it, surrender it to you and destroy self in my very centre (XII 304).

And further on in the conference he said that by humility

> we are a total offering to God, to whom we owe all honour and in whose presence we must annihilate self and allow God to take possession of us (XII 306).

All this is in line with his teaching that God is a simple being not admitting of any admixture, and that this quality can be shared by us

by communication. In speaking of simplicity in an un-dated conference he referred to "the total stripping of self' (XI46) and in the advice he gave to the 27 year old Antoine Durand when he made him superior of the seminary in Agde he said "You must empty yourself of yourself in order to put on Jesus Christ" (XI 343). He admitted, in a conference in September 1655, that this was a constant theme of his:

> Believe me, it is an infallible maxim of Jesus Christ, which I have often passed on to you in his name, that as soon as a heart is emptied of self God fills it (XI 312).

In an impromptu prayer during a conference in April 1659 he said:

> The core of humility is that it prevents us from claiming any worth other than from you, who give things their value (XII 211).

Meekness comes third in Vincent's own listing but it seems more logical to deal with it after zeal.

Mortification

In the conference on the five virtues on 22 August 1659 Vincent, having dealt with the first three, said:

> … the way to possess these virtues is mortification, which cuts back everything which could hinder our acquiring them (XII 306).

For him, therefore, mortification is not a virtue practised for its own sake; it is not an end in itself; it is not even just a matter of self-mastery or self-control. It is something worked at precisely in order to deepen and strengthen the virtues of simplicity and humility. It is mentioned in §8 of chapter II, and at a conference on 2 May 1659 Vincent read out that paragraph and the following one, and then continued:

> There's the matter for this evening's conference, and it speaks for itself. The rule is so obvious and so easily grasped that it would be trying your patience to speak about something so clear; and to want to add anything to it would be to obscure its meaning (XII 212).

He then went on to do precisely those two things to the extent of fifteen printed pages. He had been reading St Basil on the subject and drew heavily on him. As usual, buried in the mass of practical details about the practice of the virtue there is a short section where he looks at the central core of it. He takes Col 3:9-10 as a key text:

> You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self (XII 224).

He links this with a prayer which, he says, was used at that time by a priest when vesting for mass:

> Exue me, Domine, veterum hominem et indue me novem, etc.

He was an inveterate "etc" man.

This idea of a new self he had already used in connection with simplicity, a self intent on God with the old self stripped away; the link with humility is also clear. Mortification is the deliberate working at this stripping so that we become more and more intent on God and see more and more clearly how he must increase and we must decrease. He quotes 1 Cor 5:5-7 about getting rid of the old yeast and giving life to our actions by watchfulness and the intention motivating them. We put on Christ by baptism (Gal 3:27), and by mortification and other virtues we consolidate his presence in us until we can say with Paul "I live now, not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). A vinedresser always keeps his pruning-knife handy so that when he notices a shoot that needs to be cut off he can do so immediately; this strengthens the fruit-bearing branches (XII 225).

Once again his emphasis is clear. Mortification is not masochism, nor even self-discipline for its own sake. It is a deliberately chosen, spiritually motivated, endeavour to eliminate from ourselves as far as possible anything which is an obstacle to the furtherance of our being intent on God.

On another occasion he answers a possible objection:

> Anyone who claims that exterior mortifications are of no importance, saying that the interior sort are better, clearly shows that he's unmortified both interiorly and exteriorly (XI 71).

Zeal

Simplicity, humility and mortification are largely concerned with our relationship with God. But that relationship, of its nature, turns us towards other people and their relationship with God, or, in the traditional phrase, zeal for souls. In a letter to Lambert aux Couteaux, superior in Richelieu, dated 26 August 1640, Vincent said that a visitation was in progress in St Lazare at the time of writing. He said that a visitation is of such importance, and Lambert is to pass this on to his community, that preaching and missions are to be temporarily suspended:

> We must work at bringing it about that God reigns totally in ourselves and, *after that,* in others" (II 97; italics added).

Vincent gave a conference on zeal on 21 June 1652 but we don't have a record of what he said (XII 459). Zeal is mentioned explicitly only once in the Common Rules, in the list of the virtues in chapter II. That paragraph was dealt with in the conference of 22 August 1659, and he said that zeal is

> an unalloyed desire to make oneself acceptable to God and useful to others (XII 307).

After a Repetition of Prayer two years earlier he had said:

> Yes, Fathers, we must be totally intent on God and on meeting the needs of the people; we must give ourselves to God for that, burn ourselves out for that, give up our lives for that, strip ourselves, so to speak, for that; or at least want to feel that way if we do not already do so (XI 402).

In December 1658 he gave a conference on the first paragraph of the Common Rules, a long conference which in its printed form runs to twenty-one pages. Just before the final prayer he gave this summary:

> We should work at becoming spiritual, at developing a great holy zeal for the service of God; we should tackle the opportunities for good which come our way, in the manner we have been talking about. I don't mean we should take things to extremes and take on everything indiscriminately; just whatever God brings to our attention and expects from us. We belong to him and not to ourselves; if he piles on the work he will also step up our capacity (XII 93).

Back in 1630 he had warned Louise about taking on too much:

> The devil has a trick for deceiving good people; he gets them to take on more than they can handle so that in fact they do not achieve anything (196).

In the 1657 Repetition of Prayer he had used the expression "meeting the needs of the people"; that is rather vague. In a conference on §12 of chapter II of the Common Rules, on 30 May 1659, he was more explicit:

> If we ourselves have any love we should show it by getting people to love God and to love others; to love others for God and to love

> God for the sake of others. We have been selected by God to be the instruments of his overwhelming fatherly love which wants to root itself in souls and to grow (XII 260).

And a couple of months later, in the August conference on the five virtues, he indicated one practical way of doing this:

> … showing them the correct attitude to have towards the word of God by having this attitude towards it ourselves. Believe me, people will be respectful towards the Church and will reverence the word of God if they see that we value it ourselves (XII 320-1).

If we are to bring people to this frame of mind we have to take into account their concrete situation. In 1652 Vincent wrote to Jean le Vacher in Algiers about his dealings with captured priests who were held in slavery:

> I ask you to take human weakness into account as much as you can; you are more likely to change the attitude of priest-slaves by being sympathetic towards them than by writing them off or by pointing out their faults. To have their faults pointed out is not what they need; what they need is determination, and that comes gradually, as things said to them and good example begin to have their effect (IV 121).

He then goes on to make a very interesting point. Le Vacher is not to bother with either the Turks themselves or with apostate Christians; his ministry is to the Christian slaves and he is to confine himself to that.

Meekness

It is as a concomitant of zeal that the omitted virtue, meekness, can best be treated. In the Latin version of the Common Rules the word used is *mansuetudo,* in the French version *douceur.* The Murray-Chambers Latin dictionary defines the former as "tameness", with the transferred meanings of "mildness" and "gentleness". Harrap's French dictionary defines *douceur,* when it refers to a person, as "gentleness". The accepted English word in this context has been "meekness". All four words, tameness, mildness, gentleness and meekness, seem to carry overtones of negativity and insipidity. The virtue which Vincent had in mind is positive and far from insipid. It is the self-control necessary to avoid reacting with anger or annoyance in our dealings with other people, as he explicitly said in a conference on 28 March 1659:

> The first element in this virtue is the restraining of feelings of

> anger (XII 186),

and he cites himself as an example of someone who does not do this:

> I get carried away, I have different moods, I complain, I criticise. Just this evening I gave out to the brother on the door when he told me that someone wanted to see me. "My God, Brother" I said, "what are up up to? I told you I wasn't in to anybody" (XII187).

But he adds that

> … since sometimes it is necessary to show anger, to shout, to correct, to punish, it is important that people who possess this virtue do these things not through being carried away by a natural reaction but because they consider that it is necessary: after all, our Lord called St Peter "Satan", and said to the Jews "Be off, hypocrites" not just once but many times; we see this word repeated ten or twelve times in a single chapter. On other occasions he threw the sellers out of the temple, up-unded the tables and in other ways acted like a man in a rage (XII 187).

He had used these New Testament examples earlier in a letter to a brother in Richelieu in 1642 (IV 397). He explained that Jesus acted with complete self-control; he was not carried away by natural impulse. Jesus knew how to blend the tart with the sweet, as Vincent told Louise in 1637, saying that sometimes this virtue of meekness "needs a dash of vinegar" (1392).

The Superior General wrote in his Advent letter of 1984 that the gentleness of Christ

> is a controlled strength, and it is that controlled strength which can tame our natural aggressivity, hold back the bitter and sarcastic word and temper the rawness of criticism. It is not a virtue to be uncritical. Let, however, growth in the power of criticism be matched by a growth in gentleness.

In the conference on 28 March 1659 Vincent said that this virtue also means

> having great affability and cordiality; and when we meet people we show serenity so that we are a help to them (XII 189).

In 1650 he told a confrère in a letter that it was this which had made the early missions so successful (IV 53).

During 1652 Etienne Blatiron, the superior in Genoa, kept asking

Vincent for John McEnnery, from Limerick, for a mission to be given in Corsica. McEnnery had been stationed in Genoa for many years but at that time was teaching theology in St Lazare. Vincent told Blatiron that McEnnery had not sufficient of this virtue to cope with the crudity of the Corsicans (IV 449).

According to Abelly Vincent often used to say that he had used harsh words only three times in his life, believing on each occasion that he had adequate reasons for doing so. On none of these occasions did he in fact achieve what he had been hoping for (XI 66-67). There could easily be far more of Abelly than Vincent in this.

This virtue also means that if we are on the receiving end of someone's anger

> we let it pass, don't make a thing of it; we excuse it by saying that he didn't really mean it, that he did it on the spur of the moment, that he was carried away by a sudden impulse (XII 191).

Vincent gave some very practical pointers about how to handle all this. We should try to foresee possibly dangerous situations and mentally practise in advance how we would deal with them. If we find ourselves beginning to be affected by rising anger we should break off all action and speech immediately. If actually affected by anger we should try to conceal it and not let it appear on our face. And then Vincent, no doubt recalling all he had ever said about his favourite virtue, felt it necessary to add that such concealment was not against simplicity (XI 66-67).

Vincentian Ministry to the Deaf in Scotland

Diarmuid O'Farrell

The early years, 1859-1962

When Fr Matthew Kavanagh arrived in Lanark on 8 September 1859 to open, and become the first superior of St Mary's he was accompanied by Fr Thomas McNamara from Phibsboro who had been instrumental in founding the two schools for the deaf in Cabra, Dublin. The girls' school under the Dominican nuns opened in 1846 and the boys' school under the Christian Brothers opened in 1857. It is interesting to speculate on whether Fr McNamara discussed the religious education of the deaf on his journey to Lanark. The Daughters of Charity opened an orphanage in Smyllum, Lanark, in 1864 and, in 1871, at the request of the Parochial Educational Board, they admitted some deaf children to Smyllum orphanage. The superior, Sister Teresa Farrell, a niece of Fr McNamara, decided to get special teachers for their deaf children. She sent to Cabra for help and we can detect the influence of the Vincentian priests in this action. The Dominican nuns in Cabra sent two teachers who were deaf to Smyllum. These teachers introduced Cabra signs to Smyllum. As word spread around that there was a Catholic school for deaf children in Lanark more deaf children were sent to Smyllum. By 1889 there were 36 deaf children in Smyllum.

