COLLOQUE

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ST. VINCENT'S
GATEACRE
GRANGE

Right:
Entrance Hall.

Below:
Garden Front.

(from old postcards)

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Editorial

It has been suggested by some confrères over the past few years that from time to time COLLOQUE should print translations of significant articles which had appeared in foreign Vincentian publications. A start is made in this issue with an article by the present Provincial of Toulouse, a former Assistant to the Superior General.

September 11 this year was the 150th anniversary of the martyrdom of John Gabriel Perboyre. This is marked in this issue by a translation of one of his letters. A long article on him appeared in issue No. 6, Autumn 1982.

St Vincent's Conversion and Our Own

André Sylvestre

(This talk was given at a Vincentian seminar in Cagliari, Sardinia, in September 1982. It appeared in Italian in "Annali della Missione" 91 (1984). The translation given here has been made from a French text supplied by the author)

We are proud of St Vincent who, even before the end of his life had passed into history, and was canonised by popular opinion so soon after his death (as shown in the funeral oration given by Bishop Maupas de la Tour), and we might be tempted to focus back on his early years the light of holiness which lit up his old age. The Litany of St Vincent stresses the precociousness of his spiritual gifts labelling him "senex a puero", in other words that he had the wisdom of old age right from his youth. It also says he was "ab infantia misericors", or that his heart was moved to pity even from infancy. His hagiographers even went so far as to falsify the date of his birth, ageing him by five years since it seemed impossible that such a saintly man should have gone against the ruling of the Council of Trent and had himself ordained a priest before the canonical age of twenty-four.

The actual fact is that there is a huge distance between that young priest who plotted his advancement in the ranks of the Church in such a determined way (I 18), that young adventurer who sets out for Marseilles on a hired horse which he sells to pay his debts (I 3), (whether this is true or false does not really matter; his mentioning of it in his letter shows the way his mind was working), a huge distance, I say, between those youthful ambition-filled years and the old priest who thanked God for all that had happened to him and his community: he remembers that footstool thrown at his head by a furious mother, or the loss of the big Orsigny farm which caused problems for the economic well-being of St Lazare.

Between these two extremes there was an entire lifetime, more than half a century of effort, of fidelity to grace, fidelity to that interaction between the will of man and the will of God. There was, in fact, a

genuine conversion. We cannot, though, speak of a "road to Damascus" event in the case of St Vincent. The years of slavery, even if proved historically true, were only a stage in his efforts to advance his career. St Vincent was not suddenly launched on earth by the Lord. Unlike St Ignatius he did not receive a gunshot wound which laid him up and gave time for reflection. Unlike his contemporary, De Rancé, founder of La Trappe, he was not obsessed by the death of his mistress. All the same, it can rightly be said about him that he underwent a real conversion, a conversion the development of which can be plotted from day to day, but still a total and definitive conversion.

What we want to do is to pick out those elements which justify our speaking of a conversion in St Vincent's life, so that we ourselves can head out along the same path in his footsteps.

St Vincent was from a farming background, coming from a good family which wanted to improve its social position, as was the case with many others. His thoughts were turned towards the priesthood and he prepared himself for this by hard work, and he distinguished himself by the ingenuity of his schemes for earning money. Again, this was as with many others. He headed up to Paris in order to better his chances of a career in the Church. Since a certain Gascon had found success there in becoming Henri IV, Paris had exerted a strong pull on Gascons who wanted to get to the top.

He shows the influence of the leading spiritual masters who were to be found in the France of those days: Benet of Canfield, André Duval, Pierre de Bérulle and, later on, St Francis de Sales. He puts himself under Bérulle's direction. This does not put a stop to his plans for furthering his career in the Church as, towards the end of 1617, he obtains various benefices.

In a Church which is trying to reform itself he will be a good priest of whom his family can be proud, since he will have helped them. We see a promising career opening up before him but, leaving aside the rather unusual features of several years of unprotesting submission to an accusation of theft or the handing over of a large sum of money to the *Charité* hospital, we do not really notice any clear sign of conversion in this upright priestly life.

St Vincent had learnt from Benet of Canfield that the entire spiritual life is summed up in the fulfillment of the will of God. His contemporary Blaise Pascal will write later on, in *Le Mystère de Jésus:* "If God were personally to give us teachers, Oh how fully we should obey them! Necessity and circumstances are infallibly such teachers".

The Church's spiritual needs and society's material ones were

enormous at that time. France had been shattered on emerging from the wars of religion and after the spring-like years of the reign of Henri IV went through another troubled period, with the people, as usual, paying the price. The young Vincent was not particularly concerned about the condition of the Church or society, nor by what was happening. But the Lord revealed himself in a much clearer manner by giving him very real and very eloquent teachers to let him see his will, and this was the case all through the rest of his life.

St Vincent had begun his priestly ministry in the classical way. During his studies in Toulouse and elsewhere, and from various experiences, he had built up a store of philosophical, theological and canonical truths and he would keep, defend and preach these on behalf of the Church. His role seemed quite clear to him, a role of authority and teaching. He himself was amazed at it when, later on, he told of his ministry in Clichy:

> I had such good people, so willing to do what I told them. For example, when I recommended them to go to confession on the first Sunday of the month none of them missed out … One day Cardinal de Retz asked me; "Well, Fr Vincent, how are things with you?" I said: "My Lord, I'm so happy that words fail me. Why? Because I have such good and obedient people who do all I tell them, and my own opinion is that neither the Pope nor yourself, My Lord, are as happy as I am" (IX 646).

As chaplain at Queen Marguerite's small court, then in succession Parish Priest, tutor, Parish Priest again and finally missioner he knew what he had to teach, he knew by heart, like so many good priests of his day, the doctrine of which he considered himself the bearer. His ministry was a credit to the Church, all found it helpful, especially himself. Strong in this learning and authority he set about renewing in a short space of time the parish of Châtillon which was in an appalling state. But now the Lord intervenes to upset all his plans, good and all as they were; but they were very human plans. He still has a lot to learn at the Master's school. In his old age he will repeat with all the conviction of his humility, but also of his experience, that he was only "a scholar of the fourth form". In the course of 1617, in January in Cannes and in August in Châtillon, when he considered he was preaching the gospel to poor spiritually neglected people, and in fact he was doing so, fully convinced and with all his heart, he discovered that he was having the gospel preached to himself by them. He brought them light but received

an even brighter light from them. It was they who revealed to him the human face of the Lord.

Later on, when speaking of these poor people "who are so crude and ignorant that they hardly seem human" he adds: "But turn the medal back to front and you'll see that the Son of God, who wished to be born poor, is represented to us in them" (XI 32). The point, then, was to "turn the medal back to front".

It was during 1617 that St Vincent himself began to turn the medal round, and to see Jesus Christ himself in the poor who were to be honoured and served, who were to be carefully listened to because it is through them that he speaks to us. Just as we call Jesus Christ our Lord or our Master St Vincent would say later on, when speaking about the poor: "Our lords and our masters". In other words, they are those whom we must obey and to whom we must give an account, in a certain sense to the Lord himself living among us, but they are also those by means of whom the Lord Jesus continues to reveal his teaching to us.

There we have the start of St Vincent's conversion, the turning round of the medal. It was a good and zealous priest who did this, one with the qualities and prejudices of his time, but also the greatest saint of his time, one with a breadth of view and a vision of the Church and society which still throws light today on the way ahead. It was the poor who little by little forced him in the direction of this turning round and transformation. At the more critical points in the history of the Church it is the poor who have brought it back to the essentials, as they did in St Vincent's life. At the decisive moments they have been at the crossroads to reveal Jesus Christ to the Church, and to make it hear their cry and show it the way it must go.

St Vincent had listened to the Lord's call, he had followed it, believing that the route was clearly indicated, preparing his spiritual and material future in the best possible way, when he was told, just as Peter was at the lakeside: "When you were young you walked where you liked; but when you grow old somebody will take you where you would rather not go" (Jn 21:18).

In what areas did St Vincent's conversion develop? We can ask ourselves that question and pick out certain lines of thrust in his holiness.

At the beginning of his priesthood he was involved in a Church which was, first and foremost, a hierarchical one, a Church in which one openly manoeuvred to secure a comfortable place. Now the poor, towards whom the Lord had guided him, showed him another vision of the Church. The Church was part of the established order, the clergy being the "first order of the State". The Church was weighed down

by the sedimentary deposits of history, with upper and lower ranks of clergy, with the people below and, right down at the bottom, the world of the poor. It was these people at the lowest level who revealed themselves to St Vincent as the people of God, the people to whom he would devote his life. These are the people who, through sharing suffering, tears and blood, participating in the mystery of the passion and death of Christ, make up the Body of Christ which is the Church. The clergy, bishops, priests and all other dignitaries of various types, exist only to serve the People of God. This was the Church St Vincent will have in mind at the Council of Conscience when he'll be trying to have bishops appointed for the service of the People of God, especially the poor, rather than just to obtain promotions for people. This is also the Church described by Bossuet, a famous disciple of St Vincent, in a well-known passage in his *Discourse on the eminent dignity of the poor:*

> The poor are the first-born of the Church, its real infants … Wealthy people are allowed in only on condition of serving the poor. The Church, at the start, was conceived only for the poor; they are the true citizens of this holy city which scripture calls the city of God …

Three centuries later Vatican II will describe this vision of the Church as the People of God. We have, however, great difficulty in making this vision come alive in actual fact. There is question of a real and deep overturning of values. It made St Vincent take a completely new look at his way of understanding his role as priest and his way of understanding the spiritual life.

If the Church is, in fact, this city of God for the poor, as St Vincent found it to be and as Bossuet described it several years later, then a priest can no longer enter its ranks in order to carve out a career for himself. He is no longer the guarantor and good conscience of a hierarchically structured society which maintains him. The situation does not deceive him; this society is living by the sweat of the poor, according to the words of St Vincent himself, and it perpetuates this state of things.

The priest carries forward Christ's mission, and in this respect St Vincent is certainly christocentric, like the French school of spirituality. But he focuses on what seems to him to be the basic attitude in Jesus Christ: "Coming into the world he accepts the mission of helping the poor"; we now "are the instruments by means of which the Son of God continues to carry on doing from heaven what he had been doing on earth" (XI 69). If the Church has to be, for people of all times, the

sign that Christ's work is being continued, and that it is always present among those who are suffering, then after his time there is need for priests who "will be like our Lord, Jesus Christ, who on coming into the world showed that his main work was to help the poor and take care of them … That is why we are very happy to be in the Congregation for the same purpose as that which brought the Son of God to become man" (XI 108).

The Church, through its priests and because of them, in many ways deserves the rebuke of the Montmirail Huguenot which made such an impression on St Vincent and which, three centuries later, still stings us: "The Church abandons the poor to their ignorance and wretchedness … and you are trying to convince me that it is guided by the Holy Spirit! That is something I will never accept" (XI 34).

All St Vincent's pastoral ministry will be marked by his preoccupation with the poor. Evangelization is organised with the aim of giving them something; they are the *raison d'être* of his social works; and his ideas about the formation of priests stem from his desire that they will take care of the poor; and his ideas on the appointment of bishops stem from his desire that they will really be "fathers of the poor".

Finally, even if St Vincent did not write a treatise on spirituality he has a way of reading the gospel which leads him to follow Christ precisely as the evangelizer of the poor. This understanding of the gospel is well reflected in chapter II of the Common Rules, "Gospel Teaching". He stresses carrying out of the will of God and following Christ as being fundamental. It is a matter of following Christ through the virtues which are most characteristic of the human condition to which he submitted himself and which he put into practice: simplicity, gentleness, humility, mortification. He loved to discover these virtues as living realities, and to "read" them personified in the poor. That is why he admired the virtues of country girls and wanted the Daughters of Charity to take them as models (IX 81). He admires the religion of these poor people, who maintained a living faith in spite of distress and fatigue (XI 200ff). He held that at the end the poor would be our judges before the tribunal of God.

It can, then, be said that St Vincent did not undergo a sudden conversion of the type of which St Paul's is the classic example. But, like St Paul, he let go of his certainties to allow himself be led gradually towards the unknown. Paul was led by the hand into Damascus to find out what he should do. St Vincent allowed himself to be led, as if by the hand, to the bedside of the sick in the Hôtel-Dieu, to the bedside of the countryman in Cannes, to the poor shack of that family in Châtillon, to

the galleyslaves' prison, to the church doors where abandoned babies were dying. It was their sufferings, their physical or moral wounds which spoke to him of Jesus Christ, which suggested to him what he should do, just as one evening the wounds of the risen Jesus revealed to Thomas what his apostolate would be.

To speak of St Vincent's conversion also means speaking about our own, because we are invited to follow him and to "love what he loved and to put into practice what he taught", as the opening prayer of St Vincent's mass has it. Even clearer is the 16th declaration of the 1980 General Assembly: "Each one of us and each of our communities must follow out the route traced by St Vincent as he followed Christ, by being converted towards the poor". Our personal conversion, like St Vincent's, cannot come about suddenly, but only by progressive stages which have signposted, and still signpost, our existence and which are a secret between ourselves and God.

In his conversion St Vincent was true to himself. In the wrinkles of old age we can still see the features of childhood, because it was in his complete totality that he was converted and transformed.

Like himself we have to be true to our origins; a tree cannot bear fruit unless it has good roots. All through the life of St Vincent we find traces of his country background; its after-taste lingered on, and he was firmly rooted in reality. For me the symbol of this fidelity to his origins seems to be that moment when St Vincent recalls that in his childhood, while he was at school, he felt ashamed of his father because he was badly dressed and had a limp, and says he committed "a big sin" in this. From then on he never missed an opportunity of recalling the fact that he came from a small country village.

St Vincent was also faithful to his temperament and character, though at the same time struggling to master his natural asperity. His biographers say that had he not lived at the same time as St Francis de Sales he would have been regarded as the gentlest man of his century. The hardiness of the young shepherd, his gift of observation, the energy he showed some years later in advancing his career, all these he would place at the service of the poor and in getting things done for their benefit.

We also must be faithful to our temperament, to our natural virtues and even to our failings, all of which go towards the carrying out of the will of God in our vocation. But like St Vincent we have to be faithful to the intrusion of divine grace no matter from where or in what way it comes. The poet Paul Claudel puts it very well, showing the unpredictability of the breaking-in of grace into our life:

Grace of God, how do you come?
Through the door, through the window?
Through the eyes or through the ears?
Perhaps some underground way?
Grace of God, how do you come?
Through fire, by the torch?

