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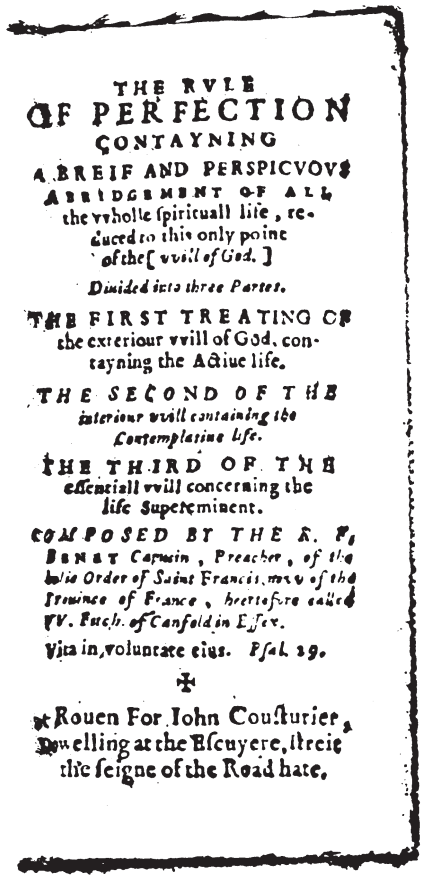

THE RVLE
OF PERFECTION
CONTAYNING
A BREIF AND PERSPICVOVS
ABRIDGEMENT OF ALL
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duced to this only poinc
of the [vvill of God.]

Divided into three Partes.

THE FIRST TREATING OF
the exteriour vvill of God, con-
tayning the Actiue life.

THE SECOND OF THE
interiour vvill containing the
Contemplatiue life.

THE THIRD OF THE
eſſentiall vvill concerning the
life Supereminent.

COMPOSED BY THE R. F.
BENET Capucin, *Preacher, of the*
holie Order of Saint Francis, more of the
Prouince of France, heretofore called
FV. Fuch. of Canfold in Eſſex.

Vita in voluntate eius. *Pſal. 29.*

✠

Rouen For Iohn Couſturier,
dwelling at the Eſcuyere, ſtreit
the ſeigne of the Road hate.

Photocopy of the title-page (actual size) of the copy of the Rouen edition (1608) in the library of the Irish College in Paris.

Contents

Editorial

The articles in this issue were not written around any unifying theme, yet a certain consistent thread may be perceived running through some of them. The image of St Vincent as a man of enormous activity always needs to be corrected by the reminder that there was a real contemplative dimension to him. Benet of Canfield was one of the great contemplatives of his day and his influence on Vincent is being more and more investigated. Benet and Vincent both taught the importance of spiritual direction, and the third article looks at developments in this area. The homily deals with this aspect of ministry in Maynooth. One of the contributions to the Forum tries to tease out in what way the spirituality of a Vincentian is different from that of a diocesan priest, and the other contribution ranges over various ways in which a priest may minister in a parish context. The two historical articles deal respectively with a famous mission in the early days of the Province and period in the history of the development of the Province's formation programme for its students.

St Vincent and Contemplation

Michael Imediedu Edem

Introduction

St Vincent, the son of a poor farmer from Pouy in the district of Dax, was a shepherd-boy before he began his life of scholarship out of the love and the sweat of his parents. When he became a priest he was involved in so many works, including chaplaincy to the galley-slaves, retreats and missions, provision of food to the poor, taking care of abandoned children, missionary activities abroad and the training of priests in seminaries. He founded the Congregation of the Mission for men and the Daughters of Charity for women to take care of the diverse activities. Because of these many-sided activities he is, to many, nothing other than an active worker, or the Father of the Poor, or the Patron of all Works of Mercy, as he was proclaimed by Leo XIII in 1885. As a result of his involvement with the poor, the sublime name of the saint is sometimes reduced, either mistakenly or unconsciously, to "Vincent de Poor", especially in Nigeria and in many other countries where he is normally associated with the Society of St Vincent de Paul founded by Frederic Ozanam.

In the popular conception St Vincent is an active worker and only rarely do people think of the other side of his life. If one were to pierce through and get to the core of St Vincent's life and work it would be discovered that his tenacious spirit was not sustained by any other thing than the contemplative attitude, which dominated his whole life. Of all the aspects of the life of Vincent that have been written on, contemplation is the part that receives the least adequate treatment. Sometimes it is treated simply as an appendix. In some cases a few lines are devoted to it and then it is dismissed as unceremoniously as it began. Andre Dodin in his book *En prière avec Monsieur Vincent* has a few lines on contemplation in the chapter dealing with difficulties and adaptations. In this section he seems to hold that St Vincent drew his contemplative life from St Ignatius of Loyola.[1] There is no gainsaying that Vincent was influenced by St Ignatius and many others in this respect, but to say that he had a total dependence on him may not be very safe. If that were to be the case then his whole attitude would have been Ignatian. In actual

fact his outlook is totally different from that of Ignatius, for he does not involve himself with the consolations and desolations as found in Ignatius.

In the Dictionnaire de Spiritualité there are many ennumerations of the various schools of spirituality. Even though most of these are French in origin, and Vincent was French, nothing is mentioned about him at all.[2] What could be inferred from this apart from the fact that St Vincent did not develop any didactic treatise on contemplation? This could also be said of many other subjects in the life of St Vincent. Even though the systematic treatise is lacking in St Vincent's treatment of contemplation the practical aspect is not lacking at all.

Considering the fact that St Vincent is not associated with contemplation it might not be very surprising to have a look at a letter which he wrote to one of his priests, Claude Dufour the superior in Saintes, in 1647. In this letter the attitude of Vincent is ambivalent and one might immediately conclude from here that he was against contemplation. A consideration of the said letter would give a clue to what has just been said.

The seemingly contradictory attitudes of St Vincent about contemplation

The letter was begun by Vincent thus:

> I cannot express the consolation my soul received from the last letter you wrote to me, and from the resolution which our Lord has given you. Yes indeed, Sir, and I think heaven itself rejoices at this; for, alas, the Church has enough solitaries through his mercy, and too many useless persons, and even more who are tearing her apart. Her great need is to have men who can evangelise, who work to purge her, to illuminate her, and to unite her to her divine spouse. And that is what you are doing, through his divine goodness.

Going through these quoted lines would one not jump to the conclusion that Vincent was against contemplation? From the above exposition the most probable conclusion one might arrive at would be that he did not like contemplation and he never wanted others to be involved in it, for he used his authority as Superior General to debar Dufour from leaving the Congregation when he wanted to do so. It could also be construed that he did not like the solitary persons, the monks, because

they were so many, nor the number of useless persons in the Church, when active workers were needed and nothing was being done in that regard. Even if these were to be valid arguments, would this blot out the facts and reasons why Vincent has to hinder the priest from carrying out his intentions? After the first part of this letter Vincent went on to say that he was not going to disclose to Dufour the admiration which the prior of the Carthusian monastery of Mont-Dieu expressed to him when the prior spent a day in St Lazare at an ordination. In an attempt to throw light on what he was talking about he mentioned that the prior had more missionary spirit than himself (III 203). As a good father he exhorted the confrère to have more confidence in our Lord, who called the members of the Congregation to this way of life, and to forget about his thoughts. He also promised that he would do his best to console him in whatever way he would be capable of.[3]

A year later, in 1648, Claude Dufour wrote a letter to Vincent making some complaints, and Vincent wrote back on 22 July. In this letter Vincent thanked him very warmly for the letter, and almost re-emphasised the same points he had already written. Included amongst the major points mentioned were the following:

> There is a great difference between the apostolic life and the solitude of the Carthusians. The latter is, of course, very holy but it is not suitable for those whom God has called to the former, which is in itself more excellent; otherwise St John the Baptist and our Lord himself would not have preferred it to the other, which they did by leaving the desert to preach to the people. Besides which, the apostolic life does not exclude contemplation, but embraces it and avails of it in order better to know the eternal truths which it must announce; and, besides, it is more useful to the neighbour whom we must love as ourselves, and as a consequence aid him in a way which solitaries do not (III 346-7).

The last part of this second letter as seen gives a very great hope to the positive dimensions rather than the all-embracing negativity that seemed to dominate the first letter. Here Vincent indicates in a subtle way his reason for restraining Dufour from joining the monastery. His fatherly care, experience and love constrained him to act in this apparently strange manner. In the first letter it was noticed that the saint expressed a great desire to help Dufour overcome his problems. This same attitude was demonstrated in an experiential and concrete manner rather than by using philosophical principles and remaining in the air

without rendering help in any way. Reading through these letters in a cursory manner it would be discovered that even though there is an apparent negation of contemplation the facts contained therein demonstrate the contrary. St Vincent was not against contemplation as an aspect of prayer; what he was not in support of was the idea of, making contemplation solely a thing of the monastery.

> Apostolic involvement in the world, community life and the experience of God in prayer complement one another in the life of a Vincentian… and through the intimate union of prayer and apostolate the confrère becomes a contemplative in action and an apostle in prayer.[4]

The object of contemplation as manifested in intimacy with God, and in providence and indifference

In order to put this section into its proper context it would be good to consider the following:

> If we consider the action of God who takes care of the world and every soul in particular, the contemplative life tends always and more often to an abandonment to divine providence. At the end of such a spiritual journey one ends up looking at every event which occurs with faith, and this confers a notable continuity with contemplative prayer.[5]

Such tendency motivated St Vincent to found the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity to take care of the various categories of poor people in France. This providential outlook was so great in his life that he saw not only the poor to be ministered to but the Christ who lives in the poor and in the lovers of the poor:

> God loves the poor; he also loves the lovers of the poor. When someone loves another he loves, too, those who love and serve the other. So we too hope that God would love us on account of the poor.[6]

Contemplation involves not only the proper vision of life, orientation to the Trinity, abandonment to divine providence and union with God, but also has a transforming effect which coalesces all these diverse elements. It is in this way that "union with God disposes one to know

his holy will and to want what he wants and to will what he wills".[7] To want to serve the poor not for personal motives but in recognition of God in the poor puts his theocentric motives in a limelight and disposed towards the providential hand of God and submission to his will. For Vincent "submitting to the will of God was just like submitting all the faculties of his soul, the organs of his body and his actions, to God in prayer, in the continuous awareness of God's presence, and this was just like saying with St Paul 'Lord, what do you want me to do?"'.[8]

The submission that is spoken of here is not a slavish type of submission in which the person has no freedom of choice; the one mentioned here is that which is undertaken willingly and joyfully as a result of freedom of relationship existing between the two persons. Concerning this St Vincent says:

> If he was so careful about consulting God, about listening to him and about using such great circumspection in distinguishing the true inspirations which were coming from the Holy Spirit from the false ones coming from the devil's suggestion, or from disordered natural movements, it was in order to know the will of God with greater certainty, and to put himself in the way of carrying it out. Finally, if he so strongly rejected all the maxims of the world in order to embrace those of the gospel, if he so perfectly renounced himself, if he embraced the cross with so much affection and if he gave himself up to doing and suffering everything for God, it was to conform himself more perfectly to everything willed by his divine majesty; and he had such an esteem of the practice of this holy conformity that one day, from the fullness of his heart, he uttered this beautiful sentence, that "to conform oneself in all things to the will of God, and take one's pleasure in it, was to live on earth a totally angelic life, and it was even to live the life of Jesus Christ".[9]

Here Vincent is using submission to the will of God as a means of achieving a communitarian life with the Lord, the type that leads to discernment and rendering one capable of identifying with Jesus in his sufferings.[10] It is always an intimate friend that would know the intimate thoughts of the friend. At the depth of very intimate union there is always love as a binding force. It is what Vincent is demonstrating here, when he says:

> The perfection of love does not consist in ecstasies but in doing

> well the will of God, and he will be of all men the most perfect who will have his will most conformed to that of God; hence, our perfection consists in so uniting our will to that of God that his will and ours may be only one act of willing and non-willing, and he who will excel more on this point will be the most perfect.[11]

The intimate union does not consist in ecstasies but in an identification with Jesus in his totality, even in his own sufferings. Speaking of the identification with the sufferings of Christ in such a light manner indicates his freedom and the transformation and purification that underpin the affective love more and more. Of course the intimate union that is spoken of would not be there if conformity were to be unreflective, irrational and blind adherence, without the point of intersection of mind and will in order to produce an integratedly harmonious life of prayer. It is in the afflictions and sufferings, whether they are interior or exterior, that the true love of God appears, and the same applies to the perfect conformity to his will. Contemplation is a free gift of God to the individual, who freely responds to this grace of God. It issues itself in union or in intimate relationship of love with the Lord, that purifies and transforms the individual in a very profound way so that the sense of abandonment to divine providence or submission to the will of God is provoked, and the right spirit of indifference is generated, and the vision of the person is illumined in order to create an outlet for practical life.

When the heart of man is united to God's good pleasure, acquiring not solely with patience but also with peace and joy the dispositions of the divine goodness, it receives and carries with love the crosses that the good Lord sends, since this is his own good delight.[12] In order to carry the crosses with joy and peace there is need for resignation and an effort at doing away with all natural repugnances, and submitting all to the good pleasure of God.[13] "Resignation" here is not to be understood in terms of the philosophy of indifferentism in which one is passive about the whole situation, refuses to make any decision and falls back on pessimism because he is incapable of doing anything about it. This type of vision would fight against all forms of self-affirmation which may be translated as "the courage to be",[14] which is the whole central message of Paul Tillich's book. "Reliance on the providence of God", "Resignation", and "Indifference" in the religious sense do not provoke the negative feelings and anxieties that result from the type of philosophy that has just been referred to. Vincent's use of these terms is not meant to create negative feelings but to generate courage to move forward and be united with the Lord in order to be more useful to the

neighbour and become more human, flexible with the same sentiments with our Divine Master and Lord. With this type of spirit one would be able to eat, and use any type of clothes, or bed, offered to him [15]. Vincent's capacity to depend on the providential hand of God, to be indifferent to things in a positive sense, make positive judgements and discernments, love affectively and effectively, and be more lively in a concrete human situation reveal a depth of the incarnated Christ made present in his life. As such, the words of our Lord "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these you neglected to do it to me" (Mt 25: 45).

Direction and conferences

From his storehouse he was able to bring out things both old and new to help those whom he had the privilege of taking care of. He cherished people and accepted them in their own natural condition. The example of this is typified in the contemplative life of the noble lady Jeanne de Chantal whose fruit of contemplation he used in a conference to the Daughters. This lady used the statue of Our Lady for her prayer. She looked at the eyes and said:

> O beautiful eyes, how pure you are! You have never served for anything except to give glory to my God. What purity appears in your holy eyes! What a difference from mine, by which I have so offended my God! I no longer want to give them so much freedom but, on the contrary, I will accustom them to modesty. (IX 31)

On another occasion she looked at the mouth and said:

> O holy mouth, how many times have you opened to give praise to God, to instruct the neighbour and edify him! You never opened to commit sin. What a difference from mine, which has always done the opposite! I want, helped by the grace of my God and your charity, Holy Virgin, to keep a closer watch on my words, especially to refrain from such and such which are disedifying and sadden the neighbour. (IX 31)

Probably Vincent used these examples to encourage and challenge the sisters to a life of more intimate prayer and communion with our Lord in order to come to a better realisation of their own weakness and need of total dependence on the Lord. The lady mentioned was a directee of Vincent for a long time. So, using the example of this woman in such a context was a great challenge to the Daughters, both those of

his own time and those of ours.

On another occasion he spoke to the Daughters of Charity, or rather he gave a conference to them, and began by asking what they understood by affective and effective love. One sister answered as follows: "Affective love makes us love God with tenderness and joy; effective love makes us come to the practice of good works, which present themselves to be done, for him" (IX 598-9). In order to practicalise this he gave an example of a father who had two sons. He said that one of the children was younger and the father showed a very tender love for him and allowed him to play with him, eat with him and do everything with him. He had another son who was older. He loved him but he did not witness to this love in the same way to the elder son as he did to the younger. If a question arose as to whom he would like to be his heir he pointed to the older son. To drive home this lesson he said that the love shown to the senior son is effective love and the other is affective love. He then added that the father needs to have both types of love (IX 599).

The images of playing, eating and going out with the father used by Vincent to describe these two types of love reveal the confidence of the saint with God and the capacity to be at home with him. This intimate way of talking about the relationship brings out the freedom with which he spoke, the practical experiential knowledge that is profound but at the same time not rooted in academic knowledge, though rooted in personal relationship. This simple attitude of describing an intimate relationship of that nature calls to mind the description of the Little Flower who used the same term "playing" as Vincent did. She said that she had offered herself to the child Jesus as his "plaything", but not as the sort of expensive toy that is looked at but not used; she says that Jesus heard her prayer.[15]

St Thérèse has the same central point, and conveys the same idea, as Vincent, but there is a difference in detail. In Vincent's case the image of the father and the two sons is used, whereas in Thérèse it is the image of the child Jesus and the plaything which is used. What is central to both is the freedom and the willingness of being used as an object of "play". What is attractive in this is the utter disposability and abandonment which come out very strongly in each case. This type of attitude did not grow in a single day; it grew gradually, but surely and steadily too. This type of concept reveals a transcendental affective love that derives its origin from God and not from man. Thus Vincent was instructed by those he directed, and also instructed others by his conferences and by his spiritual life.

Personal life and prayer life

In his personal life Vincent practised virtues in all the circumstances of his life, and in the crosses the Lord wished to send him. In spite of all the failures he met in his life no one ever heard him say anything other than "Blessed be God!",[1]" "May the name of God be blessed".[17] Abelly adds that this was his normal disposition by which he made the intentions of his heart known. The presentation of the situation may look unrealistic and it may seem that Abelly was trying to angelise Vincent, or to make him look very extraordinary or like a superman, but if one thinks more of the message that the author wants to convey than of the details then the whole account would be appreciated in a different way.