Lanark was not the most suitable geographical site for a school for the deaf because it was a long distance from the centres of Catholic population. Sister Teresa Farrell had been given £4,000 in a will by Mr Thomas Tiernan of Glasgow to be used for a school for the deaf (and blind), and in 1909 the Daughters of Charity acquired a site in Tollcross on the outskirts of Glasgow. A school for the deaf and blind was built there and opened in 1911. The deaf children in the Lanark school were then transferred to the new St Vincent's School in Tollcross. The connection between the Vincentian priests and the school for the deaf was weakened by the change of the school to Glasgow. But the need for a trained chaplain for the deaf became more obvious and urgent when in the 1930s Sister Joseph Duff devoted herself full-time to the

After Care of the former pupils of St Vincent's School for the Deaf. Sister Duff was a former Head Teacher of the school for the deaf and a niece of the former Vincentian Provincial Fr Peter Duff. In 1937 she set up a committee to provide for the support of deaf adults. She was unable to arrange for a specially trained chaplain to be appointed to work with deaf people.

First Vincentian chaplain appointed

It was left to Sister Duffs successor, Sister Brendan Cussen, to persuade Archbishop Campbell of Glasgow to ask the Provincial of the Vincentians Fr James O'Doherty to appoint a trained chaplain to the deaf for Glasgow. In 1949 Fr Dermot Sweeney was appointed to Lanark as the first chaplain to the deaf in Glasgow. At that time there was no place in Glasgow where Fr Sweeney could stay and there was no place for the deaf to meet. The well-known meeting place for the Catholic deaf at the time was under the railway bridge of Central Station in Argyle Street. In a short time Fr Sweeney's charm and Sister Brendan's determination and business ability brought it about that there was a room for the chaplain in the Sisters' house in Wilton Street, Glasgow, and the deaf had a club premises nearby in 13 Lansdowne Crescent. The Club was a former presbytery of St Columba's parish. Archbishop Campbell offered it to Fr Sweeney as a Club for the Deaf at a nominal rent.

Fr Sweeney came to Scotland trained in the tradition of the Vincentian chaplains to the deaf from the time of Fr Thomas McNamara. His work was marked by a high degree of skill in communication and a deep appreciation of the educational and emotional deprivation of people born deaf, or who lose their hearing before they have naturally acquired speech. In Glasgow he visited the school for the deaf and visited deaf people in their homes and in hospital. The children in Tollcross School at this time numbered over 200 and came from all over Scotland. After-Care work involved quite a lot of travelling, with marriages and funerals in many different parishes and dioceses. The Club in 13 Lansdowne Crescent became a hive of activity: there was a monthly Mass for the deaf, in sign language; there was an annual retreat which was often "preached" by the deaf Canon Hayward from Manchester, and some special devotions like a triduum for the feast of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. There were further education classes, and the football team came for regular training. The Football Club dates back to Sister Joseph Duffs time and has won many trophies in both deaf and "hearing" competitions.

In 1948 the National Assistance Act was passed in the British Parliament and this Act marked a watershed in Local Authority support for the welfare of deaf people. This Act imposed on Local Authorities an obligation to provide a welfare service for deaf people either directly through the Social Work Department or indirectly through making grants to voluntary organisations. This Act empowered Glasgow Corporation to make an annual grant to St Vincent's Centre for the Deaf. During the 1950s the annual grant gradually increased from £50 to £2,000. Glasgow Corporation, in common with other Local Authorities, recognised that the voluntary societies were meeting the social and spiritual needs of the deaf in a way the Local Authorities could not.

My twenty years with the deaf in Scotland

In 1962 Fr Dermot Sweeney was appointed Parish Priest of St Mary's, Lanark, and I was sent to take his place as Chaplain to the Deaf in Glasgow. On my arrival in Scotland I felt I needed a qualification for work with deaf people so that I could communicate effectively with them, and so that St Vincent's Centre for the Deaf would continue to receive the support of the Local Authority. I did the three year "in service" course for the Diploma of the Deaf Welfare Examination Board. During this time I was in regular contact with Fr (now Canon) Charles Hollywood, the Chaplain to the Deaf in Manchester, who did the more demanding Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW) at the same time. In the years which followed, the pastoral and Social Work provision for deaf people entered a period of expansion in Glasgow and other parts of Britain. Catholic Centres which had previously received little recognition gradually raised the level of service they offered to deaf people. The staff in St Vincent's Centre, Glasgow, increased from two to five. The Chaplain and the Daughter of Charity were joined by a secretary, a welfare assistant and a rehabilitation supervisor. In 1974 a rehabilitation unit for deaf people with special problems was started by Sister Augustine O'Mahony, who had taken Sister Brendan Cussen's place as a Social Worker when Sister Cussen died in 1968.

I played an active part in the founding of the Association for the Catholic Deaf of Great Britain and Ireland in 1969-70. This Association, which arranged an annual conference of all those working with and for the deaf, brought the needs of the Catholic deaf to the attention of the National Hierarchies. The Association organised missions for the deaf in areas where no Catholic services for deaf people existed. By means of the Catholic Centres for the Deaf, and by means of these missions,

deaf people were offered the opportunity of playing a leadership role in organising their social and spiritual activities. It must be admitted that this new-found power of leadership did not always look towards the strengthening of spiritual values. Running a licensed Club, as any Parish Priest with this experience knows, can create unwelcome tensions between the priest and the parishioners. Material considerations can outweigh spiritual ones in deciding a course of action in the community.

The expansion of the work of the chaplain in Glasgow and elsewhere resulted in a weakening of the link with the community in Lanark. This community link with the chaplain was compensated for in 1973 when Fr Eamonn Cowan opened a hostel for boys "under Care" at Glengowan, 196 Nithsdale Road, Glasgow. The Chaplain for the Deaf moved into this hostel. Fr John Concannon took charge of the hostel in 1974.

By this time the Club at 13 Lansdowne Crescent was not able to meet the needs of the deaf. Under the influence of Sister Augustine, and with the support of the Committee of Management, plans for a new Club or Social Centre were drawn up. These plans were approved by Glasgow Corporation. In 1975 the need for a second Chaplain to the Deaf was recognised by the Archbishop of Glasgow and the Vincentian Provincial. Fr Fergus Kelly was appointed to Glasgow and during his first year he stayed in a room in the school for the deaf in Tollcross. In 1976 the new Centre for the Deaf was built in Tobago Street in the East End of Glasgow at a cost of £200,000. A grant of £167,000 was received from Glasgow Corporation. The opening of this Centre could be taken as a symbol that Catholic services for the deaf in Glasgow stood favourable comparison with those of any Centre for the Deaf in Britain.

Vincentian house in Glasgow

In 1976 Fr John Concannon was withdrawn from Glasgow and he was not replaced in Glengowan Hostel. This forced the two Chaplains to the Deaf to look for a suitable dwelling in Glasgow. A flat was acquired at 2 Nithsdale Place in the Pollockshields area of Glasgow, not too far from Glengowan Hostel. This became the new Vincentian house in Glasgow. Fr Kelly returned to Armagh in 1977 and Fr Joe Cunningham came to Glasgow as assistant Chaplain to the Deaf in 1978. Fr Cunningham had by this time acquired the Teacher of the Deaf Diploma in University College, Dublin. His course included some teaching practice in St Mary's School for the Deaf in Cabra. It is interesting to see that the Cabra schools continue to have an influence on the ministry to the deaf

in Scotland. Fr Cunningham took over the school chaplaincy work and became editor of the Centre's newsletter. Later he became editor of *Outreach,* the magazine of the Association for the Catholic Deaf. He adapted the Eucharistic Prayers for use in Masses for deaf people and he produced a small Mass book for deaf people which took into account the limited language of people who are born deaf, and their special needs when they attend Mass in their local parish church.

Adapting liturgy to deaf people

In Scotland, in common with other countries, continuous efforts were made to adapt the liturgy so that deaf people could achieve that conscious active participation urged on all Catholics by the Second Vatican Council. Under the direction of Fr James Foley, of Motherwell diocese, work was done to produce a Lectionary of simplified scripture readings for use at Masses for the deaf. The overhead projector was often used at Mass to provide visual aids and words of prayers and hymns. On occasions a deaf choir signs the hymns, and a group can mime a gospel incident. The rites of Marriage, Baptism and Penance were changed to take into account the language leVel, culture and catechetical instruction of deaf people. In recent years more attention was given to the deaf person in his or her local church. From time to time Chaplains to the Deaf have used sign language and visual aids at a local Sunday Mass at which some deaf people have been present. This has always helped the worship of the hearing people as well as the deaf. An increasing number of churches are using the loop system with their public address system to help hearing-aid users hear the words of the celebrant with greater clarity.

Tensions in the ministry to the deaf

In addition to the tensions inherent in every apostolate, working with deaf people, has some inbuilt tensions, which Scotland shares with other areas. The chaplain, teachers, social workers and voluntary helpers are frequently involved in the educational debate about whether signs should be used in educating deaf children. This controversy has continued for the past two hundred years and even today can arouse very strong feelings.

The chaplains tend to keep to the fringe of this debate and co-operate with whichever method is in use in the schools they visit. Their main concern is to communicate the faith to the deaf children and to

ensure that no deaf child is neglected owing to too rigid adherence to a system inappropriate for that particular child. This educational debate of oralism versus total communication is somewhat parallelled by a pastoral debate about whether to treat deaf people as part of a "natural community" or to treat them as part of the local church into which they should be integrated. The former approach leads to thinking of the deaf as a parish or diocese similar to the Travellers. The latter approach leads to efforts at making parishes more aware of the needs of the deaf people in their midst. The tensions of this debate should be resolved by remembering that the ideal approach is not one or the other but both one and the other. We encourage deaf people to do as a group what they derive most benefit from as a group, for example occasional deaf liturgies. We encourage the local community to involve deaf people in the community life of the parish.

