

COLLOQUE

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Editorial

This edition of *Colloque* marks some significant changes in the Irish Province. During 1999, we withdrew from the management of St Patrick's, Drumcondra and from the community house there (though some will continue to work in the College) and the confreres in Cork moved from the large community dwelling attached to the church in Sunday's Well to a smaller house close-by. St Pat's was very much associated with the late Fr Donal Cregan and in tribute to him and to the work of the College of Education, two articles are included here. In the light of developments in Irish Education, the article reprinted from *Leargas* makes most interesting reading. The move at Sunday's Well is marked by Brian Magee's homily given on the occasion.

The articles by Bill Clarke, Ellen Flynn and Eugene Curran have the common theme of the development of a spirituality through experience and faith; what might be called vincentian spirituality – which is itself the focus of Ellen's article; whether such terminology is misleading and a misnomer. Eugene traces the psycho-spiritual development of Louise de Marillac and Bill looks at the spiritual heritage of Ghebré Michael. In its own way, John Gowan's account of the foundation of St Brigid's Orphanage is an account of the development of the spirituality of Margaret Aylward and the Sisters of the Holy Faith. I think John must have the distinction of being the oldest contributor to *Colloque*, being dead now for over a century!

Tom Davitt's article on Edmund Barry's letter is a wonderful piece of research and an insight of a Vincentian involvement in Ireland which predates the founding of the Irish province by just under two centuries. We are the heirs of a rich tradition.

A Spirituality for all Seasons?

Some reflections on Vincentianism in the Third Millennium

Ellen Flynn DC

Introduction

This article is an attempt to explore aspects of the spirituality and mission of Vincent de Paul, in the context of the modern church in the British Isles, with a view to discerning some pointers that may have relevance for the future of the Vincentian Movement. I am working out of three main aspects: the Christian tradition, Vincent de Paul himself and my own experience. These reflections are not intended to be conclusive or exhaustive, indeed they are necessarily brief, but simply to begin to pose some questions arising from my experience.

Spirituality and the Christian Church

For some time I have been concerned about the use of the word 'spirituality' in contemporary society. As Diarmuid Ó Murchú MSC points out it is important to make the distinction between 'religion' and 'spirituality'. He defines religion as an accepted religious system such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, spirituality being the ancient, primal search for meaning that is as old as humanity itself.

Contemporary spirituality tends to be seen as a sub-system or offshoot of formal religion but anthropology shows that spirituality is much more central to human experience than religion. In his book *Reclaiming Spirituality*, Diarmuid explores this in terms of the growth of what seem to be offbeat 'spiritualities' which formal religion often cannot understand.(1) Pat Collins CM suggests that spirituality is 'a way of trusting oneself, in a committed way, to centres of meaning and value beyond oneself'(2). Bob Maloney CM describes spirituality as an energising vision, a driving force, a specific way in which one is rooted in God and relates to the created world. It is the insight of spirituality that is the source of action, motivating a way of life.(3)

Moving into Christianity, which by his own definition is a religion, Diarmuid Ó Murchú tries to reach back to uncover the founding spirituality. To do this one has to reach the founding person, Jesus of Nazareth, through the documentation of the Gospels. The meaning of the story is the primary concern, rather than how much is historical fact or popular fable. It is the unfolding of the story that carries the search for meaning. He finds that as Christianity grew priorities became blurred, power infiltrated. Christians organised themselves into a system that could enter

the battle for cultural supremacy, so that by the time of Constantine, the imperial imprint had been stamped on the Gospel message. God's new reign had been usurped and the prophetic cutting edge virtually extinguished. So we find ourselves very far removed from the Galilean who took pride in washing feet, sharing food with tax collectors and sinners, proclaiming loving service to the poor and opposing all that de-humanised people. A founding spirit, an energising vision, has been buried in an organised religion.

This throws up a myriad of questions about the Christian/Catholic Church, which are beyond the scope of this article. However, I have long been concerned about the apparent proliferation of so-called 'spiritualities' springing up all over the church. Some profess to be 'traditional', bordering on extreme devotionism, with thin theological basis, verging on cult activity; some promote an extreme individualism which seems to declare Christ and the church superfluous to requirements; some place emphasis on salvation and perfection by ones own methods; some promote their own forms of alternative liturgy. All this serves to clutter up the founding spirituality of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps what we see in today's culture is a primal search for meaning; a way through all the clutter to find that which touches peoples' lives. The thirst for spirituality is certainly alive and well! It seems that the search of many people for an authentic spirituality is not perceived as being met by the Christian church as an organised religion.

The same word 'spirituality' is used to denote the particular Gospel emphasis of groups deeply rooted within the church such as, Franciscan, Dominican, Ignatian – and Vincentian. And what of these? Have they become so finely tuned as entities in themselves as to add to the clutter? Have they become a kind of plan of holiness to be added on? Have they become the precious preserve of a few who seek to allow others to enter the club? What is their relationship to the organised church? How do they now measure up to the founding vision of Jesus Christ? It is my contention that, only in so far as they do so, will they be sufficiently authentic and prophetic in today's culture.

My intention here is twofold: a) to suggest that the founding spirituality of Christianity, the kerygma, the simplicity and radicality of the message have been clouded – and consequently people search for alternative religions; and b) to clarify what is meant by a 'spirituality'. Already in this cursory outline I have mentioned three uses of the word: the primal search for meaning; the cult tendency; and the Gospel emphasis of specific groups. My own instincts lead me back to reclaiming the founding spirituality of Jesus Christ and its relationship to what we in the Vincentian family term 'vincentian spirituality'.

Incarnational Spirituality

Inspired by John C. Haughey, Pat Collins talks of three models of spirituality:

1. Programmatic, which follows a pattern of living, laid down by the church and to which people are required to be loyal
2. Pneumatic, which depends on a sense of the immediate presence of God, which only the Holy Spirit can give and which is experiential and relational
3. Autogenic, which originates in the spiritual self which hungers for meaning, in itself motivating action and leading to activism.(4)

Although Pat does not say so specifically, it could be concluded from his quotations that Vincent is a mixture of all these.