There is no doubt that Vincent did not write any treatise on contemplation like the great doctors of the Church on mysticism and contemplation, but the riches of his personal life and testimony did more for his contemporaries than written scrolls. In one of the copies in one of the preserved prayers of Vincent the heart of a passionate lover who is totally free for the other is brought out. He prayed:

> O Saviour of my soul, fill us with those attitudes which so powerfully made you humble, those attitudes which made you prefer insult to praise, and those which made you seek the Father's glory in your own belittlement. Let us begin right now to reject everything which is not for your honour and our own disparagement, everything which smacks of vanity, ostentation and self-importance; let us try from now on to act with real humility; let us renounce once and for all the approval of misguided and misleading people, and foolish imagination about the success of our work. Finally, Lord, let us learn to be really humble of heart, by your grace and by your example (XII 211).

In this prayer Vincent is trying to be totally for God, or rather to devote everything to God, his thoughts, imaginations, feelings, his will and all his faculties. The element of resignation which induced him to seek the will of God in everything is the underlying principle to this prayer. From all that is seen so far it would be noticed that the contemplative spirit of Vincent did not superhumanise him in any way, or dehumanise him at all. It rather put him on the right pedestal to do what was right. The attitude of Vincent that comes out in a very general way is his capacity to do something slowly but surely and courageously, without any rush. He carried out in his own life the patience which he taught. The typical example which can exemplify this is the case of the

St Lazare complex, which was the biggest in Paris at the time. Many of the buildings in that complex were very old and needed renovation; some of the walls were almost crumbling and many of the places were very dirty. This could have helped in Vincent's refusal to accept the edifice for one whole year. And any time something was mentioned about it he dismissed it and changed the topic to something else. It was after one year, with the advice of André Duval that he decided to accept the complex from Adrien le Bon.[ls]

The refusal of Vincent in this case could be termed weakness since he refused to receive what was granted to him free of charge. At the same time it need not be forgotten that money was not all that easy to come by. It was sometimes difficult to feed the poor people he took care of, and maybe when Vincent calculated the cost of this renovation he decided not to involve himself in it. It could be he did not want to rush into it so as not to give the impression that he was waiting for that opportunity. Whatever the reason might have been the fact remains that Vincent needed some time for reflection and discernment, especially in a matter which was going to affect the future of the Congregation. It might not be too wrong to presume that he finally accepted the place as a result of his contemplation. It would not be too surprising if he used his famous phrases "God is good", "May the name of the Lord be blessed" in such a situation. He was always quick to listen, but not as quick to respond as to listen. This would surely correspond to the injunction of St James "Be quick to listen but slow to speak and slow to rouse your temper" (Jas 1: 19). He was not slow to listen but slow to act. He finally acted the way he did because of the good of those he was working for. It might not have been very edifying if he were to miss such a golden chance offered gratuitously to him. The case of St Lazare is mentioned here not because of its historical reason but because of the fact that it illuminates the whole philosophy of life of Vincent. He was capable of waiting on God instead of rushing him into something or trying to force his own decisions on him and claim that it was God's will. The openness and freedom that dominated his attitude in this context are to be greatly valued and admired.

The courage of Vincent has already been noted. This comes out more brilliantly where that of many a man would fail. He reversed his former position, or rather his former shaky position, and took the bull by the horns without bothering himself about fear of failure, or what others would say. He outlawed and overlooked such novel thoughts and imaginations and appeared victorious. What conclusion could be drawn from this? "My power is at best in weakness" (2 Cor 12: 9), he would say with

St Paul. Such proclamation is never that of carnal thinking but from the Christ who lives in the person. "I have been crucified with Christ and I live now not with my life but with the life of Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2: 19-20). Where would he have derived such strength except from the very source of power itself, especially when the so-called power fails? Would there be a courageous man to stand upright in spite of oppositions and not wanting to save his face and look for admirers? Who would like to go against the sacrosanct stereotyped established norms in order to arrive at a new phase of birth? If there were any person to risk that would there not be an unconscious or quasi-reflex response such as "That is not the normal way", or "The change may come later, but surely not in my days?" Who would bell the cat?

The consequence of his contemplation

The last part of the "Personal and prayer life" throws out a great challenge and in some ways it can even be regarded as the conclusion, but the conclusion still has to be made. It was mentioned earlier that contemplation involves not only the proper vision of life, orientation to the Trinity, abandonment to divine providence, and union with God, but that it has also a transforming effect which coalesces all the diverse elements. The various elements have already surfaced in one way or another in this article, for example the aspect of faith which runs through his entire life and activities and the attempt in which he struggled to make it his own. This reactivated the various aspects of the mystery of salvation for him. The simplicity and clearness with which he perceived things and situations indicate a great depth of union with God. This permeated his entire prayer life. In Damascus House, Mill Hill, the timetable of the daily life of Vincent is given. There it is indicated that he used to get up at 4.00 a.m. every day and at 4.30 he would be in the chapel for prayer and mass till about 8.00. So it would not be surprising if Vincent developed this attitude of spending time with God. He felt so much at home in the chapel because of his intimacy with God. Only intimate friends can stay with each other for a very long time without getting tired of each other and without fidgeting. The fervour with which he celebrated mass can be discovered in his exhortations to the confrères to be recollected always and be aware of the presence of God. Abelly says that one never saw him dissipated about anything. Every day he was recollected and would not reply to any question asked him without a small pause, especially if the thing was important. Within such a moment he would raise his mind to God to ask for his light and grace before responding to such a question or proposition.[19] As he knew through his own experi-

ence the graces and blessings enclosed in his interior recollection, and in the attention he paid to the presence of God, he made others share in this as much as he could. For this reason he had these words put up in various places in St Lazare in block letters: *Dieu vous regarde* (God is looking at you).[20] Such an expression, if used in an aggressive manner, would mean calling God's displeasure on somebody, or calling God to be judge, but in the context in which Vincent used it it was rather a reminder to all who came in contact with those words to be aware of the presence of God. And he said that if anyone practised recollection in his life, and followed this ardently, he would arrive very soon at a very high level of sanctity.[21] On another occasion he said:

> The thought of the presence of God makes the practice of unceasingly doing his will familiar to us. Remembering the divine presence... will become a habit, so that in the end we will be, as it were, animated by this divine presence.[22]

Contemplation is the concretisation and deepening of prayer life. In a way it is an appropriation and acknowledgement of an intimate relational life that is real. It results from the transformation and illumination that is manifested in daily life, whether in big or small matters. The resistance of Vincent to Jansenism and the encouragement of frequent communion[23] would give a clue to what has just been said. His friendly relationship to his confrères (cf the letter to Claude Dufour already mentioned) and to others attracted various groups of people to him. The freedom which he loved showed itself not only on the intellectual level that terminates at the head but also on the level of a realisation of one's own sinfulness, the joy of forgiveness and cooperation with the grace of God more and more. It is in this way that the spirit of humility, simplicity and openness emerges. It is with this freedom that Vincent stressed simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal for souls in the Common Rules. Reading through these maxims one would discover underneath the wording a profound wisdom tinted with sobriety and rooted in grace. In all this the background of his contemplative thought is not lacking: abandonment to divine providence, indifference and intimacy with God. His abandonment to divine providence did not make him lax in areas where he was supposed to be active, nor did indifference provoke in him a spirit of passivity. He was balanced and intimately united with God and very down to earth with men. His contemplative life is a spiritual life incarnated in the material world.

NOTES

1. cf André Dodin: *En prière avec Monsieur Vincent,* Arras, 1950, p 65.
2. The enumeration of the various schools of spirituality includes: the Carmelite, the Franciscan, the Ignatian, the Benedictine, that of Mgr Waffelaert, the Sulpician and that of Mgr Saudreau. See "Contemplation" in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité,* vol. II, ii, 1643.
3. Loc.cit.; cf also St Gregory the Great on the combination of what he called "Two lives" in *Le Regole Pastorale, 1943, Bk 2: 5,* p 63. Cuthbert Butler in his book *Western Mysticism* has a section on Gregory the Great in which he makes an analysis of his writing on contemplation and indicates that the true "mixed life" is the best, cf p 184. In Vincent's letter to Claude Dufour he wanted to bring home this fact, or rather the necessity of combining these two lives and their excellence as manifested in actual pastoral life.
4. *Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission,* 1980, chapter 4, "Prayer", No. 60, p 11.
5. Bernard "Contemplazione" in *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualitá, p 270.*
6. *The Office of Readings for the feast of St Vincent, 27 September.*
7. Abelly: *Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul,* Paris, Gaume, 1891, vol. Ill, p 49.
8. Loc. cit.
9. Loc. cit. cf also St John of the Cross: *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* on self-negation.
10. cf St John of the Cross, op. cit., on suffering for Christ's sake, and on self-annihilation.
11. Abelly, op. cit. p 5l.
12. Ibid p. 60.
13. Loc. cit.
14. cf Paul Tillich *The Courage to Be.*
15. St Thérèse of Lisieux: *The Story of a Soul,* Wheathampstead, 1973, p 75.
16. Abelly op. cit. p 60.
17. Loc. cit.
18. Coste: *Le Grand Saint du Grand Siècle,* Paris 1932, pp 193-6.
19. Abelly op. cit. p 72.
20. Ibid, p 173.
21. Loc. cit.
22. Ibid p 75.
23. Roman: *Vincenzo di Paoli,* Milan, 1986; on frequent communion, pp 523ff, on Jansenism pp 513ff.

An Introduction to Benet of Canfield

Thomas Davitt

(Revised version of paper read to
Vincentian Study Group. February 1987)

Biography

A family named Fitch, with roots back in the 13th century, is documented as owning much land in Essex in later centuries. In the first half of the 16th century a William Fitch took up residence in the Essex village of Little Canfield, about 35 miles slightly north-east of London. By his second wife he had four sons, Thomas, William (who died in infancy), another William and Francis. The second William, born in 1562 on a date unknown, is the man we are concerned with.

About 1579 he went to London to study law, doing his studies at New Inn, one of the eight Inns of Chancery. Having finished his preliminary studies there he was admitted on 3 November 1580, aged 18, to the Middle Temple, one of the four Inns of Court, for more specifically legal studies. The period of study there was normally about seven years, at the end of which students were called to the Bar to practise as barristers. For the first five years of William Fitch's law studies we have little information. From then on, though, things began to happen and we have exact dates.

As regards religion Fitch was Anglican. He had Catholic cousins called Wiseman, one of whom was also studying law at the Middle Temple at the same time. In the Temple Church the morning preacher was Anglican and the evening one Calvinist. Fitch, therefore, had some contact with three forms of Christianity.

In the third week of July 1585 Fitch went down the country to stay with a friend; he was then 23 years old. On Saturday 23 July he picked up, out of curiosity, a small book which he saw lying on a table in his friend's house, a book about which he had heard a lot of praise. It was called *The First Book of Christian Exercises appertaining to Resolution,*

by Robert Parsons SJ, published in 1582 in Rouen. A Protestant version came out in 1584. Fitch read some pages and was somewhat upset, and he put the book aside. The following Tuesday, the 26th, he took it up again and read much more. He felt urged to take the book's contents seriously and apply to himself what it said. He had not been living a dissolute life, merely the rather uncommitted one of a young nominal Protestant of his time and background. He felt called by what he read to a deeper religious commitment, and at the same time felt repelled by what this would demand of him. For two or three days he was in a sort of depression, pulled in both directions at the same time. On Thursday the 27th or Friday the 28th he chose definitively for God.

But as soon as he made this decision he was faced with another; should he remain Protestant or become a Catholic? He decided that the following Monday he would return to London to find and read other books which would help him to decide. He finished Parsons' book on Friday the 28th and went out for a walk in the fields after his evening meal, to reflect on what he had read. After a short walk he saw a herd of horses moving along and merely glanced at them. When he looked at them a second time he realised that they were not like any horses he had ever seen and he thought they were ghosts. When he got a bit nearer he saw they were horses and was annoyed with himself, and continued on. After half a dozen steps he looked back, and could not see any horses; instead there was a crowd of poorly dressed people; he thought they were haymakers. He was a bit puzzled, so he looked back again and this time he saw a different group, dressed in odd-looking whitish-grey robes. He tried to go to meet them, but no matter how quickly he went they stayed the same distance from him. He stopped, rubbed his eyes and when he looked again all he saw was a tall man in white, who then vanished.

That evening he told all this to a fellow-guest at the house with whom he shared a room; this man was a Catholic. This friend told him that he would need to take some advice and do a lot of reading to clarify his mind about whether to become a Catholic or not. Fitch's attitude was that he would consult persons of both Churches, do his own reading, and make up his own mind. The following day, Saturday, they returned to London, two days earlier than planned. On arrival they separated, Fitch going to discuss the matter with Protestants, the friend to do so with some Catholics; they arranged to meet the following day to pool results.

In his room Fitch decided to rough out on paper the points he would raise. He came to the conclusion that everything hinged on the truth or

falsity of the claim that Christ was present in the Eucharist. If he was satisfied about the reality of this presence then he would join the Church which taught it. If he was satisfied about the falsity of the claim he would be a member of the Church which rejected it. He then went out to find a Puritan friend and after only a short conversation with him in the garden some other people arrived and Fitch was unable to raise with him the religious matters he had prepared; his friend invited him to come to dinner the following day. Fitch left and went to the lodgings of the Catholic friend who had been with him in the country, but he was out; he left a note for him and returned home to reflect, and to pray about the whole matter. He found he could not think clearly, nor could he pray. He read parts of Parsons' book again but found them of little help. He tried to get some sleep but failed also in that. Then it suddenly struck him that he was relying far too much on his own powers of reasoning and showing insufficient trust in God. As soon as he saw things in this light he found that all his worries vanished and he could pray again.

While he was praying his Catholic friend, who had found his note, arrived. Fitch's idea had been to get this friend to explain Catholicism in detail to him to help him make up his mind. But after what he had just been through he had already made up his mind to become a Catholic and needed no further convincing. They spent the rest of the night discussing religious topics.

The following day, Sunday 1 August, they went to Newgate prison where Fitch's friend knew a priest prisoner, and Fitch was received into the Catholic Church. From the moment he had first picked up Parsons' book until the time of his reception into the Church only eight days had passed; he himself has left a record of the dates.

He at once got down to a study of the scriptures and theology and found the Protestant position unconvincing. He decided he would have to leave England, for two reasons: to get away from Protestants in case they would corrupt him, and to live in a country where Catholicism was practised openly and without hindrance. He arranged for about half his income to be spent on helping the poor and then, on 27 February 1586, he left for France. On arrival he went to Douai and made a retreat.

He was already wondering whether he should join a religious order, and asked advice from many different people. The advice varied in detail from person to person, but they were all agreed on one thing: he should not enter a religious order. On Saturday 28 May 1586, the day before Trinity Sunday, he decided to have three masses celebrated to help him reach a decision. Around midnight he had some sort of ecstasy and a clear indication that he should join a religious order. His

own preference inclined him towards St Francis of Assisi; but was it to be the Franciscans or the Capuchins? The latter had been in France for less than six years but already had a flourishing Paris Province with fourteen houses. He made up his mind to go to Rome and ask the Pope which branch was more faithful to the spirit of St Francis, but first he would go to Paris and speak to friars of each order. He was to go to the Capuchin house in Meudon, now engulfed by the suburbs of Paris, to discuss the matter with one of the friars. On the way he had some sort of further enlightenment from God and understood that the vision he had had in England meant that he should be a Capuchin. On arrival at the the friary, then, instead of asking advice he applied to enter the novitiate. Shortly afterwards, on 23 March 1587, less that two years after the day on which he had first picked up Parsons' book, he began his Capuchin novitiate in Paris. He was given the religious name of Benoit, the French form of Benedict. In English, though, he used the older form of Benet. In line with normal Capuchin usage the name of his birthplace was appended to his religious name and from then on he was known as Benet of Canfield.

During his novitiate he had all sorts of mystical experiences and ecstasy, and most of the community wanted to get rid of him; the Superior and the Provincial, however, did not. He was given a very hard time, though, by the others in the hope, apparently, of inducing him to leave of his own accord, but this did not work. He made his first profession after twelve months, and went to Italy, probably Venice, for his theological studies. We do not have details of dates for this period as his autobiographical writings stop at his entry into the novitiate. In view of the various visions, ecstasies and other mystical experiences which he had it is interesting to note that he was under the impression that everyone had these.

We do not have the date or place of his ordination, and the next date we have is 29 September 1592 when he was appointed Definitor (Provincial Consultor) in Paris. In July 1599 he left France and returned to England.

In company with a Scottish Capuchin, John Chrysostom Campbell, he landed near Dover. The mere fact of landing, as friars, made them guilty of treason. They called at what they thought was an inn but which was, in fact, a prison. Their habits were noticed under their outer garb and they were arrested and sent to London for interrogation, and kept at first in the Tower. Then Campbell was transferred to the Marshalsea and Benet to the Clink. In January 1600 they were both transferred to Wisbech in Cambridgeshire and in December 1600 again moved, this

time to Framlingham. In either 1602 or 1603, as a result of diplomatic efforts by the French king, Benet was banished from England and returned to France.

For the period between his return to France and his death in 1611 we have only three definite biographical facts: he was Definitor from 1606 until his death; he was Guardian and Master of Novices in Rouen in 1608; and he died in Paris on 21 November 1611, aged 49.

"The Rule of Perfection"

Benet himself says he was personally practising what he wrote in *The Rule* from the time of his entry into the Capuchins in 1587. He put it into writing in Italy, and therefore before 1592. Some fellow-Capuchins got possession of Parts I and II in manuscript and an unauthorised version of these two parts was circulating by August 1593. Part III, though being taught by Benet, was not circulated at this stage. Parts I and II, in French, were passed by the ecclesiastical censors in 1596-97. During his period in prison in England, 1599-1602, he had the work printed twice but on each occasion the edition was confiscated. A French bishop brought out an unauthorised version in 1608. Another edition, full of mistakes, was circulating by 1609.

An English edition of Parts I and II was published in Rouen in 1608.' A French edition of Parts I and II was published in Paris in 1609. In 1610 Benet himself, for the first time, supervised the publication of editions in Latin and French, by order of his superiors, who wanted a definitive version, especially of Part HI. A very faulty Part III had been circulating around 1608.