A tension peculiar to the Glasgow scene was the tension between the Rehabilitation Unit and the Social Centre. The unit catered for about thirty severely handicapped deaf people who lived in supervised accommodation and made use of the Social Centre in Tobago Street for office space and occupational and recreational facilities. The administration of this unit took an unduly high proportion of the Committee's and the chaplain's time. The majority of the staff of the unit and most of the deaf "trainees" were not Catholic. Gradually the influence of the chaplain and the Daughters of Charity weakened, and doubts arose about the effectiveness of the Centre's control over the ethical principles of the Rehabilitation Unit. In the 1970s there was tension between the Centre staff and the Unit staff owing to lack of office space. The deaf people coming to the Centre in the evenings and at weekends resented the fact that the deaf "trainees" from the Unit used the Centre during the daytime, even though the Unit paid the Centre for the use of its facilities. The Unit was funded by a generous per capita grant for each deaf person sent to it by a Local Authority. Under its lay director Mr James McDonald the Unit prospered and has helped many deaf people enjoy a better quality of life than they had before coming to the Unit. The tension between the Unit and the Centre has been resolved by a decision in 1984 to form the Unit into a separate society with a different name and different premises.

Team work

A feature of the ministry to the deaf in Scotland has been the team-work approach to the apostolate. Priests, Daughters of Charity,

lay people, including the deaf, have all contributed to raise the quality of life of deaf people in Scotland. There have been changes in the Daughters of Charity in recent years. Sister Elizabeth Keating, Sister Margaret Gallagher, Sister Margaret Mary Gethin, Sister Elizabeth Ann O'Sullivan and Sister Denise Gardner all played a valuable part in the work of St Vincent's Centre before the present Pastoral Worker, Sister Mary Chisolm, took up her position. The staff of the Centre, the voluntary helpers and the Friends of the Deaf all combine to form a caring community willing to help deaf people, each in his or her special way. This community is, in its turn, enriched by the friendship and gratitude of the deaf community.

The present and the future

In 1982 when I was appointed Parish Priest of Lanark Fr Cunningham became Director and Chaplain of St Vincent's Centre for the deaf. In 1984 Fr Fergus Kelly returned to Glasgow as Assistant Chaplain. In 1985 Fr Ray Armstrong replaced Fr Cunningham as Director of the Centre for the Deaf. The situation faced by the present chaplains and staff is quite different to that facing me twenty years ago. The Local Authorities have a policy now of employing trained Social Workers for the Deaf. This policy leaves the spiritual, community, and employment needs of deaf people to be catered for by the voluntary societies such as St Vincent's Centre. While in theory this could bring to deaf people the resources of both the statutory and voluntary societies, in practice the worry is that in order to pay their own staff the Local Authorities will have to make drastic cuts in their grants to societies like St Vincent's Centre for the Deaf. The result might be a reduction in the help offered to deaf people in the spiritual and community aspects of their lives. Owing to a fall in the school roll St Vincent's School for the Deaf faces an uncertain future. In 1985 the first lay Head Teacher was appointed to Tollcross. She was faced with a school of deaf and partially-hearing children, none of whom were residential. Local Authorities, for educational and economic reasons, had stopped sending deaf children from outside Glasgow to Tollcross. It is possible that many of the present children will be sent to a unit attached to a "hearing" school. This will extend the work of the chaplain and weaken the tradition and expertise of the religious education of deaf children so admirably built up over the past seventy-five years. One encouraging aspect of pastoral work for the deaf in recent years has been an increase in interest taken by diocesan priests in the pastoral care of the deaf. While this interest is to

be encouraged it may be worth repeating the observation made to the bishops of England and Wales by the Committee on Pastoral Care of the Deaf that there is a difference in quality as well as in degree between a part-time chaplain and a full-time chaplain. The way ahead is full of challenges, but the history of ministry to the deaf in Scotland shows that changes and challenges are there to be met. They have been met in the past. With God's help they will continue to be met in the future.

After Upholland — An Appraisal

Francis MacMorrow

PART 1

To begin at the end!

"I can't understand why the Vincentians are not getting vocations in Britain."

This was the final remark of our facilitator, Fr Jim Sweeney CP, at the end of our Upholland Meeting at Easter 1986. For the present writer it was the most thought-provoking comment of the week. There hadn't been any explicit discussion about "getting vocations". Nevertheless, it is reasonable to say that this matter is now so urgent that it underlay all the business of the week. This for two reasons:

(a) Because of our personnel situation in this country, it must be obvious that the end of our apostolate here cannot be too long delayed.

(b) An upturn in vocations would give us the morale boost we need. It would be a sign from Heaven that the Holy Spirit is strongly with us and vivifying with his power our apostolate in this country.

The opinion of an "outsider" is always to be welcomed. For many months before our Meeting, Fr Sweeney was in close touch with our Community. He had come to know it very well. His admiration and respect for us was patently obvious. Yet, in the end, he had to admit his puzzlement. Why no vocations? His comment was no platitude.

Preparation for the Meeting was very thorough. The two basic questions for our Meeting were determined by the Provincial, Fr. Frank Mullan.

They were:

(a) What are the basic reasons why the CMs should continue to work in Britain?

(b) How can we best implement in Britain the Province's Mission Statement?[1]

A preparatory commission was set up. Its members were Fathers Tom Lane, Diarmuid O'Farrell, Joe Cunningham, Michael Prior, Hugh McMahon, Tom Bennett and Reggie Deaton. They worked in close co-operation with Fr. Sweeney. Fr. Mullan also attended.

Referring to dialogue with the facilitator, the commission stated as follows:

> It became clear that at the Easter Meeting we should aim to agree on a joint assessment of our position in Britain; our opportunities; our being over-stretched; the problem of vocations etc. We agreed that the Province's Mission Statement should be central to the Meeting: each confrère should make it his own. We should examine together what the obstacles are to our implementing that Statement.[2]

Our Superior General, Fr McCullen, expressed his hopes for the Meeting when he wrote:

> During my visit to the Province I learned of the preparations that were being made for the Meeting, which will shortly take place, of all the confrères working in England and Scotland. The Meeting will be an historical one, in that not since the Province made its first foundation here in 1853 will all the confrères have deliberated together on the work that the Lord is calling them to do in Great Britain. Let this Easter Meeting be characterised by openness; openness above all to the Spirit of God; openness to the needs of the Church in Great Britain; openness to what each confrère participant will say. Let no conclusions be foregone. If the Province is to maintain its present vitality, and even to increase it, then it must clearly be recognised as one which is made up, not only of men who pray, but of men who pray regularly in Community. Such was the ideal that St Vincent proposed to us, an ideal which none of us would dare to contradict by word, but at times we do so by practice. Let each one periodically exorcise those rationalisations which gain entry into our lives, by which we dispense ourselves from the time which we give to prayer or from making our contribution to Community Prayer.[3]

In order to involve all confrères in the work of the Meeting each community was invited to discuss the proposed two questions and make submissions to the Preparatory Commission. When this was complete, we received from the commission a summary of the replies. Early in the New Year Fr Sweeney wrote to each confrère in Britain. He invited everyone to submit in Card Index form, replies to the questions he

proposed. In all, twenty-eight confrères (out of forty-two) replied to him. These questions covered all aspects of our Vincentian life. Reading the answers and reflecting on their content was to be the first business of the Meeting. Here we had before us the deeply-held convictions of the confrères about our apostolate in Britain. No such opportunity had ever arisen in the past.

DOCUMENT I

Assessment of the present situation of the Vincentians in Britain

SECTION I: Your personal call as a Vincentian

The Section covered:
(a) life as a Vincentian; (b) interpersonal relationships;
(c) apostolic assignments; (d) relationships with authority.

On all these issues almost unanimous satisfaction was expressed. Quite clearly the Province has no great problems in this area.

SECTION II: Ministries of the Vincentians in Britain

This Section asked two questions:
(a) How well do our ministries meet the needs which our Vincentian charism points us to?
(b) What criteria should guide us in any re-ordering of our ministries?

In reply to (a), a little more than half felt quite satisfied that our works are in accord with our charism. However, a sizeable minority had reservations. They feel that while our work is valuable for the Church it fails to meet the definition of our charism.

The replies to (b) concerning criteria for re-ordering of ministries are very varied. Suggestions include, "the poor", "needs of the Church", "our resources", "strong community", "missions and retreats", "prayer", "catechetics", etc.

SECTION III: Life in Community and Vincentian Identity

Two questions were asked:
(a) How helpful do you find your life in Community in fulfilling your vocation as a Vincentian?
(b) How clear is our identity as Vincentians in our way of living and working in Britain?

In reply to (a), the vast majority would see life in Community as a "sine qua non" of their vocation. However, some would see it as a

diminishing factor in their lives.

It's when we come to (b) above that the first big negative response appears. Only very few believe we have a satisfactory identity. The vast majority believe that here we have a problem. It is suggested that Strawberry Hill and Damascus House offer the best examples of widespread identity as being under Vincentian direction. Similarly a small number in our older parishes would identify with Vincentians. However, these are seen as exceptions to our overall lack of image. The following are some of the reasons suggested for this situation:

"not well known"; "no visible apostolic distinctiveness"; "too self-effacing"; "small numbers"; "based in Ireland"; "too like diocesan clergy"; "no distinctive religious habit"; "being neither religious nor diocesan"; "no visible option for the poor".

SECTION IV: What are your hopes and expectations for Vincentian Vocations from Britain?

In the light of answers to the preceding Section it will come as no surprise that the answers to this question are pessimistic. Some see little or no hope in our present situation. One terse reply reads as follows:

> "nil, until we sort out our identity and agree on some definite thrust for our apostolate."

Others emphasise Christian hope such as:

> "Christian hope can only really begin to exist in a situation of near despair. So I am hopeful, because the vocation question causes great concern. My hope would lie in my/our spiritual renewal, life style in community, the apostolate and efforts to effect 'evangelizare pauperibus misit me' and, at the same time, seeking out persons who might share our life, vision and apostolic work."

It can be said that those replies which emphasise Christian hope make no suggestions as to concrete ways in which it might be actualised.

One can sum up the attitudes of the twenty-eight who replied as follows: full satisfaction with life in community and with community as a source of apostolate; mixed views as to our faithfulness to the charism of St Vincent; much concern as to our apostolic identity and, as a consequence, the likelihood of new aspirants.

Proceedings commenced on the evening of Easter Monday, 31 March. Fr Frank Mullan addressed the assembly. He reminded us what the real purpose of the Meetings was: "the core of the matter," he said,

"is a really deep personal conversion and renewal of mind and heart of each of us here present". He recalled Fr McCullen's insistence on the need for "prayer and fasting".

Fr Jim Sweeney, our facilitator, took the Chair. When the proposed programme was approved, we went on to elect a coordinating committee. They were chosen as follows:

Fathers D. Beirne, P. McCrohan and M. Barry with Fathers Mullan and Lane joining them *ex officio.*

We then commenced the public reading of confrères' submissions on the proposed questions. This continued into the following day. The remaining days were spent either in small groups or plenary sessions. In this way the full agenda was explored in a methodical way. A novel feature of this meeting was the sending of "ambassadors" from one group to another to ensure that each group was "cross-fertilised" by the others and to ensure that nothing of significance was allowed to get lost.