A cursory look at Vincent's own spiritual formation may be helpful. Maïté Lafitte DC(5) examines the early influence on Vincent of the 'French School' including people like Bérulle, Jean-Eudes, Bourdoise and Jean Jaques Olier, all of whom are mentioned in Vincent's own writings. In the French School, Trinity and Incarnation are important theological underpinnings. Teaching on the Trinity emphasises that God is not a solitary God but an essence of life that constantly flows from one to another in an ideal of relationship. In the believer this gives rise ¹ to a profound sense of adoration and a permanent state of loving respect. The virtue of religion is fundamental, expressing itself in faithfulness to baptism and discipleship as modelled by the second person of the Trinity. The disciple is motivated by a sense of complete wonder at the love of God, particularly the love which led to the self-emptying of Christ. Incarnational teaching sees Christ as the perfect adorer by his very being, the Word made flesh, the epiphany (manifestation). The Incarnation must take place in his body, which is the church. Incarnation is a reality of constant re-birth. God is always giving birth to the Son in the power of the Spirit. The word is made flesh in the dynamic of every day.

Bob Maloney makes the point that 'healthy spirituality depends on valid theological underpinnings'.(6) The baptismal approach to discipleship that Vincent had been taught is very evident in his writings:

We live in Jesus Christ by the death of Jesus Christ and that we ought to die in Jesus Christ by the life of Jesus Christ and that our life ought to be hidden in Jesus Christ and full of Jesus Christ and that in order to die like Jesus Christ it is necessary to live like Jesus Christ.(7)

And

It is therefore essential for you, Father, to empty yourself in order to put on Jesus Christ.(S)

The second half of Bob Maloney's thought that 'healthy theology is continually revitalised by the insights of the spiritual masters' and 'praxis and theology necessarily influence one another',⁽⁹⁾ brings us to the heart of the matter. Vincent's theology is intensely incarnational, giving rise to a powerful praxis. Vincent does not consider the Incarnation as a Christmas event but, with the Fathers of the church, links Jesus' birth (emptying) to the whole of his life and his passion. Pure Trinitarian love is the driving force behind the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. Vincent reflects often, not only on the divinity of Jesus, but on his weakness, vulnerability and sacrifice as a source of our praise, adoration and desire to follow.⁽¹⁰⁾ Vincent's view is distinctly Pauline (as we see from the quotes above). We must 'put on' Christ. Our life is hidden in Jesus Christ and full of Jesus Christ. Our life must continue the life of Jesus and be an invitation to live like Jesus. To love Christ means loving like Christ – not just worshipping from afar. The word is made flesh in the dynamic of every day and in the soul of every person. These themes recur incessantly in Vincent. He made the lofty theology of the French School concrete. The heart of the praxis then is that the Son of God is made man and present in every person. When Vincent was with people, especially those in the most need, he felt he was in the presence of Christ, a spirituality taken straight from Matt. 25 and interpreted literally. The person in need *is* Jesus Christ. The person in need is Master and Lord. This is so simple – and yet so profound.

Some observations

This jubilee year is an ideal time to reflect on incarnational spirituality – and to remember that there are incarnational elements in other world faiths. The theology of God made human is particular to Christianity and so incarnational spirituality has a particular context for us. It is a founding spirituality, not initiated by Vincent – nor even the French School.

Vincent is a man steeped in the founding vision of Jesus Christ, whose mission and whole way of life is based on the Incarnation and the baptismal call to live out of the Paschal Mystery. What more is there? Is this a 'spirituality' or is it pure Gospel – to which all are called? There is no layer to add on, no offshoot or sub-system. There is no clutter. We see the elements of Pat's programmatic, pneumatic and autogenic analysis. It operates with the immediate meaning of a spirituality, within the organised church; fully inserted, but questioning and prophetic; at the

cutting edge challenging that which does not serve the people; central to human experience and uncluttering the formal religion. This is not a precious preserve given to only a few but essential to all those who follow Jesus of Nazareth. Diarmuid Ó Murchú (not a Vincentian!) writes that one cannot be a Christian without giving priority to the poor. The Gospel is saturated with it! In his view, it is not exclusively a question of improving the lot of the poor ('that can so easily become another masquerade for patriarchal manipulation'). Rather it is a question of exposing ourselves to the cry of the poor, we too being vulnerable, impoverished but caring people who 'can encounter the living face of God in those closest to God's heart'.

Defining who the poor are is not so easy these days. Everyone who professes to die and rise with Christ has a chosen vocation to suffering, a way to redeem brokenness. All of humanity struggles to break free. Christ embraces the entire world from the cross, where he himself becomes the Poor One. He comes to free all people from whatever bondage they are chained up in. By this definition everyone is poor – including us! How do we make our priorities in a culture full of horrors Vincent would never have dreamed of?

In all of this it is clear to me that the spirituality of Vincent de Paul is not a cult, not something to be added on or spoken of as if apart, but pure, uncluttered, radical Christianity following the founding vision of Jesus Christ. Perhaps we need to take care in our expressions and interpretations lest we do give impressions of added layers, offshoots or sub-systems. I remember hearing once of a lay member of the Vincentian Family who was heard to say: 'I have an unease with something called Vincentian Spirituality, as if the Holy Spirit herself were vincentian!'

Foundational Experience

It is well known that Vincent's early motivations in priesthood were not of the purest!

He was to be ordained for his diocese but was too young, according to the Canon Law of the time. He was underhand about it and sought ordination in another diocese, by an elderly bishop, at the bishop's private country residence! However, his first appointment was by the Vicar General of Dax to a parish in that diocese, but everything points to the fact that Vincent's motivations were largely materialistic. How then, did his theology kick in and this extraordinary praxis begin to take shape? The answer is simple. The people formed him.