For us the most interesting point in the history of the printed versions of *The Rule* is the fact that a reprint of the 1609 Paris edition of Parts I and II, with a faulty version of Part III appended to it, came out later in 1609, also in Paris. This is the *only* edition which contains an expression used by Vincent in an undated letter to Louise from about 1629. From this fact André Dodin concludes that Vincent got that particular edition in 1609; the definitive edition, prepared by Benet himself the following year, did not have that expression. A letter of approbation printed at the beginning of *The Rule* is signed by a number of doctors of the Sorbonne, including André Duval, and Dodin presumes that Duval introduced Vincent to the work as soon as the 1609 edition came out. Dodin and other recent Vincentian writers such as Orcajo, Román and Colluccia all agree that *The Rule of Perfection* was the book that most influenced Vincent's thinking on, and practice of, spirituality. Optat of Veghel

OFM Cap did a doctoral thesis on Benet, published in Rome in 1949, and in it he says that *The Rule* was the main source of Vincent's teaching on following the will of God.[3] Further back, in 1932, Pierre Defrennes SJ said the same thing in a three part article in the *Revue Ascetique et Mystique* on St Vincent's vocation. Coste's biography, from 1932. and his fourteen volume edition of the letters, conferences and documents (1920-25) do not have any reference to either Benet or his book.

An outline of the teaching of "The Rule of Perfection"

In the book Benet says that "The holy ghost loves not the slacke operation" (I xv) and an attempt to give a brief summary of the book might well come under that heading. The title-page of the English edition published in Rouen in 1608 contains exactly the same wording as appeared in French in the 1610 edition authorised by Benet himself:

> The Rule of Perfection, contayning a breif and perspicuous abridgement of all the wholle spirituall life, reduced to this only point of the (will of God). Divided into three partes. The first treating of the exteriour will of God contayning the Active life. The second the interiour will containing the Contemplative life. The third of the essentiall will concerning the life Supereminent.

He has quite an idiosyncratic use of brackets in his book, and his spellings are not consistent. It should be noted that "rule" in the title is not meant in the sense of "regulation" or "law", something to be observed or kept. It has the same sense as when a twelve-inch ruler is called a "foot rule"; in other words, it is a norm against which to check something. In this case that "something" is "perfection" which is what the whole book is about.

Part I deals with the exterior will of God. This, according to Benet, is "the divine pleasure knowne by the lawe and by reason, being the rule of all our thoughts, words and deeds in the Active life"(I v). It is important to note that "the active life" for Benet is not what it usually means. For him it means the ascetic element, as opposed to the purely contemplative, of the spiritual life. In other words, when used by him the expression includes mortification, rooting out defects, the practice of virtues, discursive prayer, ejaculatory prayer. For Benet, the necessity for these means is known from the law of God or from reason, what he calls the exterior will of God. His argument is that if a person's intention is simply to do God's will all these things come under that heading. It

then leads on to the interior will of God.

Part II deals with this interior will of God, which Benet describes as follows:

> This interiour will of God, then, is the divine pleasure knowne to us by a perfect, manifest, and expert interiour knowledge, illuminating the sowlle in the Interiour or Contemplative life (that is) when shee seeth and contemplateth her God, and inwardly experimenteth, perceiveth and tasteth in such or such a thing.

Benet sees this developing in stages, the first of which he calls "manifestation". The manifestation of the interior will follows from fidelity to the exterior will:

> "for the one springeth of the other as the effect of the cause… Yf then hee be moved by this only end of the *will of God,* hee seeth and feeleth it within himself. But note this word (only) for if so be hee be moved by any other end, not only sinister but good, hee cannot feele it be it never so good" (II ii).

In other words, unless a person has a completely refined purity of intention this will not happen.

> "And (loe) heer the poynt wherin many fayle, the ditch wherinto many fall, and the rock wheragainst many wracke, the which so stoppeth this spacious Oceane of the *will of God,* and maketh it so straight and unnavigable, that the shipps of theyr sowlles cannot make sayle therin (namely) because they have some other end, although oftentimes so secret, that they themselfs know not, neither can discerne it" (II ii).

After manifestation comes "admiration", which means an experienced awareness of the awesomeness and majesty of God, and the nothingness of created things in comparison; and also the extreme familiarity on the part of God towards one.

The third stage is "humiliation" where, by the "diminution" and "annihilation" of self one discovers "more essentially" the will of God.

The fourth stage is "exultation", which is self-explanatory. The will of God is so obviously beautiful and admirable that one is overwhelmed with joy because of it.

The fifth, and final, stage is "elevation". This is

> an excessive spiritual! joy, the plenarie abundance whereof replenisheth wholly the sowlle, and with her extreame sweetnes so inebriateth her, as that cleane forgetting the world and all creatures, yea herself, shee remaineth wholly fixed in this fountaine of joye (to weet) God, whoe hath totally seazed upon all her powres, and so strooken and wounded her heart, and taken a full possession therof, that shee having now no more dominion over herself, followeth his inflaming instincts and atrtractions all in all, and (as it were) hand in hand, geveth eare to his wordes, embraceth his doctrine, and (finally) geveth her self wholly over unto him, submitting and subjecting her to his good pleasure; followeth him like as doth the shaddowe the boddie (II vi).

Part III of *The Rule* treats of "the essentiall will concerning the life supereminent", according to the title-page of the 1608 English edition, though in fact Part III was not included in that edition. The essential will of God is the will of God, or the divine essence, in so far as it is known or seen in an immediate and continual way, without any image supplied by the senses, by means of God's grace. To the person concerned it appears to be intuitive. Benet, in the introduction to Part III, says that what he teaches there is not to be undertaken without the permission of a director.

No human effort can bring about the knowledge of the essential will of God. Because of this he teaches that all natural human acts (as meant in his explanation of "the active life") cease, and the person remains passive, not doing anything except experiencing God's working. The cessation of all acts is called "annihilation" ("anneantissement"). The intellect and will are the two principal human powers that cease to act. God empties the soul of all shapes and images, which are its normal way of working, and gives it a new light and a new capability for seeing spiritual things. This light enables a person to advert to three common faults: 1) Too much active enthusiasm; *2)* an almost unperceived continued use of images; 3) not really continuously looking at God as present in the soul.

In passive annihilation God stops all natural and ordinary activity of the soul, raising it to a new mode of acting, completely spiritual, which consists in a simple recalling of the Everything and the Nothing, by which the vision of the will of God is attained.

At the end of Part III Benet has five chapters on Christ's passion, because, he says, contemplation of this is an essential part of his teaching on the will of God. He rejects the idea that this is only for beginners and

says that it is part even of the supereminent life. He says we cannot contemplate bare divinity, while in Jesus we can see "divinity proportioned to our capacity". He makes three points: 1) We must not contemplate either the humanity or the divinity of Christ alone, but both together as being only one person; 2) we are to contemplate the sufferings of Jesus, not as having happened in the past in Jerusalem, but as happening now in ourselves; 3) as an explicit exception to his general rule he says that images are to be used in this case.

On 26 April 1689 the Holy Office condemned an Italian translation of *The Rule* which had been published in Viterbo in 1667. The decree of condemnation was published on 29 November 1689. By the normal rules of interpretation it was almost universally held that only the 1667 Viterbo edition was condemned, and this explains why editions and translations continued to appear after 1689. When Leo XIII revised the Index he put the original French edition into it. But in more recent times the whole Index itself has been abolished.

At the end of his almost 500 page thesis Optat of Veghel says he does not know why the book was condemned, and the Holy Office never gave its reason. He presumes that it was condemned in connection with the condemnation of Quietism, either because in the opinion of the Holy Office it contained Quietest errors or because, by reason of its lack of clarity, such errors could wrongly be attributed to it.

The influence of "The Rule" on Vincent

The title-page of the 1608 Rouen edition in English says that it reduces the whole spiritual life to the will of God. One does not have to read very much by or on St Vincent before realising that the expression "the will of God" keeps cropping up rather frequently. In the Common Rules one of the themes suggested for the weekly conference is "the practice of doing the will of God in all things" (CR 10:2). Earlier on in the rules, Vincent had written that following the will of God is a sure means of acquiring Christian perfection in a short time (CR 2: 3). The last phrase, "in a short time", seems to echo what Benet wrote at the start of his book: "This exercise of *the will of God* shall be found without all comparison to be more short then any other" (I i).

Paragraph 3 of chapter II of the Common Rules, after the words quoted above, continues by saying that doing the will of God in everything consists mainly in doing four things, the first of which is "Rightly performing whatever is commanded and shunning what is forbidden, as often as it is known that such a command or prohibition comes from God, the Church, our Superiors, or from the Rules or Constitutions of

our Congregation". This would seem to be a straightforward abridgement of what Benet has in Part I chapter v, this part being sub-titled "The Exteriour Will of God". He says the exterior will of God is

> the divine pleasure knowne by the lawe and by reason. I say (by the law) for thereby he hath made knowen his Will. I say (by the lawe) in generall, not of God only, to comprehend all kinds of good lawes, namely the lawe of God whereof is written: If thow wilt enter into life keepe the commandments; also the lawe of the Church, it being written: If hee will not heare the Church, accompt him no better then an Ethnicke or Publicane. Likewise, the lawe and commandment of the spiritual! Pastor, whereof it is written: Obay your superiours and be subject unto them... Finally, the lawe of every man's state, qualitie and condition, be he lord or subject, master or servant, bound or free, married or unmarried, be hee lay man, Ecclesiasticall or religious.

A short section on civil law is omitted from this quotation as Vincent did not make any mention of civil law in the Common Rules.

The second of the four things mentioned in CR *2:* 3 is "choosing from among indifferent things that arise those which are repugnant to our nature rather than those which are pleasing". Once again this seems to be an abridgement of what Benet says in Part I chapter vi, where he deals with indifferent things in this way:

> They are of three sorts (to weet) agreeable to nature or sensualitie, as hearing curious talke or newes, viewing the beautie of some person, stately buildings and such like; or contrarie to nature and sensualitie, as keeping silence, geving almes, fasting not commanded, etc... If the thing offered or that presenteth itself be of the first kinde, according to sensualitie or affection, *the will of God* is that we refuse and reject it; if it bee of the second, repugnant to sensualite or affection, *the will of God* is that wee accept it.

Vincent adds: "Unless those which please are necessary". Here again he seems to be borrowing from Benet, who says:

> Yet with this exception, if true and unfained discretion require not the contrarie, having respect to health, person, qualitie, tyme and place, with other like circumstances.

If, in the case of such necessity, we choose what is pleasing, Vincent says we must choose it as being more pleasing to God and not because it pleases us. Once again he seems to be summarising Benet who deals with things which are "agreable to nature and sensualitie" in Part I chapter vii. He says that these are to be dealt with

> by casting of and turning away his mind from the contentment and pleasure of such a thing and stopping all his spiritual! powres and understanding against the sensualitie thereof and contrary wise by fixing his heart and mind and all his powres on God, and so offer himself unto him as his vessel or instrument, whereby hee may doe that work only for his honor and will, without any pleasure or proper commoditie of this his creature.

The third point Vincent makes is that we accept all unexpected happenings, good or bad, as coming from God. Benet does not seem to treat specifically of this.

The fourth and final point Vincent makes is that we can choose at random among indifferent things which are neither pleasing nor displeasing. Here again this seems to be a shortened form of what Benet says in Part I chapter vii:

> If the thing be of the third kind, namely indifferent, neither according nor yet against sensualitie to doe or to leave undone; a man may choose which side hee will, always with this intention of the *will of God.*

Next we will take a look at the conference which Vincent gave on this paragraph of the Common Rules to the community in St Lazare on 7 March 1659. In the paragraph and in the conference the phrase "the exercise of the will of God" is used. Benet uses this word "exercise" in this sense in Part I chapter i, of which the heading is "Of the excellence and utilitie of this exercise, compared with others". Vincent said in the conference:

> We should bear in mind that there are various exercises put forward by masters of the spiritual life and which they practised in different ways. Some went for indifference in everything, and thought that perfection consisted in neither wanting nor rejecting any particular thing from among all the things sent by God... Others went for acting with purity of intention, seeing God in the

> things which happen, doing them or putting up with them in his sight; that is very discerning. To sum up, the exercise of always doing the will of God is far better than all this because it includes both indifference and purity of intention, and all other systems practised or advised; and if there is any other exercise which leads to perfection it will be found to an eminent degree in this (XII 152).

Now let us take a look at how Benet handles the same idea:

> Having shewed the profit and excellencie of this *will of God* in comparison of other exercises, it followeth also that wee briefly declare the same in regard of it self, all which excellency is comprehended in this, that this rule and exercise containeth all others, and all kind of perfection.

Vincent next takes up three New Testament quotations: "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (Jn 4: 34); "Thy will be done" (Mt 6: 10); and "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2: 20). He uses these for his usual practice of taking Jesus as a model; in this case, as a model of someone who always did the will of God. Benet handles the first of these quotations in this way:

> Thus then may appeare how all the above said perfections are contained in this exercise of the *will of God,* as also any whatsoever or whereinsoever the whole or any parte of perfection doth consist; and therefore rightly and not without just cause is the *will of God* so much praised, and recommended unto us in the holie scripture as when it is said: "This is my meat to do the will of him whoe sent me".

He uses the quotation from Mathew in this way:

> If one thinketh that perfection consisteth in resignation, as *Christ* teacheth, "Thy will be done", it is in this exercise: because he that doth the *will of God* is resigned, seing that resignation is nothing els but a disposition and perfect preparation to receive willingly whatsoever the divine will shall ordaine or dispose of himself, either in suffering or doing things hard or easie, pleasant or bitter, honourable or dishonourable and abject, all of which hee must needs have whoe accomplisheth the *will of God.*

The third quotation, from Galatians, is used by Vincent in this way:

> We are no longer alive by a human life, we are alive by a divine life, and we will live in it if our hearts are full of, and our actions motivated by, this intention of doing the will of God.

Benet's use of it is similar:

> I live now, not I but Christ in me. This perfection (I say) is herein contained: for that when a man putteth of his owne will for the *will of God,* he putteth of himself and putteth on God.

Finally we will have a look at some points made by Vincent on other occasions which seem to be clear echoes of ideas from Benet. After a Repetition of Prayer on 17 October 1655 Vincent said:

> What exactly, then is perfection? It seems to me that it means something from which nothing is missing (XI 316).

Benet, having pointed out that perfection is not concerned with just the most important things, says that the way to perfection "consisteth in avoiding imperfections" (I vii). Later on, on the same occasion, Vincent asked "Who is the most perfect?" and went on to answer his question:

> 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).

Benet has this to say:

> Those things are the *will of God* in which God's intention and mans are but one; but in these things indifferend done with rectification of intention Gods intention and ours are but one (Ivi).

Earlier on in the book he had said:

> By forsaking ones owne will and doing his, we adheare unto him and become one will and spirit with him (I ii).

In a conference in St Lazare on 22 August 1659 Vincent said that

holiness is

> the withdrawal and distancing ourselves from earthly matters and at the same time being intent on God and uniting ourselves with the divine will (XII 300).

When Benet writes of purity of intention he has this to say:

> It is nothing els then a pure and free choice which the sowlle maketh by her free will of this divine will and pleasure in steed of her owne affection, passion or will, and also of her worke; the which choice consisteth in an aversion from the creature, and in a simple conversion to the Creator; and is mayde by a true, faythfull and simple regard of the *will of God.*

Madame Acarie's husband Pierre died towards the end on 1613 and early in 1614 she entered the Carmelites and became Sister Mary of the Incarnation. She died in 1618, and the process for her beatification began in 1622. One of the witnesses was Dom Sans de Sainte-Catherine, a former General of the Feuillants, a branch of the Cistercians. In 1592 Benet first met Mme Acarie and was able to assure her that what she was experiencing was from God and not from the devil. Dom Sans dealt with her meetings with Benet in his evidence at the process. One passage in his evidence is particularly interesting. He said that one of the things which Mme Acarie learnt from her meetings with Benet was

> that when it is necessary one must come down to earth and put God aside, in order to deal with things of this world for the service of the same God, which is called leaving God for God.'

It is not quite clear whether Dom Sans is saying that Benet used the expression "leaving God for God". If it was Benet's own expression then that is possibly where Vincent picked it up, at least indirectly.

The final point to look at is in a letter from Vincent to Louise, undated but placed by Coste at around 1629:

> O God, my daughter, what great treasures are hidden in divine Providence, and how supremely they honour our Lord who follow Providence and don't encroach on it (I 68).

This is the passage which Dodin uses to show that Vincent had

access to a copy of *The Rule of Perfection* early on. The word which Vincent uses is "enjamber" (to encroach on). In chapter ix of Part III, which never appeared in English, Benet wrote:

> For things are, in themselves, such as they are, and neither more nor less than they are in reality, nor other than God has made them; so much so, that if they elevate their being too much, anticipating and encroaching on that of God, and taking his place, that does not come from them but from ourselves.

The word Benet uses here is the noun "enjambement" and Dodin has discovered that this word in this sentence appears only in the faulty version of Part III which was appended to the 1609 edition of Parts I and II and which came out later that same year. Dodin concludes from this that Vincent had this particular edition early on, and that it was probably Andre Duval who put him in touch with it, as he was Vincent's director at the time. Benet says in the Introduction to Part III that what was contained in that section was to be undertaken only with the approval of a director.

NOTES

1. There are three copies of *The Rule of Perfection* in the library of the Irish College, Paris. One is a copy of the English edition, Rouen 1608, and there are two copies of French editions, Lyon 1653 and Paris 1696. In 1982 a bilingual edition edited by Jean Orcibal was published in Paris by the Presses Universitaires de France.

2. Optat says that his basis for this statement is a still unpublished doctoral thesis of André Dodin. Neither the library nor the archives of the Maison-mère in Paris have a copy of this thesis.

3. Bruno de Jésus-Marie ODC: *La Belle Acarie,* Paris 1942, page 130. The expression is used by Vincent in three conferences to the Daughters: IX 319, X 554 and X 595. In the one-volume reprint of the Leonard translation the expression occurs on pages 284, 1118 and 1155. Louise uses it in a letter to Sr Laurence on 20 June 1656, page 508 in the 1983 French edition. In Sr Helen Mary Law's English translation (1972) the letter, provisionally dated 1655, is on page 430.