The business concluded on the afternoon of Friday, 3 April, when the appended recommendations were agreed.

Tribute must be paid to Fr Sweeney for the flawless manner in which he conducted the proceedings. Fr Mullan thanked him on behalf of our community for the splendid way in which he did so. Fr Sweeney in turn thanked our community for what had been for him both a privilege and an experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Missions/Retreats

1. That in the distribution of our manpower resources Missions and Retreats must be given a priority, in accordance with the norms of our Province.
2. That we should set up a team, 3 or 4 confrères, in London to pioneer a new missionary thrust in accordance with our Mission Statement.
3. That our missioners should seek suitable training.
4. That every house should help finance the new mission team.
5. That our approach to missions is specific and based on our Vincentian spirituality.
6. That Vincentian parishes should have regular missions.

Formation for Ministry

1. That we should continue to open our houses to the clergy for spiritual (e.g. ministry, fraternity for priests, poustinia) and social purposes.
2. That an informal survey of the members of this body should be carried out before we leave, to discover what individuals or communities are doing for the clergy, so that we may know what is being done and thus plan further possible developments.
3. That the pastoral involvement of the laity is to be positively encouraged as a hope for the future.

   That good instruction and preparation are essential if the ministry of the laity is to develop successfully. (The challenge to the community is to do what, and wherever, we can to foster this instruction and preparation).
4. That a better link should be developed between the parishes, Damascus House and Strawberry Hill in respect of formation for ministry.

Parishes

1. That we should be utterly flexible, taking account of our missionary thrust in Britain, and of the age, availability and aptitude of confrères.
2. That the confrères in our parishes prepare for the time, (in the near future), when there will be fewer priests.

   We recommend the confrères, as ordained ministers, to be catalysts for the establishment of other ministries (e.g. finance, youth, liturgy, bereaved, adult religious education, justice, parenting, catechetics, marriage, communications, care of the poor).
3. That parishes adopt a programme of renewal e.g. "Parish Renewal".

St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill

1. That the work in St Mary's College is in accord with the Mission Statement, and we would like to see it continue.
2. That there ought to be closer liaison between St Mary's College and Damascus House, and that this contact should provide a Resource for parishes also.

The Deaf

1. That all confrères, as a means of developing awareness of the needs of deaf people, should learn the basic skills of communication with the deaf.
2. To help the deaf and hard of hearing we propose that the LOOP system be installed in all our churches.

Vincentians in Britain

1. That we develop our Vincentian identity by our internal attitude, and by following the examples of Christ and St Vincent, Evangelisers of the Poor. We also should celebrate Vincentian feasts on Sundays (cum permissu), and preach on St Vincent.
2. That there be a further meeting of the Vincentians in Great Britain at a later date.
3. That the Rules of Office & Remit of the Regional Co-Ordinator be re-examined by the Provincial and his Council with a view to giving greater autonomy to the region.

Vocations
(Vocations depend on personal spirituality in community inspired by St Vincent and related to works for the poor).

1. That there should be a planned programme for formation including a nominated community and nominated place in Great Britain for September, 1986. This information should be given to all the confrères.
2. That an investigation into the possibility of short term commitment to the Vincentians should be made.
3. That a full-time Vocation Director for Great Britain should be appointed.
4. That in all our Parish Societies meetings should begin (or end) with a prayer for Vincentian vocations.

PART II

Introduction

In Part I of this essay I gave an overview of proceedings at our Upholland Meeting. To assess its importance for the future of the Province is a more difficult task. When the history of our time is written,

will this Meeting be considered a major milestone, even a turning-point in our mission to Britain or will it be just a mere footnote? Obviously this appraisal cannot be made in isolation, without reference to the whole Province and indeed to the Church at large. My intention will be to stimulate new reflection and new insights leading, hopefully, to a constructive criticism and dialogue. Only in that way can the Holy Spirit speak to us.

It is an accepted fact that we live in a most difficult era for priesthood and apostolic life, some call it *breakdown*. This might tempt us to look back with nostalgia to the "good old days" when stability and security reigned supreme! But, as Bishop O'Mahony recently told his fellow jubilarians, there can be no going back to the forties and fifties; nor would it be for the good of the Church if the accepted model of those days was somehow to be reconstituted in our time.[4]

And yet it is a privileged time in which to live. The very difficulty we must cope with is filled with meaning and challenge, something not evident twenty years ago. It is something entirely positive, not visible to the human eye but only for those who recognise the pattern of the new creation, the paschal mystery. Death leading to life, God's redemptive plan. In this sense every death is a new birth. The present is a time for a new sowing, leading to a new reaping by a later generation of Vincentians. But there are sombre and dark clouds about us in a sky generally bright. We will ignore them at our peril!

I believe it is fair to say that our "identity" in Britain is a matter of widespread concern with confrères, leading to an attitude of pessimism concerning vocations. These two important issues will colour all I propose to say. When we speak about "vocations", we are probably thinking primarily of numbers as our immediate concern.

When we speak about "identity", we are considering something very difficult to define. It cannot be quantified. For all of us, our identity is determined by our relationship with Jesus Christ. He is who gives to everyone his ultimate meaning. Each of us is still in the process of becoming his true self. Identity comes from a personal experience of God. Consequently, the discovery of God is personal and unique.

In the Book of Revelation (2:17) we read:

> I will give him a white stone upon which is inscribed a new name, to be known only by him who receives it.

This "new name" is my true identity. When I speak about our Community identity I mean something more. I mean the state of being *visible and identifiable to our fellowmen because of the unique,*

apostolic and prophetic mission we exercise in the Church.

The Changing Church

Clericalism, Juridicism, Triumphalism, Author!tarianism are some of the words used to describe the Church of the pre- Vatican II era. All of us were born and most of us were educated into this understanding of Church, now fast disappearing. The violent assaults of the 16th century caused the Church to go on the defensive, to retreat into its fortress, to lower the drawbridge, and have as little contact as possible with the enemy. This is the "siege" mentality which has continued for four centuries and which Vatican II and the ecumenical movement are seeking to modify. During this era emphasis was placed on the Church as institution and the importance of authority and tradition. This was necessary at the time but no longer! Stressing the institutional aspect of the Church tended to obscure the person of Christ. This limitation was compounded by the fact that Sacred Scripture was given a subordinate role. We were trained to live our priesthood in a "necessary, perfect society, superior to the state and having within itself all the means necessary to achieve its end." Obedience and conformity was the expected response, wherein lay holiness.

Whether we accept it or not we live in an era of great change in the world and in the Church. Change upsets people. While most will accept what is happening as the work of the Holy Spirit, the element of fear and dismay remains. Is it any wonder that we were all completely unprepared to accept it! Why upset a working arrangement that was so much at peace and so universally admired and accepted!

The extent and depth of theological renewal that has taken place in recent years, and continues to do so, is unprecedented in nearly two thousand years of Christian history. The first stirrings for change took place under Pius X. They gathered momentum under succeeding Popes and reached their climax in the calling of Vatican II. Its purpose was: updating Christian thought, life, and worship, to do this the Church must leave the sacristy and enter into the market-place, office, school and factory. It must influence the mass media. It must influence life at all levels, both as individual and as family. The era of dialectics and polemics was now at an end. Henceforth emphasis must shift to the positive, constructive and remedial service that true religion should provide. The theological renewal was further sparked by the liturgical, vernacular and scriptural revivals and, perhaps most of all, by the ecumenical movement. Yes, much has changed, rapidly and dramatically!

What was unique about Vatican II was that it was not summoned to condemn any heresy but rather to deepen and renew the Church's own life, to update her doctrines and ministry and to increase the relevance of both in a world seeking to cope with bewildering changes and complex problems. The Church is now presented as the mystery of God's saving love, as the People of God on pilgrimage towards the eternal Kingdom. The Church through long experience has learned the art of adaptation. Pope John Paul expressed it like this in Knock:

> Every generation with its own mentality and characteristics is like a new continent to be won for Christ. The Church must constantly look for new ways that will enable her to understand more profoundly, and to carry out with renewed vigour, the mission received from the founder.[5]

All these factors, influencing each other, set off a chain reaction that has caused unprecedented ferment in the Church. Every phase of theological and biblical science has been affected. Every change, and most of all in things of belief and worship, involves effort, struggle and indeed discomfort and pain. Our inherited view of the Church and our Congregation as static institutions gave us no assistance at all.

If the shock-waves of all these changes now upset us we would need to be far more upset if we were not feeling them. It is unavoidable, and indeed good, that we should. We sometimes forget that God often comes to disturb us. While he comforts the afflicted he often afflicts the comfortable! Our present position has all the trauma of death and birth, death to a familiar and much loved style of living, praying and celebrating. Birth to the new and unexplored. "A certain form of Church is dying", Cardinal Suenens writes, "and another is being born".[6] The Holy Spirit now summons our congregation in a new direction. Thomas Merton says somewhere that the Gospel should come to us as brand new or not at all; that unless we hear this newness it ceases to be news, and if it is not news it is not the Gospel!

Are we Vincentians a prophetic community proclaiming and using the resurrection power of God that can put life where there is death? Can we still proclaim the Gospel as "brand new"?

The Sociological Factor

The late Archbishop Downey of Liverpool is reputed to have once said that he would like to see every religious institute go into what he called "voluntary liquidation" within fifty years of the death of its founder. His reason was the belief that by then it will most probably have departed

from the founder's spirit. Even allowing for hyperbole, the suggestion should give food for reflection. The history of the Church is strewn with the names of religious groups whose "liquidation" was involuntary and, for that reason, all the more distressing. Dubay[7] quotes Hostie[8] who speaks of the "inexorable decline" of religious communities. He speaks of an average life span of two to three hundred years. He notes that of 105 foundations initiated by 1600 (and that roughly includes ourselves) only 25 are still in existence. Another statistic: 76% of all men's religious communities founded before 1500 and 64% of those founded before 1800 have ceased to exist.[9] Hence the Cistercians, Benedictines, Franciscans, Dominicans, Carmelites are exceptions. Most religious institutes die. Dubay notes that normally religious superiors are the first to be alarmed but their best efforts are of little avail. A reformation is possible and sometimes occurs but it does not arise from authority or from outside help. It can happen only from what he calls a "new inner fermentation". This may sometimes cause a split between those who want renewal and those who don't. But it may be inevitable. Further on he sees a common pattern in the life span of all religious institutes. They begin in a radical prophetic life-style, animated by the spirit and drive of a charismatic founder. This early stage is characterised by freedom in sharing the things of the Spirit, by flexibility and spontaneity, by the exciting sense of creating together something new for God. The charism of the institute is manifested in powerful gifts of prayer and of apostolate. This can be called the *spontaneous* phase.