Early in his ministry (1617) at Folleville, in the company of Madame de Gondi, Vincent discovered his vocation. He had already been through a period of partial conversion under the direction of Bérulle and his

experience in Clichy. José María Román CM marks Vincent's trip to Folleville as an experience of "the people calling, the poor, simple, country folk."(11) It was here that Vincent discovered the sacredness of the confessional, the power of the sermon. He came across priests who did not even know the words of absolution. He was shocked by the needs of people and clergy and his mission began to unfold in front of him:

We now see Vincent in possession of two basic elements of his profound religious experience – the spiritual misery of a Christian people without the Gospel, and the frightening lack of training for the clergy who were ignorant of even the most elementary rules for the exercise of their ministry.(12)

Vincent was convinced that the clergy had to be reformed before the people could be converted. Of course, he could not wait for that to happen. In the meantime he ensured that 'the liturgy was celebrated with dignity and the office recited with due attention. To this was added Vincent's eloquent and passionate preaching'.(13)

Finally, in Châtillon, we have the famous incident regarding Vincent's moving homily about a distressed family, resulting in the whole parish coming to their aid. This in turn led to the subsequent organisation of charity and the Confraternities. The seed that Vincent sowed in Châtillon flourished in his absence and bore fruit long after his departure. Roman calls Châtillon a 'full dress rehearsal for all Vincent's work'.(14) In all that followed Vincent took up the challenges of that time – the mission to evangelise, reform the clergy and alleviate poverty.

In 1623, whilst on a Mission in Montmirail, Vincent came across a man who challenged him:

I cannot believe that there are Catholics in country places who are abandoned to the care of wicked and ignorant pastors who do not know their obligations... these folk are left in frightening ignorance...(15)

This incident confirmed Vincent, fired him up – and frightened him as to where this path, which he felt so passionately about, would lead. The further accounts of Vincent's success and that of the Congregation of the Mission, give every indication that the people themselves perceived their own need and responded overwhelmingly everywhere the Missioners went.

Vincent's approach to a mission was catechetical (the other seventeenth century model was penitential) and he gave great importance to the teaching of basic doctrine, leading the people to frequent the Sacraments. It was his conviction that knowledge of the basic truths of faith was essential to the people and Vincent was appalled by the

lack of it. His emphasis on simple preaching and communication style, speaking from the heart, was central to his approach. He insisted that people do not need theological terminology, but they do need accessible theological truth which touches their hearts. The Missioners were to preach in this way and also to look after the material needs of the poor, wherever they found them, setting up Confraternities wherever they could. The Daughters of Charity were to be the counterpart, providing material relief, practical service, and also showing concern for the spiritual welfare of the poor. Through both communities, Vincent achieved a balance.

It is very important to help the poor in a material way but in fact it was never Our Lord's plan in establishing this company that you should only look after their bodily needs. There will never be any shortage of people for that. Our Lord's intention in setting up the company was that you should give spiritual help to poor sick people. A Turk or an infidel can give material help. You must be resolved to add spiritual help to the material relief you give.(16)

Vincent's relationship with Louise de Marillac cannot go without mention here and provides for us a collaborative model unusual for its day. Eugene Curran reflects on the relationship between Louise and Vincent in his article on Louise in this issue. His very title 'The Transfiguration of the Commonplace' is an indication that her own spirituality was drawn from the everyday:

Her own emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit through Divine Providence is an echo of that idea of the Transfiguration of the Commonplace; the incidents of everyday life become the means by which the will of God is revealed to us and the people we meet as we go about our daily work... become the loci of our meeting with the divine made manifest in the human, the temporal and the limited. (17)

She was part of the founding vision and drive of Vincent, was recognised by him as 'an excellent organiser with an eye for detail'(18) and together they complemented and supported each other personally and creatively in their faith, in the Double Family and in the mission to the poorest. As Roman puts it:

'Missioners and Daughters of Charity were to be the two arms of Vincent's vocation and so he regarded them as dependent on each other.'(19)

Alongside all this, Vincent attended royalty on their deathbeds, not caring who they were but using their influence. He was happy to get involved in politics, especially where an issue of justice was concerned. He had an amazing ability to both court and oppose, serve and denounce.

On the church front Vincent's fight against Jansenism shows a clear perception of the truth, and fearlessness in its defence. His appointment to the Council of Conscience took him to the heart of the National Church. In dealing with bishops he reminded them of the duties of their office, demanded integrity above all suspicion, insisted on a sound knowledge of Canon Law and deplored their love of rank, pomp and splendour. Vincent arrived naturally here, as he was unlikely to influence priests otherwise. His constant goal in all this was to reach the people and improve their lot.

The involvement of Vincent and the Congregation of the Mission in seminaries makes amusing reading. In 1636 Vincent opened a junior seminary along the lines recommended by the Council of Trent, only to declare five years later that not one of these type of seminaries was any use to the church – but also saying 'we must respect the directives of the Council as coming from the Holy Spirit'!(20) The following year, along with others, he opened a seminary for those over twenty years of age, placing the emphasis on virtues proper to the priesthood, training in liturgical functions, moral theology and pastoral skills. Intellectual training in theology and philosophy remained with universities and colleges. He was put under pressure because these were so far away from the seminaries and he eventually allowed some more academic study in the seminary – but with considerable reluctance.(21)

Reflection on Personal Experience

Re-visiting the mission and spirit of Vincent – and Louise – no matter how briefly, has filled me with a new conviction for the relevance of the Vincentian Movement today. I am conscious that, although we have regarded Vincent as normative, it is important to realise that each person living out their own experience contributes and shapes the present so that the Vincentian Family is a living, growing organism that needs to move with the church and society. Vincent's life experience is only one – and he was constantly formed by interaction with others. Elizabeth Anne Seton and Frederick Ozanam have been just two who have since inspired branches of the Vincentian movement. In the light of the richness of the Vincentian Family now – in all its facets, branches and communities, it would be foolish to focus only on Vincent and Louise in considering the future.