Through reflection on St Vincent's life and on his attitudes, through reacting as he did, loving what he loved, putting into practice what he taught, being converted like him to contact with reality and to listening to our Teacher and to our lords and masters the poor, we will end up by acquiring some of the features which, in my opinion, characterise a son or daughter of St Vincent and which prevent their being ever mistaken for someone else. St Vincent has an unforgettable profile. In the same way his sons and daughters, by dint of continual effort at imitating Christ in the school of their father, will take on a characteristic spiritual profile. Here are some of the features which can be picked out, and which I put forward for you to reflect on, though this is not a complete list:

1. A son of St Vincent, no matter what his ministry is, should have a preferential and intense love for the poor. He puts them in the foreground of his interests, at least spiritually, because it is, at least in part, by means of them that God reveals his will to him. He experiences a state of "connaturality" with them, to use a Thomist expression; he recognises himself, in the sight of God, as part of the same family.

2. He has a sense of reality which makes him give proper attention to facts and happenings. He has a certain distrust of anything which smacks of spiritual daydreaming. This well-grounded spirituality has fostered his sense of reality, and his desire to check things out for himself. He is not at ease with theories, being more at home with certainties learned by experience.

3. He is chary of mistaking his wishes for realities. On the spiritual level this means being careful never to "tread on the heels of Providence". He could give the appearance of moving very slowly and rather fearfully. He is waiting for some sign of God's will before moving into the future. He will recognise this sign through scrutinising some happening or through the call of authority.

4. As soon as the will of God has become sufficiently clear to him he will follow it and hold on to it with firmness and tenacity, whether it is a question of work or administration, and he will do so with a sense of his accountability. This inflexible fidelity to carrying out the task assigned by the will of God will go hand in hand with great flexibility as regards choice and use of means.

5. At all stages of the matter, from mere proposal right through to completion, he has spent a lot of time in preparing the various parts, slowly mulling things over in the presence of God and with his help. What is actually achieved, then, is what has already been decided before God. Improvising does not come into it.

6. There is a simplicity in his daily demeanour that opens hearts to him and heads straight for the desired result.

Evangelizare Pauperibus Misit Me: Jesus in the Synagogue at Nazareth.

Michael Prior

It was only to be expected that the members of the *Vincentian retreat through pilgrimage* to the Holy Land in August 1989 would visit the "synagogue" in Nazareth. One of the earliest references to the site is that of the sixth-century pilgrim from Piacenza, who wrote:

> We travelled to the city of Nazareth where many miracles take place. In the synagogue there is kept the book in which the Lord wrote his ABC, and in this synagogue is the bench on which he sat with other children. Christians can lift the bench and move it about, but the Jews are completely unable to move it, and cannot drag it outside.

The efforts made to locate the synagogue of Jesus' time have not been successful. Nevertheless, the present "synagogue" building well serves the purpose of commemorating Jesus' visits to his synagogue. No doubt he visited the synagogue many times, but it was a particular sabbath visit which Luke records, and which is presented as the beginning of Jesus' ministry to others in his gospel (Lk 4:16-30). During that visit Jesus read from the book of Isaiah (Ch. 61), and proceeded to give a commentary on the text, claiming that the prophecy of Isaiah was being fulfilled on that day. As we Vincentians read, pondered and sang the text in the "synagogue" on that August day memories of Jesus and St Vincent de Paul flooded our minds and hearts.

I propose to offer some reflections on the central Vincentian text "He sent me to evangelize the poor", mainly from the perspective of Luke. My reflections are published in two parts. The first deals with some of the questions which a modern biblical scholar would wish to pose. The second shall deal with a more recent emphasis of modern scholarship, namely the efforts to situate the traditions about Jesus and the evangelization of the poor in the life of an early Christian community, in this case Luke's church.

Lest we fall into the trap of imagining that the enquiry into the Word of God concerns only the past, a third reflection will be offered by a confrère more competent than I am on the place of this central Lucan theme in the Vincentian tradition. Together we propose to offer a study of the community motto which is sensitive to the concerns of biblical scholarship and respects the faith perspective that the Word of God is alive and active, and calls for a response in every generation.

The literary setting in Luke

There are many noteworthy features in the account in Luke's gospel. The most striking one is that Luke is the only one of the four evangelists to record Jesus' reading from, and commenting on, the Isaiah text. He is the only one to begin Jesus' ministry in Galilee in this solemn way.

Matthew and Mark are close to each other in their description of the transition from the desert temptation of Jesus to the beginning of his public ministry in Galilee:

> Now when he heard that John had been arrested he withdrew into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea … From that time Jesus began to preach, saying "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mt 4:12-17).

Mark reads:

> Now after John was arrested Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mk 1: 14f).

Matthew and Mark immediately go on to the call of the disciples (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20), which Luke deals with later (5:1-11).

For Luke Jesus *returned* (for in Luke's Infancy Narrative Nazareth was the home of Mary and Joseph before the birth of Jesus, and so Jesus was returning home) in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God (Lk 4:14). A report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country and he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all (cf Lk 4:14f). The scene in the synagogue of Nazareth follows immediately.

It is true that Matthew and Mark record a teaching of Jesus in a synagogue "in his own country", at which the hearers were astonished and

asked where this wisdom came from, and took offence at him. Jesus said: "A prophet is not without honour, except in his own country", and did not do many mighty works there ("except that he laid his hands upon a few sick people and healed them", Mark adds) because of their unbelief (Mt 13:53-58; cf Mk 6:l-6a).

For his part Luke also has the "No prophet is acceptable in his own country" response, and follows it with the stories of the Zarephath widow and Naaman the Syrian. While Matthew and Mark record only that they took offence at Jesus, Luke says that all in the synagogue were filled with wrath and tried to throw him from the brow of the hill (Lk 4:28f).

Luke's account, then, is unique in *opening* the public ministry of Jesus in Galilee in the synagogue at Nazareth, and in the manner in which he does it by reading and commenting on the Isaiah text.

The setting in the life of Jesus.

1. The historicity question – what really happened? Already you may be on the way to formulating some questions. As someone within the tradition of nineteenth century historiography you may consider "What really happened?" to be the most important one to deal with. If, however, you are sensitive to the power of the story, and of other powerful forms of literary communication, you may be attuned to recognise in Luke's account aspects of his truth which are not exhausted by answering the rather mechanical question "What really happened?". In any event, you should hold on to your own questions, and seek a satisfactory answer to them. It may be the case that your own questions are much more important than those which have dominated scholarly investigation in the wealthier parts of the world this century.

An enquirer may wonder whence the setting and content of this particular narrative and teaching came to Luke. Is Luke's account of the opening of the public ministry of Jesus in Galilee closer to what actually happened, than that of Matthew and/or Mark? Or is it the case that Luke, or his source, has dramatised a scene hinted at in (the tradition behind) the other two gospels, and given it a place in the opening of the public ministry in Galilee? Such questions are not without importance since our estimate of the authority of the passage will take account of whether we are dealing with the *ipsissima verba Jesu* or

with some Lucan (or pre-Lucan) redaction of them, or whether we are in fact dealing with a mainly Lucan composition.

What we have before us is the finished account of Luke, 4:16-30. In the language of twentieth century gospel scholarship, accepted by Vatican II, we are at the final (third) stage of gospel composition, namely that of the context of the *author.* There is embedded in the text *the record of the event* as kept alive in a community, or some communities, of the early Church (the second stage), and behind those two stages lies *the event in the life of Jesus himself* (the first stage).

Our situation is not unlike that of an archaeologist investigating a man-made mound. What he or she sees in the first instance is the mound in its finished state. As soon as the excavator probes what lies below it will be clear that the different layers reflect different stages. Most of us would love to move from the present text to the bedrock of the event as it happened in the ministry of Jesus (the first stage). Were it possible to know that for sure we could then say that we have arrived at an account of the event in the life of Jesus which was free of the kind of literary evolution which took place later (in the second stage), and which culminated in the finished account of Luke's gospel (the third stage of gospel composition). However, even in that situation we could never say that "this is exactly what happened", but only that this is how somebody reported what had happened, since all accounts of events involve selections and interpretations.

The setting in the life of Jesus.

2. The source question

The source question is very complicated. It is not only that we have other accounts of the beginning of the Galilean ministry. The fact of the matter is that we have in the three gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke a whole range of similarities and differences in the events they record, and in their order, as well as in the terminology and language employed. How to account simultaneously for both the similarities and differences between these three gospels is called *The Synoptic Problem,* and its solution has proved to be one of the most intractable of all problems of literary relationship.

The hypothesis which has widest support among scholars is that Mark is the first gospel to have been written, and that its text was used by both Matthew and Luke, but independently of each other. The material common to Matthew and Luke which is not in Mark is ascribed to a different source of mainly sayings of Jesus called Q, from

the German word *Quelle* (source). In addition, about one half of Luke and one third of Matthew consists of material unique to each of them, and this is called the special Lucan and the special Matthean material respectively. This attempted solution of the problem is referred to as the Two-Source Theory.

Followers of the Two-Source Theory will use language like "Luke (or Matthew) derived this material from Mark, or the Q source, and modified it in such and such a way, thereby reflecting his own theological and pastoral perspectives". This solution confers on Mark a closer contact with the *ipsissima verba et facta Jesu,* and consequently attributes to Matthew and Luke a greater element of literary creativity.

There are several other attempts at a solution. Some dispense with the hypothesis of the Q document, and suggest that either Matthew or Luke was aware of the other's material. One such view suggests that Matthew was the first gospel, which was used by Luke, and that Mark was the third in the order of composition and was a conflation of the other two. Predictably, there is also a suggestion that Luke was the first gospel, and was used by the other two, but this view has very little support. In either of these *scenarii* the distance between the finished gospel and the events of the life of Jesus is less than in the first hypothesis, and the consequence of this is that more attention is paid to the historical reliability of Luke, and less is attributed to his literary creativity.

That scholars are not of one mind in the matter is a measure of the complexity of the problem, and whatever divergence of solutions is proposed life goes on, and the reader must make some sense of the problem. Almost every book which uses the results of gospel scholarship works on the assumption that Mark was the first gospel, that Matthew and Luke used it and Q, and that each used additional material peculiar to itself.

My way of dealing with the matter is to reserve judgement on the solution to the Synoptic Problem. Rather than use language like "Luke *modified* Mark at this point, etc." I prefer to note that Luke's version *is different from* that of Mark/Matthew. This approach prevents me erecting huge redactional edifices on the shaky sands of source "certainties".

What really happened in Nazareth?

What is it in Luke's account that makes us suspicious about whether it represents what really happened at the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus? Had we only his description to go by we might have no such

suspicion. The fact that Jesus' Galilean ministry opens differently in Matthew and Mark poses the problem for us.

Several features in Luke's account make us wonder if in fact it reflects the situation in the ministry of Jesus.

The account in 4:16-30 seriously conflicts with what one might expect to find after 4:15: "And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all". Is it likely that his own people should have turned on him in such a violent fashion? Given the general opposition to the acknowledgement of a prophet in his home base, it is not impossible, to say the least. The placing of the two reactions, enthusiastic acceptance and total rejection, side by side highlights the ambivalence of the response to Jesus.

The existence of somewhat similar material in another literary context in the gospels of Mark and Matthew (Mk 6:1-6; cf Mt 13:53-58) suggests to some perceptive readers that Luke may have given a new context to the scene as recorded in Mark/Matthew, and elaborated it after his own fashion. This, of course, begs the source question of the dependence of Luke on either Mark or Matthew. The dependence may have been in the other direction, if only in the sense that Mark, or Matthew, may have been aware of the tradition of rejection at Nazareth from the source behind Luke's gospel. While it is true that the accounts have elements in common there are many differences: Luke has "Nazareth" while Mark has "his own country"; Luke alone names Joseph; Luke alone has the "Physician, heal yourself, etc." (4:23), as well as the content of what Jesus read and taught. That the two gospels record two separate incidents is not an impossible solution.

A convenient solution to the problem is to suggest that Luke redacted Mark 6:1-6 with, or without, the use of other material from the tradition. This is the view of such scholars as Bultmann and Dibelius, and the general one of scholars who subscribe to the Two Source Theory of gospel origins. Others, however, argue that Luke does not depend strongly on Mark in this narrative. The uncertainty of scholarly opinion in the matter leaves the innocent reader somewhat at a loss.

There is the additional problem posed by the very material in the account of Luke. We might well wonder about the likelihood of the crowd in the synagogue turning on Jesus to the extent of wishing to throw him from the brow of the hill "on which Nazareth is built". The attitude to the Salman Rushdie book is only one recent example of what religious people can do to a dissident! A more recent rejection of a "prophet" by his own Jewish people is provided by the account of the address of Professor George Steiner to the packed audience of

the World Union of Progressive Judaism Conference at West London Synagogue in May 1990. He claimed that Israel was

> edging towards sheer brute ungovernability, towards a dread isolation among unforgiving enemies, towards political corruption, political cowardice, political mediocrity of the most profound kind … which fill all of us with shame.

The *Jewish Chronicle* laconically adds "Some in the audience hissed with anger" (May 11, 1990). Perhaps there is in John 8:59 some reflection of this attitude to Jesus, the (false) prophet, ("So they took up stones to throw at him; but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple"), and also in John 10:39 ("Again they tried to arrest him, but he escaped from their hands").

A less substantial objection to accepting the Lucan incident as recording a historical event will come from people who have visited Nazareth and wonder what hill is referred to, since the first-century town was not built on a hill as such. This is not a serious objection, since there is no shortage of suitable hills nearby!

I resist the common assumption that Luke got the material from Mark 6:1-6 and added to it. Mark's account looks to me like a general summary of the kind of reaction to Jesus after he had spoken in the surrounding synagogues, since he gives no hint of what Jesus actually said. It may be the case that Luke's source actually records what happened that day, or, alternatively, that what he writes may be typical of what Jesus said in a different place, or places.

Nor am I convinced by the argument that the present text of Luke combines two distinct narratives, with the joining coming at 4:22. However, the prominent place given to the universalistic character of the preaching of Jesus in the stories of the Zarephath widow and Naaman the Syrian may be out of place so early in the public ministry of Jesus. But even that objection is not decisive.

Modern commentators vary in their assessment of the arguments. Fitzmyer's conclusion is that the Lucan form of the Nazareth visit owes its inspiration to Mark 6:l-6a, but that the additional material may come from Luke's private source, or may be entirely of his own composition. He rejects the view of some scholars that the Lucan episode came to the evangelist from a non-Marcan source. He therefore postulates a greater degree of literary creativity on the part of Luke or his sources, noting the artistic quality of Luke's account in its build-up of the reactions to Jesus. He sees the episode to have been transposed from a different

context in its source, Mark's gospel, and to have been inserted into the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus in Luke to show right from the beginning of the gospel that Jesus' ministry would be met with both success and, more especially, with rejection (1981: 526-9).