Developments in Spiritual Direction

Aidan McGing

When in 1961 I was moved from teaching theology to giving spiritual direction I was very disappointed, for I was more at home with ideas than with people. I little knew then that the greatest upsurge in spiritual direction in three hundred years was upon us. What had been happening?

Remote origins of the "new" spiritual direction

The 1600s had been a golden age of spiritual direction, but the practice had diminished during the 1700s and 1800s. Then shortly before the first world war a revival began in France which produced a galaxy of writers and practitioners, such as Saudreau, Garrigou-Lagrange, de Guibert, etc.[1] After the second world war it became popular among lay people in Italian Catholic Action. About twenty years ago it was taken up and developed seriously by several groups of North American Jesuits, from both Canada and the USA, whence the "new" spiritual direction came to Ireland and England.

At this point my reader mutters to himself "We are Vincentians; is he asking us to become Jesuits?" Not at all, but I do believe that while we re-examine our own tradition we should allow ourselves to be nourished by others, always tempering what we find by that *douceur* (gentleness) which Vincent recommends.

As usual, the pioneers of the "new" direction were entering on the work of other men. Apart from the influence of the French school mentioned above exhaustive historical research had been pursued in Europe for a century on the writings and teachings of the old spiritual masters; treatises once locked up in the forbidding tomes of Migne or older folios were now published in attractive paperbacks with readable introductions and notes, and at affordable prices. These books were bought and read. At a more technical level specialised periodicals and books began to publish articles on the history and theory of spirituality (the word dates from about 1680) ,[2] and vast encyclopedias began to harvest the work of centuries in easily accessible articles for those who wished to consult them. The *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité,* still in progress and moving fast, began, for instance, in 1936. Never in the history of Christianity

have so many masterpieces been so easily available or so competently explained. As people explored these riches they perceived quickly that spiritual direction had been part of Christianity from the beginning, and they wished to restore, and share in, its ancient glories.

Then the crisis of faith, which had begun before the Council, intensified in the succeeding years, so that believers, especially those called to support the faith of others, felt the need to deepen their own faith. Spiritual direction suddenly became important, because faith could no longer be taken for granted.

> If, in this context, one looks at the role of religion and the maintenance and reproduction of its meanings and values — as well as their implementation in everyday interaction — it too becomes increasingly partitioned off to Sunday observances and sacramental attendances, and much less reinforced through communal relationship systems… *The implementation and operationalization of religious convictions, and values, therefore, becomes increasingly dependent on personal convictions, or convictions shared amongst small groups of intimates,* rather than being ones of wider social reinforcement.[3] (Italics mine)

"Convictions shared amongst small groups of intimates". There is an increasing parallel between the present renewal starting so slowly and the situation in France around 1600. For in the second half of the 16th century the ideals of Trent became known in France, and at the same time new editions of the Fathers, and new translations of the Spanish, Italian, German and Flemish mystics, were diffused throughout the country, where they found groups of readers surprisingly eager to read and absorb them. The result was a burgeoning Catholic restoration which showed itself inwardly by a deeper personal prayer supported by a renewed spiritual direction, and outwardly by an effort of evangelization coming from inner conviction and religious experience. Vincent was at the intersection of these two movements. Are we seeing something similar just beginning at present?

Immediate origins

The North American Jesuits mentioned above were stimulated in their enterprise by recent advances in counselling, and by recent research into St Ignatius. In regard to counselling they knew well that spiritual direction, which helps the client see what God wants of him etc, is not

the same as counselling, which helps the client come to terms with his problems and to grow, out of his own personal resources. Nevertheless, spiritual direction will often shade off into informal counselling, and the two disciplines will always cover some of the same ground, for instance motivation, self-knowledge, relationships, so that advances in counselling suggested a new look at the older discipline.

This was in line with a common phenomenon in the Catholic Church: currents outside the Church stimulate Catholics to plumb their own traditions more deeply, as the recovery of Aristotle triggered off scholastic theology, and many rationalist scholars contributed to the present biblical revival.

In regard to Ignatius, scholars using critical historical methods had been studying him against his background, stripping away, for instance, many of the accretions which over the centuries had been added to his Exercises. This new knowledge fired several of his followers to go back to his original intentions and original methods of direction.

To some extent, then, the new wave arose from the same sort of return to the sources which we now see in our own community, where we suddenly find ourselves researching St Vincent. To return to the old will mean a new beginning:

> Listen to me, you… who seek Yahweh.
> Consider the rock from which you were hewn, the quarry from which you were cut.
> Consider Abraham your father… (Is 51:1-2)

Emphases of the "new" spiritual direction

As we might expect, spiritual direction has been understood differently at different times and by different people, but the following objectives are constant: a) to help the individual to pray; b) to help him to self-knowledge; c) to help him to self-acceptance; d) to help him to find the will of God;[4] Working in this traditional framework the "new" method has the following characteristics:

1) It takes the word "spiritual" seriously, in the Pauline and Johannine sense of referring to the action of the Spirit of the Father and Jesus Christ on the directee. ("The Spirit Himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God", Rm 8: 16; "therefore we teach… in the way the Spirit teaches us", 1 Cor 2:13; "But when the Spirit comes he will lead you to the complete truth", Jn 16: 13, and many more texts).

Using the classic biblical criterion (Gal 5:22) that the Spirit brings peace, love and joy the director helps the directee in the myriad move-

ments of his mind, will and emotions, to discover where the Spirit is leading, both inside and outside of prayer. If all this sounds precious, the dialogue in which it occurs is very simple, and usually very satisfying. The process can also help one to recognise and accept what is wrong: for instance that deep down one is terrified of Christ. To face such truths brings new freedom. Incidentally, St Vincent accepted and used this criterion:

> …the Spirit of God never disturbs us: Non in commotione Dominus (1 Kgs 19: 11). So that when somebody comes to us to complain, and tells us his sorrows, his pains and inspirations (lumières), and when we see that they fill him with uneasiness, bitterness and impatience, let us conclude that he is deceived, for the Spirit of God is a spirit of peace… But if he (God) by the ministry of angels communicates sometimes some favour, it will be easy to see if this inspiration comes from Him if it enters our souls gently, and brings us to look for the greater glory of God (XII 350).

This, then, in my experience is where the "new" direction scores. It starts with the fact, for it is a fact, that when a person prays seriously something always happens; new perceptions and new emotions arise in the mind. The person praying is literally led by the Spirit, though he may not see clearly what is going on, or he may deceive himself wishfully. But if he is bold enough to discuss with the right person what is happening he will be surprised and encouraged to see that his prayer is being answered, often in unexpected ways.

2) While retaining the word "director", for lack of a better, it insists with the old Irish tradition that this person is rather a soul friend (anam chara) or a companion on the way (Lk 24: 13-35). Of course with a younger directee the director will be more directive, but his aim will always be to help him find his own way to God and, above all, never let him become dependent on him. By and large the "new" school models the director on the counsellor. This is reasonable, so long as we remain clear about the difference between the two processes, for even the loftiest spiritual experiences must be expressed in human and cultural terms. We have no other terms to use.

3) It favours directed retreats, without making a fetish of them. These are retreats consisting almost entirely of periods of personal prayer, discussed every day with the director.

4) The movement has come to us from North America. This fact

reflects a continuing phenomenon in western society, whereby the seminal ideas and inventions usually arise in Europe and are developed and popularised in North America. Henry Ford, for instance, followed Gottlieb Daimler and, in the religious sphere Marriage Encounter, which originated in Spain, was popularised in the U.S., whence it came to Ireland. The American origin of the "new" school also reflects a constant in the Catholic Church, namely that at certain times certain regions are centres of religious influence, as Ireland was in the seventh century, Saxony in the tenth and France after about 1650. In the western world America has now become the great source of religious influence within the Catholic Church. And if anybody objects that some Catholic currents in North America are unorthodox I agree. But at the same time I have to point out that during the long period of France's religious hegemony (1650-1950) that country also produced many unorthodox. The only solution is to test the spirits to see if they come from God (1 Jn 4: 11).

5) It presumes that spiritual direction is an art that can be taught to suitable persons. Here again it follows a world movement in which disciplines which had hitherto been learned by intuition and imitation (for instance business methods and pastoral practice) are now taught systematically at third level colleges. Nothing can replace a living tradition of spiritual direction, as we have in this Province, but we would be foolish to ignore the present educational project of combining theory and practice.

Training of the Spiritual Director

And if this art can be taught, what should the practitioner learn? As the job description is daunting so are the skills and knowledge required. An introductory work on direction which at the last count has gone through twenty-eight, I repeat twenty-eight, printings [5] lists the following requirements: Knowledge of the spiritual life, openness to others, docility to the Holy Spirit, peace of God, largeness of heart, aptitude and capability. More specifically, the director should be competent in theology and scripture (and be aware of modern trends) so as to understand the theory of Christianity. He should have read deeply in the spiritual masters, especially the older ones who preceded , or were outside, scholasticism, and who united doctrine with personal experience; in this way he can see further than the prevailing fashions. He should have a good practical knowledge of psychology and psychopathology, he should know the standard counselling techniques, be able to make human contact with his directees, and understand their world,

which is the modern world. He should have a personal knowledge of prayer, and that precious knowledge which people with academic degrees seldom get, or get too late, pastoral experience outside the institution they may live in.

Where do we find such a paragon? Nowhere, obviously. But we can go a long way towards filling the lacuna by training suitable persons.

The spiritual direction movement, then, has all the marks of an idea whose time has come. It is entirely traditional yet adapted to the needs of the present moment, when people want to make individual decisions and no longer feel that their faith is automatic. It is a new beginning to an old art, and if by their fruits you shall know them, the fruits seem to be good.

Spiritual direction in the seminary

Here I want to make a distinction between spiritual direction and formation. "Formation" is about the whole training of the candidate to the priesthood, and it includes his studies and other work, the example of the staff, reflection on pastoral work, taking part in the liturgy, taking part in social life, being helped to grow to maturity. It should not be brainwashing, though I suppose a weak person can allow himself to be brainwashed. It is rather the free response of the individual to a whole series of tasks and activities.

During Vincent's time there was considerable confusion between the internal and external forum.[6] Our sensibility has since changed radically and we now wish our inmost relations with God to be very private, whether or not we feel guilty about them. For this reason Leo XIII in 1890 forbade those in authority to make any enquiry about the inner state of their subjects. The spiritual director comes in here, as part of the formation team, to take over the private inner area which previous less sensitive generations assigned to the superior or to his nominee; and, in a sense, he is still the nominee of some superior. But the point I am making is simply that while the spiritual director is autonomous in the inner forum he is a subordinate member of a team, responsible for one area only. I do not claim too much for him.

Spiritual direction the most fundamental discipline in the seminary

A student for the priesthood spends a lot of the time studying theology and scripture, and in prayer and worship, but

> Only a Christian who stands in the service of his faith can understand Christian theology, and only he can enter into the religious

> meaning of the Bible. Theology and Bible together form the context of worship and must be understood in their bearing on it.[7]

Theology, after all, is an attempt by representatives of the believing community during different centuries, and faced by different problems, to express the faith of the community in whatever concepts and symbols are available to them. Some of the Fathers, for instance, using neo-platonic concepts, worked out a theology of God as the Absolutely One, while Aquinas, departing from Aristotle, described Him as the Unmoved Mover of the Universe. Scripture in turn is a privileged record of the believing community's experience first of Yahweh and then of Jesus, and their interpretation of these experiences. "These are recorded *that you may believe* that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, *and that believing this* you may have life in his name" (Jn 20: 31). And worship, unless sustained by faith, becomes dilettantism or simply a burden. Faith is the foundation of all our hopes, and without it we cannot please God (Hb 11: 1,6).

In a famous passage Newman [8] compares the man reading scripture without faith to a boy at school (a hundred years ago!) reading a passage of Latin or Greek poetry which he thinks he understands. But only when he reads the passage years later, after a long experience of life, will he perceive the depths of meaning behind simple words. Then the heart of the dead poet will speak to his heart, as both communicate through a common experience of life. So the scholar who reads the scriptures and thinks he understands them has missed the whole point if his faith does not respond to the faith of the inspired writer. In Newman's terminology, the non-believer gives a notional assent to the text, while the believer gives a real assent, assent of the whole person. Of course there are degrees of faith, and of course the more scholarship one has in approaching either theology or the scriptures the better. But faith is paramount. Otherwise one is like the military mandarin who grew grey in his inner chamber, reading mighty books of war as a laborious escape from reality.

This is what St Augustine meant when he said repeatedly "nisi credideritis, non intelligetis" — unless you believe you will not understand. It is what St Anselm meant when he defined theology as "fides quaerens intellectum" — faith seeking understanding. It is what Aquinas meant when he said that theology proceeds from articles of faith which are known not "by the natural light of the intellect" but "by the light of a superior knowledge, which is God's knowledge" (S.Th. 1,1,2). The student, then, granted a conceptual knowledge, will only understand

his chief studies at their deepest level to the extent that he believes by divine faith.

Am I insinuating that if faith is so necessary spiritual direction is the only way to acquire it? Of course not, *not the only* way. But still, from the earliest times there has been a constant tradition that the best and safest way to help a young man or woman to grow in faith is through the guidance of an older person. It follows the logic of the Catholic system, that we are all members of the one body and that the Holy Spirit works on us through the ministry of others, as in the sacraments. Indeed, we develop few deep convictions anywhere in life without some sort of interchange with others.

This is especially true of the candidate for the priesthood, who is no longer sustained by a common consensus, and who finds himself suddenly exposed in the seminary to an enormous range of ideas in a strange environment. He is confused by big words, and by the separation of devotion and theology which has been with us since the Middle Ages. He is equally confused by the scholarship he has to absorb when studying the scriptures, and in danger of confusing it (though necessary) with a faith reading. He needs a guiding hand through the labyrinth, somebody he can trust, somebody who will encourage him to grow in his own way.

Conclusion

I have been considering spiritual direction before ordination, when I hope we would all agree that it is necessary. But what about the time after ordination? The best answer I have come across is that of Léonce de Grandmaison:[g]

> 1) It is morally necessary during the years of formation; 2) also at turning points in one's vocation already accepted; 3) at a time of spiritual crisis; 4) when one experiences intense fervour.

Finally, the acid test of all spiritual direction is whether it turns one outward towards God and other people. Direction that causes brooding or introversion is false. If any reader would like to experience spiritual direction for himself he could begin by doing a stint at the Intercession for Priests during the summer in All Hallows, or sign on for a directed retreat. I would be the last person to say that everybody must do a directed retreat, but many have found one the beginning of a new life.

NOTES

1. Kenneth Leech, *Soul Friend* London 1977, pp 68-78.
2. André Dodin CM, in *Vincentiana* 4-6, 1984, p 557.
3. D F Hannan, ESRI, in an address to the NCPI, September 1986.
4. Ct Friedrich Wulf SJ, in the article "Spiritual Direction" in *Sacramentum Mundi* Vol. VI.
5. Jean Laplace *Preparing for Spiritual Direction,* Chicago 1975. pp 94-133.
6. *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité,* art. "Direction spirituelle". col. 1119.
7. Michel Polanyi *Personal Knowledge.* London 1962. p 281.
8. J H Newman *Grammar of Assent,* ch. 5, n. 2. "Real Assents".
9. Art. cit. in Note 6. col. 1142.

"A Regular Array of Proselytising Monks"

James H. Murphy

In the days before video nasties became the staple diet of the nation's youth it was the custom of television companies In warn viewers that the film they were about to see ought not to be watched by "persons of a nervous disposition". It was a device- intended as much to entice viewers as to dissuade them. In the hope of arousing a similar interest I must now warn that readers of an ecumenical or liberal disposition ought instantly to cease reading this article. The Ireland of the 1840s which saw the beginnings of Irish Vincentian parish missions was a place where no clergyman could afford to be "wet" on the subject of bashing the opposition. And it is this Ireland with its interdenominational strife which is the subject of this piece.

Our story begins with the Reverend Daniel Foley in IS49. This early Victorian cleric was full of a strong evangelical missionary enthusiasm. It was the sort of enthusiasm which was later to lead men like David Livingstone to set out for "darkest" Africa, to convert the "natives". Daniel, too, knew of an uncivilised spot whose inhabitants were slaves to a superstition of a most vile intensity. The place was Ireland, the superstition Popery.

Things had been going well for evangelical Protestantism within the Church of Ireland for some time. The Catholic Church was in a bit of a muddle. Some historians have suggested that only about 40% of Irish Catholics in rural areas were going to mass, though others dispute such figures. What is not in doubt, however, is that the Church of Ireland was making lots of converts, thousands in fact, particularly in the 1840s, the decade of the great famine.

When Daniel Foley got back to England he published a book. It was called *A Missionary Tour through the South and West of Ireland.* As well as having lots of good things to report to his evangelical friends in England about the evangelical crusade in Ireland, which they were largely financing, he also felt obliged to sound a warning note on one or two issues. In particular, he had to tell them that Rome was fighting back.

The following passage is part of Foley's description of Schull, Co. Cork, which he visited. There had been a Vincentian parish mission there the previous year. I think it would be safe to conclude he did not like us:

> Various means have been brought to bear here by the Popish Church. The Society of St Vincent de Paul sent a regular array of proselytising monks, with medals for sale and gratuitous distribution and with money also, which is openly offered to the converts if they would return: while the people of the Romish Religion are left to die of want.

The selling of medals and scapulars drew his particular ire. Indeed, so incensed was he by this manifest sign of Romish superstition that he obtained permission to mount the pulpit of the local church to inveigh against "their medals" and "gods of brass and copper" which he, nonetheless, asserted "could not stop the progress of Christ's gospel".

For the other side of the story on this particular issue one only has to read Fr Thomas McNamara in his *Memoir of* the early missions. As far as he was concerned people bought medals, scapulars, rosary beads and statues as tokens of the faith they had renewed during the mission:

> (the people) brought all these objects to the missioners to be blessed by them as precious souvenirs of the mission!

Of course, religious bitterness in Ireland, then as now, was due to other factors apart from religion; factors such as economics and politics. This is perhaps best illustrated in the extraordinary circumstances which led up to the famous 1846 Vincentian mission at Dingle.