For me, looking at the church of today, in the British Isles, the implications of this brief look at Vincent's life and spirituality are striking. I

have spent a number of years working in numerous parishes on missions and formation projects, reaching the National scene in England and Wales, and now wearing various hats including chairing a national committee on formation and setting up diocesan communication networks in formation. My experience has led me to reflect deeply on the position of people, clergy and the church in general.

The People

Although there are some exemplary pockets of light around the country, the cry of the people for basic evangelisation and the truth of faith is as strong as ever. After an input I am constantly met with ‘why doesn’t everyone know this?’ Having experienced something they suddenly perceive the need – the large majority don’t. So we have an added problem of lack of awareness. Local initiatives are often held at diocesan level and are wonderful for the people who attend, filling them with enthusiasm – but when they get home it is extremely difficult for them to share it or put anything into practice. At the coalface, ‘the spiritual misery of a Christian people without the Gospel’ (22) has often been my experience – the ignorance is still frightening. Our people are full of faith but need constantly to be fed. For some, the primal search for meaning continues.

The Liturgy, which is the expected mode of contact, is often ineffective, especially for the poor, because of the lack of evangelisation, formation, training and inculturation. Attendance is dropping and therefore the ability of the church to have contact with people is declining. And what about all those who are on the margins, feeling alienated and untouched? My experiences on parish missions are amongst the most moving of my life and have helped me to realise the poverty of moral and spiritual suffering, the need for healing and reconciliation in all walks of life and the amount of unnoticed material poverty in our society, even in the apparently affluent parish.

The Clergy

Training for the clergy has become increasingly academic and leaves some priests ill-equipped for what faces them in parish life. Priests are given parishes after only a few years of ordination. Young men find themselves overburdened with responsibility and facing years of living alone with little in the way of support. Older clergy are still trying to catch up with Vatican II, having neither the time nor the energy to do so and some feeling threatened and overtaken by some of their lay parishioners. Those who have energy and enthusiasm work wonders and although energised by their work, find themselves overworked, pressurised, isolated and sometimes unsupported by an unformed people.

Part of this is due to the number of non-ecclesiastical roles Parish Priests are expected to undertake. The troubles and scandals of recent times have left priests feeling wary and vulnerable. The decline in vocations is leading to a rise in the leadership of the laity who have received piece-meal formation since Vatican II.

The Church

All this leaves the church in as serious a position as Vincent found it. It is interesting that Vincent's immediate solutions were to remain faithful to public prayer, ensuring the dignified celebration of the liturgy, preaching with sincerity and simplicity, and alleviating material poverty where it was found. Whilst I have painted what seems a bleak picture, I also acknowledge the sense of a church in transition in which enormous change has already taken place reaching ahead to a reformed future and a collaborative ecclesiology in which all are valued, the priesthood redefining and owning its leadership and the role of lay women and men respected and fostered.

Although I have been writing only out of my experience, it is interesting to note the Congregation of the Clergy released a document in July 1999, suggesting the need for deep and adequate training of priests in the pastoral application of Word and Sacrament, with special emphasis on preaching skills. The document speaks of the need for a 'new evangelisation' of *the faithful*, as well as outreach to the unchurched. It acknowledges that the language of evangelisation has become unintelligible to many and seeks to promote urgent formation of the laity in Scripture and the Sacraments, asking searching questions about practice, relevance and effectiveness.(23)

Some questions arising

As a vincentian in these times I find myself asking some questions about our future mission in evangelisation and the alleviation of poverty. Within our tradition there is surely a call here to put the heart back into Christianity; to reach back through the clutter; to serve the spiritual poverty of our times; to put Christ back through simple preaching of the kerygma, which in itself increases sensitivity to the poor. But I have to ask:

- Are we really as inserted in the life of the church at all levels as we could be?
- Are we fully present and informed at the heart of the church in these Islands?
- Do we have any influence to use for the people and/or the clergy?
- Are we prophetic, standing in solidarity with them? Have we become a race apart?

- Are we ourselves still fully up to date in the teachings of the modern church?
- How do we co-operate with the initiatives already out there – and discern the real needs?
- There is Vincentian collaboration in individual ways but where is the more corporate collaboration Vincent expected between the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission? (and by extension the other members of the Vincentian Family)? And how do we understand collaboration? How does it fit with the emerging roles of women and the laity in the modern church?
- Have we split evangelisation and service of the poor into two missions rather than two halves of the same whole?
- Have we defined ‘the poor’ too narrowly?
- Where is the Vincentian ability to bring together men and women, rich and poor, learned and unlearned?

I know there are positive and obvious answers to all these questions (I don’t mean to imply that we have lost it altogether!) and there are more questions waiting to be asked. Maybe the time has come to take stock, to re-visit our corporate vision. These thoughts have come only out of my experience as one Vincentian in today’s church. My hope in writing this article is that my experience may resound in the experience of others, that other questions may be asked – that all my questions and observations are open to debate I have no doubt!

Of one thing I am convinced – the mission of Vincent de Paul is alive, vibrant, urgent and relevant in our times. As we approach a new millennium, given our own falling numbers, how can we respond to the challenge? There was only one Vincent de Paul! Perhaps part of the answer lies in moving ahead as a Vincentian movement, bringing us all together into one mission of evangelisation and alleviation of poverty.

The founding spirituality of Jesus Christ turns the world upside-down, ridicules those who claim the world as their own, rejects the self-made gods of formal religion and summons the weak and oppressed to freedom. It was the people themselves who showed Vincent his vocation, fired him up, energised him, formed him, and cried out to him. Are we listening?