The most recent commentary in English follows a broadly similar line. Luke took his cue from Mark and made good Mark's deficiency in not anywhere giving an account of what Jesus actually said in any of the synagogue visits: "Luke's opening is far more artistic and impressive, being perhaps the most dramatically elaborated story in his Gospel". It draws attention to the similarities in form and content between this sermon of the spirit-filled Jesus and those of the spirit-filled preachers in Acts (e.g. 10:34-39; 13:17ff; 17:2ff.) (Evans 1990:266). This interpretation pays particular attention to the quality of Luke as a writer and to the unity of Luke-Acts as the two-volume work of the same author.

On the other hand Marshall sums up his discussion as follows: "It is difficult to see why anyone should have invented the conclusion of Luke's story, and it is more probable that Mark's tradition has abbreviated the story" (1978:180).

Alas, one cannot be absolutely sure about the matter. I too acknowledge the artistic quality of the author of the gospel, but would not wish to deprive the episode of a substantial degree of historicity. I consider that it is possible to respect both of these aspects by concluding that in 4:16-30 Luke records a real event in the synagogue at Nazareth which was critical for the public ministry of Jesus, and which he places almost (but not quite, cf. 4:14f.) at the inauguration of that ministry in Galilee.

While the Nazareth synagogue visit appears to inaugurate the public ministry of Jesus in Luke, the text itself makes it clear that Luke was aware of earlier activity of Jesus in Capernaum (4:23). Luke saw in the incident a foretaste of what he knew to have happened in the rest of the ministry of Jesus, and in that of the disciples who carried on evangelizing the poor after he had ascended.

The meaning of the scene

Marshall takes the view that the author has placed the narrative in this place "for its programmatic significance", and he notes that it contains many of the main features of Luke-Acts *in nuce* (1978:178). Similarly Fitzmyer claims that "Luke has deliberately put this story at the beginning of the public ministry to encapsulate the entire ministry of Jesus and the reaction to it. The fulfilment-story stresses the success of his teaching

under the guidance of the Spirit, but the rejection story symbolizes the opposition that his ministry will evoke among his own. The rejection of him by the people of his hometown is a miniature of the rejection of him by the people of his own *patris* in the larger sense" (1981:529).

The story emphasizes that the ministry of Jesus, which is about to take place, is in fulfilment of Old Testament passages, directly in the quote from Isaiah 61, and in presenting Jesus as a counterpart of Elijah and Elisha. The eschatological era has begun in the person of Jesus, in that the Spirit, long dormant, has come upon him, anointing him to evangelize poor people, to proclaim liberty to captives, etc., and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

The rejection of Jesus by the Jewish people of his own town, coupled with the movement towards the gentiles, which is clear in the two examples of the Zarephath widow and Naaman, may remined the reader of the ultimate rejection of Jesus by "the Jewish people". The reader will also relate it to the movement of the Christian preaching from Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish religion, to Rome, the centre of the non-christian empire, which is such a feature of the second volume, the Acts.

The meaning of the text

The celebrated Vincentian phrase *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* is only one of several which occur in the reading from Isaiah 61 which, in its turn, is only part of the drama which unfolds in the synagogue in Nazareth on that fateful day. It is important to respect the richness of the full text, and the whole context of the event. We give the Isaiah text here in the Septuagint (LXX), Luke's Greek text, and a translation.

> LXX: *pneuma kuriou ep' eme hou heineken echrisen me*
> Luke: *pneuma kuriou ep' eme hou heineken echrisen me*
> The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me
>
> LXX: *euangelisasthai ptochois apestalken me*
> Luke: *euangelisasthai ptochois apestalken me*
> He sent me to evangelize poor (people)
> LXX: *iasasthai tous suntetrimmenous te kardia*
> Luke: ----------(not in Luke)
> to soothe the broken-hearted
>
> LXX: *keruxai aichmalotois aphesin kai tuphlois anablepsin*
> Luke: *keruxai aichmalotois aphesin kai tuphlois anablepsin*
> to proclaim release to captives and recovery of sight to the blind

LXX:----------(not in LXX)
Luke: *aposteilai tethrausmenous en aphesei*
to set at liberty those who are oppressed

LXX: *kalesai eniauton kuriou dekton*
Luke: *keruxai eniauton kuriou dekton*
to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord
LXX: *kai hemeran antapodoseos*
Luke: ----------(not in Luke)
and the day of vengeance

The LXX continues, in translation: "to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion - to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit, etc.". The city will be re-built (v. 4), and the misfortunes of the exiles shall be reversed (vv. 5-11).

The historical context of Isaiah 61

The historical context of the Isaiah text is of some significance for the meaning the text receives in the ministry of Jesus. The position taken here is that the material in Isaiah 60:1 - 62:12 is a compilation by "Third Isaiah" on the occasion of the return of the Jewish exiles to devastated Jerusalem in 538, after the half-century of captivity in Babylon. It is a series of songs of praise of the new Jerusalem (60:1-22), in which glad tidings are brought to the lowly (61:1-11), and Jerusalem is feted as God's delight (62:1-12).

Isaiah 61 is rich in the abundance of metaphors used to convey the sense of the total salvation of God's people, in their bodies and spirits, both individually and socially. The prophet is announcing salvation for the returned exiles of that period. If some of the signs of the salvation are in the future it is not a distant future. Needless to say, the re-building of the city and the recovery of wealth will take time to achieve. However, while it is a time of favour for the exiles it is also the occasion of God's vengeance being shown to their enemies.

Jesus' interpretation of Isaiah 61

In his comment on the Isaiah text Jesus makes it clear that he identifies with the prophet who announced the vindication of Israel in the name of God. This identification would be even clearer if the hearers were

familiar with the Targum of Isaiah which introduces the passage with the phrase "The prophet said The Spirit of the Lord, etc."'.

At this point one must take notice of some of the differences between the LXX text of Isaiah 61 and that section quoted in Luke 4:18f. The most obvious difference is that Luke records only two of the eleven verses of Isaiah 61. The tone of the whole chapter 61 is triumphalistic and nationalistic. The restoration of Israel will be all the more enriching when one compares it with the reverse which the "foreigners" will experience: "Aliens shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall be your ploughmen and vinedressers… You shall eat the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory" (vv. 5f.). Jesus, by omitting any reference to that part of the context of Isaiah 61, appears to abandon that kind of nationalistic religious fervour. This impression is strengthened by Jesus' sad conclusion: "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his own country" (v. 24), and even more so by the reference to the two prophetic movements in favour of the foreigners as displayed by Elijah and Elisha (vv. 25ff.).

Less spectacular than that omission, but in line with it, Luke omits the LXX phrase "to soothe the broken hearted", and adds in "to set at liberty those who are oppressed". While it is not impossible that these changes were introduced by Luke it is more likely that they reflect the style of Jesus' preaching. Jesus omits any reference to the destruction of Israel's enemies. The omission of the reference to the soothing of the broken hearted is understandable on the basis that in the Isaiah text the mourners in Zion are promised not only restoration but wealth at the expense of other nations (vv. 3-6). Jesus' alteration of the Isaiah passage is significant, then, and reflects both his characteristic theology and his method of preaching (Chilton 1984:182f.).

Conclusions

So far we have considered some of the questions which have been posed by modern scholars of Luke 4:16-30. These questions have reflected the changing moods and emphases of scholarship. We have faced into the question of the historicity of the account which was forced upon us by the quite different openings of the Galilean ministry as recorded in Mark and Matthew, and by consideration of some of the details in Luke's account. I do not subscribe to the fashionable view that the account reflects no historical tradition but is "only" a literary construct due to Luke's expansion of the scene hinted at in Mark 6:1-6. I take it that Luke's account preserves a scene which took place in

the synagogue at Nazareth. Whether it happened towards the opening of the Galilean ministry of Jesus or at some subsequent time can be left open. So much for the question of historicity which dominated the discussion from the end of the nineteenth century to the late forties of this one.

Let us now bring together some considerations which result from attending to the literary character of the section. Like so much of the two-volume work of Luke the account of the Nazareth synagogue scene is presented with an abundance of dramatic and literary skill.

The dramatic character of the context should not be glossed over. The scene was the Nazareth synagogue on a sabbath. Extrapolating from what we know of later liturgical practice we surmise that the sabbath service began with the singing of a psalm, then the recitation of the *Shema* (Dt. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Nb. 15:37-41) and the *Tepillah,* followed by a reading from the Law, and then one from the Prophets (see Acts 13:15). Then there was the sermon, which in this case was based on the reading from the Prophets. The service was concluded by a blessing from the president and the priestly blessing of Nb. 6:24-26.

There is no mention of a reading from the Law in Luke 4, nor of the other elements of the service. Jesus' reading is from Isaiah, at the section we number chapter 61. We simply do not know whether there was a fixed reading from the Prophets for each sabbath service in the first century. If there was, Jesus had no choice but "to stand under the Word" of the day. The other possibility is that he searched out his choice of reading for the day. Jesus gave the scroll back to the president, and sat down for the sermon – the "word of encouragement" (Acts 13:15) was given *ex cathedra.* The Lucan setting is firmly in the tradition of the first century Jewish synagogal practice. "The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him" (v. 20). Luke's readers share in the anticipation.

Another feature of Luke's literary skill is his incorporation in the reading and sermon of several of the main themes of the double work:

– the action of the Holy Spirit: e.g. John the Baptist will be filled with the Holy Spirit. The *phrase filled with the Holy Spirit occurs* in the NT only in Luke-Acts, and is used of Elizabeth 1:41, Zechariah 1:67, Jesus 4:1, and in Acts of the group 2:4, Peter 4:8, "all" 4:31, Saul 9:17, Paul 13:52. See also of Stephen 6:5, Barnabas 11:24, disciples 13:52.

– the fulfilment of OT prophecy in the person of Jesus: e.g. Lk

24:26f, Acts 2:23, 31; 3:18, 24; 4:11, 10:43, 13:33. Luke also shows how people responded to Jesus as a prophet: Lk 7:16, 39; 9:8, 19; 24:19, Acts 2:30, 3:22, 7:37, and how he spoke of himself as accepting the destiny of a prophet: Lk ll:49f, 13:33.

– the use of Isaiah 61 with its emphasis on the poor: cf Lk 7:22, to which we shall return.

– the present as the acceptable year of the Lord: Lk 19:9; cf 23:43.

– the universal character of salvation which runs through the double work, climaxing in the movement of the gospel from the sacred city of Jerusalem ("… and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem … stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high" Lk *24:27if)* to the secular city , Rome, the capital of the Empire (Acts 28:28ff). The double work might well be entitled "On how they brought the Good News from Jerusalem to Rome". It appears from the text of Luke that it was precisely Jesus' universalisation of God's good news which prevented the Jews present in the synagogue from accepting that the day of salvation was being ushered in by Jesus. The examples from their own sacred writings of Elijah and Elisha served only to rub salt into the Jewish wounds.

The author concludes the passage by returning to the dramatic dimension of the event. Some scholars see in the mysterious escape of Jesus a reference to his future destination ("but passing through the midst of them *he went away":* the verb *poreuo* is used of Jesus setting his face *to go* to Jerusalem, Lk 9:51, and again in Lk 13:33: "I must *go on my way* today … for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem"). LaVerdiere suggests that for Luke the hill of Nazareth is symbolic of the hill of Calvary, that the Jews of Nazareth prefigure the Jewish authorities who had him put to death, and that the escape evokes the resurrection and ascension (1980:68), but this seems to me to be too fanciful. The mixed reaction to the message of Jesus prefigures the polarity of reactions to him in the course of his ministry: acceptance (Lk 4:42, 5:15) and rejection. The readers of Luke's gospel had already been introduced to the rejection of Jesus in the Canticle of Simeon (Lk 2:34), and in due course will see how the Jewish establishment brought on his crucifixion.

These are some of the reasons why the section is regarded as a preview, or foretaste, of the remainder of the gospel, or as a "microcosm of the whole of Luke-Acts" (Tiede 1980:54). They represent some of the conclusions which derive from examining Luke as an accomplished artist, i.e. from redaction criticism, the most popular method of gospel study from the fifties to the eighties.

Our results so far are not insignificant. Yet you may well insist on asking: "Who are the poor?" In recent years Vincentians have become preoccupied with the meaning of the term "the poor". This is not an unreasonable preoccupation, but it should be clear by now that the insistence on asking the question reflects a concentration on only one aspect of a very rich text. I am not the first person to call for more attention to be given to the activity of evangelizing. But it has been the intention here to go wider, if only by respecting the immediate context of *evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* In the article which follows *(The Poor in Luke's Gospel)* I shall introduce the reader to a very recent trend in biblical exegesis by enquiring into the social setting of Luke's gospel. I shall also reflect another emphasis within the science of hermeneutics, namely reader response, all in an effort to understand the Vincentian motto better.

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Convocation: One Viewpoint from Nigeria

Urban Chidi Osuji

The word "convocation" is commonly used to designate the coming together of graduates of a university to receive their academic result; at least, so it is known here. It is not a common word to show a gathering of clergy, as was the case in Clongowes. The whole idea of a Convocation was not clear to many people. The Congregation is still young in Nigeria and many of the apostolates have not been taken up by the confrères yet. Many were surprised at first at the idea of Convocation. Since the community as a whole, that is the whole Province, was involved to review its past and a trust in the future the Nigerian region found it a good idea by the Province. Here in Nigeria the future is bright, if the signs of the times are read and interpreted properly. The interest of the Nigerian confrères in Convocation grew. During the year the word "Convocation" began to take more and more root and developed from stage to stage. The invitation to the Nigerian confrères to participate in this Convocation gave them more interest in it. It was no longer a thing at which others had to decide, but something at which everybody's opinions and views were as important as anybody else's. It was an occasion for everybody to put the Congregation of the Mission on the path to a brighter and better future.

From then on there were meetings from the local to the regional level. The local level served as seed-ground for many of the topics discussed in the regional meetings. Confrères were open enough to discuss the issues as honestly as possible. The Charism Statement of 1981 said:

> We Vincentians are called by Christ to a simple evangelical life in community so that we ourselves may be effective ministers of Christ's compassion to the poor, and may form others for a similar ministry.

This gave a good focal point for the discussions that followed. The poor are seen as the focus of our mission. Their needs would determine

the works we undertake and the spirit in which we engage in them. Our movement into the archdiocese of Lagos would bring us closer to the misery of the poor in an urban situation; it would be a great help for the young people who have drifted into the cities. The rural areas are not to be left out; our parishes are located in these rural areas in which the misery of the poor constantly faces us every day. The question raised here is: "Are we to identify with the state and its effort in educational and social welfare programmes for the poor, or opt for private Church-controlled works?"