Usually some years after the founder's death expansion slows and begins to level off. Administration becomes more complex. Excuses multiply for departing from the wishes of the founder. The original spirit of the community flags. The power of the Spirit languishes. Norms are then formulated in an effort to hold on to the spirit and sense of direction that was originally forged by the founding charism. Great stress is placed on "custom" and "tradition". By now the institute has spread. It has become prestigious, influential and financially secure. This state gives rise to growing laxity, especially in prayer and poverty. We call this stable period the *normative* phase, the period of institutionalisation.

Eventually norms cease to be effective. So we enter the third phase. This is the "Ideological" phase or time of *breakdown*. The norms become outmoded and begin to be ignored. The Community begins to lose its sense of identity and direction. So "breakdown" is imminent. The stage is marked by panic efforts to discover the original charism. This stage has been described as re-arranging the deck chairs on the *Titanic!* Meetings, commissions, study-groups, documents multiply

to cope with the situation and meet rumblings of complaint. What the founding charism did at the beginning , and which was sustained for many generations in the normative phase, the hope is that "ideology" will do now!

Since this latter phase is now so topical because so widespread, I will allow one author to describe the symptoms:

> When a religious community begins to break down, the institutional structures and belief systems that served it so well during its later expansion and through the stable period go through progressive dismantling and the community's members face doubt, dissatisfaction, discouragement, anxiety and stress. Unanswered questions about the institute's nature and purpose accumulate: tension increases, people leave, vocations drop. To confront the problems, standard remedies are applied, but the usual problem-solving methods prove ineffective. The community increasingly loses its sense of purpose and identity. Its members lack direction and lose hope in the community. The average age goes up almost a year every year. Some apostolic works are closed down and people are overworked to support those works still going on. The decision-making and government process becomes more complex and often confused. Religious develop new interests, some compatible with the religious life, some not. Many no longer find sufficient meaning in traditional symbols, rules and explanations. And many search for God in new ways, even turning to spiritual fads or political causes or pop psychology. It is not necessarily a time of moral decay in the religious life, although with the turmoil and confusion, one might expect to find even serious moral lapses of various kinds.[10]

What happens is that the "letter" takes over from the "spirit". The founding charism is subsequently placed in normative guidelines so that it can be preserved, discussed and passed on to succeeding generations. Rules of external behaviour become increasingly defined. Legalistic structures take over the founding grace.

It may be asked "who is to blame for this situation?" "What has gone wrong?" The answer is: no one is to blame and nothing has gone wrong! It's a sociological fact! It seems to be the way the Holy Spirit acts because of our sinful human condition. It has happened before in the Church; it will continue to happen. We must all be careful never to forget that the Holy Spirit blows, not only when and where he chooses but also for as long, and only as long as he wills. After more than 300

years of existence, we Vincentians would be totally naive to ignore the lessons of history and consider ourselves somehow exceptional to this process. What we are faced with is a life-or-death alternative. In common with other communities we are in a state of transition. Many groups will not survive this process. Some Orders and Congregations will become truly renewed, revitalised, refounded. For those who do not, it is the end of the road! The period of minimal survival will vary from one to the other, depending upon whether efforts at renewal were at best cosmetic, at worst non-existent.

In common with many others, we Vincentians in Britain find ourselves in the state of *breakdown*. Our situation is compounded by the fact that the specific works for which our congregation was founded no longer constitute our primary apostolic thrust. This is not necessarily a bad thing; it may be a sign of the times. Nevertheless, it does lead to divided opinion as to where our founding charism can best be exercised in today's world. Add to that the difficulty of defining who constitute the poor!

Seeing the Signs of the Times

In common with many religious communities in Britain today, we now find ourselves in the situation of *breakdown*. This is not a recent phenomenon; one could argue that the symptoms were there decades ago. There is reason to believe, however, that we are feeling the effects in Britain more acutely than many others, especially where vocations are concerned. Rather than giving rise to a feeling of desperation, our circumstances should emphasise the urgent need for on-going spiritual renewal.

It is never easy to evaluate the criteria whereby to judge whether a community is seriously renewing itself or not. It is always an on-going task. Its objectives are too transcendent to be accurately measured. The danger here is to assume that it must be happening because of all the time and effort devoted to the subject. The possibility, therefore, of living in a fool's paradise is very real. Other walks of life have their own ways of assessing progress or its absence, even where results can't be accurately quantified. For example Education in Britain today is being thoroughly overhauled and remedies are being prescribed for perceived deficiencies. So, too, religious institutes have available to them certain methods whereby they can evaluate their situation. Spiritual renewal has its own intrinsic value which cannot be concealed. Besides, where such renewal is being sincerely pursued a certain degree of structurisation is not only desirable but also necessary. St Vincent leaves us in no doubt about that!

A community such as ours, supported by its long tradition, its pride and its inherited belief in itself, all combined with a need for personal security, can easily slip into a condition of increasing irrelevance, whilst assuring ourselves at the same time that we are doing "excellent work". Add to all that the danger of psychological inertia which seeks to justify the "status quo" and resists radical re-thinking and radical renewal because of the upset and inconvenience involved.

History tells us that where re-foundation has taken place certain characteristics are present:

(a) Response to the signs of the times;
(b) Renewal of the institute's charism;
(c) A deepening of prayer and focus on Jesus Christ.

As examples of where this has happened one can look to the Dominicans and Franciscans during the Counter-Reformation, to the Jesuits following their suppression and even to our own Vincentian community in France during the post-Revolution era."

The Fathers at the Council made a special plea to members of religious institutes to forward the task of renewal. Their wishes are contained in the decree *Perfectae caritatis* (28 October, 1965). In it we are called to re-discover our roots, our founding charism, that inner driving energy that led St Vincent to found a community. We are called to a new appropriation of the founding graces of our congregation. That founding charism is a "seed of God" sown by the Holy Spirit, which brought into being a new incarnation of the Word.

So our vocation largely parallels that of the Church at large, namely to be a sign and servant of the reign of God's love but in a unique, prophetic Vincentian way. Since the ultimate norm for all religious institutes is the following of Christ as taught in the Gospel, "this must be accepted by all as the supreme rule of holiness". Next, the priority of interior renewal is emphasised: "even the best contrived adaptations to the needs of our times will be of no avail unless they are animated by a spiritual renewal, which must always be assigned primary importance even in the active ministry." Finally, what is to be done? "The spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully accepted and retained . . . The up-to-date renewal of the religious life comprises both a constant return to the sources of the whole of the Christian life and to the primitive inspiration of the institute and their adaptation to be changed conditions of our time."

Vincentian Charism

Following a great deal of prayerful reflection and hard work our charism as Vincentians is encapsulated in a single statement:

> We Vincentians are called to live together as brothers in a simple and humble way in order to bring the love, healing and compassion of Christ by action and word, in a simple way, particularly to the needy and vulnerable.

This charism statement is amplified and made more concrete in our Mission Statement:

> The Vincentian Mission is to follow Christ, the evangeliser of the poor.
>
> To do this effectively, we live a simple, evangelical life in Community.
>
> Following the example of St Vincent we respond to the call of the Church by concentrating especially on:
>
> The ministry of preaching missions/retreats in the way best fitted today for the renewal of parishes and other Christian communities, forming the clergy and laity in Church ministry; catechising and forming catechisers, drawing on our Province's tradition in the forming of teachers and in other educational apostolates.
>
> In carrying out our mission and ministries in a spirit of compassion, gentleness and reverence for the individual, we will pay particular attention to:
>
> the marginalised
> the alienated from society
> those indifferent to the Church
> and the victims of injustice and poverty.

These two statements must surely give us all the foundational material we need for renewal. However, every statement is very inadequate. No formula can accurately express the charism of the institute. Like renewal itself, charism is on-going. It can be perceived only to the extent that it exists in people. A charism is grace, and grace is personal relationship with Christ. But it is not for oneself only, it is grace-for-mission:

> Each one of you has received a special grace; so like good stewards responsible for all these special graces of God, put yourselves at the service of others (1 Pet. 4: 10).

Statements, then, are just what they say! They are mere starting

points, nothing more. They don't of themselves lead to the holiness which must be our goal. It is only the Lord himself, in the power of the Holy Spirit, who can give us the renewed life of consecrated service according to the mind of St Vincent. Where this happens it is sometimes called a "second conversion" which involves a new appropriation of the spirit of Christ, leading to new zeal and effectiveness in service:

> We can be sure that we are in God only when the one who claims to be living in him is living the same kind of life as Christ lived (Un. 2:5-6).

Charism, then, can never be fully defined. Neither can it be appropriated by mere study and reflection. Since it is a gift of God we must pray for that grace, in openness to the Lord, acknowledging the need for that grace in myself and others. At Upholland and, indeed, on other occasions, we are urged to appropriate and internalise our two statements. It's not suggested how this might be done in practice. Perhaps a community prayer encapsulating the expressed values would be a step forward. Such a prayer might resemble that used by the Daughters of Charity when they pray for the spirit of St Vincent and St Louise. We can take it for certain that a sign of our time is the call of each Vincentian to charismatic renewal, in the sense that St Vincent was charismatic, as indeed were the founders of the Irish Province.[12]

Besides all that, we must face up honestly to the practical "roadblocks" in Britain that jeopardise our Vincentian identity and consequently lessen our chances of vocations.

In Part I confrères listed some of them for us. Unfortunately most of them are at present endemic to our situation and cannot be remedied in the short or medium term. One confrère is concerned that we no longer wear our traditional distinctive Vincentian attire, suggesting presumably that we have lost something of significant sign value. All of these items should be kept in mind with a view to remedial action as opportunity permits.

To conclude this section, the following represents a broad literary consensus of what the future holds:

(a) Apostolic Institutes will flourish to the extent that they are prophetic; that is, to the extent that they are different, that they offer a live option to aspirants. Those that do not offer prophetic difference have no reason to survive.

(b) Factual frugality. Experience shows that religious institutes rise and fall according to their faithfulness to the New Testament ideal

of voluntary poverty. (How St Vincent linked the survival of our community to Poverty is too well known to need repetition here). "Individual Communities should look into ways of observing evangelical poverty knowing for certain that poverty is not only the impregnable bulwark of the community but also the condition for renewal and the sign of progress in our vocation for the Church and the World" (Constitutions 1980: Pt. 3 No. 53).

(c) A prayer-life that is deeply Christ-centred. "In community prayer we will find an excellent way of animating and renewing our life, especially when we celebrate the Word of God and share it" (Constitutions 1980: Pt. 4 No. 66).[B]

The foregoing represents, generally speaking, the consensus of spiritual writers concerning the future. It will be for us to interpret these principles according to our Vincentian tradition. The heritage of St Vincent will certainly emphasise community prayer. Here we must remember that the prayer-life of the Church is dynamic. This will involve a growing use of liturgy. Besides, since the Council we have discovered new methods of prayer; and here the ecumenical movement has thrown up new insights.