Notes

1. Ó Murchú, Diarmuid 1997, *Reclaiming Spirituality*, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin
2. Collins, Pat 1999, *Spirituality for the 21st Century*, The Columba Press, Dublin

3. Maloney, Robert 1992, *The Way of Vincent de Paul*, New City Press, New York
4. Collins, Op.cit. pp. 23-30
5. Lafitte, Maité 1999, *Influence of the French School on the Spirituality of Vincent de Paul and the specific attributes of the Vincentian approach*, a talk given in Dax to Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Evron.
6. Maloney, Op.cit. p. 19
7. SV I,p.295
8. SV X1,p.343
9. Maloney, Op.cit. p. 19
10. Cf. Lafitte, Op.cit.
11. Román, José María 1999, *St Vincent de Paul. A Biography*. Melisende, London p. 119
12. Ibid, p.116
13. Ibid. p. 121 speaking of Châtillon les Dombes
14. Ibid. p. 131
15. Ibid. p. 156
16. Ibid. p. 455 quoting SV X, p.333
17. Curran, Eugene 2000, *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace; the psycho-spiritual development of Louise de Marillac*, Colloque 41, Spring 2000
18. Ibid.
19. Roman, Op.cit p. 455
20. Ibid. p. 372 quoting SV II, p.459
21. Cf. Román, Op.cit. p. 375
22. Ó Murchú Op.cit.
23. Congregation for the Clergy, 1999, *The Priest and the Third Christian Millennium – teacher of the Word, minister of the sacraments and leader of the community*. Rome. (Printed in full in Briefing, 13th Oct. 1999).

The Transfiguration of the Commonplace;
the psycho-spiritual development
of Louise de Marillac
Or
Was Louise really neurotic?

Eugene Curran CM

In her book *Out of the Garden*, Susan McMichaels speaks of her desire to show St Francis of Assisi as something other than a garden statue “a static cultural icon of unattainable gentleness and peace”. (1) In reaction to the sentimentalised view of Francis, she says “we must appreciate the struggle he underwent and be willing to undergo that same transformation”(2). In order to do that, she examines the life of Francis as a process of individuation, using Jung’s terminology. In *Fire and Light*, William Thompson speaks of ‘consulting the saints’ (3), not in terms of reading their works but, rather, of examining their lives.

This present work is an attempt to consult with another saint and one who deserves to come, not out of the garden, but out of the shadows. Louise de Marillac (1591-1660) is most often described as Co-Founder, with Vincent de Paul, of the Daughters of Charity who, in their full title, bear his name but not hers. Vincent was canonised some eighty years after his death (1737); Louise’s followed two centuries later! (beatification; 9 May 1920, canonisation; 11 March 1934).

In examining the life of Louise de Marillac, one needs to exercise what Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza has called ‘a hermeneutic of suspicion’. Like the Francis of the garden, there is an enduring myth of Louise. In brief, she is seen as a neurotic woman whose talents were harnessed by the great Vincent who then set her to work in his early Confraternities of Charity and later instituted her as Directress of his fledgling congregation. Her letters are seen as revealing a woman who constantly importunes the busy M Vincent to meet with her, who frets about her only child, Michel, and who is preoccupied with her health. In terms of the foundation, she is seen, at best, as Vincent’s lieutenant and, at worst, as his mouthpiece. Are these accurate pictures of the woman who was named Patron of all Social Workers? (4) This essay is an attempt to trace her spiritual and psychological journey against two ‘structure texts’; the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola and the *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation* of Luigi Rulla sj.

Limitations and presuppositions;

The primary limitation in this work is that of space; even such a cursory study as this can only touch on certain aspects of Louise's life and cannot seek to justify at length the anthropological and psychological underpinnings of Rulla's work. It is, very much, my perspective on her.

A further, and considerable, limitation is that of language; Louise and I speak different languages – not simply seventeenth century French of the upper classes and twentieth century Hiberno-English but also a different language of constructs, world-views and understandings.

I do not claim that Louise was, in any significant way, au fait with Loyola's Exercises; rather, I see them as a text which gives a structure and outline to the Christian journey to follow the will of God and to clarify the presence and workings of the Divine in human life.

Similarly, my basic presupposition is that all Christians are called to follow Christ and to do so with their whole selves; with their gifts and their limitations, of perspective, psychology, personality and experience. Furthermore, that we respond not simply from the 'area' of our conscious decisions but also with other unconscious motivations. It is this area especially that I seek to examine in the life of Louise de Marillac; how, carrying with her the weight of her unconscious motivations and concerns which, to some extent, limited her freedom, she was able to respond to the call of God as she recognised it in her life and move along the way of sanctity.

First, though, a note on the footnotes; to distinguish them from reference numbers to the letters of Louise and Vincent, which are also given in parentheses, the letter-references will be preceded by the initial of their author; L for Louise and V for Vincent.

Why the Title: "Transfiguration of the Commonplace"?

Space precludes a long discussion of the pericope and significance of the scriptural accounts of the Transfiguration but this phrase has echoed and re-echoed in my mind since first I heard it in the Seminaire in DePaul House, Celbridge, in 1980. Fr Martin Rafferty, of blessed memory, took the four seminarists, Jay Shanahan, Eamon Devlin, Jerome O Drisceoil and myself, for English. During the year, he introduced us to the writings of Muriel Spark, on whom he had written his Master's thesis and, in particular, to Spark's novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. In the book, the character Sandy Stranger becomes the nun, Helena of the Transfiguration, and writes a famous, and disturbing, book on psychology called *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*. Jean Brodie, like many of Spark's anti-heroes, has sought to transfigure the world in her own image and has thus failed to see its true divine Transfiguration; which, for Spark, is always linked with the divine Passion. For me, the phrase has come to

indicate the call to see the glory of God revealed in the ordinary and the everyday; most powerfully portrayed in Kurt Welther's icon of the face of Christ, which emerges as Vincent and others gather around a table, and which was used at both our Provincial and General Assemblies. As Rosemary Radford Ruether has pointed out, traditionally, the glory of God has often been portrayed in terms of imperial theology (5) – the kingly glory of an all-transcendent God; as though 'lack of relatedness in God (were) the source of divine strength'(6). But modern theologians, especially women like Catherine LaCugna, Elizabeth Johnson, Isbel Carter Heywood and others, have pointed out how that theology has led to an emphasis on the exercise of unilateral power, alienation from the rest of creation and emphasis on difference rather than acceptance of distinction. The voice that speaks from the cloud is the voice from the Shekinah (a gender-neutral image of God) the protecting cloud (7) that had travelled with the Israelites in their wilderness experience and from which YHWH had spoken to Moses(8). Although it is associated with the *Kabod* (glory)(9) it is not the glory of a conquering god but the God of Journeys, the God who walks with God's people. In the transfiguration, there is a preparation, both for Jesus and for his disciples who watch (with half-closed eyes), for the exodus which he is to accomplish; his journey through suffering and death to resurrection.