At present the work of formation has taken our attention off our many apostolates. In a couple of years, when the number of confrères will increase, our apostolates will have to be diversified. All the confrères unanimously agreed that the work for the poor should be emphasised. Formation has been the focus of the Congregation in Nigeria for the past fifteen years. On this, there was a general acceptance that the formation programme has been well co-ordinated. The stress should be on the intake. The number of intake should be increased because the present "vocation boom" in Nigeria will not continue for a very long time. To achieve this a full-time Vocations Director is needed, to get the right quality of candidates needed. We must be guided by a vision of the gospel which will be a reality in this present-day Nigeria, especially for the poor. Our call to the Vincentian vocation must be interpreted in the Nigerian context so as to make it very meaningful. We are to hear the cry of the poor and bring Christ to them.

Convocation was for us in Nigeria an exercise to see more of the Vincentian apostolates and how diverse they are, and the many opportunities open to us as Vincentians in Nigeria. These apostolates are needed in Nigeria, and many bishops have invited us to take up some of these works in their dioceses. Our problem is to be able to read the signs of the times. In two years' time our number of priests will have increased by six. If we don't diversify the work we might find ourselves crowding the existing houses. There is great scope for our young Vincentians coming up in the future but that scope needs to be explored so that they look forward to their ordination and to something to do after ordination.

The Nigerian confrères present in Ireland at Convocation were Brother Paul Odjugo, who arrived from New Orleans where he had participated in the course for Vincentian Brothers; Fathers Timothy Njoku, Simeon Eneh (studying in Rome), Hyacinth Okafor, Richard Diala and myself. The experience at Clongowes was very interesting. Both black and white, young and old, felt very much at home. The

Irish confrères who had not previously met the Nigerian confrères did so at Convocation. It was great seeing those who have prayed for and supported us for many years now. Although there had been a lot of correspondence between the Nigerian region and Ireland, that cannot be compared to the experience of meeting each other. I personally feel that another such gathering should be organised before long to afford us the opportunity of meeting each other again. From time to time I go through the photo album of Convocation to see some moment at the meeting. I remember some of the comments that sent the whole group roaring with laughter. It was a big success!

The Local Community Plan

Robert P Maloney

(Talk given in 4 Cabra Road to the Superiors of the houses in Ireland, 19 February 1990)

I would like to talk to you today about the local community plan as an instrument for renewal (while recognising that the temptation for many Superiors is to perceive it as merely another duty to be carried out!).

Some foundational thoughts

The emphasis on the local community in our new Constitutions is part of a broader philosophical change. Article 129 states: "The Congregation forms itself particularly in the individual local communities". Notice that this is a view of the Congregation "from below". It coincides with one of the perspectives from which many documents since Vatican II view the Church, emphasising that the local church is the living cell or the building-block of the universal Church; in this sense, the universal Church "lives" in the individual local churches, even if it is more than just their sum. So too, the Constitutions say that the living cell of the Congregation is the local community. The Congregation will be fully alive not just because we have a good, revised set of Constitutions, now nicely translated and bound. It will be alive if the local communities are immersed in proclaiming good news to the poor and in forming clergy and laity in various ministries. It will be alive if the local communities are praying. It will be alive if the local communities are places where "love, like that between brothers [is] always present among us, as well as the bond of holiness" (CR VIII 2).

Bernard Lonergan, in a number of his writings, but especially in his book *The Second Collection,* analyses community from a four-fold perspective. He says that community exists where first of all there is *common experience.* Right from the start it is clear that Lonergan is saying that community is not something that pre-exists and into which individuals then fit. Rather, it is something that we create through some kind of common experience. All religious communities, as you know, try to create a common experience. This is one of the objectives of

every formation programme. During the internal seminary we shared a common experience through reading the Common Rules or the letters and conferences of St Vincent. All through the time of initial formation we heard many things in common from Directors. After ordination, in an on-going way (especially in recent years), we have shared much with one another in meetings like this one. We have also frequently listened to God's Word together and concelebrated the Eucharist with each other. All of these means contribute toward creating common experience.

Within this same context it is important to note that our new Constitutions emphasize two key elements that lie at the heart of the "common" Vincentian experience: (1) the experience of Christ the Evangelizer of the Poor, and (2) the experience of the poor themselves. These are the vital sources from which a spirituality like that of St Vincent flows.

May I suggest that perhaps one of the reasons why your Convocation left such positive feelings among the members of the Province is that it was a common experience - meeting one another, grappling with common concerns, praying with one another, sharing each other's vision of what the Province is all about.

Lonergan points out, secondly, that common experience leads to *common understanding.* Karl Rahner once said, with tongue in cheek, that not all people born on the same day are contemporaries. We have all known persons of similar age who have dramatically different life-visions. The word "Church", for example, may resonate differently in different people. Hearing the word, one person might immediately envision the hierarchical Church; another's thoughts might turn right away to the local church. So it is with other words, like "God", "heaven", "hell", etc. Common understanding means that our words denote the same thing, or that they begin to approach one another in meaning, or at least that we know what the other person does mean when he means something different from what we mean!

The third level of community, in Lonergan's analysis, is *common judgement.* That is what a Constitution is all about; (the preamble to the American Constitution, for example, begins with the words: *"We* hold these truths"). Our new Constitutions are, by and large, a group of common judgements that representative members of the Congregation made. So it is too with the Lines of Action, Provincial Norms, with a local community plan. The latter is a series of common judgements that people in a house make concerning their life and ministry. In that sense, it is an instrument in building the local community.

Common experience leads to common understanding, which is the basis for common judgements that lead to *common action.* This fourth level of community is utterly essential. Praxis gives flesh to, validates, and eventually modifies theory. We *follow* Christ the Evangelizer of the Poor in community. We *do* it in certain apostolates, previously agreed on in community. We *live* together, *pray* together, and *love* one another as brothers in community.

Common action, naturally, makes great demands on us in regard to collaboration and communication. Unfortunately, it is frequently on this level (this would be my observation after visiting various Provinces) that community breaks down. In some local communities there is little common action. Each person plows his own field, sows his own seed, harvests his own crop. There is minimal communication and very little collaboration among the various members. Consequently, a sense of common mission or common apostolate is lacking.

Basically, then, Lonergan's analysis is this: authentic community exists only where common experience, common understanding, common judgement and common action coalesce.

The local community plan itself

Let me now place the local community plan within that perspective. Article 27 of the Constitutions says this:

> Each community should work at developing a community plan, according to the Constitutions, Statutes and the provincial norms. We should use this plan as a means of directing our life and work, of fulfilling the recommendations we receive, and of examining periodically our life and activities.

Notice first of all that the community plan is a *communal task* (cf also Stat. 69:5). It is not the product of the Superior alone, but of the members of the local community together. I like to think of it as a *covenant,* a covenant that we make with God and with one another in regard to the direction and quality of our lives. Seen from this perspective, the concept of a local community plan is really quite different from the way we formerly operated. Twenty-five years ago most of the structures in our lives were dictated by universal legislation. Vincentians throughout the world rose at five o'clock in the morning. A half-hour later they went to morning prayer. They meditated until about six-thirty, celebrated Mass, had breakfast, and then went about their work. Later in the day there was a particular examen. There was also

a common night prayer, with a general examen. Perhaps too the community anticipated Matins and Lauds for the next day.

Many of these structures have disappeared. But of course we all need structures in order to live. The challenge is to create renewed structures that will give stability to the central values in our lives. Article 27 indicates that covenanted structures should take the place of many of our formerly universally legislated structures. In other words, our Constutions call us to covenant that:

> at *this* time
> in *this* house
> we will do *this*

as a way of concretizing various aspects of our life as Vincentians.

Secondly, from Article 27 it is evident that, besides being a communal task, the local community plan is an *intentional task.* Using it, we make conscious, committed decisions about our life and ministry. The future is not merely thrust upon us; we exercise our own responsibility in shaping it. Thus, we become an intentional community.

Thirdly, both Article 27 and Statute 16 state that the local community plan is *a tool for periodic self-evaluation.* In other words, the plan should be not just a project for the future, but a criterion by which we judge the efficaciousness of our commitments.

Statute 16 provides a reasonable schema for a local plan. It provides a list of the matters to be concretized:

> apostolic activity
> prayer
> the use of goods
> Christian witness where we work
> on-going formation
> times for group reflection
> necessary time for relaxation and study
> and an order of day.

The concretizations are left to us.

Some practical suggestions

Though the headings in Statute 16 are not meant to be exhaustive, the statute does ask that the community reflect on all eight topics and make concrete judgements about how it will live or work in regard to

each. Here, I will comment on just a few and will make some suggestions based on my experience of what other Provinces have done.

First, *apostolic activity.* It seems to me that *the* important question in this regard – a very obvious one which, unfortunately, we might not ask often enough – is this: what is our *Vincentian* mission here? How do we evangelize as Vincentians in the place where we live and work? Frequently we discuss whether we should or should not be in a particular place but, even in those places where we have decided to be, the basic question remains: how do we bring the charism of St Vincent to this work? What are the special gifts flowing from our tradition that we should be bearing to the people here? Here in your Province I suspect that circumstances may be forcing you more and more to ask that type of question. As numbers diminish we can do fewer things than we might have done in the past, so we are forced to ask: what are the essential things as we try to carry out the Vincentian mission in this seminary, or this parish, or this school, or this center for evangelization, or this parish mission? I have found that the posing of this question can have very effective results. It can draw all participants, as they grapple with responding, to feel co-responsible for and really involved in the Vincentian mission in a given setting. I have seen schools where not just the Vincentians, but the lay administrators, the faculty and the students began to reflect on the question and began to feel a sense of inclusion in the Vincentian mission. I have witnessed popular missions where the question became contagious, where large numbers of priests, sisters, brothers and other lay men and women came to share in a sense of the Vincentian mission to evangelize the poor.

Secondly, let me reflect with you for a moment *on prayer.* In our commitment to follow Christ as the Evangelizer of the Poor it is crucial that we support one another in praying. So every house must ask the question: What will be the forms of communal prayer that we will engage in as a local community? A deep commitment to communal prayer is essential for growth as a community and is also essential if we are to draw others who are seeking God to join us. Can we truly make our prayer "something beautiful for God", as Mother Teresa might say, and also something attractive to young people?

Our new Constitutions also state in Article 47 that each of us should spend one hour daily in personal prayer. I do not think we have really come to grips with this yet in the Congregation as a whole. Are there ways in which, through the local community plan, we can support one another in spending an hour a day in personal prayer?

A third area that I would like to say something about is *on-going*

formation. The local community plan should provide time for each confrère to engage in on-going formation on a regular basis. So when we talk about this in the houses there are a number of possible questions: When and how, during the year, will each individual member take time for on-going formation? Is there something perhaps we can do as a house for on-going formation? For instance, is there somebody whom we could invite into the parish to talk about the RCIA? Or is there someone who might come to the school to talk about teaching methodology? Is there someone who has been engaging in new forms of missions who might talk to our team? Is there someone who might hold a workshop for the seminary staff on spiritual direction or on the psycho-sexual development of candidates? In fact, there are often many things that a local community can do together for in-service training and mutual enrichment.

Fourth, and finally: *Time for relaxation and study.* A very serious concern in the world-wide Congregation is the tendency for confrères to become over-stretched and burnt-out. Local communities should be quite alert to this problem. Does everyone have a day when he is free? Do we find time to relax and enjoy one another's company together? This area might be one that needs particular evaluation at the end of each year.

You will notice that all of the examples that I have used above are covenanted structures. This means that the local community, having talked about these matters, commits itself to do certain things for a year or a half-year, or until some time set for evaluation. For example, if we agree to have morning prayer and meditation in common at a certain time each day, each member should feel himself bound to this covenanted structure just as in the past people felt bound by universally legislated structures. If experience shows at the time of evaluation that the structure is a poor one, it can be changed. Evaluation should take place at least once a year, according to Statute 16, but more frequent evaluations may prove more helpful. In any event, periodically the local community should examine its life and work seriously and revise its commitments accordingly.

That is all I would like to say for the moment. I suggest to you that the local community plan, if well used, can be a real instrument in renewal, because it is a tool for creating covenanted structures that will give concrete shape to our Vincentian life and work.

St Vincent's, Gateacre, Liverpool

Thomas Davitt

Origins

On 27 June 1921 James Bennett, the Provincial, and his council decided: "That a house be rented for the students in St Joseph's, Blackrock, who are reading Philosophy". John Campbell, superior in St Mary's College, Hammersmith, was to be recommended to the Superior General for appointment as superior of the new house. On the same day Bennett wrote to the Superior General explaining that this was to be a temporary arrangement which was necessary because of the shortage of accommodation in St Joseph's. Eleven students, preparing for university degrees, would be involved (1). Written on this letter there are two sets of comments in French, apparently those of the Secretary General and the Superior General, that asking for the appointment of a superior for a house not yet in existence was premature.

The Superior General, François Verdier, replied on 20 July authorising renting a house, but contenting himself with confirming John Campbell as director; the naming of a superior should wait until arrangements were more complete (CMAR).

I have heard it said, in the 1980s, that James Bennett had in mind a house at the Blackrock end of Seapoint Avenue, on the left as one faces Dun Laoghaire, and that "Dunardagh", on Temple Hill, later bought by the Daughters of Charity, was also considered.

The accommodation for students and seminarists in the old St Joseph's, on Temple Road, at that time would have been: on the top floor eight in the big seminaire and four in the small seminaire and on the middle floor eight rooms, each with two students, making a total of twenty-eight.

On August 12 the Provincial Council decided that "for the present" all students would stay in St Joseph's, and that John Campbell be recommended to the Superior General as superior of St Joseph's. On September 19 the Council decided that "preliminary steps" be taken to secure a suitable house for additional accommodation.

The following year there was a change in the approach to solving the accommodation problem. On July 11,1922, the Council decided to send two postulants to do their philosophy in Mount Melleray. On September 25 this number was increased to five, and six students were to be sent to Rome for theology, making eleven in all, the figure mentioned in the Provincial's letter of 27 June 1921.

The following year, on 25 July, the Council decided that six postulants "continue" their philosophy in Mount Melleray, that two begin in Mungret, one in Clonliffe and one in the Mother House in Paris; the following day it was decided that two or three students be sent to Rome to begin a course for a theology degree. In December 1923 the Council decided that not more than three or four Australian students be accepted in St Joseph's for theology, for "financial and accommodation reasons".