Finally, lest we forget where our roots lie, we note the recommendation given in our Directory of Norms No. 46: "Each community should decide how best to maintain our traditional devotional practices.''

Vision and a Dream

Concerning vocations not much has to be said. This much, however, needs to be borne in mind. We must remember that the renewed understanding of Church means that young people see priesthood and religious life in very different terms from days gone by. Only if a community is seen to live the values of God's Kingdom will it arouse any interest. One needs only to attend a young people's prayer meeting to see how the understanding of the faith has changed. They are very Christ-centred. The person of Jesus fascinates them. They have little awareness of, or interest in, the institutional Church as we have traditionally known it. Prestige and tradition count for very little. We must bear these facts in mind as we work for new vocations.

In conclusion, what final judgement can one make about our Upholland meeting? One can say without hesitation that it was a response to the call of the Holy Spirit, a move in the right direction. Even if the final recommendations seem rather innocuous, they are still important. They make clear our present situation in Britain and if we have felt

complacent in the past, it ought not be so any longer! Even if we didn't find solutions, still we focused on our problems.

We became aware as never before of our spiritual poverty and that in itself is grace. In the future, leadership will be very important, but not limited to those in official positions of authority. "Your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams" (Acts 2:17). In this sense every one of us is called to be a leader, motivating ourselves and others, generating enthusiasm, with a keen sense of where we ought to be going, seeking to centre our Vincentian life around the "man for all seasons," Christ Jesus!

We have no way of knowing what the closing years of this millennium holds for our community in Britain. Already the Church is looking forward to the year of Jubilee in the year 2000. In his most recent encyclical letter Pope John Paul refers to the vital role of the Holy Spirit. He says: "the times in which we are living are bringing the Holy Spirit closer to the many who are returning to prayer"; and again: "The Church cannot prepare for the Jubilee in any other way than in the Holy Spirit". That is why we must pray together, reflect together, discern the Spirit together in order to discover anew where the charism of St Vincent is leading us, in a changing Church and World.

"Lord, will you not restore again our life that your people may rejoice in you" (Ps 84).

Notes

1. Letter of 4 December 1985.
2. Letter of Preparatory Commission, 21 December 1985.
3. Letter to the Irish Province, 7 March 1986.
4. Cf article in *The Furrow,* January 1986, p 5.
5. Pope John Paul II, address at Knock, 30 September 1979.
6. Suenens: *Open the Frontiers,* London 1980.
7. Dubay: *Can Religious Life Survive?,* New Jersey 1973.
8. Hostie: *Vie et mart des ordres religieux,* Paris 1972.
9. Fitz & Cada: "The Recovery of Religious Life", in *Review for Religious,* 34 (1975, pp 690-718).
   O'Connor: *"The Future of Religious Life",* in *Supplement to Doctrine and Life,* 18 (1978, pp 71-90).
10. Fancy: *The End of Religious Life,* Minneapolis, 1973, p 13.
11. Cf Laurentin in *The Life of Catherine Labouré,* London 1983, pp 131-134. Laurentin describes how Fr Etienne (who at the age of 42 became Superior General in August 1843 and was in office till 1874) set about re-founding the Congregation after the French Revolution. He says: "The power of Fr

Etienne's regime lay in the fact that he gave pride of place to *charismatic impulse given by grace, but at the same time linked this to observance of rule,* in such a way that ardour and order reigned together in fruitful harmony". (Italics mine).

12. "We should constantly return to the heritage of our Holy Founder, expressed in his writings and in the traditions of the Congregation, that we may learn to love what he loved and practise what he taught" (Constitutions, 1980, Pt 4, No. 69) "The Spirit of the Congregation is a participation in the spirit of Christ himself *(Ibid,* Pt l, No. 5).
"All confrères shall continually strive for a deeper knowledge of this spirit by returning to the gospel and to the example and teaching of St Vincent" *(Ibid,* Pt l, No. 8).
13. Dubay: *Op cit,* p 96, and Faricy: *Op cit,* p 17.

Don't be Afraid of Young People

Richard McCullen

(A translation of a homily preached in Italian in Rome on 28 December 1985 to a seminar of Vincentians, Daughters of Charity and their co-workers)

What motive prompted Herod to slaughter the Bethelehem infants? Jealousy? Yes. Insecurity? Yes. The most pressing reason, however, may have been fear. Fear is at the root of all jealousy and all insecurity. Herod was a very forceful man, but racked with fear; a fear of such proportions that it pushed him to the slaughter of the Bethlehem infants. It seems odd, though maybe not all that odd, that a grown man should be afraid of babies, or perhaps I should more accurately say, of one baby.

So here is the first question I would ask you who are attending this seminar and discussing how to help young people: "Are you afraid of modern youth?" Your initial reaction is to answer "No". However in our grown-up minds there can be more fear of young people than we may have realised up to now.

Perhaps the fear of young people which we have in our hearts may give rise not to jealousy but to a certain insecurity, the sort of insecurity which arises when we are faced with something we don't know or don't understand.

Many of today's adults keep their distance from young people, afraid of not understanding them. Some keep on repeating "Young people today are different", which provides an excuse for maintaining the distance.

It often strikes me that it is fear which erects a barrier between adults and young people today; this means that each is a loser. Today's young people *are* different, but let's not exaggerate the difference.

When the Pope visited my own country in 1979 and spoke at the Marian shrine he said: "Each generation is like a new continent which has to be conquered for Christ". The world of young people is like a new continent! This continent has great natural resources, some easily seen, others hidden.

The continent of youth has to be won for Christ, and the method to be used is not, obviously, reliance on force but rather on love and

respect for the individual. Since youth is a new continent we must not be surprised if what is needed there is also new.

That is why it is so important to listen to young people when they speak about their needs. Today's youth speaks of its need to "share with others in community", to "do something to bring more justice into society and into the world". But it is only after listening to young people talking about their needs that we adults should try to help them, drawing on the riches of our own personal experience.

Young people will almost always rise to a challenge. Anyone who gets involved in youth apostolate must constantly ask himself: "What gauntlet can I throw down to them?" The challenge we propose must come from Jesus Christ and so provoke the young to face up to the question asked by Jesus himself: "Who do you say that I am?"

We challenge youth to "be open to forgiveness", to "recognise Jesus in the breaking of bread", to "watch and pray so that you won't fall into temptation".

Perhaps one of the most challenging things for young people is to "see and accept the Church as the great sacrament of Jesus Christ in the world". We know that many young people accept Christ but reject the Church".

How can we get them to accept the Church and become active in its life?

How can we get them to experience the Church as a welcoming and sharing community?

How can we educate them to see themselves as co-workers with adults in Christ's work today, in the Church?

I cannot give a ready answer to these questions, especially as I am not fully acquainted with the conditions in which you work. I would, however, like to suggest one final recommendation. Don't be discouraged in your attempt to annexe this new continent for Christ. You are not on your own. Jesus is with you. He is your way; the words "Don't be afraid" were often on his lips.

Also, don't be afraid to share your convictions with young people, but like St Vincent with simplicity, humility and sensitivity. Young people respect, even if they do not often admit it, adults' courageously expressed personal convictions.

Draw encouragement also from what Paul VI said: "People today are less impressed by what is taught than by what is witnessed to". When your courage seems about to fail or when the rate of change seems to you too rapid and you begin to panic, pause and recall our Lord's reproof to his disciples: "Why are you afraid, men of little faith?" (Mt 8:26).

No matter what lack of success your efforts at contact with youth may have don't give up loving them, as St John wrote: "It is love that drives out fear" (1 Jn 4:18). Love bridges the generation gap.

Love is the language that young people and adults have to study together during life's pilgrimage because it is the only language taught by the Son of God and is the only one spoken in his Father's house.

Forum

A WEEK OF DIALOGUE IN THE INNER CITY

During the last week of August 1985 I was part of a team engaged in a direct mission project. Our terms of reference were primarily to encounter young people and help to animate a more vigorous living of Christian life at local level. The team members were mostly young lay men and women, with one sister; we were twelve in all. The project was sponsored by the Legion of Mary who have piloted this concept of mission to Ireland.

The Parish Priest and the local legionaries received us graciously and looked after us during our stay. The team members slept in the local Legion house, men and women in separate parts, in sleeping bags on the floor; I was given the privacy and comparative comfort of a room in the house of the Calced Carmelites who are chaplains to the nearby St James' Hospital. The legionaries of St James' parish, which was our zone of activity, provided all our meals.

We made contact with the people by visiting their homes, and talking to them at various points such as the church door, the streets, pubs, discos and in the open air of the massive concrete squares where the youth hung aimlessly about. The team members were allotted different sections to cover and enter into dialogue with the people. I did some of this, but I found myself particularly focused on specific priestly ministry after the ground was prepared in the first few days. So I had a lot of theology of the grassroots to explicate, a good exercise in realism and humility. There are people who think, even though they are poor; there are issues of faith and praxis which go beyond the bounds of conventional theology; there are depths of faith unimagined by current feature-writers.

This was a learning experience for me. It was good for me to sit in living rooms without a carpet. It was good for me to be available for confessions, to bring reconciliation and peace to troubled spirits, and to share generally that gift of God to me which is special to the ordained priesthood, exercised no doubt in all my human limitations but valuable all the same. This confirmed my deep faith in priesthood, Vincentian priesthood, and indeed also gave me a deep insight into partnership with lay people and apostolic sharing with them.

This last was one of the great graces of the week. Team members and other lay people were in constant interaction and I was endeavouring to be available to them. Plenty of lively discussion developed. Some ignorance was dispelled, I hope. I was trying to listen. I could say a lot about what I heard. I have to treasure it in my heart, be enriched by it all and, hopefully, in the future bring it to fruition.

There was always too a great deal of fun among the team, experiences on the beat and, naturally, the incomparable good humour of the inner city characters. The traditional Legion practice of mingling the agreeable with the useful was honoured in many ways, especially in the final night's concert and general merriment from which I recall most vividly a passionate rendering of *A Liberty Boy am I* by an old Dublin "one". On the matter of lay/priest harmony we found one very powerful expression among many others. I refer to a half-hour's quiet prayer before our afternoon stint, in the chapel of St James' Hospital. This somehow emphasised a new and divine perspective, and offered us the spiritual strength we needed so much.

This area of Dublin (like many others of the metropolis, I suspect) has much deprivation, with widespread unemployment among men and women. We met clusters of young men about the courtyards. Young girls leaning on balconies giggled and joked with the boys below. Speaking to them, one sensed a real desire to be employed in some fulfilling activity. The flats where the people live are most spartan. The food has to be simple and frugal. The pint is a focus for socialising; and maybe, understandably, too many are thrown back. The health service, now much improved, still allows some cases to fall between stools.