By 1846 Dingle was widely known as an area in which evangelical ministers of the Established Church had succeeded in making a large number of converts. A local lady, Mrs D. P. Thompson, published a book on the subject in 1846. The book's title, which belies its claim to brevity, was *A Brief Account of the Rise and Progress of the Change in Religious Opinion Now Taking Place in Dingle and the West of the County of Kerry.*

According to Mrs Thompson the first cleric to make an impact in the area had been the Reverend George Gubbins, assistant to the rector of Dunuslin, in 1831, at a time when famine and disease were rampant. She writes:

> He spared himself neither day nor night, ministering comfort while life remained and in more than one case personally assisted in the interment of the dead.

Gubbins left in 1839 and his work was continued by the Reverend Charles Gayer, who had been chaplain to Lord Ventry, the local landlord, since 1833. By the time of his death in 1848 Gayer was concurrently rector of Ventry and Dunuslin, and curate in Dingle and Kilmacheader. His methods were on a more systematic scale than Gubbins' had been. With the aid of the Ventrys, Mrs Thompson, Lord Ventry's agent and his wife, and a Lieutenant Clifford of the coast guards, Gayer began establishing small settlements or "colonies", slightly apart from the main centres of population, where his converts might live peaceably. In 1836 he became superintendent of the west Kerry district of the Irish Society. This was an organisation which was established in 1818 to assist missionaries engaged in the work of converting the Irish. With its resources behind him Gayer was able to set up the sort of infrastructure necessary for the dissemination of his evangelical ideas.

The main thrust of Protestant evangelism was to get the people to read the Bible. The Protestant societies saw themselves as bringing the word of God to the people. They did this primarily by establishing schools under the direction of the clergy of the Established Church and then by making contact with people on a more domestic level, through the activities of two sorts of paid official of the Society. The first were the Irish teachers. They were usually recruited from among the brighter pupils at the schools and were paid to give their families the rudiments of literacy and to 'introduce them to the reading of the Bible. They were augmented by the second group of officials, the Scripture readers. These were usually local adults whose function was to "open" the Bible for the people. Like the Irish teachers, the Scripture readers did not have to be formal converts to be employed. Both groups achieved considerable success in Dingle. By 1845 Gayer's initial 170 converts had grown to nearly 800, or 170 families. Other clergymen had come to his aid, the most celebrated being the Reverend Thomas Moriarty, one of a family of evangelical zealots and himself a Dingle convert.

By 1845, then, Gayer's activities in Dingle had reaped a considerable reward. All could agree on that. But what all could not agree on was the nature of that achievement and the motive behind it. Was Gayer an evangelical saint? Or was he a scurrilous "souper", someone who made converts by taking advantage of their poverty and offering them soup or other inducements to convert? This was the question which was to

divide society in Dingle in 1845 when, due mostly to Gayer's own brash over-confidence, there was a strong Catholic reaction against Gayer led by Robert Byrne, firebrand editor of the *Kerry Examiner.*

In the autumn of 1844 Gayer went on a speaking tour of Belfast and Edinburgh in order to raise funds for the expansion of his undertakings. Rather unwisely, he began to regale his audiences with exhibit and anecdote of Dingle. The following is a description of a typical meeting. On this particular evening Gayer himself was ill and the chair was taken by someone else:

> (The Chairman) produced several curious appendages, consisting of stoles, scapulars and badges of the Order of St Joseph. He also read passages from various books explanatory of these; he also produced a singular and most inflammatory poetical composition which was sung through Dingle district as a reproach to the converts.

But what gained Gayer most notoriety and presumably most financial support was his claim to have converted "800 Roman Catholics together with their priest" at Dingle.

When Robert Byrne heard of Gayer's meeting he was not slow to respond. In a series of articles beginning on *22* November 1844 Byrne launched himself into a vitriolic attack on the parson. He warned the people of Belfast and Edinburgh that "Gayer's statements are founded on the grossest delusion and on the most barefaced informers' falsehoods", and against "the awful course of iniquity he has entered into for his own selfish ends and the ruin of many."

Gayer's response was to bring a suit for libel against Byrne before the Tralee Recorder Court in March 1845. Byrne's defence was conducted by David Piggot who was later to be instrumental in bringing the Vincentians to Dingle. It was based on the rather weak plea that Gayer's assertions were indeed false as they had not made it clear that the 800 converts had been made over many years and in Dingle peninsula rather than just in Dingle town itself. Judgement inevitably went to Gayer who was awarded £40 compensation. He had made many enemies, though, and had galvanised Catholic opposition to him. All of which made his victory a rather pyrrhic one in the long run.

A transcript of the trial, under the title *The Persecution of Protestants* was published shortly after its conclusion, by the winning side. It is instructive in that it demonstrates how deep the divisions had gone. The Catholic case, on the one hand, was that the Protestant clergy and Scripture readers had procured converts by bribery, and had used the

threat of withdrawing financial and material assistance from them as a means of maintaining their fidelity to Protestantism. The Protestant case, in contradiction, was that no bribery was used and that financial and material support was justified in view of the ostracism the converts experienced on changing their faith.

From the evidence of many witnesses there can be little doubt of the animosity directed towards many converts. J Gloster, a Dunquin Scripture reader, testified as follows:

> When I became a convert, the thatch on my house was taken off and my windows were broken: those who were my dearest friends became my bitterest enemies and not one of them would speak to me. One of my cousins… passes me everyday and yet he never speaks to me except he'd call out "soup" or some other nickname to me: stones were flung at me and clods.

Other witnesses testified to the fact that Protestant converts were refused provisions and goods from Catholic shops. No wonder, then, that the Protestant community sought to assist its neophyte brethren with special housing and employment. On the other hand, though Protestant clergy denied encouraging anyone to convert through bribery, there was no doubt that becoming a convert could be a lucrative business. Scripture reader Gloster, for instance, had had his annual income raised from £20 to £24 as a result of conversion. And David Piggot was later to produce witnesses claiming to have "gone over" because of expected financial rewards.

Things came to a head when Piggot was cross-examining Gayer's loyal subordinate, Thomas Moriarty:

> Witness: I know of one man who was a convert and who purchased some leather and he could not sell it and afterwards became a Roman Catholic.
> Mr Piggot: When he got the leather he went away and became a Roman Catholic.
> Witness: Oh, no; not at all! I fling back that accusation. An imputation is attempted to be thrown at me in open court, that I gave him leather to be a Protestant, and that he afterwards went away. That's not the case.

It is hard to determine who was right. But what is clear is that the whole controversy had a lot to do with financial matters. The hostil-

ity of the Catholic community to the converts had much to do with religion. But it also had a lot to do with the fact that the converts were receiving aid from people who represented landlordism, the very class which Ireland's rural poor saw as the chief obstacle to their economic well-being. At least that was the conclusion of an independent observer who visited Dingle in 1845. American tourism in Ireland has deep roots. Mrs Asenath Nicholson was an American woman who travelled around Ireland in 1845. Like Daniel Foley she was an evangelical, and like him too she published an account of her travels. It was called *Ireland's Welcome to the Stranger or Excursions through Ireland in 1844 and 1845 for the Purpose of Personally Investigating the Condition of the Poor.* It was, however, a controversial book for, unlike Foley, Mrs Nicholson was far from favourable towards the evangelical crusade in Ireland and was especially critical of what was going on in Dingle. Indeed, in the margin of one of the pages of the copy of it I read in the National Library of Ireland someone had written the following:

> If anything more was wanting to show the absurdity, the fanatical will and the utter want of feminine propriety of Mrs N to those who have made through this tissue of nonsense and malevolence to this page, her notice of the late Mr Gayer and his wife and assistant would show…

Her first visit during her stay at Dingle was to the parish priest, Fr Devine. His reception of her was as cool as it was later to be of the Vincentian missioners:

> Considerable time was taken to get an introduction to his presence and when we did, his every look and taciturnity seemed to say "What brought you here?" He was the first I had ever met who showed reserve…

But it was no wonder that Fr Devine "showed reserve". He had just lost as many as 250 of his parishioners to the Protestant camp and, even worse, one of his curates, Fr Denis Brasbie, had "gone over". Resignation from the ministry was not something which met with general approval in those days, as the following verse from quite an extensive ballad about Brasbie demonstrates:

> Cruel Brasbie, worse than Judas, our Saviour he abused,
> The sacrament and altar he really has disgraced,

> Since Gayer is his master he has neglected
> The pure and holy order in which he was ordained.
> Them spotless robes so white, wherein he should delight
> He treated them with slight, the cruel renegade.
> For no such rotten member should ever be depended on
> Nor in pew or pulpit be allowed to preach.

Mrs Nicholson was perplexed over Fr Devine. But her perplexity turned to dismay when she encountered Parson Gayer and his wife. She found them suspicious and cagey about their work. She quotes Mrs Gayer as follows:

> When they come to us, we always receive them kindly but we do not proselytise. Though we are accused of going among them we do not; neither do we bribe them, as it is said of us, by feeding them and promising high wages. "There is a man," pointing to one in the field, "who works faithfully here through the week for eight pence a day. Do you call that bribing him? He is glad to have it". "I call that oppression" was my answer. "Well he's glad to have it".

Mrs Nicholson's controversial conclusion about Dingle was that becoming a convert was tantamount to becoming a voluntary prisoner of, and hence collaborator with, the ruling landlord class. If this assessment is right then it might explain the ferocity of the Catholic reaction in terms other than simply religious ones.

Mrs Nicholson's views were confirmed in her own eyes by her visit to an evangelical school in Ventry, where she was shocked by the narrowness and class consciousness of the curriculum. One teacher told her that geography was not taught the girls "because these are daughters of the lower orders and we do not advance them".

Mrs Nicholson summed up her impressions of Dingle as follows:

> I have looked in the cabins of many of the converts in Dingle... and though their feet were washed cleaner, their stools scoured whiter and their hearths swept better than in many of the mountain cabins, yet their eight pence a day will never put shoes upon their feet, convert their stools into chairs, or give them any better broom than the mountain heath for sweeping their cabins. It will never give them the pallatable well spread board around which their masters sit and which they have earned for them by their scantily paid toil. These converts turned from worshipping images

> to the true and living God, as they were told, holding a prayer book in their hands which they cannot read, can no more be sure that this religion, inculcated by proxy, emanates from the pure Scriptures than did the prayer book which they held in their hands when standing before a papish altar.

Though Gayer provided genuine measures for the relief of the poor, he did represent a threat to the people he sought to help and convert. In the Catholic community he was vilified as a souper. But the real problem he posed was not simply the religion he preached, it was what went with it. Gayer's milieu was that of landlordism and anglophilia, the very forces which stood in the path of the advancement of Ireland's rural poor. Asenath Nicholson was surely right when she said that to have accepted Gayer's evangelism would have been to have accepted as unalterable the station in life that one had been alotted.

In July 1846 Gayer brought another case before the Tralee Recorder's court. He wanted to evict a number of converts, occupants of the John Street colony, who had reverted to Catholicism. He won the case. After it, however, the defence counsel, James O'Brien, on his return to Dublin discussed the matter with David Piggot who was now a judge there. Radical action, they decided, was the only response to the Dingle situation and the Vincentians were the ones to carry it through. They approached the Provincial, Fr Philip Dowley, and enlisted the support of Daniel O'Connell in persuading Bishop Cornelius Egan of Kerry to allow the missioners into Dingle. Dowley agreed, Egan's reluctant consent was won and Michael Devine in Dingle had little option but to agree to the expedient.

The story of the Vincentian mission in Dingle is already very well known and need not be gone into here in any great detail. It lasted from August to September 1846 and was preached by six missioners under Thomas McNamara. After the local clergy's initial opposition was overcome enthusiasm for the mission became prodigious among the local population. At times the collective mood swung almost towards hysteria. When Bishop Egan came for confirmation there was a riot. McNamara writes:

> The people pressed forward and the confraternity men pressed them back until unable to resist by any other means, they had actually to use sticks and clubs in the struggle and what can scarcely be believed blood flowed copiously from the blows inflicted.

So many people wanted to go to confession that tickets had to be issued because the queues for confession were getting disorderly. Those who were distributing the tickets were armed with whips for their own protection. When the mission ended there were "outbursts of wailing and lamentations". And when the missioners tried to go home they had to depart by boat because all the roads were blocked by local people, reluctant to see them go.

Relations between Catholics and Protestants, particularly converts, deteriorated rapidly after the mission. Ostracism of converts was apparent beforehand. Now, however, it ceased to be an expression of frustration and became more of a systematic campaign of eradication. Though the missioners did not directly preach against Protestants McNamara notes with approbation that

> As a further result a tone more decidedly Catholic sprang up amongst the Catholics, who thenceforth had to regard the colony as a reproach to the town and parish. The perverts read their own condemnation into their looks, as they met them in the streets or on the road leading to the colony farm. Their wives and daughters were shunned by the female population and their children had to endure all the annoyance which children have to suffer from children, when their respective parents are ranked in opposition to each other…

The Dingle colonies went into a gradual decline from the 1840s onwards. Few of the converts were actually reconverted during the mission. Indeed, that had not been its purpose. McNamara puts the figure at ten to twenty families. Many more made enquiries about reconversion but did not proceed any further when the missioners, to their credit, pointed out that no guarantee could be made about their financial position other than to refer them to the Society of St Vincent de Paul with its meagre resources.

Conditions in the Dingle area, in common with most of the country during the famine, were at an all time low. At the end of 1846 McNamara received a letter from E. Walsh, secretary of the Dingle Association of Charity, who wrote "I fear we must give up our good work if there is no further increase in our poor funds".

In such conditions most of the converts remained in their new faith. Yet the position of the converts was becoming more and more difficult as they witnessed the increasing militancy of their erstwhile co-religionists, as they heard of the denunciations of Fr Peter Lydon, who

preached so passionately during the mission because, it was said, he was "shocked at seeing some hundreds of Irish becoming Protestants", or as they came to understand that as a grateful O'Connell told the missioners, when he met them at Killarney, "the popular feeling of the country and its religious guidance flow from the same channel". The only alley open to the Dingle converts was to use the generous support of the Irish Society to emigrate to other parts of Ireland or to the new world. It was an escape route that most gratefully took.

The Vincentian attitude to the Dingle mission was summed up by the Provincial, Fr Philip Dowley, in a letter to the Superior General, Fr Jean-Baptiste Etienne in Paris:

> At last, most honoured Father, the object of our mission has been accomplished. The spread of heresy has been halted, attachment to the faith has been strengthened, even the most unenlightened have been instructed, a truly Catholic spirit flourishes, confraternities have begun to assist the poor and teach the young, the dangers from the apostates have been overcome, and the unity of all ranks of people for the defence of religion is now certain.

The mission had been a complete success. Unfortunately, the victors did not always observe the maxims about being magnanimous in victory. One Vincentian account includes the following distastefully gloating description of the death of Parson Gayer in 1848:

> The two great leaders of proselytism, Parson Gayer and agent Thompson, finding their influence going, resolved to visit England and demand increased supplies. But God cut them short in their career. Gayer was seized with a mortal disease and soon died and it was popularly reported that the disease was of such a loathsome nature that no one but his wife could be found to attend him, and that he died in great agony.

McNamara was above such spite but he notes with some pleasure a changed attitude to Lord Ventry:

> The magistrates and gentry were taken no further notice of as we appeared. This was especially remarkable in the case of Lord Ventry, the great local proprietor who was regarded as a demi-god by the people of Dingle and its vicinity. We had occasion to observe, before the commencement of the mission, how, as he

> paraded through the town, everyone uncovered to him and bent lowly before him, and as he deigned to speak to one, the people stood in order that as the great man looked in any direction to the right or left they might come within his notice and pay him their respects. But as the mission advanced their respect was quite absorbed by the missioners, and the great territorial potentate ceased to appear, being unable to brook the humiliation.

With Dingle under their belts the missioners were set to become the "scourge of the soupers", a role they continued to play in the 1850s and 1860s, though the evangelical crusade was in fact rapidly running out of steam. There was quite a significant mission at Oughterard, Co. Galway, in 1852. Denominational bitterness went even deeper than in Dingle. Dingle had been about strenghtening the Catholic community. Oughterard was about winning converts back. And it was successful. Most of the five hundred locals associated with the evangelicals and their schools returned. This did not leave the evangelicals best pleased and brought them into direct confrontation with the missioners. According to a Vincentian source the success of the mission

> excited the open hostility of the parsons and Bible readers who frequently came into collision with and even insulted the people. On some occasions they stopped the missioners on the road and pronounced expressions most insulting to them and blasphemous against the most adorable Sacrament and the Blessed Virgin.

It is nice to be able to report that the missioners did not sink to the same level in their response. Still, they did organise the ostracism of the converts; in Dingle it had merely been the spontaneous reaction of the people.

> They were recommended and (as far as possible could be done) publicly engaged by the missioners to separate themselves completely from intercourse with the Jumper...; not to speak to them, not to lend or borrow from them; not to allow them into their homes nor upon their land upon any pretence whatsoever; and to show on all occasions their horror of their crime; they were directed to sign themselves with the cross everytime they met them in public or private.

In 1869 the Church of Ireland was disestablished. By that time Cardinal Cullen was presiding over a vigorous Irish Catholic Church.

The evangelical threat was at an end. Parish missions continued, but without the old sense of urgency. By 1877 the Superior General, Fr Eugene Bore, was receiving reports that "missions, although very useful, do not seem to be as fervent as they were in the beginning. They have lost some of their vitality."

Ireland often exhibits the best and worst aspects of Christianity. The early Vincentian parish missions did an immense amount of good. It is sad to record, however, that they took place in an atmosphere of religious bigotry and intolerance. It is even sadder to note that such attitudes are far from absent from southern Irish society today, not to speak of Northern Ireland. Only recently I heard a priest, who comes from an area not too far away from one of the places mentioned in this article, describe Protestants in most reprehensible terms. And it seems that no public debate can take place on important issues in Ireland without expressions of bitterness and accusations of bad faith on all sides. Perhaps we who are Irish Vincentians might perfect the work of our predecessors and find a new mission for ourselves by working for tolerance.

For a fuller account of the same subject, together with references, see James H. Murphy: "The role of Vincentian parish missions in the Irish counter-reformation of the mid-nineteenth century" in *Irish Historical Studies,* vol. XXIV No 94 (November 1984) pp 152-171.