In June 1924 the Council decided to accept into the seminaire the seven students who had completed their philosophy course, six in Mount Melleray and one in Clonliffe, and: "That negotiations be entered into for the purchase of a house near Liverpool for our own students". It has been said that the Council was not fully behind Bennett's decision to buy Gateacre, and certainly all through its short history there clearly was divided opinion about its retention.

The minutes of meetings of the Provincial Council are very summary and there is no indication as to why Liverpool was chosen as the place for the new student house. One would suspect that hope for English vocations was at least part of the reason. Eight men from Liverpool had already been accepted into the community in the previous half century, six of them since 1901, though not all stayed. That hope for vocations was part of the reason would seem to be borne out by the fact that when Gateacre was opened as a house for philosophy students it produced a vocations brochure of 13 duplicated quarto pages.

It is interesting to note, though it has no causal connection with later happenings, that in 1885 a Castleknock pastman who lived in Liverpool, Hugh Cullen, a cousin of Cardinal Cullen, wrote to Malachy O'Callaghan, superior in Castleknock, that he was "most anxious" for a Vincentian house to be opened in Liverpool (2). Oddly enough another cousin in the next generation, Paul Cullen CM, became superior in Gateacre.

On 26 November 1924 the Council decided: "That the purchase of the house ("Grange") at Gateacre be approved". The purchase price was to be £8,000, with £50 for "fast & loose" articles. £5,000 was to be borrowed from the Munster & Leinster Bank @ 4%. In fact it was not

necessary to borrow more than £2,500. The total cost, purchase plus alterations, was £9650-7-6(3).

On 4 January 1925 Archbishop Keating of Liverpool wrote to the Provincial:

> In accordance with the understanding between us, I am quite willing to allow you to open a house of studies at The Grange, Gateacre, for members of your Institute. Of course this carries with it leave for an Oratory in connection with the house, in accordance with Can. 1162, #4.1 could not grant leave for the erection of a public church under present conditions, which you will understand without further words. We are, in fact, at this very moment engaged upon mapping out new parishes in that vicinity, and the full support of all parishioners will be required to maintain them (4).

On 18 May 1925 James Bennett wrote to Patrick McHale, Assistant in Paris:

> Fr Hickey is in residence at the Grange, Gateacre, Liverpool, and has two laybrothers with him. He is preparing for the opening in September (CMAR).

Thomas Hickey was seconded from St Vincent's, Sheffield, to get Gateacre ready for opening. Two postulant laybrothers, Michael O'Sullivan and Michael Hartigan, were with him (5). It is not clear whether these are the two referred to by James Bennett, or whether there were also, at that stage, two laybrothers with vows. In August 1925 Joseph Sheehy was named as superior of the new house.

House for philosophy students, 1925-28

Gateacre was opened as a house for philosophy studies, with, apparently, the added hope that it might be a source of vocations. An unsigned article in the *Castleknock Chronicle* of 1926 shows that there was also another hope:

> St Vincent's College, Gateacre, near Liverpool, was opened for studies on September 3rd, 1925. Its present purpose is to be a School of Philosophy for aspirants to the Congregation of the Mission. When its scope is further extended, we hope that

> from this humble beginning a new Castleknock may arise… We are assured on all sides that at present there is a great need for a residential secondary school in the North of England; and that Gateacre is an ideal spot for it. Catholics are increasing in numbers in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, many of them of Irish extraction and many more descendants of the sturdy Lancastrian Catholics who remained true to the Faith in ages of persecution.

The same article tells us that the house was built in 1863 and had been vacant for eight years. There were fifteen acres of grounds with it, beautifully laid out, with terraces, lawns, a kitchen garden, bowling green, greenhouses with vines, rhododendrons, flower-beds, "noble trees", and "the famous polo stables of Lord Wavertree, which must have cost thousands of pounds to build". In 1925 the house was on the edge of open country.

Diarmuid Moran's first appointment was to Gateacre, in 1937. In 1982 he wrote:

> We were thrilled with the first sight of Gateacre Grange. A mellow red-brick building in the tasteful Victorian style, with mullioned windows and gables and high chimneys. It stood on gracefully tiered terraces down to rhododendron trees and playing fields. Inside, all was heavy carved oak. In the hall was a magnificent porphery (?) mantelpiece, reddish in colour, and a huge music box. On the right was the ballroom, now the chapel. All in white, with curved small glass closets in the walls. Next was the Breakfast Room, capable of seating four people. Next on the right the large Dining Hall, now used for mid-day lunch by the pupils. On left, reception rooms; next a Billiard Room; next a Den with an inglenook.

The article in the 1926 "Castleknock Chronicle" is accompanied by a group photograph of eleven students, with Frs Joseph Sheehy, James O'Doherty and Thomas Hickey; by the time this photo was taken one student had already left Gateacre (6). As well as being superior Fr Sheehy taught English and Latin; Fr O'Doherty taught philosophy. Spiritual conferences were given by Fr Sheehy. Brothers Patrick Normoyle and John Keating completed the community. The cook was a layman from Dublin, Tom Boyne.

Thomas Hickey's appointment was a temporary one; he was to prepare the house for occupation; it has been said that he did not like the appointment. He stayed on for a short while as bursar, and was then replaced in that position by Edward Archer, who also taught French and shared spiritual conferences with the superior. One student from that time also remembered spiritual conferences given by Robert Wilson, though he never appears in the Catalogues as being stationed in Gateacre.

The philosophy course was a two year one, and on completing it the students were to go to St Joseph's, Blackrock, to begin their seminaire. They wore clerical dress; soutanes and clerical collars in the house, black suits and ties when out. They got out to football matches and "anything else worthwhile".

On 26 November 1925 James Bennett wrote to Patrick McHale, Assistant, in Paris:

> The Archbishop of Liverpool paid his first visit to the new house in his Diocese on the 19th of this month. Father Sheehy, the superior, had all the superiors of the houses invited to meet him. All but two came. The Archbishop was very nice, spoke of his own devotion to St Vincent from boyhood, invoking his aid always to become a good priest. They had his picture in the house, and one of his brothers was called after the saint. He said he knew very well and favourably the daughters of St V., through the work they were doing in the diocese, and he hoped to become equally well acquainted with his sons in the work they had now undertaken. There are 11 students there studying philosophy.

In September 1927 another group of students arrived to begin philosophy. A photograph taken in 1928, when these students were in second philosophy, shows six students and three priests, Frs Joseph Sheehy, Michael O'Dwyer and John Oakey (7).

The first visitation of the house took place in February 1927. It mentions that the community consisted of three priests, three laybrothers and one postulant laybrother. The priests are mentioned by name, Frs Sheehy, O'Doherty and Archer; the names of the brothers are not given. There were twelve students of whom six would finish philosophy in June 1927 and start their seminaire. The visitation report has another interesting paragraph: "Later on it may be a centre for Missions, and a secondary school may be opened for which the Archbishop of Liverpool has already given permission".

The archbishop referred to was Archbishop Keating, who died the following year, 1928.

There was another visitation a year later, in February 1928. Three priests are mentioned, Joseph Sheehy, John Oakey, who taught philosophy, and Michael Heron who left at the end of the visitation. The three laybrothers are named this time, Patrick Normoyle, Thomas Gilmartin and Michael Cunningham.

It is rather extraordinary that between 3 September 1925, when Frs Sheehy and O'Doherty were appointed to Gateacre, and 15 September 1927, when Frs Lyng and Heron were appointed, there is no mention of Gateacre in the minutes of the Provincial Council. And then again from 15 September 1927 there is no further mention until on 27 June 1928 the Council decided "that the heating system in Gateacre be improved".

House for deacons, 1928-29

On 19 August 1928 the Council discussed the question of Gateacre and the accommodation problem in Blackrock and decided "that some of the students of theology be sent from Blackrock to Gateacre". There is no indication as to why Gateacre was not to continue as a house of philosophy studies. Seven years later the new Provincial, Henry O'Connor would tell the Superior General that the reason was that the students could not attend a proper university course (CMAR). On 19 August the Council decided "that the six students who have done 3 years theology be sent for their fourth year to Gateacre" (8).

During this year there occurred an incident which was later told and re-told, appreciated fully only by those who knew Fr Joe Sheehy. He took the six deacons out to some event in Liverpool on one occasion. The students all went up to the top deck of the tram whilst Fr Sheehy went "inside". When the conductor came to collect the students' fares they referred him to Fr Sheehy below. When he approached Fr Sheehy the conductor congratulated him on his six fine sons in the ministry.

No students, 1929-31

The six deacons were ordained priests in 1929 and no new aspirants were received in September of that year. This eased the accommodation problem in Blackrock and no students were sent to Gateacre that autumn.

The minutes of the Provincial Council note for 14 October 1929: "The question of Gateacre discussed. The propriety of consulting the Archbishop of Liverpool relative to opening a secondary school later on in the year". On 30 December the minutes noted: "Gateacre house discussed; suggested that Fr Leonard's views be taken and examined". Unfortunately we do not now know what Fr Leonard's views were. However, on 20 August 1929 the Superior General sent the patent appointing him superior; he was superior for just one year, during which the house had no particular function. On 30 January 1930 the minutes noted: "Gateacre discussed -proposed that the case be deferred". Gateacre does not figure again in the minutes until 11 December 1930 when the minutes noted: "Case of Gateacre; discussed. Decided to start the small school". The next mention is on 21 July 1931: "Fr Paul Cullen appointed Superior of Gateacre".

As well as the original purchase price the Provincial Fund had contributed £8261-11-2 in the period 1925-31 (9).

St Vincent's Academy, 5 Belvidere Road, 1932-35 (10).

Although references to Gateacre in the minutes of the Provincial Council are sparse and brief the background to the opening of the Academy is quite clear. On 4 March 1931 James Bennett wrote to Patrick McHale in Paris:

> Archbishop Downey of Liverpool has made an offer of his City Residence to the Congregation for the purpose of opening a preparatory school for boys. He desires to have such a school in the district, and has asked us to take it up. He asks for the market value of the house, for the buying of which we need not borrow. Two confrères went to look at the house, and find it capable of school accommodation for 30 boys of the ages 10 to 14 years.
>
> *I am told* that other communities have asked for the house for this purpose, and the Archbishop said he would first offer it to the Vincentians.
>
> I put the matter before the Prov. Council, and opinions were divided for and against acceptance. Fr O'Donnell is opposed, Frs Cullen and Kickham are for acceptance. My own opinion is – Seeing that the Archbishop has asked us to take up this work, I would not like to refuse (CMAR).

The final sentence was typed in red. The Fr Cullen mentioned was not Paul, but his brother Edmund. The above is how the Provincial wrote to the administration in Paris. In 1982 Diarmuid Moran used rather less formal language:

> He wanted to retire to the suburbs, but as the cotton trade had collapsed and large houses could not be sold he got the idea of talking the Vins into buying it and starting a school there. He was quite concerned that there was no high class school in the city, (I do not know why the Jesuit school, St Francis Xavier, did not qualify for the title), and wealthy parents were sending their children to Protestant schools.

Henry O'Connor, the Provincial, said in a letter to the Superior General in 1933 that the cost was over £2,000. In an earlier part of the letter he had written: "Incidentally, I may say that the price asked for the property by His Grace was much above the figure it was worth. However, he is a shrewd and canny business man and he succeeded in obtaining the price he asked" (CMAR). In a later letter, 25 May 1939, he wrote: "Purchase of Belvidere, alterations, etc. £4,293-12-10" (CMAR).

On 16 March 1931 the Superior General authorised the purchase of 5 Belvidere Road and on 9 August he sent the patent appointing Paul Cullen as superior. Daniel O'Connell and James Donovan were also appointed to the staff for the opening. Joseph Sheehy's appointment finished but he obviously stayed on for the formal opening day, 15 September, as he appears in one of the photographs.

The *Catholic Herald* of 19 September carried a report of the opening and gave some points from Archbishop Downey's speech:

> Ever since my election to the Episcopate, three years ago this month, I have been impressed with the necessity for a high grade day school for boys in this district. Parents of boys have written to me about the matter, priests have spoken to me about it, and I myself am convinced that such a school is essential… I entrust this work of education to the Vincentian Fathers, well knowing their competence as teachers. They have always been true to the great principles of St Vincent who was a shining gem of the

> French Church and a man of massive intelligence. I have no anxiety since the school has been placed in their hands. It will come to rank as a first-class school, and that before long.

Paul Cullen gave an interview to the paper, and among other things he said

> that the Vincentians followed a special system in education, by which they tried to make the young taste the pleasure of a cordial and reciprocal friendship. They tried to make the pupils feel that they were their friends, that they trusted them, that they were interested in them. They joined them in their recreations and amusements; they gave them, as far as possible, responsibilities in the way of acting as prefects and captains. All this tended to foster a feeling of candour and confiding docility and the winning of the affections of these young natures, whose uprightness had not yet been impaired by the fascinations of lying and the deceit of the world.

The Liverpool Post and Mercury of 16 September picked out other sections of the archbishop's speech:

> When he spoke of schools not Catholic he was not disparaging them. All he said was that religion was a subject with them, if at all, like geography or arithmetic, an impersonal sort of thing that had no real grip or directing force on the lives of the pupils. "But", he added, "that is not so with us. We begin with the assumption that a man's first duty is to God".

The *Castleknock Chronicle* of 1932 drew on these reports for an article and printed three photographs of the opening day proceedings.

The Cathedral Record (Liverpool) said that the house had "been renovated and considerably changed for the purposes of school life". In a letter of 19 July 1935 Henry O'Connor, Provincial, mentioned to the Superior General that all the rooms in the house were used for school purposes and that the confrères who taught there lived in Gateacre, six miles away, and went to the school every day by bus. James Sheil, who taught there in 1934-35, told me that sometimes some of them got a lift in the sidecar of a motorcycle combination driven by an old man.

Daniel O'Connell left the staff after one year. The boys found him interesting as a returned missionary from China. He also made an impression as a soccer player and there was a belief among the boys that he had played for some club in Northern Ireland. He was replaced by Patrick Murphy. Two years later, 1934, James Donovan left and three new confrères joined the staff, James Milner, Henry Morrin and James Shell.

Two non-Vincentian teachers are known to have taught in Belvidere Road, though not at the same time. A Mr (Michael?) Coyne and a Mr Kearns. Both were part-time and one or both were possibly clerical students.

There were about thirty boys in the school. For games they went over to Gateacre. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was produced during the Belvidere Road years, presumably by Patrick Murphy who produced other Shakespeare plays later on in Gateacre.