A large part of the area is deprived socially, culturally and economically. Yet I was very struck by the rich resources of the people in human qualities. Their good humour, lively conversation and family togetherness were very clear to see. I never encountered here the sullen anger sometimes found in more privileged groups. Instead there was that quiet desperation, a kind of depression which can paralyse, but also resignation bordering on the heroic. Faith lives among these people, and they are in touch with the inexhaustible spring of life. In one section of the area, where perhaps a few thousand live in close proximity, the architecture of the dwellings, generally featureless, nevertheless helps to give an atmosphere of community spirit. The district has had its traumas, like drug-abuse, vandalism and muggings; but from my short experience there I can now understand better the motivation behind such escapades as stealing and crashing big cars; these actions are not to be condoned, however; by no means. Television and the huge economic

power-systems tantalise the poor people with material goods; the ads scream at them, literally, from all sides. The better-off can go out and buy, but the poor are tempted to rob. Consumerist philosophy presents a system of pleasure-principle values which only leaves rich, poor and in-betweens, everyone, in a state of mesmerised exhaustion. I'm suggesting that Christians, especially priests, especially followers of Vincent de Paul, might help stop this crazed course of the First World, even in a little way.

A recent proposal, apparently serious, was made in the newspapers that an old school building in St James' was to be turned into a prison for young offenders. A deputation to the Minister concerned put paid to that absurd idea and came up instead with the suggestion that skills training for the large youth population be conducted there; it remains to be seen what will happen. At least this gave the people a sense of their own value and showed their adamant will not be to pushed about. It was an exercise in decisiveness as well as dignity.

Religiously, faithwise, whatever term we use about the whole field of the sacred, the people I saw and heard seemed by and large to be sympathetic. I could not put a figure on sacramental practice (a necessary element in a fully Christian life) but it seems quite high among the older adults, less so among the under-30s. But hardly once did I discover atheism, total lack of interest, or hostility to the Church. Personal contact with spiritual leaders, more community-based formation, and more sensitivity to the needs of certain groups (like youth) would go a long way to maintain good ecclesial life in the parish. But this goes hand in hand with a truly systemic mode of human "development" (understood here as fostering person-centred, holistic, truly human dignity, but not in terms of the industrial power-blocks of the western world). It seems to me that spirituality and "Church work" (ministry, liturgy, catechetics, even personal prayer) all have to take account of the socio-economic conditions of the people. The "supernaturalist" spirituality so prevalent up to the recent past is now recognised as being at least partly responsible for the "irrelevance" of the institutional Church in the eyes of many moderns. I don't think Vincent de Paul would be accused of that if he were among us now. As a fairly conservative community, at least in parts of the Northern Hemisphere, some kind of revolution in outlook and praxis seems to be on the cards for us here. There seems to be a quiet revolution afoot, but, as John Paul II would say, "something else is needed". A recent homilist on St Vincent said that the saint would be more likely a martyr than a confessor today. That makes me want to dive for cover immediately. It could scare us out of our wits.

Some non-Christian values, or sometimes a whole valueless philosophy, are causing havoc and inroads into parish life and even into the very fibre of the person's dignity, peace of mind, and sanity. It seems to me that Christians today have a great mission to replace these corrosive influences with the values of Christ and his transforming power in the individual and in society. It could happen, as was envisaged by St Augustine in one of his sermons, that the task of sowing faith, love and peace may be misunderstood. The apostle does not always get applause. But goodwill is not enough. We would need to work with others, be well-skilled, and institute some kind of sound analysis of situations, e.g. where the poor are suffering in large numbers, or where the economically well-off are very poor in spiritual terms. Our pastoral ministry to parish and other groups, and our missions/retreats, are grounded in the real world of people, giving service and receiving feedback.

It is interesting to note that some male religious communities have recently (in the last ten years) moved into poor areas, at least in order to have a presence there. We could not, obviously, pack up our belongings and head for the quays (even though we started there). But maybe some contacts with the neglected poor on the part of each of us would be salutary. Many have such contact, and daily. Not all are equally called to it, but the credibility of the Church now seems to hinge on this identification with the poor and outcasts. It is one of the "signs", and it can really touch into being new, fresh, streams of life within us. Gutièrrez's point about movements of life coming from the poor is a biblical insight less often recalled. The poor in spirit and in deed are the people most likely to be "favoured" (as Mary was, and said others like her would be) by "the Lord who is mighty" (Lk 1).

Maybe our survival and destiny, as our origins, are linked to this. Whenever our confrères throughout the world are close to the poor they seem to be really blessed with new members. A certain humility seems to accompany such commitment, and this humility together with the love of Christ is irresistible. Do young men sometimes see us as aloof, too comfortable, hermetic in some ways, a little remote from our humble founder Vincent? We're not, of course; at least we hope we're not. But the niggling questions remain: do they see us that way? Or do our surroundings sometimes prevent us from being identified with ordinary people: I don't know yet of any general Vincentian gathering which has invited poor people to address it, and to learn sensitivity to the poor in that immediate way; the Daughters of Charity lead us here.

These reflections have gone farther afield than I intended. Returning to St James', I can say that the experience has helped me to concentrate

some thought on this area of concern. Any effort to evangelise, or form ministers to evangelise, has to recognise the complexities of the social and economic as well as the religious issues. So, alongside the more formal faith-spiritual formation of the people some real effort should be made to help them in the economic, educational and cultural spheres. One thinks here of popular "conscientisation", availability of skills for men and women, locally-based industries with profits in the interests of the community, socio-cultural projects to enhance the whole person in dignity and freedom, to facilitate self-leadership and self-help, to save the people from being (as now) at the mercy of powerful external forces, whether multinational or nearer home. Future planning of housing should take seriously the need to respect the person and environmental ecology; at present, in inner-city contexts, those who suffer most from the crowded circumstances are the very young and the aged. Many more ideas are possible and urgent.

The Church has a massive challenge facing it in these areas. The people have the faith, but it has to be built on. A Sunday Youth Liturgy contributes greatly. Lots of things are desirable: street caring groups, ministry to the aged, or to teenagers especially, area group masses on the spot, organising "from below" a partnership in spiritual leadership, a lived concept of community Church, support groups of Christian couples and families. Indeed the very situation itself can suggest many more possibilities.

By a coincidence my week at St James' was the week of our Provincial Assembly at Emmaus, where an excellent Mission Statement was being shaped. We thought about the assembled confrères during those days and prayed for them at our masses. For our part, I venture to think that we were realising, in a little way perhaps, some of their best aspirations. Confrères live out the Statement in many ways; ours was just one of them.

Eamon Flanagan

SOME MEMORIES OF ST JOSEPH'S, BLACKROCK, AFTER 70 YEARS

I have been asked to write about the Province as I knew it in my younger days and will do so with some personal memories.

I got my vocation from a Redemptorist mission of the old style, with plenty about sin, judgement and hell, and also about the mercy of God,

a style which, I think, suited that time and did a lot of good. I had the idea of joining one of the missionary orders but, knowing little about them, I wrote to an aunt of mine in Dublin, a Sister of Charity. She knew the Vin authorities well and fixed the whole thing up for me. I was accepted after an interview with Fr Michael Brosnahan, Superior at Sunday's Well, Cork, at the time and was duly summoned to St Joseph's, Blackrock, popularly known as the Rock. The date was early September 1916.

I give these details because of a little story. When I was accepted I was asked to bring various articles of clothing, including a black hat; in my ignorance I got a bowler hat. When I arrived at St Joseph's I met John K. Murphy, who was to be *ange* to me and the other new arrivals. When he saw the hat in my hand he said "Give me that". He took it, and I never saw it again; he gave me a soft hat instead.

At St Joseph's I was welcomed, together with Ned Archer and Freddie Morrin, by Fr Joe Walshe and Fr "Joss" Geoghegan, as he was called. Fr Walshe was Provincial and Superior of St Joseph's, and Fr Geoghegan was Director of the seminarists and students. They welcomed us and put us at our ease immediately, and we began our time as seminarists. We soon met the second year seminarists, who included Bill Purcell, Harry Delaney, Henry Casey, Peter Mullan and James Thompson, and also the students who included Tom Cleary, the head student, Tom Donovan, John Thompson, brother of James, and Tommy Slaven. Some other seminarists joined later in the year, including Micheal Howard and a number of others who left for various reasons. In my year ten joined and four completed the course: Frs Archer, Howard, F. Morrin and myself. A year or two after us came Bill Meagher, John Carroll, Paddy O'Leary and Bob Alien, all happily with us, and also Joe Cullen, Jack Walsh, Michael Twomey and Michael Dwyer, who have gone to their reward. In my time in the Rock the highest number of seminarists and students together was thirty-six.

We did not, of course, use Christian names at that time. "Mr" was used, even usually among ourselves, and we wore full clerical dress and were formal in other ways. This doesn't mean that we were over-solemn. We were happy and enjoyed ourselves, despite the fairly strict regime. We had recreation and outdoor games, including tennis and a kind of football, playing these in old suits but without the Roman collar. We swam in the Fortyfoot and explored the area around Blackrock, now greatly built up. For walks you waited in the chapel and went off with the next arrival. I did not know this at first and asked Mr Purcell, the head seminarist, if I could have the walk with him. He said to me, very

gently, "That would be against the spirit of St Vincent". I did not know what the spirit of St Vincent was, but hope that I know something about it now. That same evening Bill Purcell apologised to me. On another walk with Mr Fehily, a late vocation who had to leave later because of ill-health, I was giving out about something and he said to me "Well, Mr. Hurley, when I was your age I also thought I knew everything".

The formalities I mention above were, I think, part of the outlook of the time which stressed authority and regulations more than now when there is more freedom and individuality. Some years ago I heard a philosopher saying on the BBC that this change in western society is basically one from law to love. He said that for some centuries western society was chiefly based on law, authority and male predominance, but that a change is now taking place with more emphasis on love, freedom and the female element. An interviewer asked him which was better, emphasis on law or on love, and he replied that a combination of the two was best. On being asked if this combination ever existed he replied that there was a good attempt at it in the Middle Ages. He said nothing about the influence of the Catholic Church at that time but, as we know, our Lord himself stresses the union between law and love: "If you keep my commandments you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and remain in his love".

The hour for rising in the Rock was 5.30 a.m., followed by an hour's meditation and then mass. Night prayer was at 9.30 p.m. As seminarists our day was filled with religious and other exercises. Fr Geoghegan and subsequent directors, who included Frs Bob Rossiter, John Carr and Tommy Hickey, gave us conferences and spiritual guidance. We read the scriptures and *Christian Perfection* by Rodriguez, and began to learn how to pray. I remember Fr Geoghegan teaching me some aspirations and telling me to keep repeating them and thinking about their meaning; ever since, I have thought this was a good way of praying.