Centenary of Vincentian Spiritual Fathers in Maynooth

Richard McCullen

(Homily preached in De Paul House, Celbridge, 22 May 1987)

Readings: Acts 15: 22-31, John 15: 12-17

For the second day running the Spirit of God has led us into the aula of the first Ecumenical Council. Yesterday at mass we listened to St Peter addressing the Fathers of the Council. Then there were the interventions of the missionary bishops Paul and Barnabas, and a contribution from the Local Ordinary, James, bishop of Jerusalem. Today the Fathers at the Council are writing the document, outlining the lines of action for the Church. It takes the form of a resolution of the bishops. "It was resolved by the Apostles and the Elders in agreement with the whole Jerusalem Church that representatives be chosen from among their number and sent to Antioch, along with Paul and Barnabas. Those chosen were leading men of the community, Judas known as Barsabbas, and Silas" (Acts 15: 22). As we read the text and resolution of the Fathers gathered in Council the issue seems to us today to be somewhat unreal and remote. We wonder why it should have been such a burning issue at the time. The truth is, of course, that the Christian Church was breaking out of the mould of Judaism and that, for the Apostles, was a traumatic experience. Indeed Karl Rahner remarks that the Church has had only two such experiences in its history. The first one was the Council of Jerusalem and the second was the Vatican Council of our own day. It is Rahner who remarks that during and after the Vatican Council the Church broke out from its western and European model to become a world Church. That is not to say that the Church was not missionary and was not striving to preach the gospel to the ends of the earth before Vatican II. The Church broke out from a mould during Vatican II, and that is reflected in the documents of the Council. The documents of the Second Vatican Council are unlike the documents of any other Ecumenical Council in the history of the Church. Beginning with its reflection on its prayer life in the Liturgy document and on its own

nature in Lumen Gentium, the Council stretched out its mind and its heart to the members of the Jewish Faith and to the millions who belong to the other great world religions. All this is reflected in the sixteen or so documents or resolutions of the Second Vatican Council.

Here today in De Paul House we are reflecting on another resolution of much lesser significance, but important for us as a Province and for the Irish Church. Let me read the text of a resolution passed by the Irish Bishops at their meeting in 1885:

> RESOLVED: That the Superior General of the Vincentian Fathers be requested in the name of the Bishops of Ireland to allow Fr Myers CM and any other priest of the Irish Province whom the Superior may approve, to take up their residence in the College and discharge the duties of the "patres spirituals" for at least one year.

The one year of 1886-1887 has since become one hundred years and it is those hundred years that we are celebrating here this evening. Indeed it is not quite correct to say that we are celebrating one hundred years, or a centenary. We are celebrating the fact that there has been an unbroken succession of confrères of the Province, who by the grace of God have been able to give expression to the charism which the Spirit of God gave to St Vincent for the formation of priests. The charism given to St Vincent has expressed itself through these confrères over a period of a hundred years for the benefit of the Irish Church.

The presence of the confrères in Maynooth for a hundred years is a long chapter in the history of our Province. There have been other chapters, too, perhaps not quite as long, in which the story of the Province's work for the formation of the diocesan clergy has been told: Paris, All Hallows, Clonliffe and, in our own days a new chapter is being written in Nigeria. The story of the confrères' work in these seminaries is still being recounted.

There have been other chapters, very interesting ones, but which have now been closed, Kilkenny, Ware, Ushaw. All this leads me to the conclusion that the Irish Province has been privileged, perhaps as no other Province of the Congregation at the present time, in being able to contribute in such a notable way to the formation of the diocesan clergy. It is true that the formation of the clergy is accessory to the principal end of our Congregation, namely to preach the gospel to the poor. It is, however, an extremely important accessory for, as the Vatican Council reminds us, "The wish for renewal of the whole Church in great part

depends on the priestly ministry, animated by the Spirit of Christ" (Optatam totius, Introduction).

Our celebration this evening has a character of thanksgiving. It is St Vincent who remarks in one of his letters that "ingratitude is the greatest of crimes" (III 37). It is right and fitting that we give thanks for so much that has been accomplished by our confrères in a hundred years. I have been told that it is not certain if Maynooth College itself will mark this event. It is not of great consequence that it should. St Vincent repeatedly emphasised that we must remain "humble and hidden in the Lord" (CR xii 10). Indeed it is almost a condition for God's blessing on such work that we be humble and hidden in the Lord. It is not that succeeding generations of diocesan priests have not been grateful for what the confrères have done for them in the work of their formation as priests. I recall how when Fr Neil Kevin wrote his very sensitive book on the spirit of Maynooth and its institutions he omitted to mention in its pages the work of the two Spiritual Fathers. On noticing the omission he was deeply embarrassed and made good the omission by a very generous and appreciative few pages in the second edition.

In our mass of thanksgiving this evening the Providence of God has suggested to us a reading from the fifteenth chapter of St John's gospel. The words of our Lord "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain" (Jn 15: 16). Fathers Frank Mullan and Seamus O'Neill, who began their formation as priests in Maynooth, will recall how often that text was cited by Fr Tom Cleary. It was one of his most favourite and most often repeated texts in his conferencs to the students. Likewise, too, our Lord's words "I will not now call you servants, but friends" (Jn 15: 15). Much of the work of the Spiritual Fathers in Maynooth could be related to those two sayings of our Lord, as they help students to come to know if, in fact, the Lord has chosen them for the priesthood and at the same time unfolding to all the meaning and the significance of the friendship of Christ for our lives. The Spiritual Fathers in Maynooth have been, above all, men of encouragement, and it is on a note of encouragement that the first reading ends. The resolution of the bishops at Jerusalem "was read and the faithful were delighted with the encouragement it gave them" (Acts 15: 31). Encouragement is at the heart of the work of the Spiritual Fathers in Maynooth. They encourage men to persevere to the priesthood, or to find their vocation as laymen. "I would maintain" wrote Chesterton "that thanks are the highest from of thought and that gratitude is happiness doubled by wonder". May God give us the grace of grateful wonder for what he has accomplished through our

confrères in the span of one hundred years in Maynooth. May he judge us worthy to continue the apostolate of assisting those whom he continues to choose for the priesthood. May he enlighten us to reveal to the students of Maynooth of this and coming generations the riches of his friendship.

Vincentian Students at Clonliffe

Maurice Carbery

The reason why Vincentian students were sent to Clonliffe College to obtain a degree at University College, Dublin, is something which I never heard discussed seriously in my youth; it was all taken for granted as normal. The commonly accepted view was that the Vins in charge of St Joseph's, Blackrock, considered that it would interfere with the spirit and the training of students if some of their number daily attended UCD.

It was a period of great social and economic change after the first world war, plus the 1916 insurrection and the civil war, and this obviously affected the youth of the period. We understood that the Vincentians had the privilege and right to place two of their students in Clonliffe to fulfil a debt and obligation which the Dublin diocese felt towards the Vincentians for the help received before the building of Clonliffe College in 1859. Up to that time the students of the Dublin diocese were required to spend some years at Castleknock College before being sent to Maynooth College to study for the priesthood. Actually it was this mentality in the Dublin diocese at that period that was one of the causes of founding Castleknock College. In *A Century of Irish Vincentian Foundations 1833-1933* Edmund Cullen says:

> It was observed that for want of a suitable education many young men entered Maynooth and other establishments of that kind without any very definite knowledge of the holy state to which they aspired, or the conditions necessary for it. The consequence was that by far the greater part of them, finding in the course of time that they had taken the wrong step, having no vocation to the priesthood, left the ecclesiastical colleges, having lost time and opportunities for securing a career in the world; and besides having occupied places of others destined in the designs of God for the Ministry. It was also considered that, in such a work, the Community would become more identified with the clergy of the Arch-diocese, and would moreover have the prospect of gaining recruits for themselves from the ranks of their pupils. When the prospect was mentioned to the Archbishop (Dr Murray) he not

> only approved of it but presented a gift of £200, and promised to use his influence in every way he could to promote the undertaking (p28).

Castleknock was established as "an exclusively ecclesiastical establishment for the Archdiocese of Dublin" but "in the course of time however they were induced to take lay pupils" (ibid pp 33,37).

It is consoling to ponder how splendidly the hopes and wishes of the founders of the young Irish Province turned out when we consider how many vocations have come to the Vincentians from Castleknock through the years. It is no longer a seminary and has evolved, as other similar institutions, into a secondary school. But under God's providence it is still fulfilling its mission of gaining recruits for the Little Company even in these times when so many previous sources have dried up.

The college at Castleknock continued to be the diocesan college until 1859. In that year the Archbishop of Dublin removed his ecclesiastical students from Castleknock, having established Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, as the ecclesiastical seminary for the archdiocese of Dublin. This brought about a definite change in Castleknock, though ecclesiastical students from other dioceses continued to come. One providential development was that after 1859 it began to produce more vocations to the Vincentians than between 1835 and 1859 (ibid, p 90).

In 1873 the property that was until recently known as St Joseph's, Temple Road, Blackrock, was purchased and established as a novitiate for the Irish Province. Presumably from this time on those students doing their novitiate or studying theology lived in this house only. Whether Vincentian students, up to the time of the first world war in 1914, were sent to Clonliffe to study philosophy or theology I have no certain knowledge. It was common knowledge among the Castleknock community when I arrived there in 1933 that Harry O'Connor had been sent to Clonliffe, as a Vincentian student, to obtain a degree at UCD. The rest of the staff presumably had attended UCD as students living in St Joseph's.

Deciding to investigate the subject more fully I began to look up obituary notices in the *Castleknock Chronicle* from the beginning of this century for whatever knowledge could be found there. Of course the absence of any reference to attending Clonliffe should not necessarily be taken as proof that the individual did not do a course there:
Edward Sheehy (1873-1935): "After reading Philosophy at the Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, he passed on to make his Theological studies at St Joseph's, Blackrock" (1936, p 112).

John McGuinness (1858-1940): "... he passed to Castleknock for a period of six years. There he did his Classical and Philosophical studies" (1942, p 47).
Edmund Comerford (1870-1940): "In 1887 he came to Castleknock where he did his University course, after which he entered the Vincentian novitiate" (1942. p 47).
Paul Cullen (1861-1945): "He was a student here from 1875 to 1884, when he joined the Vincentian Congregation and went to the head house in Paris to do his novitiate. His theological studies were made in St Joseph's, Blackrock" (1946, p 48).
Patrick Quinn (1864-1950): "Fr Quinn came to Castleknock in 1889, and having completed his studies in Philosophy and the Arts, he entered the Novitiate" (1950, p 56).
William Hastings (1890-1954): " After a year in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, he entered the Vincentian Novitiate at St Joseph's, Blackrock. When his spiritual year was completed he resumed his studies at the University, and in the Autumn exams in 1912 obtained his degree in Philosophy with First Class Honours" (1954, p 35).
Austin Murphy (1886-1955): "After leaving Castleknock in 1905 he graduated from the old Royal University with a degree in Mental and Moral Philosophy and received his theological training in Clonliffe College and St Joseph's, Blackrock" (1956, p 39).
Henry Delany (1895-1969): "On leaving Castleknock Fr Delany continued his studies at UCD, St Joseph's, Blackrock and Dax, France" (1970, p 14).

I am adding some excerpts from *The College History and Centenary Record of Holy Cross College Clonliffe 1859-1959* because they throw light on the subject we are discussing. It was compiled by Mgr Richard Sherry DD who is now Parish Priest of Donnybrook:

> (From a speech by Archbishop Walsh): Since 1881 the students of the College had been taking the examinations of the Royal University. The Archbishop pointed out that between 1881 and 1908 81 students took the BA Examinations. In this period 451 students passed through the College, so that the proportion doing the university course, was relatively high for those days (pill).

This means that out of an average of 17 students each year three took the BA degree.

> On Monday 8th Nov. 1909 the old Royal University ceased to exist, and the National University of Ireland came into existence (p 115, note)… The Clonliffe students set out for the first time for University College (p 115). (A quotation from an account of student life in Clonliffe around 1910): There were usually a few Vincentian students living with us at Clonliffe in those days. They did the university course with us; I suppose this arrangement made things easier for the staffing of St Joseph's, Blackrock (p 121). The arrangement with the Vincentians seems to have begun in 1895. It ceased in 1928 (p 122, note).

It is difficult to deduce from these extracts whether the Vincentian authorities followed any definite pattern. The novitiate year and the theological studies were almost always done in St Joseph's, but philosophy was done mainly in Castleknock, but also in Clonliffe and St Joseph's. Since 1909 it became necessary for those who wished to obtain a BA degree to attend lectures in University College, and this created problems for seminary authorities. Under the old Royal University it was only an examination at the end of each year which was supplied by the University, and the student was free to obtain tuition wherever he could find it; the University did not take on the obligation of supplying lectures. It is probably because this state of affairs obtained that the Vincentian authorities felt the need to use Clonliffe more freely to supply the demand of their teaching colleges for young Vincentian professors with BA degrees in other subjects besides philosophy. There are no clues to suggest that these places in Clonliffe were free, but they may have been subsidised by the diocese.

Killian Kehoe and I, at the end of our schooling in 1925, having applied to join the Vins, were told to spend one more year in Castleknock, riding in each day to UCD on our bicycles to attend lectures in First Arts. We were sent to Clonliffe for the next two years to finish our BA degree, and then we entered St Joseph's to do our novitiate and theology.

The first evening we arrived in Clonliffe Fr Matthew McMahon, then Vice President, after supper brought all the new students to a lower corridor in the college and taught us how to bless ourselves and how to genuflect, according to his standards; he was a holy priest, but an odd one at times. The Dean was a Fr John Kelly with whom I got on well as he was keen on games, especially soccer and cricket. He had a brusque manner but he was felt to be just in his dealings with the students. The President was Mgr Patrick Walsh, who had written the life of the late Archbishop William Walsh which was considered a great success. He

was a human type of person but rather pompous. I remember in one of his talks he instructed us on the correct method of address to a monsginor: the vocative case was Monsignore, with the accent on the o. In all this Killian and I were treated like any other student. The main difference occurred in the subjects we were studying for our degree. Practically all the Clonliffe students were doing a philosophy degree, and therefore attended the same lectures; Vincentian students attended their own lectures. Kevin Cronin, a year ahead of us, was in his final BA year and as he and I had a history lecture in common we were paired to walk to and from UCD together.

The method of reaching, and returning from, UCD was "Shanks's mare". It took about forty minutes good walking, and the students walked in pairs. In general it was a healthy exercise, but returning for a three o'clock dinner after a day's work could be tiring. While attending UCD Clonliffe students wore bowler hats to distinguish them from other clerical students. Needless to say this tickled the humour of the lay students. One of their pranks was to telescope a few dozen of these objects, which were hung up in the basement.

On alternate Sundays the students walked to the Pro-Cathedral to assist at High Mass and Vespers with the archbishop and his chapter. As we walked down Gardiner Street, two by two, dressed in soutane and soprana (a Roman garment lined with red silk), with a silk hat perched on our head, we were a sight. But the Dublin urchins were quite accustomed to us, as they pestered each pair with the cry "Give us a medal, Father".

On the sporting side, luckily for us, permission had been given by the archbishop the year before to wear football togs instead of trousers. I enjoyed the games, soccer for most of the year and cricket in the summer term. Killian had been outstanding on the rugby field and at athletics, but soccer was not so much to his liking. This led to an amusing incident one evening during a match in which our Dean, Dr John Kelly, was playing. He was athletically built and enjoyed, and rather fancied himself at, soccer, having an explosive shot for goal. Killian was on the opposing team and was getting frustrated by his failure to stop smart dapper forwards who fooled him. Towards the end of the game a good pass came to John Kelly, who had only to round Killian to have a blast at the goal. All Killian's rugby instincts suddenly asserted themselves and he gave the flying Dean a mighty shoulder, sending him over the adjacent path. A few moments of consternation as his Reverence picked himself up, and then: "Mr Kehoe, what do you mean charging around like a wild bull?" Typical of the man, that was the end of it; no ill feeling.

Clonliffe in those days consisted of the main building you see as you walk up the front avenue, along with the church on the left. It consisted of four stories, and on the two top floors were the students' rooms, divided into four divisions. Juniors on the top floor, Seniors underneath, with seventeen students in each division, ruled by a prefect. The rooms looked out on the front and the back, with a rather dark corridor running down the middle of the building. With a single room to each person, that meant the accommodation was for around seventy students.

The spiritual direction of the students was cared for by Fr Edmund Cullen CM, President of St Patrick's Training College, Drumcondra. He walked over every Tuesday and gave us a conference, and heard confessions on Saturday. Known affectionately as Fr Ned, he was liked by the students. He had a sense of humour and could mix with the young. He was friendly with Dr Byrne, the archbishop, and always sat opposite him at big dinners in the College refectory. It was not till 1938 that the first residential Director was appointed, in the person of Fr Donal Costelloe CM. Killian and I had no connection with St Joseph's before we entered in September 1928, except for one visit that same year. It was the last year as Superior there of John Roughan.

I enjoyed my period in Clonliffe. Although there was not the familiarity and friendship between the teachers and the taught that I had learned to like and admire in Castleknock, yet the dedication of the staff in the formation of young men for the priesthood impressed and formed me. The correct implementation of the rubrics of the liturgy of the Church was looked upon as good manners towards God, and it therefore became very important in the life of the College. Another point was the insight I got at a young age into the mind and thinking of a secular priest, and of course the many new friendships formed that helped in my later life, especially when I was appointed Spiritual Director in Clonliffe, under the Presidency of my old Dean Dr John Kelly, who took a certain amount of pride in welcoming back his old pupil.

Before I left Clonliffe as a student, in fact in my first year there 1926-27, the President of the college Mgr Patrick Walsh, one day summoned me to his room and spoke to me about the difficulty the diocese was beginning to experience in taking in enough students to run the diocese. It was only afterwards that I began to realise that he was giving the warning that the old privilege of going to Clonliffe would have to cease. Kevin Cronin, Killian and I are the last surviving Vincentian students who went to Clonliffe, but actually a student from Armagh was sent there in 1928 but he did not persevere.