In the life of Louise de Marillac, I see the transfiguration of a human life through interaction with other people, especially those who were most abandoned. Louise came to recognise that in each person, her sisters and those they served, she saw the eyes of Christ. Her approach was not, primarily, an academic one but one drawn from praxis; from a daily meeting with others. In particular, I see it in the transfiguration of those aspects of her life which had kept her entrammelled or enmeshed for a long time.

In the transfiguration, Jesus was transformed and yet retained his human, and limited, form; it is a proleptic vision of what is and has yet to be fully realised. In the transfiguration of Jesus during his earthly life, we see the truth that particularity is a scandal, a mystery and a redemptive truth. This is not yet the Risen Christ, free of the limitations of human existence (time, space, gender, experience) but the human Jesus who must leave the mountain and return to his life and mission and, as a consequence, his suffering and death. In the same way, I claim, the basic needs in Louise de Marillac remain with her throughout her life; what is significant is that their hold on her dramatically reduces and that her real sanctity subsists in her exercise of the freedom open to her. Her limitations, which were real and considerable, do not hold her back from response to the God who walks with her on her journey.

The hermeneutic of suspicion; reading the letters

Schussler-Fiorenza's injunction to feminist theologians to exercise a hermeneutic of suspicion when reading biblical stories and their interpretations by generations of male scholars is apposite when reading the letters of Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul. As with most religious communities and, indeed, with nations, myth is every whit as powerful a hermeneutic as scholarly distance and, in fact, probably has a greater hold.

The myth has grown of Louise as a neurotic woman inundating Vincent with minutiae and unsure of herself. It owes as much, perhaps, to the oral traditions of the Double Family and to the portrayal of Louise in the film *Monsieur Vincent* as to any study of the letters and of the conventions and mores of the times. However, in reading the letters, some things need to be borne in mind.

In her article 'The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction', Sandra Schneiders outlines three forms of spiritual direction, the second of which she names as 'spiritual paternity or maternity'. Maintaining that this form is very rare, she nevertheless describes it as 'an intense and filial affectivity and unreserved totality of mutual sharing between two people' (10). It seems to me that this adequately describes the relationship between Vincent and Louise; even before the title became customary for the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, Louise often (when she does use an address) refers to Vincent as 'my most honoured father', eventually ceasing to call him 'Monsieur' and, as the years progress, referring less to M. Vincent and more to 'Our Most Honoured Father' in letters to the sisters (the shift seeming to come sometime about 1651). She almost always signs herself, in letters to Vincent, 'your humble daughter and obedient servant*'; her last letter to him is signed 'your humble, obedient and very grateful daughter and servant' (L654). While, in the early letters, Vincent often refers to Louise in the course of a letter as 'my dear daughter' this ceases some time after 1629.

We should, however, be wary of reading such a filiation relationship in terms of a power imbalance. It is clear that Louise recognises that Vincent was, in a significant sense, a 'father' to her but that does not imply that she remains in a state of spiritual childishness. While her letters often request an interview with him, it is to be remembered that he was the recognised Superior General of her congregation and that there was much that could not be enclosed in a letter (again and again in her letters to the sisters. Louise refers to letters that have gone astray or not been delivered). Vincent also requests times and dates for meeting:

I most humbly entreat you, Mademoiselle, to let me know whether you think I should come and see you this afternoon

to talk to your sisters or whether I should wait until tomorrow morning. (L356)

Furthermore, one must recall the forms of address and the use of language prevalent in those days. After the ‘my dear daughter’ of some of the earlier letters, Vincent always refers to Louise as *Mademoiselle LeGras* and, occasionally, writes to her in the third person (“business prevents me from seeing her today”; V2663) but this was not uncommon (he addresses *Mademoiselle de Lamoignon* – whom he had known since her childhood – in the same way: V2676); this was both convention and necessity; as Louise’s eyesight failed many of her letters would have been read aloud to her by her assistants. This is in contrast to the closeness of their earlier letters; ‘if you wish me to have the happiness of seeing you during your illness, let me know. I have imposed on myself the law of not coming to see you unless I am summoned for some necessity or very useful matter’ (V399). Although this seems to imply a unilateral decision by Vincent to keep a certain distance from Louise and the Daughters, his letter 395 implies that it was one made on both their parts; ‘I would be happy not to come there at all, according to the decision we made in that regard at the beginning’.

Above all, we must recall that the letters constitute only a tiny fraction of their relationship and interactions; the greater part of which took place in private meetings and the talks which meant so much to both of them. These are not accessible to us but it is to be supposed that this was, initially anyhow, their primary means of communication and interchange, particularly while Louise was still resident in Paris.