We also learned other things in the seminaire, like speaking correctly. My Cork accent was taken for granted, but not my mis-pronunciations. Like other Cork people I had some difficulty with *th*. Once a week we had an exercise called Colloque, when a seminarist preached a short sermon and the director called someone to state his opinion of it. The custom was to begin with the words "I thought" and then give our opinion. The first time I was called I began with "I tought" and he repeated "I thought". The three or four times I was called I never got beyond those two words. Others were corrected in the same way. Some Dubliners are inclined to mis-pronounce the letter *u*. Michael Howard, who hailed from Swords, was one day reading at meals in the refectory

and pronounced the word *judge* as *joodge*. The presiding priest called out *judge,* and Michael repeated the sentence with the same pronunciation, *joodge*. The priest again called *out judge*. Michael paused a little and then said "Sorry, Father, but *it's joodge* here".

As students we did philosophy at University College, Dublin, and theology at St Joseph's. I well remember Dr James Doyle, who taught dogma, giving us a special course in metaphysics to prepare us for theology. He was a first-class teacher and went through the notions of person and nature, substance and accidents, potentiality and actuality, and some other metaphysical ideas, and linked up with the theological treatises on the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Eucharist, using diagrams on the blackboard to illustrate his points. I personally found what he did with us extremely useful when studying and thinking about the treatises mentioned.

Because of the three year university course our time at St Joseph's lasted eight years, and the health of some of the students suffered as a result. For this reason and, I presume, for others also, we were sent in 1920 or 1921 to do part of our course at the French Vincentian house of studies in Dax in the south of France. This experiment lasted only two years because the health of some of the students again suffered. But it was an interesting and useful experience; it broadened our minds and we had an opportunity to improve our French. One of the priests was Fr Gounod, a kind and understanding man who taught moral theology. In class he used to give us Irish news about Terence MacSwiney, the Lord Mayor of Cork, who was on hunger strike at the time. One morning he told us "Le maire de Cork est mort". He afterwards became archbishop of Carthage, in North Africa, and it is said he would have been made a cardinal had he lived longer. With our Irish ways we were something of a puzzle to the French, and they came to the conclusion that we were not of Latin or Germanic, but of Celtic, formation.

John Hurley.

VINCENTIAN STUDY GROUP, 1985-86

Once again there were five meetings:

October, in Castleknock
Philip Walshe: "On re-reading Mary Purcell's *The World of Monsieur Vincent"*.

November, in Celbridge
Mark Noonan: "On re-reading Jean Calvet's *St Vncent de Paul"*.

January, in All Hallows
Adrian Eastwood: "Comments on John Prager's *Reflections on the renewal of Vincentian spirituality,* in VINCENTIANA 5/1981".

February, in All Hallows
Tom Davitt: "The Five Characteristic Virtues".

March, in St Paul's
Stan Brindley: "On André Dodin's *En prière avec Monsieur Vincent"*.

Five further meetings have been arranged for 1986-87.

Tom Davitt.

OBITUARY

Fr Maurice Regis O'Neill, C.M.

It is not easy to do justice to a priest who had such an extraordinary influence over people. My first recollection of Maurice was as a student in St Joseph's, Blackrock. He was more mature than the rest of us and physically a mountain of a man. He was often seen in the company of Con Curtin and Derry Sweeney. In size they had little in common but we had no doubt about it that they were characters and had much humour in common. They annoyed me and some others in July in Castleknock where the students were on holiday. After lunch we joined the line sometimes asking the Director for permission to go to Dublin, which was not easy to get, though it was quite easy to get down to the Liffey for a swim. Maurice and the boys got permission to go to Dublin — at least he so pretended — and coming away he said in the hearing of us all, rubbing his hands in glee "Con, hurry up, that bus to Dublin is at two o'clock." In a few moments there was Maurice and the other two boys marching out the front avenue with coats and umbrellas giving us the impression they were bound for the City. They went no further than a few hundred yards into Phoenix Park!

After ordination in 1943 Maurice was posted to Lanark where he spent the next fourteen years giving missions and retreats in Scotland, England and Ireland. A successful missioner, he spoke straight from the shoulder. Blessed with a powerful voice, a photographic memory, a clear mind and a compellng presence he made a deep impression on the people. When not giving missions he was busy visiting the Douglas area of the parish, some twelve miles south-west of Lanark. Forty years later he is still remembered and loved by the people of Douglas.

Another special interest of his was Smyllum — the children and the school. He impressed children and teachers alike so much so that they said he was the priest who did most for Smyllum children; today we would call them in-care children. He got close to them, spoke their language, was a familiar sight, a giant outside the school surrounded by children full of the joys of living. They loved him, he made them laugh, this handsome priest who took such an interest in them. To them he was Gregory Peck or Victor Mature; (in Dunstable he was Noel Purcell). Smyllum girls adored him and no wonder with words such as "Sweetheart, what is it today?" they flocked to Confession to Maurice. The great man had wide interests. During the war there were

9,000 Poles in Douglas, part of the Free Polish Army. They had their own Chaplains but Maurice visited them learning their language. In Thankerton, eight miles outside Lanark, he made friends with another group, the Italian prisoners of war and had them singing at the Midnight Mass one Christmas.

There is no doubt that Maurice was an outstanding figure in Lanark and so nobody was surprised when he was sent to Dunstable in September 1957 as Parish Priest of St Mary's, the parish the Spanish Vins very kindly handed over to us. What a lasting impression he made on that parish! The 600 Mass-going population soon became 2,000 necessitating the building of that beautiful magnificent round church of which the parishioners are so proud and often refer to as "Fr O'Neill's church". He also provided the people of Houghton Regis, the new town two miles north east of Dunstable, with a large Church Hall. On Sundays it was a church, on weekdays it was used for Catechism classes. Maurice was very conscious of the lack of a Catholic school so he put on Religious Lessons for the children. He was a master at handling children and immediately had a Children's Mass with a Children's Choir each Sunday. He had seen such a mass while on a mission in Middlesbrough Cathedral conducted by Canon Sullivan. While Mass was said in Latin at the altar Maurice was down in the aisle with the children using Fr Harry Morrin's *Children's Mass Book*. He held those children and parents spell-bound.

At that mass and at all masses he drove home to parents and children the necessity of Sunday School. By dint of Sunday Notices and announcing the numbers attending each Sunday he built up the numbers to over 400 children. This meant using every available space in the Church, the sacristy, the Presbytery, the Hall, also the Priory School, a big school in Dunstable which Maurice hoped to acquire for a Catholic School. He organised an army of teachers including Loreto Sisters and some of their teachers from St Alban's, also Brothers of the Sacred Heart who at that time had a house in Dunstable.

Another stroke of genius was the way he met all the Head Teachers in the local schools and opened the way for the priests to go into every school at least once a week and have a class with the Catholic children. He went further and even got Catholic teachers on the staff of two schools. What an organiser! What a diplomat! One headmaster took a full course of instruction in the Catholic Faith.

Maurice had only one Vincentian curate in my time; that was enough for him! But he managed to get a secular priest, Joe Nolan, chaplain to the men building the Ml and part time curate in the parish. Maurice was

very much at ease in the company of the great, bishops, professional types, etc, but I remember one occasion when it was not so. Another priest, chaplain to the Irish, was arriving at Heathrow. Maurice the genial host invited him to Dunstable to meet Joe Nolan. At that meal Maurice had little or nothing to say for once, he was so overpowered by the new priest arriving from Ireland. That priest was Eamonn Casey, now Bishop of Galway.

For fear of canonising Maurice so soon, he had one addiction; he was addicted to strong black tea, a cup every hour from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. when he retired with his last cup and a tablet for his migraine. Two questions I never got an answer to: 1, How did he pass his Driving Test in Lanark? 2, How did the Dominicans miss such a character, and he from Newbridge?

Whatever the answer to No. 2 the Dominicans asked Maurice back to give their priests' retreat. He was also asked by the Bishop of Northampton to give his priests a retreat.

Maurice had many talents—gifts of nature and grace and he used them for the salvation of souls. May the Good Lord reward him now.

John O'Hare,C.M.

MAURICE REGIS O'NEILL, C.M.
Born: Newbridge, Co. Kildare, 7 June 1914.
Entered the Congregation: 17 October 1936.
Final vows: 18 October 1938.
Ordained a priest in Clonliffe College by Dr McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, 30 May 1943.

APPOINTMENTS
1943-1957 St Mary's, Lanark.
1957-1965 St Mary's, Dunstable.
1965-1966 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1966-1972 St Cedd's, Goodmayes.
1972-1974 293 Waldegrave Road.
1974-1986 St Vincent's, Castleknock.

Died 5 July 1986.

Fr Michael Murphy, C.M.

If one asked Michael Murphy how he would like to be remembered his response would be "Don't say anything; just remember me in your prayers". This would not show false humility, but something of his true character.

It is easy to pay tribute to a confrère whose life has been punctuated with identifiable achievements, one who for one reason or another has been very much in the community "eye" if not in the public one. Michael was the very antithesis of all that.

His life's work was the parish mission and retreats, something so close to the mind of St Vincent. He was a fine preacher, with the musical Cork voice, and one who brought enthusiasm into his celebration of the Eucharist and other sacraments.

In latter years it is as bursar that we remember him, his quiet and methodical efficiency.

Michael was a private person. He had a reserve for social visiting. He was most at home in his own community. He had a gifted sense of fun and good humour and was always so obliging.

His sense of poverty was always to be admired. He went on missions with the minimum of luggage; we used to say "three socks". His room was uncluttered, to say the very least. He had so little personal belongings; just his tiny radio.

Michael was an even-tempered man who never seemed to get annoyed. His personal piety could never be concealed.

During his latter years, when he became terminally ill, he suffered much, yet he did so with great silence and forbearance; one might say cheerfully. He was so grateful to the Daughters in Holy Angels, Glenmaroon, for their care and kindness to him. He was at home with the Daughters also, and won a place in their hearts.

All were edified by his patient acceptance of God's will to the end.

The psalmist has captured his character:

> O Lord, my heart is not proud,
> Nor haughty my eyes;
> I have not gone after things too great,
> Nor marvels beyond me (Ps 130).

Donal Gallagher, C.M.

MICHAEL MURPHY, C.M.
Born: Kinsale, Co. Cork, 5 December 1918.
Entered the Congregation: 7 September 1938.
Final vows: 8 September 1940.
Ordained a priest in Clonliffe College by Dr McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin, 26 May 1945.

APPOINTMENTS
1945-1946 All Hallows.
1946-1968 St Vincent's, Cork.
1968-1971 St Kevin's, Glenart.
1971-1986 St Peter's, Phibsboro.

Died 25 July 1986.