I visited Belvidere Road in 1985. No. 5 does not appear to have been altered since 1935. It is a large residence in a row of houses of varying sizes. It has only a small space between the road and its frontage. It would appear to have been enlarged by the width of two windows on the right hand side, perhaps at the time of its aquisition as Archbishop's House. In appearance it does not present any features which make it obviously suitable as a school. I did not see the interior.

It became clear fairly soon that the school in Belvidere Road had two great drawbacks: first, the double expense of maintaining both Gateacre Grange and itself and, secondly, the six mile bus ride in each direction every day for the teaching confrères. The report of the visitation in February/March 1933 says that the school has about 40 pupils, all day boys, and that it is practically self-supporting; St Vincent's, Gateacre, on the other hand, has to be supported from the Provincial Fund. James Donovan is mentioned as bursar and teacher, Brother Patrick Normoyle is in charge of the garden and Brother Michael Keating is in charge of the sacristy and grounds. The Provincial refers to the fact that the main reason for opening the school was to "cater for boys who had been attending Protestant schools. The project does not seem to have achieved the success which was anticipated".

On 9 March the question of Gateacre was discussed at the Provincial Council, presumably as a result of the visitation. Any decision was postponed until more data would be available. It was discussed again on 17 April when it was decided that Gateacre be put up for sale and that the financial position and future possibilities of Belvidere Road be put before the archbishop. On 23 June the Provincial reported to

his council on his visit to the archbishop: the archbishop agreed that there was no prospect of opening a school in Gateacre so he asked that Belvidere Road be continued. No promise was given The council confirmed the decison to sell Gateacre and to keep Belvidere Road for another year. John Oakey was added to the staff for the following year.

In June 1933 the Provincial, Henry O'Connor, wrote to Charles Souvay, Assistant, in Paris:

> There is no hope of our succeeding in our house of St Vincent's, Gateacre, Liverpool. This house was opened in 1925 as a house of philosophy for our students. The idea of sending students there was abandoned in 1928. Since then the place has been at a standstill. A secondary school was considered but was not found practical. It is the unanimous opinion of the Provincial Council that we should dispose of the House. It is a very heavy drag on the finances of the Province (CMAR).

A General Assembly was due to be held that summer to elect a new Superior General to succeed the late François Verdier. Emile Cazot, the Vicar General, told Henry O'Connor that the sale of Gateacre would depend on the consent of the new Superior General and his council, and to wait until the new General was elected. Charles Souvay was elected, and O'Connor wrote to him on 6 August:

> Very Rev. Pere Cazot in a letter of the middle of May informed me that the question of the sale of St Vincent's, Gateacre, Liverpool, was postponed for consideration till the Superior General was elected. When convenient, I shall be grateful for your permission to dispose of the place. I think I told you the Archbishop was of the same mind as myself, viz. that there was not much prospect for a boarding school at Gateacre (CMAR).

An undated summary of the above, in French, has "Oui" pencilled on it.

On 3 November 1933 the minutes of the Provincial Council record that the solicitor in Liverpool suggested that £10,000 be asked for Gateacre and that religious communities be offered the option before the place was put on the open market; the Council agreed.

There was another visitation of Gateacre in November 1934. In

the report the staff is given as follows: Paul Cullen, superior and Headmaster; James Patrick Murphy, professor and Prefect of Studies; James Milner, Procurator and professor; James Sheil, professor; Henry Morrin, professor of mathematics; Brothers Michael Keating and Patrick Normoyle. The main part of the report is as follows:

> At present St Vincent's is being used merely as a house of residence for the Community. So far we have been unable to dispose of it and it is a very considerable expense to keep it up. (Permission was granted last year to dispose of it if possible).
>
> The school for small boys at Belvidere Road, Liverpool, opened over two years ago at the request of His Grace, Most Reverend Dr Downey, Archbishop of Liverpool, has not developed and grown as we should wish. The numbers attending the school are very small and the undertaking is a loss to the Province. We still have hopes that if St Vincent's, Gateacre, was disposed of and the Community transferred to Belvidere Road, that considerable saving could be effected and that possibly in the course of a couple of years the school would pay its way. As matters stand at present great expense and inconvenience is caused to the confrères. It is a journey of six miles from St Vincent's, Gateacre, to the school, Belvidere Road, and in consequence the confrères are very hard pressed for time. We are hopeful that a purchaser for St Vincent's, Gateacre, may soon be announced.
>
> I have received very good reports of the teaching and training given by the Fathers at the school. Of course the boys are very young, from 8 -14 years. These boys are children of the better class people of Liverpool and the object of the school is to prevent, if possible, Catholic parents from sending their children to Protestant schools (CMAR).

The above is from the handwritten report. On the printed Visitation Form the following is written:

> N.B. The School, St Vincent's Academy, Belvidere Road, Liverpool, just pays its way. It can provide no money for the maintenance of St Vincent's, Gateacre, which has to be supported by the Province (CMAR).

On 26 November the Provincial Council again discussed the Liverpool situation and the possible sale of Gateacre. It was decided

that one or other house in Liverpool must be given up.

In March 1935 the Council minutes record: "Dr Murray-Bligh's letter re establishing a boarding school in Gateacre". That is the only extant reference to such a proposal.

In May 1935 the Provincial wrote to the Superior General:

> Of course, as I told you in Paris, we are losing money heavily in Liverpool. The prospects for the future are not bright. I may have some solution to our difficulties when I see you in June (CMAR).

On 19 July he wrote a long letter to the Superior General. He started with a summary of the history of the community's involvement in Liverpool. With regard to Belvidere Road he said that after four years the school had proved a failure, with pupils at any one period never exceeding forty. The main part of his letter then follows:

> Now to come to the point of this long epistle. His Grace, who is a frequent caller at Gateacre, spoke to the Superior about the school at Belvidere Road a few days ago. He said he realised it was not a success. He mentioned that the chief idea in his mind, when he invited the Vincentian Fathers to open a school at Belvidere Road was to prevent Catholic parents sending boys to Protestant schools. The opening of Belvidere Road has not lessened the evil.
>
> Now His Grace makes the proposal, which I consider monstrous, that we transfer the school to Gateacre and dispose of Belvidere Road. The Community came to His Grace's rescue in 1931 and paid him the tidy sum of over £2,000 for his residence. If the property was put up for sale now it is doubtful if a purchaser could be found, and if one was found I doubt if a third of the former price would be offered.
>
> His Grace the Archbishop has invited me to come over next week and consider some proposals for the future. I have an idea that he desires Gateacre to be developed: that a sum of at least £2,000 would be spent on the place to fit it out for a boys' secondary school.
>
> Personally I am of opinion that we won't or cannot succeed. There are two first class Catholic day schools in the city which supply the needs up to a certain point. We should never obtain the number of pupils and the pensions necessary to make the school

> a paying proposition.
>
> Here I may remark that since we opened in Liverpool in 1925 about £26,000 has been invested by the Community, and no return from it so far. I have already stated that the Central Fund has to advance the sum of £900 per annum to keep the Community there. We cannot afford that loss. The Archbishop so far has made no offer to help us out of our difficulties. It was thought at one time he might give us a Parish Church, but such is not likely.
>
> I have placed a proposition before my Council and it is considered sound: (1) That we make an effort to cut our losses at once by disposing of Belvidere Road, if such is possible. (2) That we make an experiment in Gateacre for the coming academic year without spending any additional money on the place. If at the end of the year we find that the school there is not likely to succeed that we seek your permission to close down (CMAR).

He mentions at the end of the letter that when, in the previous year, the Superior General had granted permission to sell Gateacre and an estate agent had brought the matter to the attention of other religious communities, none of them showed any interest in buying it.

The minutes of the Superior General's Council note, under the date 22 July 1935: "The Provincial of Ireland is authorised to sell the town house, Belvidere Road, in Liverpool".

The minutes of the Provincial Council, dated 10 August 1935, record:

> Decided that the day-school at Belvidere Road be transferred to Gateacre and that Belvidere Road be sold. It was emphasised that no further money be expended on Gateacre without express approval of Council. It was also decided that a renewed effort be made to get a purchaser for Gateacre.

The school in Gateacre, 1935-39

At the end of the 1934-35 school year the school in Belvidere Road closed and in September the re-opening was in Gateacre. The staff was as follows: Paul Cullen, superior and Headmaster, James Milner, Henry Morrin, Patrick Murphy. James Milner was nicknamed "Golden Miller" after a famous greyhound. On one occasion he was in charge of the boys on a "day out" granted by the Headmaster. As a gesture of appreciation he suggested that the boys send the Headmaster a postcard

with the inscription: "Na h-abair e". He, like the boys, was English; he said the Irish expression meant: "We had a lovely day". Harry Morrin was regarded as a strict disciplinarian, though some years later, after the closure of Gateacre, he called out to Castleknock and took two ex-Gateacre boys out for the day.

When the school was transferred to Gateacre it was hoped that the number of pupils could be raised to seventy-five, regarded as the minimum for viability; this figure, though, was never achieved. There were a number of children from foreign consulates, including Brazilian and Spanish.

In October the Provincial Council was told that an offer of £1250 was made for Belvidere Road; the Council suggested that the Provincial should request the solicitor to ask for a higher sum. On 18 November the Council decided that the £1250 be accepted if no bigger offer was forthcoming. There is no further reference to Belvidere Road in the minutes. It was sold, and in a financial analysis sent to the Superior General by the Provincial in 1939 there is an item: "Credit - sale of Belvidere £1162". The only Gateacre item in the minutes for 1936 is the approval of the expenditure of £60 on lavatories in August.

There was a visitation in May 1937 and the report states that there were sixty-eight pupils, with the superior being hopeful of raising the number to over a hundred. During the year the Province had to advance £600 as the boys' fees and chaplaincy stipends were insufficient to cover expenses. The Provincial was "hopeful" that after a further year the college would be able to pay its way. The superior, Paul Cullen, was seventy-four and had completed six years in office.

September 1937 saw changes in the staff for the first time since the transfer to Gateacre. Paul Cullen retired as superior and Headmaster, though he stayed on in residence. Harry Morrin and James Milner left, the latter for China. The new superior and Headmaster was John K Murphy, who said later that he was sent there to "make or break" the school. Diarmuid Moran and Arthur McRory, newly ordained, were taking up their first appointment. In 1982 Diarmuid Moran recalled the journey over to Gateacre:

> Fr McRory and I were appointed to Gateacre in 1937 by Fr H O'Connor, Prov., and it was arranged we should travel with Fr J K Murphy who had also been appointed, as superior. Fr F Morrin, Bursar in Blackrock, gave us the tickets. With accumulated conferences on poverty in our minds we declined any further assistance which he offered. To us, Arthur & myself, it

was like a journey to the unexplored depths of China. On the train JK asked us if we were hungry, and brought us in to dinner. When the bill came he expected us to pay for ourselves out of the travel expenses given us. There was an incredible look on his face when we said we had declined any money. On arrival at Gateacre it was found that there was two shillings and sixpence in the safe, and nothing at all in the bank.

Fr Beverley Ahearn CSsR was a pupil in Gateacre from 1936 until 1939. In 1989 he recalled his impressions:

> Of the priests you mention I do not remember James Milner. I thought that the Headmaster prior to John Murphy was Pat Cullen. My recollection – that of a 7-8 yr old – is that Fr Cullen was a big, white-haired man, kindly and with a "presence". The name may have become mixed up in my mind – perhaps Fr Cullen never existed. Even now I have a distinct impression that I had at the time that the new headmaster, John Murphy, did not have the same sort of presence that the previous one did.
>
> Pat Murphy I remember as strict but very fair. I was in his production of *The Tempest,* in the lowly part of Mustardseed. He taught a small class to serve mass and allowed me to serve for the first time when he was saying mass at Nazareth House one feast of St Patrick. The fathers, as far as I remember, used to say daily mass at this convent, which no longer exists. Fr Murphy, when I was about eight, began to teach us a little Latin. I can recall how he awoke enthusiasm amongst us. He had us learning words and declensions so that we could go home and speak foreign words to our parents! Next day he would ask us what we had taught our parents. In this way he seemed to be getting us to concentrate and also, in some way, to be doing homework.
>
> There was one occasion when Pat Murphy got into a towering rage - the only time I can recall. Someone had written on the lavatory wall: "Fr Murphy is a bloody fool". I can still call to mind sitting in the classroom, with the door connecting to the next classroom open, and Fr Murphy striding from one room to the other, glaring, uttering threats and waiting for the culprit to own up. I can still remember my thoughts at the time: Why did he presume that he was meant, and not John Murphy? Why did he not recognise the handwriting? When I saw the writing on the wall I was even more puzzled because I thought that it was much

too grown-up for anyone in the two classes Pat was concerned with. The incident must have been closed that day because I have no further recollection of it.

Pat Murphy was interested in sports and, I think, was in charge of both soccer and cricket teams. I can remember following the cricket team in away matches and Pat making sure that I and any other little lad who had done this got some refreshment at the same time as the team. He encouraged us to support all home matches particularly.

Arthur McRory I don't remember much about. I know that I did no work for him and I knew I had won the fight when he complained to John Murphy that he could do nothing with me!

Dermot Moran comes more clearly to mind. I can remember him as a teacher who gave great encouragement to the less bright pupils. He was much more interested in getting an answer from the retiring, shy boy or the one less-gifted intellectually than from the bright boys in the class. Dermot was the priest I spoke to in 1939 about being a Vincentian. I certainly wanted to be a priest and at the time the Vins were the ones I knew. In the course of this conversation Dermot mentioned going to Castleknock and after that the Noviciate. I said that Castleknock would cost too much money, and I remember very clearly Dermot telling me that there was no need to go to Castleknock, that I could stay at home in Liverpool until I was old enough to enter the Noviciate. Not long after that the notice of closure was sent to the parents and the Vins returned to Ireland without me!

Dermot taught me something of honesty in that same hot summer of 1939. I was leaving school one afternoon with a penny in my pocket for the bus home. The ice-cream man had pulled up in front of the school and was doing a brisk trade. I asked Dermot for the loan of a penny. On his asking me whether it was for the bus fare I replied that it was to buy an ice-cream. Because I told him the truth he lent me a penny. He would not accept repayment the next day, on the grounds that I had kept my word to pay him back as soon as possible.