Here is a list of the confrères in front of us:

1926-28 Maurice Carbery and Killian Kehoe; 1925-27 Kevin Cronin; 1922-1925 William Sullivan and William Gilgunn; 1921-23 John Conran.

For one year, 1923-24, the following Vincentian students studied philosophy in Castleknock under the guidance of Fr Bodkin, who died a year later:

Eddie Cullen
Eddie Conran
John Conran
Bernard Maguire
Gerard Tierney.

Addendum I

I was always told that the two places in Clonliffe for Vincentian students were free; certainly my family was never billed for anything during my two years there. It was commonly understood by the Clonliffe students of my time that this arrangement was a quid pro quo by which the Province gave the services of a confessor to the Clonliffe students (Ned Cullen in my time) in return for two free places for CM students. I was the only one in my year, but I succeeded Bill Sullivan and Willie Gilgunn, and I was succeeded by Maurice and Killian.

I think the arrangement began with John Conran, although I know that some years earlier Harry O'Connor had been sent as a CM student.

I think the arrangement was simply a case of making it easy for a CM undergraduate to attend UCD, for in my year I was the only one sent to UCD. All the rest, six of them, were sent to Gateacre to begin philosophy. I joined them in Blackrock to begin our seminaire together.

I don't know why the arrangement was discontinued. It is worth recording that the last CM student to be sent to Clonliffe was the one Maurice records as an Armagh man who did not persevere, who went there in 1928; his name was Simon McGrath. I met him in 1927 when I had finished my degree course, and my reason for meeting him was to "hand on" my top hat and soprana. These were expensive items in those days and it was customary for diocesan students in Clonlitte to hand them on to incoming students whom they happened to know when they themselves came to ordination. I was told about Simon, met him and gave him mine; fortunately the top hat fitted. He did not persevere and was thus the last of an illustrious line.

I don't think I would add anything else to Maurice's script. I too enjoyed Clonliffe and have always been grateful to the authorities there

for giving me hospitality while studying at UCD. If I have ever felt inclined to criticise the regime there I have always refrained, for the kindness and acceptance I received there has always been my major memory of the place.

Kevin Cronin

Addendum II

Having read Maurice's survey I feel that I have little to add. He seems to have researched the matter very thoroughly with the very limited resources available to him.

My own view, formed from scraps of information received from time to time rather haphazardly, is that two places per annum were placed at the disposal of Vincentian Provincials to allot to their students whom they wished to send to pursue university studies in UCD. This gesture was made by the archbishops in recognition and appreciation of the facilities extended by the Castleknock community to the Dublin clerical students, before the existence of Clonliffe College, for the formation and philosophical studies of the said students before going to Maynooth for the completion of their studies.

I am not too sure that the archbishops' offer was widely accepted by the Vins. In the early days there was no compulsion on priests to have university degrees in order to teach; many of them had no degrees. Those who had did their studies in Castleknock or St Joseph's, Blackrock, before sitting the examinations of the old Royal University, which was merely an examining institute.

It may not be widely known, though I am sure that it is reported in the Provincial Archives, that a situation arose in St Joseph's in the 1922 era which may have influenced the Provincial to take advantage of the offer of places in Clonliffe to a greater extent than before. There were two factions among the students in Blackrock, those in favour of the Treaty and those against. At the time of the shelling of the Four Courts some went into Dublin, without permission, to observe the goings-on. Unfortunately they were spotted at Tara Street station. The particular students were assembled in the Library afterwards and harangued. As a result some were expelled.

It is quite possible that after this prospective Vins were sent to Clonliffe rather than having them upset by the troubled atmosphere in the Rock. From this time on, beginning with Charlie Horan, John Conran, etc, whom Maurice mentions at the end, some students went to Clonlift'e. I mention Charlie Horan, who left from Clonlift'e and joined Liverpool diocese and was promoted to Vicar General or some other

high position. He would have been a few years junior to Bill Meagher; he was a fine fellow.

It was after Maurice and I left Clonliffe that twelve postulants entered the Rock. These had done First Arts from Castleknock but did Second Arts and BA years from the Rock. So Maurice and I were the last of the Clonliffe men, apart from the Armagh man a year later who did not persevere.

Life in Clonliffe was just as Maurice has described it. We were amenable to all the rules and regulations. The only privilege we enjoyed was that we were allowed to choose our own subjects for our degree; the choice was made for all the other students. We did our philosophy in evening classes in Clonliffe.

Killian Kehoe

Addendum III

In January 1898 John Conran (not the one already referred to), signing himself as "Director of St Joseph's, Blackrock, Provincial Consultor and Provincial Bursar" wrote to the Superior General. The letter was marked "Confidential". The following is a translation of the section on the students' Philosophy course:

This year we have reached the highest number ever, namely twenty-six students and seminarists, of whom only seven have taken their vows. As well as these seven there are five others who are studying theology, two of whom have been with us for two years but who have not yet been allowed to take their vows. The other three would start their theology after a year and a half in the intern seminaire. There are 14 in the intern seminaire, one of whom goes to theology class for the Incarnation tract because he will not have any other opportunity of doing it during his studies.

The spirit of the students and seminarists is good. Here the transition from the seminaire to studies does not seem to be as dangerous as is said. The students are as obedient and fervent as the seminarists. The ages of both are rather high. Seventeen are over twenty-four years old. Five are over twenty-two and only two are under twenty-one. Their very advanced age makes their formation in our spirit more difficult. We have no remedy in the case of those who, for example, come from Maynooth College. They have to be taken when they offer themselves. They have studied theology to a greater or lesser extent before coming to us.

As regards the students in Castleknock who are postulants for the Congregation, they do a much longer course and they are also obliged to do philosophy for two years before joining us. A Castleknock boy

was accepted into the Jesuit novitiate last September and has made the thirty day retreat since his entry. Even had he wanted to he would not have been accepted here for tour years; and during two of those years he would have studied the Arts and Science course for the University of Dublin, and after that he would have done philosophy for two more years, following our custom for the past three or four years, in the Diocesan College of Dublin, or in All Hallows College, or in the Irish College in Paris.

The practice of sending Castleknock boys to do philosophy before the novitiate is reprehensible. It is without precedent in any religious society, and I think it is against the usage of the Congregation in other Provinces. We have at present five seminarists who were sent from Castleknock to do philosophy either in Clonliffe (Diocesan College of Dublin) or in All Hallows College or in the Irish College, Paris. All five say that they did not get anything worthwhile from these colleges. They had a greater spirit of faith and submission in Castleknock and a better idea of the ecclesiastical state. These had been lost, to a greater or lesser extent, during their philosophical studies in the other colleges. Some of them were tempted against their vocation to the Congregation. One who was at Clonliffe (Dublin) was strongly tempted to take up some secular occupation, and even when he had been received here he was tempted to return to Clonliffe and even asked permission to go back there to consult his former director.

At present there are three Castleknock postulants doing philosophy there, and two in Solesmes (Nord). This pair in Solesmes, since they don't speak French well, will do a very incomplete philosophy course in one year. This is without precedent, and too much for their vocation, and too great an expense for their parents. Besides, the young men in Castleknock will not be encouraged when faced with the long course and the other difficulties (exile, for example, and especially before entering the little Congregation) to offer themselves for the Company. This would be a calamity, because Castleknock boys are very good candidates. It would be much better if philosophy was taught in Castleknock, as was the case a few years ago. Three of our professors and three of the best professors of the Irish College, Paris, did their philosophy in Castleknock, and if it is not accepted that they did it well we should blame the Provincial Council which did not take sufficient care to see that it was adequately taught. The Castleknock boys who entered the Congregation in the past have been for the most part more receptive of formation, more malleable and of a more open character and disposition.

Fr Geoghegan is superior in Castleknock, and is the most capable confrère in theology and philosophy; we have reason to hope that if the Visitor makes him professor of philosophy it will be well taught.

It would be better, perhaps, if philosophy were done here after the intern seminaire, when it would be studied with more zeal and success.

The small number of students, and the difficulty of finding a professor, will be put forward as objections, but there are ways and means when there is the will, and when one wants to one always can. All other religious communities find philosophy professors although the students are few in number.

If it is not possible to do this then a central school of philosophy for the Congregation could be set up; for example near Louvain (Belgium), or the International College in Rome could be used for it, under a cosmopolitan superior who would know how to consult about the differences and needs of the countries. The Irish Jesuit Fathers send their novices to Belgium or to the Isle of Jersey for their philosophy. I am convinced, though, that the health and spirit of the seminarists would be damaged by such an arrangement: "Qui multum peregrinantur raro sanctificantur".

The practice followed at present, of sending Castleknock postulants to the major colleges to do philosophy, is Fr Morrissey's idea, and objecting to it is like speaking to a deaf person. Since he does not want to admit being wrong, and he is somewhat autocratic, it will be necessary to give an authoritative solution to the question which will leave no room for appeal. It seems to me that Fr Morrissey is full of prejudices against Castleknock, but he does not want to admit this. However, it seems to me that he has been more favourable towards it in recent weeks.

(Thomas Morrissey was the fourth Visitor of the Irish Province, from September 1888 to July 1909)

Forum

APPROACHES TO PARISH MINISTRY

The late James Murphy came to see the new parish the Vins had taken over in Warrington a year after our arrival there. I took him on a tour of the area allocated to us by the diocese of Liverpool. There was the parent parish of St Stephen's; Fr Moss Dillon had been its founder. He was sent there in 1952 and he immediately bought eighteen acres of land on which he built a church, presbytery, social club, and schools which included nursery, junior and secondary modern; this latter eventually became a comprehensive school. It was a mighty achievement. An even mightier one was that he paid for it all before he retired to Kerry in ill health in 1971.

Adjacent to the parent parish was the area called St Bridget's. The centre of its life was the primary school where everything that happened in the parish took place, including mass.

Further away still from St Stephen's, but adjacent to St Bridget's, was the third area called St Oliver's. Though it was adjacent to the rest of the parish it was split off from it by the Motorway. It was one of the New Towns in the North West. In that summer of 1978 when James Murphy saw it it was virgin territory; there were only a few houses around and the roads were just being built. Mass was celebrated in the local state school. The Vins commuted the four miles from St Stephen's to minister to the needs of the few Catholics living there. The parish was starting from scratch, just as Moss Dillon had done with St Stephen's. James Murphy remarked that his secret dream was one day to get such an appointment and build a parish from scratch.

Is there a blueprint for that job? Is the ideal to go out and buy land on which you put all the necessary amenities required for running a successful parish? Then, when you have these built and paid for you can watch the growth of the Kingdom taking place under your own eyes and feel proud of the part you have played in the scheme of things divine. It is certainly an approach which has been successful, and possibly could continue to be.

When you look at the various approaches to the development of parishes you see that at different times different emphases have been to the fore. Fr Michael Hollings certainly runs a parish with a difference.

Most find his Open House approach too demanding, not least the housekeeper who might have to cater for twenty-six at a sitting. The curates found the lack of privacy a difficult fact of that style of life to live with. It is not an approach which has caught on.

Fr Jock Dalrymple exemplified a less demanding style of Open House. Parishioners had access to the presbytery, could use its facilities and felt at home there. Then, through shortage of priests, he lost his curates and he found he was being tied down to the presbytery too much. So, to get more freedom for the essential ministry he needed to take in parishioners who would help with the manning of the house. When he got his first heart attack he left it with the parishioners to organise things in his absence. He returned three months later thinking that he would have to pick up the pieces, only to find that he was not as indispensible as he had thought. Things were not just ticking over; there was a purposeful enthusiasm about the parishioners, realising a potential Jock had not expected in them.

A different form of involvement and enthusiasm is shown among parishioners and non-parishioners in Fr O'Mahony's parish of Our Lady of the Wayside in Solihull. His massive Third World effort, which has enabled him to send £6m to developing countries, is the envy of those who wish they could do something similar. He has succeeded because he has confined his efforts to parishioners. He galvanised the local community, especially the medical people and institutions, to help in collecting both funds and medicines for the needy. A comparison could be made with St Vincent. Fr O'Mahony's parish is an early example of the missionary parish spoken of at the General Assembly, or an aspect of it. He may not be trying to convert the local community but he is certainly tapping their resources.

Those are a few of the outstanding or noteworthy approaches to parish development, at the individual level. For an "official" look you can see what the bishops in the United States said in January 1980. This interim report was drawn up after considerable consultation in about half the states. It began by asserting that "In our view the renewal of parish life is a complex task that cannot be accomplished quickly. Any serious approach to parish renewal requires a commitment of at least three to five years of on-going effort". They then went on to identify four critical issues central to parish development: a) leadership; b) liturgy-spirituality; c) mission; d) co-ordination with diocesan services (Pre 8/80).

Nearer home the working party of the English bishops produced a report entitled "Community in Church and the World — approaches to the renewal of the local church" (Briefings, 12 September 1986). Its

preamble states: "The openness of the local church allows the Church and neighbourhood to penetrate one another more thoroughly and builds community both in the Church and outside it by allowing people to meet, collaborate and enter into dialogue, and by increasing and fortifying the different networks within the area. Thus, in the words of Vatican II, the open parish becomes, in some sense, a soul or leaven in the wider community and strengthens its seams". It goes on to quote the National Conference of Priests in September 1984 which passed a resolution, without opposition: " In the mission to bring Christ to the world, the value of small groups using the see/judge/act model is proving eminently effective. In such action-prayer-bible based groups priests and laity together experience renewal of faith and life as they listen to one another, learn to value each other's ministry and come to know a sense of belonging. This Conference therefore recommends to Bishops and councils of priests that such groups be formed in our parishes, with suitable resources being provided by diocesan pastoral centres".

But what of the Vincentian approach? When the last Provincial Assembly debated our parochial involvement the facilitator, Fr Markham, summed up the characteristics of a Vincentian parish as being marked by compassion, gentleness and respect for the individual and care for the poor (cf 30-8-85, session 3). The meeting of the confrères in Great Britain further elaborated this theme in their recommendations: "We recommend the confrères to be catalysts; we should be flexible about parishes; we should continue to open our houses to the clergy".

Moving from the Provincial to the General Assembly, its *Lines of Action,* which is the Programme for Action approved by it for the next six years, clarifies what our approach could be: "Among our apostolic activities the following stand out: the increased importance of the missionary parish, recourse to new forms of pastoral approach like small Christian communities, basic ecclesial communities and other apostolic action formation groups" (cf p. 3). But it goes on to say that pastoral planning was sparse and that there was an excessive stability (p.4). It asked what formation of leaders was taking place.

In the light of all this, how should one approach parish work today? The answer is always going to be very much influenced by the individual. One of the people who influenced me most on the course on Spirituality that I did at St Bueno's was not a member of staff but one of the participants. Fr McGlinchey, a Columban working in Korea, had made his name as a developer of cooperatives on the island of Cheju. In the 1960s he brought pigs from Donegal and built up a new source of income from them. He brought tractors from Japan and helped change

the agricultural scene to such an extent that he was internationally recognised for his work.

Then the Columbans held their Regional Assembly in the early 1970s and decided that part of the strategy for establishing the Kingdom of God on earth in that part of the world should include basic Christian communities. So he took over a parish and began to implement the policy. He divided the parish into four sections; there were about 10,000 in the parish. He put someone in charge of each section. Each of these leaders would have as many others to help them as they needed or could get. He was the overall leader but each section was responsible for its own life. The leaders would be like curates in their own areas; people would come to them to make arrangements for baptisms, funerals and pre-sacramental preparations.

As pre-sacramental instruction became increasingly the order of the day a lot of helpers were required. More and more people needed to become involved and help with the courses. So Fr McGlinchey set up a Pastoral Retreat Centre in order to instruct the helpers and deepen their spiritual life. It was at this stage that he said he felt he was not adequately equipped for this work, so he applied to St Bueno's so that he could learn to give retreats and guide people in the spiritual life and in group work.

He had been involved in basic Christian communities along these lines for about four years. He said it would take at least ten years before they would be solidly established. After four years he still had only about fifty people involved in running the four sections of the parish.

You might want to involve people in the running of the parish, but the people might not want to be involved, or at least not to that extent. It takes time to sell the idea. It takes even more time to be ready, mentally, spiritually and economically.

It is interesting that it was not shortage of priests that forced him into this approach; his inspiration came from the Columban Regional Assembly which proposed this as the most enlightened approach for their apostolate. Involvement of the laity is the beginning; training them follows. The compassion which is so often mentioned among us requires us, and especially in our parishes, to open our doors to them, get them involved, help them achieve their potential. Parochial work will *be* team work involving priests, sisters and laity. Together, the best approach in a particular parish will be planned. Planning requires training. It will all take time.

Eamon Raftery

THE SPIRITUALITY OF A VINCENTIAN: CELBRIDGE 1982 (SUMMER)

Pursuant to what we have been saying on the holiness demanded by the priestly ministry I have the temerity to say a few words on the spirituality of the Vincentian. The views expressed are, of course, merely personal.

Recently Dr John Greehy, speaking to the Bray Vicariate on the spirituality of the ministerial priesthood, said rightly that the spirituality of the priest cannot be separated from his role as priest. Neither can the spirituality of a Vincentian be separated from his role within that priesthood. To isolate this role is not easy, and so I say that what I give is purely a personal viewpoint.

First let me say that, to me at any rate, the role of the Vincentian priest is not identical with that of the diocesan priest; their functions may overlap here and there but they are not identical. Vincent de Paul was a diocesan priest and if that particular role had dovetailed into his life work he would, no doubt, have remained a diocesan priest; but he did not. He founded a new community some of whom were laymen, but laymen bound by vows, and with specific objectives quite distinct from those of the diocesan priesthood.

What is distinctive about the role of the Vincentian? I'll suggest an answer which will perhaps surprise you; I may be completely wrong but I'll give the viewpoint for what it is worth. First let us take the objectives of the diocesan priest; he is preacher of the word, he is president of the eucharistic assembly, he is an animator of his community (which means that he sees that the spirit of the gospel permeates his community). This latter objective naturally covers a wide area.

I'll give a little gloss on each of these objectives. The diocesan priest is a preacher, mainly at the Sunday homily which is a very particular kind of preaching. It is an intimate heart to heart talk which applies the truth of the gospel to the life and needs of the congregation to whom he is talking; that will be his main preaching duty.