We must be wary of reading their correspondence in the light of our twentieth century understanding or preoccupations. Vincent and Louise never address directly any physical attraction that may have been there between them, although Vincent is openly affectionate in speaking of her son, Michel. It is likely, as Charpy suggest (11), that Vincent saw the Daughters of Charity very much as Louise’s domain and, initially, often referred to them as her daughters. This might explain why, particularly in the later letters. Vincent is brief (sometimes to the point of terseness) and often gives answers like ‘do whatever you see fit’. While this has sometimes been interpreted as almost exasperation on his part it is more likely that it is a recognition of her organisational skills and an affirmation of her leadership of her daughters. But, in terms of their relationship, Vincent himself acknowledges how significant he was in Louise’s life;

I am not asking you to remember me in your prayers because I have no doubt that, after little Le Gras. you put me in first place (V266)

and Louise, writing to M Portail. says;

Since you are in Gascony, get all the information you can, because you know that I am going to ply you with questions so that I may know better the person dearest to us in all the world. (L148)

Another aspect of the myth is that Louise was obsessed with her faults (“if such an ideal is completely ridiculous I’m sure you’ll forgive me this fault, together with all my usual ones” (L532) and “they are all good daughters and I am very worthless” (L538)) yet Vincent writes in a similar manner; “I am saying this to you with tears in my eyes, in view of the... abominations of my poor soul” (V390; to Jane Frances de Chantal). And, while it is true that Louise writes often of her health, her concern can hardly be described as excessive. Vincent writes, “My slight fever is, as you say, double tertian but you know that at this season I usually have double quartian... And what are you doing for your headache? I really think that perhaps you still need to be purged a little” (V394). Such concern is understandable in a world where many died young, even among the strong and healthy peasant girls who made up the early community of Daughters; a recurring theme – along with the numbers who left the community – in many of Louise’s early letters (L247).

We must be careful also of playing the numbers game. Firstly, far more of Vincent’s than Louise’s letters have survived. Of Louise’s 656 extant letters, 178 are addressed to Vincent. Of the 416 letters in Volume I of Vincent’s letters, some 268 are addressed to Louise. Of the 417 letters in Volume VII (December 1657-June 1659), 6 are from Vincent to Louise and 22 from Louise to Vincent; and it must be recalled that, by this stage, Vincent often replied to Louise by giving answers to her questions on the paper she had sent and returning it to her (see Louise 128, 132d, 277b, 417, 545d).

A good deal has been made recently of the fact that Louise was the natural daughter of the noble house of de Marillac and the psychological impact this must have had on her. It is true that Louis and Michel de Marillac (12) signed her marriage register as friends rather than uncles of the bride. Yet, recognition of the effect this may have had on her (with which I will deal later) needs to be offset by a recognition of the fact that she remained an acknowledged and valued member of the de Marillac family. Even after the death of Michel, her guardian, it is clear that she remained on friendly, indeed intimate, terms with the family, and that they supported her financially; “(Mme de Marillac) asked me to tell her frankly and she would send me the money her mother had offered to send me, in the form of an annuity” (L90) and “since my widowhood I have sought help, at least within the last ten or twelve years. M and

Mme de Marillac and his mother can testify to this” (L274). Later, in 1658, when she has now been widowed some 33 years, she writes to Vincent that she will stop to visit Mme de Marillac at Ollainville as ‘the whole family will be offended if I’m near them without paying them a visit’ (L593) and she kept contact with this Madame’s mother-in-law, a Carmelite, herself a daughter-in-law of Michel (L595). She mentions that a M de Noyers would have known her as ‘he had seen me at the home of M de Marillac. then keeper of the Seals’(L96). Therefore, she was known 10, and welcome in the homes of, four generations of the family. What is equally notable is that, while Vincent always addresses his letters to Mademoiselle LeGras, and refers to her thus in conferences to the Sisters (“neither I nor M Portail... nor Mile LeGras... ever envisaged such a thing”, as Torn Dougan often quoted) she signed herself Louise de Marillac.

Finally, a great deal has been said about her concerns about her son, Michel; a young man who look a long lime to settle down, being 36 when he eventually married Gabrielle LeClerc. He vacillated between life as a priest and public life and finally left the seminary at the age of 27, although he would lodge with the Vincentians on many occasions. Louise’s letter 137 seems to suggest that Michel had entered some form of alliance with a girl (possibly fathering a child by her) around the year 1646 and that she feared that he would return to this relationship. Yet, such concerns are hardly unusual in a mother, particularly one in the situation in which Louise found herself. She had from her father only a small annuity and very little from her marriage (she had had to move out of the home she shared with Antoine as it was too large to maintain) (13). As a woman living a religious life, she would not enter another marriage and, therefore, if Michel did not become a priest, he would have to make his own way in life. In a society as stratified as seventeenth century France was, there was also the matter of the family name and of family honour. Michel’s meanderings were not merely the dalliances of a teenager, they indicate a serious lack of direction in his life. While Louise gives voice to her worries, we must remember that she does so in letters to her director, to whom she had committed herself to pour out her soul. We should also recall that the image of her as an overbearing mother is not entirely well-founded; from almost age twelve, Michel had been lodging at Vincent’s house of Bons Enfants, from which Vincent sends reports to his mother, herself often on the road visiting the Confraternities of Charity (V40, 43, 46, 63 etc.) – even when Michel was a grown man (VI86). In modern terms, Louise was a working single mother; and one who had responsibilities other than her son and her house – by 1633 the young women who would form the nucleus of the Daughters of Charity were gathered around her. In such

circumstances, her requests for news of her only child could hardly be termed over-protective.

We need also to be aware that the letters reveal not only Louise but also Vincent. It is beyond the scope of this essay to examine his personality, but, as Gascons were famed for their forthrightness, Vincent's responses to Louise's questions are as indicative of his personality as of his reactions to her. Part of the endurance of the myth is that, in both books, letters to Vincent are described as 'to St Vincent' and those to Louise as "to St Louise": we have to recall that neither were saints at the time and, though they may have recognised the sanctity of each other, formal declarations would only follow their deaths!

A final comment needs to be made, though it cannot be expanded on at length here; the myth of Vincent and Louise has seen Louise as much more dependent on Vincent than vice-versa. In fact, he relies a great deal on her advice about individual Daughters and also about his own health.