We had a number of laymen as teachers, but the only name that sticks with me is a Mr Lowe. There was another person, named Mr Cairns (it sounded like that, though I do not know how he spelt his name) who was something like the school secretary. He was a bit more than this, because on occasion he read to us while we were eating our packed lunches, and he threatened boys

> who talked with the strap. He also stood as sponsor for almost the whole number of those being confirmed with me.
>
> There were times when some of us who lived fairly close by would meet Arthur McRory and Dermot Moran out for a walk. Looking back I realise that they never passed by without stopping to talk.
>
> The majority of boys, about fifty I think, moved to St Edward's College, run by the Irish Christian Brothers, in September 1939. Shortly before the summer holidays we were all brought by bus to do an exam in St Edward's to help the Brothers to decide in which classes to place us. This recollection brings to mind the names of Donald and Ken Hyde. The reason for this is that Donald died in 1940 or 1941 and all the ex-St Vincent's boys were brought to the funeral. This is the last reference to St Vincent's that I can remember.

In the August 1952 issue of *Evangelizare* there is an unsigned obituary on Patrick Murphy, which has this paragraph about his years in Liverpool:

> Those who were stationed with Fr Murphy in St Vincent's, Belvidere Road and later at Gateacre, Liverpool, remember his forceful efficiency as a teacher. More than this, he merged his life into the life of the school. In games, in classwork and in the cultural activity of the school he showed himself a leader. His productions of Shakespeare in the open air soon came to be recognised as one of the chief annual events in the Catholic life of Liverpool.

In November 1938 there was another visitation. In the report the Provincial wrote:

> Since the last visitation in May 1937 the College has made slow but steady progress. I learned from different sources that the College is becoming better known to the better class Catholics of Liverpool, that they are satisfied with the teaching and formation of the students, and that in consequence a considerable increase in the number of students may be expected in the coming year. At present the number of students on the College Roll number about 70, all day students. This House is not yet self-supporting. We have to advance £600 per annum from the Provincial Fund to

meet current expenses.

The College and grounds I found in excellent repair. The relations between the confrères and the students are very happy and cordial. I was impressed by the earnest work done by the confrères. All are anxious to make the College a success.

Earlier in this article there was a quotation from Diarmuid Moran's 1982 memoirs of his years in Gateacre, 1937-39; a further extract is appropriate here:

Fr Pat Murphy was appointed in 1932 and did tremendous work in getting it on a sound and organised footing. He built up contacts. Good pupils began to come. Gateacre, Woolton, Allerton, Spoke, Chylmore, etc. were all growing areas with a substantial Catholic population. The purpose of the school was emblazoned on a board outside in large gold letters: "School for Young Gentlemen".

To put it on a sound academic footing it was decided to offer Fr Jim Thompson in Strawberry Hill – a brilliant educationalist – the Headmastership. He declined; his health was not too good. Fr J K Murphy, a very able man and excellent teacher, was then appointed, in 1939.

On his arrival he examined the situation, consulted education authorities. Eventually he submitted a plan to the Provincial. To obtain recognition by the Department of Education it was necessary to provide certain educational facilities. It meant building a proper school. There was plenty of adjacent room. The estimated cost was £15,000. There were about 70 pupils, a number of whom did not pay their fees. They enjoyed the school and were very fond of it.

Perhaps the parents' opinion might be summed up in the words of one parent to Fr J K Murphy: "I suppose Gateacre will now cease to be a pleasant boys' club and become a school".

As can be imagined, teaching them was very difficult. They were willing to play but not to learn. With our Irish school ideas of discipline, adjustment was very difficult for Arthur and myself. Fr Pat Murphy impressed on us that there was *no,* repeat *no,* corporal punishment, nor could boys be kept in. We did our best but without much success. On one occasion in desperation I sent a miscreant who was wrecking the class down to the Headmaster, Fr J K Murphy. He had an important visitor in his room to whom he was extolling the school. Sizing up the situ-

> ation at a glance he seized the first book on his shelf, a lexicon of Homer's *Iliad* in Greek, and thrust it into the boy's hand. The child handed it to me gleefully saying : "The Headmaster told me to bring this to you".
>
> On another occasion I detained an eleven year old during recreation and, towering over the weeping child like an ogre, was delivering an oration on the evils which befell a boy who did not do his homework, when the door opened and the Headmaster ushered in a prospective parent to whom he had been explaining the tender care we took of young pupils.
>
> The Provincial made a visitation in November 1938. The whole question was put before him. He seemed favourably disposed. He had the money. In the meantime, as the House was struggling financially all the time, he suggested taking in boarding pupils. The empty attics could be used as dormitories. The House, I believe, got £300 a year subsidy from Prov. Fund; this, and the irregular fees, had to keep the place running. There was no hope from the Archbishop. Once he had sold Belvidere Road and moved out to about 200 yards from Gateacre Grange he seemed to lose all interest in it.

There is no reference to Gateacre in the minutes of the Provincial Council between 12 August 1937 (the appointment of Frs Murphy, Moran and McRory) and 10 May 1939 when there occurs the brief note: "Future of Gateacre discussed". Twelve days later the Provincial wrote to the Superior General:

> I really hate to have to bother you but for some time I have been worried beyond measure about our house in Liverpool. Sincerely I see no hope of its ever becoming a success.
>
> At two meetings of my Council since Easter we discussed the pros and cons in regard to this House at great length. I placed facts & figures before the Council to show that the school could not pay its way. I had previously gone to Liverpool & obtained some useful knowledge about the needs for such a school in Gateacre. I learned that there was not a need for a day school such as Gateacre because Liverpool is already well supplied with two fine & well managed Catholic Day Schools, run by the Jesuits & Christian Brothers. These schools have about 1000 boys on their rolls. Our school has about 65 pupils at present and hopes are not bright that the numbers will increase. The amount

received in school fees for this year 1938-39 is £900 approx.

Again Gateacre is not properly equipped as a school, such as is now required in England. If it was decided to equip it properly at least £15,000 should be invested in new buildings. I am convinced that such an investment would be foolish because I see no future for the school.

During the years 1924-39 £27,184 have been spent out of Provincial funds on the purchase and maintenance of Gateacre. Roughly this is an annual allocation of £1200 from the Provincial Fund to meet the deficit at Liverpool. This is a big drain on our Provincial Fund. We see no hopes of ever being able to recover our losses.

Frankly & sincerely I see no hopes of the work at Gateacre succeeding. My Consultors are in agreement on this point. It was decided at our last meeting that I would place the position of Gateacre before you & express the opinion of the Council that at this point it would be advisable for us to withdraw from the Arch-Diocese of Liverpool.

It may be possible to find an easy purchaser. The Sisters of Charity are, I understand, under order to move from one of their houses in Liverpool and it is quite likely they would give favourable consideration to Gateacre. I have discussed this question with Fr Sheedy and he is in favour of the project.

Perhaps I should say also that we find it almost impossible to find a clerical staff with academic degrees for Gateacre. We have seven other Colleges to staff in the Province and it is always a difficulty to find confrères with degrees such as are required by Boards of Education. Only one confrère in Gateacre has an Hons. BA degree. Two have no degrees. I hope I have placed the position of Gateacre clearly before you. It is the opinion of the Council that it is not likely to succeed and therefore the Council requests your sanction for its closure.

On 30 June 1939 the minutes of the Council note: "Decided finally to dispose of College in Liverpool". There is, however, one further reference, under the date 8 May 1940: "Fr Sheedy, Director of Sisters of Charity, has paid over to I. Province purchase money of Gateacre £10,000. Out of this sum it was decided to advance a loan of £3,000 (three thousand pounds) to Castleknock @ one and a half per cent to reduce overdraft".

Retrospect

Inevitably, the correctness of the decision to close Gateacre was questioned. There seems to be no doubt that during the 1930s it was believed that there was an anti-Gateacre "lobby" in the Province, and that it had the ear of the Provincial; or even that he himself was part of it. In his submissions to the Superior General the Provincial emphasised the financial losses incurred in maintaining Gateacre, and in those days the sums involved were quite considerable. This was a factual element in the decision to close. There also was the concept of "success" referred to by the Provincial. In his long letter to the Superior General in July 1935 he wrote:

> After a trial of four years the school at Belvidere has proved a failure…
> [Archbishop Downey] said he realised it was not a success… Personally I am of opinion that we won't or cannot succeed… If at the end of the year we find that the school there is not likely to succeed that we seek your permission to close down (CMAR).

In the report of the November 1938 visitation he wrote: "All are anxious to make the College a success".

Apart from the financial element "success" in the mind of the Provincial seems to have meant two things: an increase in the number of pupils and a significant decrease in the number of Catholic boys being sent to Protestant schools. In the case of the former, the increase in numbers was not as great as hoped for. In the case of the latter both the archbishop and himself realised that it was not happening.

Fr Beverley Ahearn CSsR, writing in 1989, recalls the closure:

> The reason given for the closing of the school is very clear in my mind. Financial: the school just was not paying its way. My father, in the year or two following the closure, repeatedly said that if only the Vincentians had waited a little while they would have had more pupils than they could have coped with and would certainly have been in a good financial position. The reason for this is that the fear of bombing on the outbreak of war would have led more parents to send their children to a school on the outskirts of the city. That was my father's view, for what it is worth, but I quote it as impressing on my young mind the reason why the school was closed.

While most of the boys transferred to the Christian Brothers, as mentioned above, about half a dozen went to Castleknock.

Acknowledgements

I have been working on this article on and off for about ten years. I had the opportunity of talking to confrères who lived in Gateacre, some of whom have since died: Patrick Travers, James Sheil, Michael O'Sullivan, Andrew Kavanagh, Patrick Brady, Thomas Gilmartin, Diarmuid Moran, Arthur McRory. I also spoke to other confrères who remember the Gateacre period even though they were never stationed there. I also had a meeting with Dr Desmond McGrath of Dublin, a past pupil of 5 Belvidere Road, and a telephone conversation with Charles Farrell, of Widnes, Cheshire, a past pupil of Gateacre (later of Castleknock), and a long letter, parts of which are quoted in the article, from Fr Beverley Ahearn CSsR. Thanks are due to all these as well as to the archivist of Liverpool diocese and to the late Brother Joseph Gazafy CM, archivist of the General Curia in Rome.

NOTES

1. This letter is in the archives of the CM General Curia in Rome. In the rest of the article this source will be given as (CMAR) in the text.
2. This letter is in the archives of Castleknock College.
3. Henry O'Connor to Charles L Souvay, 25 May 1939 (CMAR).
4. A copy of this letter is in the archives of the diocese of Liverpool. Neither there nor in CMAR nor in the CM archives in Dublin is there either the original or a copy of Bennett's letter to the archbishop.
5. Brother Michael O'Sullivan told me this in June 1984. Michael Hartigan was received into the community in Blackrock on 18 March 1926. He left later.
6. The students in the photograph were identified for me by Patrick Travers and Patrick Brady in October 1984: Bonner (phonetic spelling; first name not recalled), James Milner, Vincent Durcan (phonetic spelling of surname). Lenehan (phonetic spelling; first name not recalled), Patrick Brady, James Patrick Murphy, Seamus McCarthy, Andrew Kavanagh, John McKay, Patrick Travers, Patrick Connolly. Of these Bonner. Durcan and Lenehan did not continue on to Blackrock. Bonner and Durcan were ordained later, the former as a Redemptorist and the latter for Leeds diocese. McKay and Connolly started their seminaire in Blackrock but left later.
7. This photograph was kept by James Sheil. The students in it are: Bernard Brady, James Sheil, Patrick Gilgunn, Thomas Rice, Henry Morrin, Patrick Connolly. Brady went on to Blackrock but left later. Connolly is referred to in the previous note.
8. The six deacons were: John Conran, Donal Costelloe, Michael Devlin, James Donovan, Owen McArdle and Christopher O'Leary. All were already dead when I began preparing this article so I was unable to get any first-hand information about 1928-29 in Gateacre.
9. Henry O'Connor to Charles L Souvay. 25 May 1939 (CMAR).
10. Belvidere is the correct spelling, though in most CM sources it is spelt Belvedere, presumably by analogy with the college in Dublin. The correct spelling has been substituted in quotations used.

Forum

THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE 1988-1990

For those conversant with the Rite of Christian Iniation of Adults the term "mystagogy" will be familiar. For the "uninitiated", it refers to the Period of Postbaptismal Catechesis when the neophytes, together with the entire *ekklesia* have an opportunity to revel in the mysteries for a time, savouring them as they recall the "journey" in which they have been engaged. As Leonardo Boff has written: "Life is made up of re-readings of the past".

Sharing one's "re-reading of the past" facilitates a deeper understanding and appreciation of a sabbatical. Otherwise the danger lies in missing the meaning in the experience.

Living with the confrères at St John's University, New York, proved to be invaluable; not only in terms of community life but also on account of their willingness to be of assistance in my study for the MA in Theology, specialising in Catechetical Ministry. For example, one confrère was generous enough to lend me his electric typewriter for the eighty-odd papers that lay ahead of me. Space does not permit me to record many similar such instances of help provided. However, I wish to register my indebtedness to all concerned at St John's. Proximity to the campus (a stone's throw from the residence) was also a tremendous asset, thereby obviating any tedious commuting and allowing me unlimited access to the library and so forth.

The "culture shock" was not as acute as I had been led to expect. Maybe this is because we are influenced by our own cultural signification systems more than we would care to admit, if not realise. In addition, I found the American people very welcoming, polite and hard working. Their tolerance of the multiplicity of ethnic groups in, say, New York is surely a lesson to be emulated, particularly in Northern Ireland. (I am not suggesting that the "Big Apple" has a perfect skin!). Overall I felt much safer in New York than at any time during my eleven years in Armagh. And the two winters there were certainly

milder than any I had experienced in Ireland for many years. Those who have witnessed the Fall might well agree to it being the nicest of the four seasons in the States.

The MA programme in Theology at St John's is eminently pastoral in focus. One chooses an area of concentration and then builds a cluster of elective courses around it. Classes (the word "seminar" is more apt) are small in size, averaging from eight to ten persons, with the laity predominating! There was quite a strong Irish contingent during my period of study.

Ecclesiastes points out that "writing books [term papers!] involves endless hard work, and that much study wearies the body" (11:12). In complying with his judgement I saw fit to engage in a modest amount of travel which, looking back, was as much part of the educational process as the academe. I visited most of the houses of the Eastern Province, participating in the culminating celebrations of its centenary in September 1988.

So what was the meaning in the experience over the two years of my sabbatical? While it is not possible to provide a comprehensive synthesis of all my courses covered in the theology programme I would like to focus attention on some of the main lines thereof.

First of all, I was left with the firm conviction that a study and understanding of how culture is transmitted is a *sine qua non* for engaging in the work of catechesis. Otherwise a dangerous juncture is reached whereby salvation is presented in terms of the consumerist ethos, thus portraying religion solely in the guise of personal enhancement, emotional uplift, and security for the future. Put differently, if a Church believes the dominant culture to be positive and worthy of embrace, then dominant cultural forms can so easily be adopted to ensure the unreflective transmission of that culture.