He is president of the eucharistic assembly. That, of course, is jargon; it simply means that he says mass and administers the sacraments to his parishioners, holds regular confession mainly of devotion, visits the sick, visits schools, and so on. These, of course, are extremely important services in the Church.

He is an animator of the community, a leader who has to try and see that there is a presence of the Church in the parish, that the gospel maxims permeate the life of the parish. This might mean anything from

heading a deputation to the chairman of the local County Council to protest about the condition of the village water supply or lack of recreational facilities in the local hospital, to chairing a meeting of the GAA club or local drama group. A really excellent example of this particular function of the diocesan priest would be Vincent's work for the poor during the period he spent as cure of Châtillon-les-Dombes; but at that time he was a diocesan priest.

To my mind the Vincentian's specific function is distinct from all this, mainly under the first and third of the three objectives already mentioned. His preaching, for instance, is directly aimed at *metanoia,* or change of life, or conversion in its widest sense. John Gill, with the old-style mission sermon, was a great example of this. And at the mission there was also the morning instruction, a backup to the sermon, which had the same end in view. Of course this *metanoia* is an on-going process in every Christian. What I am talking about is those turning-points in the lives of all of us, turning points that are definite landmarks where the life of the Trinity begins to be active at a higher level. At one extreme end there would be a change from the life of serious sin, people who are completely cut off from God, and at the other end reasonably good people embarking on a new striving towards a greater union with God. But all the time the instinct of the Church down the centuries has seen the necessity, for the ordinary man and woman, of more intense periods of renewal; a refresher course, so to speak, in the faith. These take the form of missions, retreats and so on. That particular function, it seems to me, gives the Vincentian his particular calling. It is the seed, the expression and development of which gave rise to many other ancillary and necessary works.

Vincent answered the call to this particular vocation on the occasion of the incident you know so well, on 25 January 1617. He always regarded the choice of day, the Conversion of St Paul, as especially chosen in the designs of Providence. This shows the consciousness of conversion in its widest sense that impelled him to follow the particular Vincentian way. The poor peasant dying in his sins but for Vincent's ministration prompted the good Madame de Gondi to ask for the widespread preaching of missions on the subject of conversion and general confessions. Eureka! Vincent de Paul had found his vocation; the Vincentians had arrived!

Of course things developed. The mustard seed of the sermon on general confessions grew into a vast tree. Vincent soon saw that it was no use converting parishes unless you left good priests to serve them. And so he became a foremost founder of seminaries and a great force

in the reform of the French clergy in general. Nor did it end there. The Tuesday Conferences brought this conversion to the nobility and to the middle classes of Paris.

In a word, if I as a Vincentian priest were asked to say what gave a distinctive Vincentian role to Vincent de Paul's activities I would cut through the incrustation of the old priest with the child in his arms and the orphans hanging on to him (all good works, of course, and all of which he engaged in with the Daughters of Charity) and insist that his distinctive characteristic as a Vincentian priest was that he was an animator of the faith.

Look at our own Province. The few Maynooth men who in the early 19th century started a school on Usher's Quay, and later at Castleknock, and then became affiliated to the Congregation of the Mission, what were they at? They began by giving priests and professional men, men of faith, to the Church in Ireland. The Church in Ireland, as you well know, was just out of the catacombs which were the Penal Laws. It needed educated men who would give a necessary witness to the faith from all the key positions in life. The bishops were very conscious of the same need; witness Newman's university. It might be objected that the element of *metanoia* is not very prominent here; this would be true. But that element, which no doubt was always present to some extent, became increasingly evident after their affiliation with the Vincentian community. Besides, the work of education provided a back-up for the work of the missions, just as the seminaries and the Tuesday Conferences provided the same necessary back-up for the missions to the French countryside in the 17th century.

Of course they went into missions and retreats in a big way; it could not be otherwise, given their Vincentian stamp. But they kept on their other works as a necessary part of what they were about. Seminary work was undertaken: All Hallows as a back-up for the Irish emigrants who might lose their faith in God, the direction of students for the priesthood in Maynooth. Later, when the National Schools came into being and Training Colleges were instituted, was it not odd (or was it a special design of Providence?) that it was not a very learned order like the Jesuits or Dominicans who were chosen to supervise this vital area in the faith-life of the Irish people? No, it was the Vineentians. Dare anyone say because, in the eyes of God, they were, first and foremost, animators of the faith?

To me it all makes a pattern. In practically every work the Vincentian instinct seized on a key point in the battle of the faith-life of the people. Today we hear some talk about the priest wondering about his role. To

me, the one priest who should have no doubt at all about his role, especially in the world we live in, is the Vincentian. "Pray ye therfore the Lord of the harvest to send forth labourers into his harvest".

But to get back to our point of departure, the spirituality of the Vincentian: as Dr Greehy remarked, the spirituality of any priest must depend on his role; it takes its shape and form from his role. The Vincentian is no exception. Vincent listed five virtues as the very faculties of the soul of his Congregation: simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal for souls. It does not require a great deal of reflection to see how each of these virtues bears particularly upon the role of a Vincentian priest, and the mission for which the Congregation was founded.

Tom O'Flynn

Editor's note: There were dozens of files of conference notes among T. O'F. 's papers, many on the backs of envelopes and on odd scraps of paper (see page 58 of his booklet on Frank Duff), others on full sheets; all were very rough, just outlines, headings or even single words. The paper printed here was unique in being fully typed out, with the title as given. The odd thing, though, is that he does not appear to have given the talk.

VINCENTIAN STUDY GROUP

Once again there were five meetings during the period from October to March:

October: Frank Mullan on Jacques Delarue's book *The Missionary Ideal of the Priest according to St Vincent de Paul.*

November: Kieran Magovern on André Dodin's book on the spirit of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

January: Seamus O'Neill on aspects of the spirituality of St Vincent, based on the Spanish book by Antonino Orcajo.

February: Tom Davitt on Benet of Canfield.

March: Eamon Flanagan on the Carmelite dimension in St Vincent and its application to us.

TD

CORRIGENDUM

In the last issue the statement on page 231 about the Brothers present at the last General Assembly was not quite accurate. Two of the Brothers were elected in their own right, one by the Mid-Western Province of the United States and the other, from Madagascar, by the Province of Toulouse; only one Brother was invited by the Superior General.

Fr Arthur McRory C.M.

Arthur received the final call in the front hall of St Patrick's College, Armagh, between 8 and 9 pm on Friday 9 January. He was either en route to or from his beloved Arts and Crafts Room. Upstairs his TV was on and the electric fire was plugged in; he hadn't intended to stay long downstairs. The Cardinal's secretary Fr James Clyne had greeted Arthur on the stairs on his way over to Ara Coeli to fetch something from his office. On his return James found Arthur dead in the front hall. He was a mere five months short of the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of his ordination.

Arthur had a wide community experience: Gateacre Grange, Armagh, Phibsboro, Lanark, Sheffield, Glenart, Phibsboro, Blackrock, Hereford, Strawberry Hill and finally back to Armagh where as a schoolboy he had received his vocation to the priesthood.

To put first things first, at the centre of Arthur's life was a deep faith nourished by prayer. His devotion to prayer was a quiet source of inspiration and example to the community. In the morning he was always first in the oratory. Many a time, arriving back with him late at night, I would excuse myself in advance from morning prayer. He'd be very understanding, but he would be up himself in the oratory as usual. His last morning was like any other.

Whenever he preached or said a few words there was always something catching and uplifting in what he said. On Sunday mornings the people loved to see him coming out for the nine o'clock mass in the cathedral. I remember his telling me that in his experience of missions and retreats he felt he had never given what could be termed a failure. I'm sure this was true. His message was not sombre nor overly pious, but practical, laced with humour and spiced by his genuine spirituality.

Arthur was a gifted man. He had a love for painting and drawing and all types of art-work. He had the distinction of training a College team which won the McRory Cup. He was also a deeply musical person. One of the hurts that he carried with him was that the authorities in his time in the 'Rock didn't grant him the opportunity to have some formal musical training. Despite this drawback he could play the organ with conviction and musicality, particularly in the realm of improvisation.

Wherever he went in the school he had an entourage. Arthur's eye and ear were sensitive to the aches and pains of the young, both physical

and psychological.

As anybody knows who has lived in closed institutions like boarding schools an "emotional ventilation service" is a boon to the collective morale. Arthur provided this service in his Arts and Crafts Room, and through his group consultations in what the boys called the "wee room". Never a big eater he seemed to take his evening meal on the edge of his seat, then he was away. One had to marvel at his zeal. The huge numbers of pastmen who were former clients who came to his obsequies bore testimony to the generosity with which he gave of his time. In his homily the Cardinal remarked: "He was able to bridge the generation gap far better than people who were twenty or thirty years his junior". He had the gift of listening without patronising.

One of his delights was to go for "a run". This "run" had nothing to do with jogging. It meant out in the car and calling on some of his many friends. Arthur regretted that he didn't drive. A couple of years ago when there was much talk of the Sinclair car he toyed with the idea of buying one. He was contemplating this purchase not for the thrill of having the wind in his hair but merely as a means of visiting Dungannon.

Arthur spent nearly thirty years of his priestly life away from the North. One of his great consolations in these last years was being able to visit his family in Dungannon. His attachment to Dungannon was remarkable. It is only in seeing the strength of this attachment that one realised how big was the sacrifice he had to make in spending such a long time away. He had no desire to travel to faraway places in exotic lands. An hour or two in Dungannon was worth more to Arthur than all the world's holiday resorts put together.

Arthur was a community man. He was, in the words of the Common Rules, "attentive to the needs of his neighbour" both at table and in general. As community bursar he had a great memory for confrères' likes and dislikes. There was nothing he liked better than making arrangements for a community celebration.

If ever he was critical of a confrère he would immediately begin to back-track. Harsh or black and white judgements were not in his nature. He was always hopeful that things would improve. His own community experience, with its inevitable periods of light and shade, made him sympathetic rather than judgemental. Arthur's generosity of spirit used to be vividly illustrated on parent-teacher nights. Boys will not recommend their parents to see a teacher if they believe he is going to give a severe "summing up" of the student's application and progress. All the first years would put Arthur on the list. He positively glowed as the horde of parents waited to see him. Rather than being tired after these

long sessions he seemed to be refreshed. The parents were affirmed in their belief that if "junior" was not yet a complete genius he was at least showing signs of budding.

Although Arthur's going leaves a sad gap in the life of St Patrick's College, in many ways the Lord called him at a suitable time. He did not like to hear all the talk about leaving. He knew at his age he was going to find it difficult to carve out a new niche away from his beloved College and Dungannon.

Some months before he died Arthur said he didn't want any homily or panegyric at his obsequies. I didn't really believe him. There are few Vincentians who have a cardinal to attend their wake, their removal and preach at their Requiem Mass. The homily that Cardinal O Fiaich preached came from the heart. The Cardinal remembered with great affection Arthur's time as Dean in Armagh. "Deans" he said "are not normally the most popular members of any college staff. Fr McRory's sense of justice and fair play shone out on every occasion, even when he had to discipline us. If he had to chastise you, he began with firmness but ended with a smile".

The Cardinal ended with a prayer: "We pray today that God in his mercy will give him a high place in the eternal happiness of heaven for all the great work that he did in the cities and towns of Great Britain from Liverpool to Hereford, for the work he did in scores of towns in Great Britain and Ireland in his missions and retreats, but particularly for the work he has done in our own city of Armagh".

Kieran Magovern CM

ARTHUR McRORY CM
Born: Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, 28 April 1909.
Entered the Congregation: 7 September 1930.
Final vows: 8 September 1932.»
Ordained a priest in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, by Dr Wall, auxiliary bishop of Dublin, 22 May 1937.

Appointments
1937-1939 St Vincent's, Gateacre.
1939-1946 St Patrick's, Armagh.
1946-1948 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1948-1952 St Mary's, Lanark.
1952-1954 St Kevin's, Glenart.

1954-1959 St Vincent's, Sheffield.
1959-1967 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1967-1969 St Joseph's, Blackrock.
1969-1970 Our Lady's, Hereford.
1970-1971 St Mary's, Strawberry Hill.
1971-1987 St Patrick's, Armagh.

Died 9 January 1987

Fr John Carroll CM

John Carroll was born at Kileenevere, Co. Limerick, in November 1899. His father died when John was only two years old and it fell to his mother to bring up John and his sister Agnes. He was sent to school, first to Roscrea and then, in 1914, he followed his uncles and cousin Jerome to Castleknock. In 1918 he entered the seminaire at Blackrock. He lost his mother before he was ordained in 1926 but he and Agnes remained very close throughout their lives; death was to separate them by only four months in the end.

John's early career was varied. After ordination he returned to Castleknock, where he was appointed sub-dean to Fr William Meagher. He taught Irish, played rugby and threw himself into the activities of the house with the enthusiasm which was to be characteristic of his life. After a year he was appointed to Lanark from which after a few months he was called to Strawberry Hill as dean. From what we gathered John enjoyed those years in Twickenham with the late Dr James Doyle. No doubt he kept order in the house, but the vignettes from that period were more of golf, the theatre and skating in Richmond Park. From Strawberry Hill he returned to Castleknock, this time as dean. Those under him remember his rule as being of the more robust tupe, and his own later stories seemed to confirm their impression.

His next appointment was to Cork, where he joined the mission staff and from which he was sent on loan to the Australian Province. He built up a large circle of friends there among the clergy and the people that remained with him to the end of his life. When war broke out he joined the Australian Army as a military chaplain. He never claimed to have had a distinguished war record, nor did he attempt to trade regimental tales with some of his former chaplain confrères, but he certainly

claimed to have enjoyed his period of service.. This was spent in various camps in northern Australia and on hospital ships between there and the Red Sea. Years later a missionary priest from India had joined us for supper in Castleknock and was being intently questioned about conditions in Calcutta and Bombay. John, by then becoming a little deaf, came alive on catching the word Bombay. 'Bombay', he remarked, 'darn good yacht club in Bombay'.

After the war John returned to the Irish Province. Appointed to Phibsboro he continued to work as a missioner. In 1956 he went to Lanark as Superior and soon established himself with all denominations and with all sections of the community. He presided with great aplomb over the centenary celebrations of St Mary's. We would sometimes see the gold watch with which he was presented on leaving Lanark. To the end of his days he loved to return there to visit his friends in the town, the parish and the golf club.

From Lanark he returned to the mission staff in Phibsboro in 1962 and remained there until he was appointed to Castleknock in 1969. He had intended to continue working as a missioner but within days of his arrival he suffered a severe stroke and this put an end to his active career on the missions. With great determination he fought his way back to mobility. Within months he was hearing the boys' confessions, and saying mass and preaching on chaplaincies. Within the year he was again playing golf, going out in his car and meeting his friends. In the house he had become the grand old man, welcoming all visitors but especially the senior pastmen. One pastman who had known John as dean remarked on his geniality. While he never got to know the boys very well he was interested in all that went on in the house and occasionally as *laudator temporis acti* would advise the dean or the football trainers. In his last years deafness made communication difficult for him, but he never gave up the effort to live life to the full.

When John spoke of himself you became aware that he saw himself essentially as a missioner. The experiences of which he spoke revolved around the missions: parishes, priests, people, sermons, confessions and days of rest. Among his effects we found his collected sermons, all carefully composed and written out in longhand. They were not tracts such as might attract the unbelieving mind. They were rather such as would strengthen the believer and show him how best he might live by the law of the gospel. He spoke of devotions and duties in a faith that was already shared. Knowing John, however, one felt that his person, like that of many of his confrères, gave another dimension to his preaching. His prayer was part of the fabric of his being, the regular practice

of his life. With his deafness we became the unwilling eavesdroppers on his conversations with our Lord and our Lady. But equally part of that fabric was his enthusiasm for life itself and his acceptance of people, taken as they came.

In the last months and weeks John knew that his time was coming to an end. Although there was no evident deterioration in his health he spoke calmly of his approaching death. To one of us he remarked that he had enjoyed every moment of his life. He seemed to have chosen the verb carefully, and he repeated the phrase again. To another of us who visited him when he was sick, just hours before his unexpected death, he asked to be reminded of the final verse of *Abide with me:*

> Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes, Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies. Heaven's morning breaks and earth's vain shadows flee. In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

The two remarks seemed to encapsulate the character of the man.

Denis O'Donovan CM

Fathers John Carroll and William McGlynn came from Ireland in the year 1934 on loan, to free confrères destined to found a new apostolate in Mosgiel, New Zealand.

During a good span of his years here he was one of a team of three missioners, with William McGlynn and Eddie Lyons (still living in Dublin, who joined the Vins from the secular clergy in South Australia).

John Carroll was a lively, colourful, outgoing confrère with a zest for life, endowed with Irish charm — a somewhat distinctive character.

During the war he served as an Australian Army chaplain, mainly (if not entirely) in the Australian sector. I think he relished this exciting experience more than giving missions around the country. In style and temperament he resembled a fellow chaplain, Eugene Hogan, who, as we know, distinguished himself in this and many other fields. The two became close friends.

John was an excellent golfer, but intolerant of second-rate golfing partners.

After Vatican II I met him again in Phibsboro where he was semi-retired and slowing down. Later he was posted to Castleknock as a

chaplain, still able to meet the demands of boarding-school life, which he shared with his dog!

He will be kindly remembered by his contemporaries and those who shared life with him in Australia; and no doubt we will not forget him in death.

Boniface Mannes CM

JOHN CARROLL CM
Born: Kileenevere, Dromkeen, Co. Limerick, 15 November 1899.
Entered CM: 13 October 1918.
Final vows: 15 October 1920.
Ordained a priest in Clonliffe College by Dr Byrne, archbishop of Dublin, 27 February 1926.

APPOINTMENTS
1926-1927 St Vincent's, Castleknock.
1927-1929 St Mary's, Strawberry Hill.
1929-1931 St Vincent's, Castleknock.
1931-1934 St Vincent's, Cork.
1934-1946 St Joseph's, Malvern, Australia.
(Australian Army 12 September 1940 to 17 December 1945)
1946-1956 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1956-1962 St Mary's, Lanark.
1962 1968 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1968-1987 St Vincent's, Castleknock.

Died 19 February 1987.