Secondly, it became very clear to me that catechesis and religious education have a rather ambiguous relationship in many countries, not excepting Ireland. In theory, they are distinct and complementary, and *both* presume zones of freedom. Catechesis falls within the context of ministry, whereas religious education falls within education. Thus the latter cannot be conducted from a catechetical angle. Catechesis presupposes that the hearer is receiving the Christian message as a salvific reality, while religious education facilitates a way of willing, disciplined enquiry (a sort of religious literacy) towards knowledge and understanding, including Christian ones. The realm of enrichment is reached when religious education can strengthen one's faith, when catechesis can increase one's knowledge of the Christian message.

Thirdly, and following on from the preceding, I came to the conclusion that true education must be on the side of freedom, that is, in assisting a person to become fully human. Conversely, whatever inhibits or limits this process of humanization can be legitimately named as oppression, which is a subtle form of violence. I spent much time (and paper) reflecting on the system of education for youth in Ireland and realised that the social structures there are unmistakably intended to keep them not only mute but apathetic as well. The economy generates the educational "machine", demanding and ensuring that the schooling system reproduce the dispositions required for the running of that economy. Hence Irish youth have succumbed to the very fanaticism that unrelentingly dogs their educational oppressors vis-a-vis the "points system", whereby each public examination grade corresponds to a quota of points for application to institutes of higher education. And it would appear that the privileged and the powerful in Irish society positively encourage emigration as the traditional safety-valve to maintain their own position. Accommodation for the politicisation of youth is therefore urgently required - an education for critical scrutiny and the sort of resistance it fosters, since it is the only kind that can deal with the key cultural forces shaping the minds of the young. Offering them critical standpoints and assisting them to apply them to the broad range of social practices will both facilitate and foster an emerging consciousness by which previously taken-for-granted issues and procedures begin to be seen through the "lens" of the gospel, and therefore of liberation.

One of the best courses I chose was Pastoral Ministry with the Grieving. I found it particularly helpful in the light of our departure as a community from Armagh. Today, as we know, religious, in most congregations, are experiencing the dying and death of so much they imagined would last for ever. The question, of course, is whether this experience of dying/death is being accepted or denied. It needs to be accepted, if revitalisation/refounding is to occur. However, if we refuse to confront the dying/death realities in our personal lives there is little hope for transition and growth on the congregational level. For myself, then, I came to regard departure from Armagh as a journey from grief to growth, from death to life, since there is no developmental growth without separation. Nostalgia can be the bane of grief. Like grammar, it makes the past perfect and the present tense!

Overall, the sabbatical afforded me an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of the priesthood so far, and to realise that formation is a lifelong process. Thus a sabbatical is not a luxury but a necessity!

Apart from an "education in critical scrutiny" this was perhaps the most valuable lesson ("the meaning in the experience") that I learnt.

Hopefully, then, it can be seen that my period of study and reflection was truly a worthwhile "journey".

Colm McAdam

Miscellanea

A Letter of John Gabriel Perboyre

This letter was written on 16 August 1839. It is the last letter, or at least the last surviving one, written before his arrest on 16 September 1839. It is addressed to Jean-Baptiste Torrette who was ordained with JGP in the chapel of the rue du Bac on 23 September 1826. JBT was appointed to Macao in 1829, the first French confrère to be sent to China since before the French Revolution. He became Visitor of the missions in China which were in the care of the French Vincentians. He died on 12 September 1840, the day after JGP's execution. The following confrères are mentioned in the letter:

Rameaux, François-Alexis: born 1802, ordained 1826, to Macao 1832, bishop 1840, died 1845.

Mouly, Joseph-Martial: born 1807, ordained 1831, to Macao 1834, bishop 1842, died 1868.

Ouang, André: born 1798, ordained 1826, died 1843.

Baldus, Jean-Henri: born 1811, ordained 1834, to Macao 1834, bishop 1845, died 1869.

Yang, André: born 1803, ordained 1838, died 1862; visited JGP in prison many times.

Tcheng, Paul: born 1813, ordained 1838, died 1873.

Gay [Ngai], Stanislas: born 1785, ordained 1817, died 1849.

Grappin, Jean: born 1791, ordained ?, superior in St Flour seminary, Provincial, 2nd Assistant to Superior General, died 1846.

Father, and very dear Confrère,

The grace of O. L. be always with us.

The messengers are here who are going to take our new missionaries; we are taking advantage of this opportunity to send you our little messages. Mine won't be long, especially since Fr Rameaux will no doubt make up to you this time for his silence last year; his sight is

good enough at the moment for him not to need a secretary. He went down to the lower region [of Houpe province] to meet the messengers from Fr Mouly; he's still there in order to direct them on to you and I think that on their return he will be once again among us, when he himself returns from the long trip he is going to make through the province of Honan.

As for myself, I'm still in the same place, where Fr Ouang has come to help me. He will help me in visiting the groups of Christians whilst Fr Baldus, who has almost fully recovered his strength, will remain as chaplain in the residence.

The two excellent young Chinese confrères whom you sent us will also be helping us.

I haven't seen Fr Yang as Fr Rameaux has kept him down there with him. It seems that the first missions brought on some sickness in his case.

Fr Tcheng passed through here on his way to Tchangsin-hien to join Fr Gay, who is very pleased with him. These reinforcements though, in my opinion, are not enough to bring us to full strength. It seems to me that were we five Europeans with five Chinese for the provinces of Houpe" and Honan such personnel would be, at the very most, only what is really needed for our work in our present circumstances.

Anyway, it's up to Fr Rameaux to let you know what is needed. Since you asked him about all this he himself will tell you how many he wants.

I received the three trusses which you were kind enough to have forwarded to me; but no less than a week ago I was wearing one of them when it snapped of its own accord at a moment when I was sitting quietly on my chair.

When I mentioned to you last year that the trusses you sent did not suit me I had no intention of making a complaint, all the more so since, on the contrary, I owed you many thanks for the speed with which you helped me. The reason why I didn't tell you which side I needed them for was because I was not expecting that you yourself would be buying them; I had simply asked you to forward to me the ones which I had already asked for in Paris. And, in this request which was sent to Fr Grappin, in 1836, I expressly said that I was asking him to buy me two or three trusses for an inguinal hernia on the right side. His answer, which I received last year, shows clearly that he did not mis-understand me. If he went beyond what I asked that was his own doing and from exceptional goodness; he was afraid, he said, that a second hernia might occur on the other side, which had happened in his own case.

All the same, in my opinion the expenses which have been incurred for me in this matter have been wasted, and I admit it; I have all the less difficulty in conceding this because I realise more and more how wasted have been all the expenses which I have cost the Congregation in the twenty years I have depended on it, and I assure you that that is one of my greatest sorrows which will, no doubt, remain as long as the good God puts up with me in this world.

I ask you to pass on my friendly regards to the confrères in your house and in St Joseph's, and please believe the respect and devotion with which I have the honour to be,

Father and very dear Confrère,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

J G Perboyre u.p.C.M.

16 August 1839.

Air raid sirens in Armagh

Cornelius Murphy was born in Macroom in 1879. He was ordained in 1903 and appointed to All Hallows. In 1906 he was transferred to Armagh where he remained until the summer of 1949, when he was changed to Glenart; he died there the following December. In a large foolscap notebook he kept notes of spiritual reflections and items of news. Not all the latter are dated; the earliest dated item is about the drowning of William Coleman in the Forty Foot in 1905, and the latest is that given below.

On the night of Friday 25th Oct. 1940 a unique incident in the history of this ancient (and modern) Seminary took place. We had just retired to rest and the first soothing clouds of what is called the beauty sleep were settling over us when through the sleepy fog a sound began to make itself felt. Gradually the sound made itself clearer and more insistent and the minds of all realised for certain that it had come at last, the danger siren announcing the imminence of an air raid:

> Like chief who hears his warders call –
> "To arms! The foeman storms the wall".

We sprang from our "feathery" couches and began to prepare for the worst. The boys had to be shepherded to the safest points from the effect of bombs. Dormitories and chapel, as they had concrete roofs or ceilings, were deemed the safest. Lights had to be extinguished

everywhere. Those in charge glided about like ghosts, occasionally flashing a ray from an electric torch and seeking what might seem to be the best cover in case of an attack. Then indeed we realised what poor Londoners were suffering in the air raids.

After almost half an hour a long continuous note from the siren sounded the all-clear and everybody withdrew to their ordinary place of repose. Boys could be heard running back chattering to their dormitories; they evidently enjoyed the novelty of the experience. In a short space of time silence reigned throughout the Seminary.

But the peace was again to be broken. At 1.30 a.m. the wave-like cadence of the siren again spoke danger and this time we found it harder to respond. However, we again adopted the same measures of precaution, uncomfortable as they were, upper dormitory boys coming down to the middle dormitories; it was much harder this time as our real slumbers were broken. The all-clear note sounded in about half-an-hour. We sought blanket-land and slept till morning.

Next night, Saturday, about 8.10 p.m. we had another fright. We were not in bed so it was not so bad. All lights were extinguished; torches again came into play. We led our charges to the dormitories; in about half an hour the all-clear sounded. Thus ended for the timebeing and, we hope, for ever, our participation in this dreadful war.

It was 12.15 a.m. on the night of April 25-26 1941, Friday-Saturday, that the wailing sound of the siren woke us. It had been months since we had heard it last; even during the Belfast blitz of the Tuesday-Wednesday night of the previous week all was silent in Armagh. Therefore the sound was ominous enough; still, we lay on as we were tired and it was not our turn to get up.

We hoped we should soon hear the all-clear and thus be spared the trouble of getting up. Instead, we heard the danger-signal agreed on in case of imminent danger, the ringing of the hand-bell by Fr Rafferty who had gone to the roof. Springing out of bed, we hastily donned our clothes, took flash-lamp and tin-hat and hastened out to help in safeguarding the boys. All was confusion in the corridors, the boys assembling, the squads of fire-watchers getting together, and generally a tense air about.

We went to the oratory for the Holy Oils and then went towards where the boys had left. They had been instructed to make for the railway embankment around the hill at the back of Ara Coeli. It must have been near 1.30 a.m. when I emerged from the house by the door near the chapel. All seemed dark and quiet about as the boys had cleared through the gap opposite and had made for the embankment.

Then I heard the sound, the throbbing deep sound of the German aircraft, and it seemed just overhead. I hastened across the open field with the ominous sound overhead; would he drop his bombs? I felt that anything might happen. As I came round the corner of the gap I saw figures ahead. It was some of the priests and boys who were scattered on the top of the field. I came round and mingled with the groups. Meanwhile the aircraft had moved on, and seemed to go towards the South. We were, thank God, spared from an attack. Shortly afterwards we retired indoors. The all-clear sounded later and we went back to bed. It was the nearest yet. Will it come any nearer? Who knows?

OBITUARY

Father Kevin O'Hagan CM

As a student in Blackrock and Glenart I heard the name of Kevin O'Hagan; he was "our man in Japan". Not until the second half of 1958 did I meet him face to face, when he arrived in Phibsboro to become a member of the staff of St Peter's on his return from ten years in Japan. In many ways he was a real breath of fresh air.

A short time after Kevin's arrival in Phibsboro, Pope John XXIII was elected. In those days, before TV in the community room, there was much conversation. At the election of John XXIII Kevin told us that there would be sweeping changes in the Church and that lay people would play a prominent part in the life and liturgy of the Church. Some of us laughed at such a statement. Some put it down to the imagination of a somewhat eccentric confrère returning to reality after ten years in far-off Japan. Who was right?

I lived in different communities with Kevin for a period of eight years from 1958. Volumes could be written on him, I feel, but I will pinpoint only some of the experiences I had.

When he arrived in Phibsboro in 1958 I remember carrying a lightweight suitcase up to his room whilst he carried a smallish shoulder-strapped case. That was all. I was somewhat surprised; I expected a large trunk. When he left St Peter's in 1966 to take up his appointment in Sheffield I saw him off; again two smallish bags. Recently I met a friend of Kevin's, from Sheffield, and he told me that he never saw a priest's house so poverty-stricken as Kevin's was at Holy Family, Sheffield.

Kevin's hobbies were mainly cricket, chess, the camera and, in later years, a little flutter on the horses now and again. In the many lengthy and sometimes loud debates or discussions in the community room I feel Kevin made use of these hobbies. Every word spoken was remembered as though the lens of his camera was working overtime. At times, to secure a "checkmate", an eavesdropping cricketer might rightly conclude that the tactics of body-line bowling had been revived. But like the rest of us, in the game of "chance", he hoped to get a winner or two.

He found great relaxation in his pipes. With each pipe he used there was usually a lengthy historical tale attached. His reading was very serious and "heavy", and mostly in French; he listened to tapes

of "heavy" and classical music. But he was never annoyed at being disturbed or interrupted; his room had always an "open door" at any hour of the day or night. This was also true when he might be called to the parlour to help a parishioner or priest. Everyone was always made welcome and he never gave a sign that you might have overstayed your welcome.

His devotion to the "priestly hour" every Friday in Solly Street was very much appreciated by the bishop and priests of Hallam, and others as well.

Bishop Moverley and Kevin got on well together. Towards the end of 1980 rumours were whispered around Solly Street that the Vins were being asked to give help in the newly formed diocese of Hallam. It wasn't much of a surprise when eventually Kevin was appointed to take up duties as the Parish Priest of Holy Family parish at the other end of Sheffield. Almost immediately everyone, priests and people, noticed a terrific change for the better in Kevin. Younger looking, immaculately dressed, and methodical as always. Every Tuesday, after doing his parish banking, he came in to Solly Street for a few hours. Holy Family parish consisted chiefly of elderly people in flats. Kevin was given a master key by the local authorities to facilitate him in his work for these elderly people; they certainly appreciated him.

Kevin is now out of sight; I doubt if he will be ever out of mind.

Patrick Hughes CM

KEVIN O'HAGAN CM
Born: Lurgan, Co. Armagh, 15 January 1919.
Entered the CM: 7 September 1937.
Final vows: 8 September 1939.
Ordained a priest in Clonliffe College by Dr John Charles McQuaid, archbishop of Dublin, 25 March 1944.

APPOINTMENTS
1944-45 St Mary's, Lanark.
1945-47 Sacred Heart, Mill Hill.
1947-48 St Vincent's, Sheffield.
1948-49 Maison-mère, Paris.
1949-58 Maiko, Japan.
1958-66 St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1966-90 St Vincent's, Sheffield.
Died 8 February, 1990.