This introduction to the letters has, perforce, been a long one and yet, in the context of the number of letters, all too brief. Its primary function has been to examine critically some of the aspects of the myth of Louise de Marillac. The purpose of the rest of the essay is to examine how this young widow became the saint we know.

Given the vast number of letters between Louise and Vincent, we cannot hope to deal with all aspects of their relationship. In this section, I want to look at what we can glean of Louise's personality in the early stage of their correspondence and to see her progress in the spiritual life in the context of the paradigm offered by Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, with the psychological insights offered by Rulla in his *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*. In order to do this we will have to look, briefly, at the personality of Louise as indicated by the letters and Vincent's responses and actions in her regard.

Louise's Personality

Given all the caveats outlined above, what picture emerges of Louise de Marillac Le Gras? Certainly, her early letters indicate an absolute reliance on Vincent; speaking of his absence – "in my weakness the days often seem like months" (L1). "I have never felt your absence more keenly than now" (L2), "I don't dare continue without a special permission from you" (L101). Vincent equally acknowledges this dependence; "Patience... my dear daughter... I assure you that I thought about you again this morning for a rather long time and that I am and shall be all my life, in the love of Jesus and his holy Mother, your servant" (V33) and accepts her love for him; "what shall I tell you now about the one whom your heart loves so dearly in Our Lord? He is a little better, I think, but still suffering somewhat from his slight chills" (V29).

It is clear that between the two there is a strong affective bond and that, in the beginning. Louise stands in need of constant reassurance that the bond is there. Given the uncertainty of her setting out and the difficulties of her marriage (Charpy suggests that Antoine became difficult when he first became ill (14) but there is very little to indicate that theirs was a love match; and the fact that Louise, with a LeGras child, habitually used her original surname, may be telling) her initial reliance on Vincent is understandable: his affection and support provided a firm foundation that had, until then, been lacking.

This last issue, of her name, remains a fascinating one. Unlike the slightly older Jeanne Françoise de Frémiot, who continued to use, and is recognised by the Church as saint by, her husband's name and title of de Chantal – and who, like Louise, had living children when she joined with Francis de Sales in the foundation of the Order of the Visitation – Louise early reverted to her family name of de Marillac and it was under this name that she was canonised, yet the address on many of the letters and Vincent's references to her indicate that it was by the Le Gras name that she was identified in her public life.

Besides the tensions in her marriage, the difficulties widowhood imposed and her troubles with Michel, there remained the question of her birth. Louis de Marillac, while he recognised her as his natural child, never legitimised her; as he had her half-sister, Innocente. Since proceedings between him and Innocente's mother, Antoinette Camus, included the contention that Louis had been impotent from childhood (15) there is the further possibility that he was not even Louise's father but took the role to protect another member of the family. At the time of Innocente's birth Louis and Antoinette had been living apart for two years, hence the need for a formal declaration and recognition of Innocente as the legitimate heir. Louise was old enough to realise that this beneficence did not extend to her although, in his will, Louis was to describe her as 'the greatest consolation in my life' (16). But the process of legitimizing Louise would have required a declaration of her true parentage. Martinez (17) observes that the inheritance allotted to recognised natural daughters could be anything up to one fifth of the estate, but to those who were conceived in incestuous or sacrilegious unions, only donations could be made. As we have seen, Louise, while an acknowledged member of the de Marillac family, received only an annuity and no share of her father's estate. Indeed, she had to go to court to receive from her uncle, Michel de Marillac, the share that did fall to her. Yet her love for Michel de Marillac seems to have been very deep; she was eager to get a copy of his translation of the psalms (L47). She was educated at the royal convent of the Dominicans at Poissy, where her grand-aunt was a sister and prioress. Again, the name may be significant; though Louise

was the feminine form of her father and uncle's names, it was also the name of this respected religious, indicating the degree to which Louise was an acknowledged and loved member of the family.

Though she would later be moved from Poissy to an école-pension, yet, while there, she had mixed with daughters of the nobility and the court. France and, especially, Paris and the royal court was not then noted for its democratic tendencies, yet Louise's birth does not seem to have been a matter of any scandal in the school.

Her need for love, approval and support is clear in the letters and, certainly, understandable in the context of her life experience. In Vincent she found someone who loved her unconditionally and who recognised her talents.

Her talents themselves may offer us some further insight into her personality. She was recognised by Vincent as an excellent organiser with an eye for detail. This may indicate an obsessive personality and this becomes more possible when we take into account that Vincent would not allow her to spend a long time in introspection, and exhorts her to be cheerful (V24) and not to fret too much about 'the little one', Michel (V24), or to give in to this 'excessive affection' (V40) for her son. In letter 41 he says; "you have more affection for him than almost any mother I know". That a young mother, herself unsure of the love of others, should have focussed her love on her only child is hardly unheard of in the annals of history and that that child should grow up to cause continued worry is also not unique. Yet, and this must be borne in mind, however strong her feelings for Michel, she had the insight to realise that he needed another environment and especially the company of men (hence her attempts to get him into the college of Adrian Bourdoise, later the Jesuits and, finally, Vincent's Bons Enfants). In general, her letters seem to focus on the problems she faces and his emphasise reliance on Providence. This dependence on others for affection was remarked by others. Le Camus, Bishop of Bellay (and her former director) wrote, on 26 July 1625,

"Forgive me, my very dear sister, if I tell you that you are a little too attached to those who direct you and that you depend on them a little too much. M Vincent is out of sight and here we have Mademoiselle LeGras upset and disoriented" (18).

Louise learned the lesson well; when she herself became a director of souls, in her letters to her Daughters, she returns frequently to these three themes; accepting the director God provides and not seeking one who is more appealing, not delving too deeply interiorly and trust in Providence.

Yet perhaps the greatest insight into Louise's personality is given in her description of the enlightenment she received at Pentecost 1623 (19). In her later written testament to this she outlines the three doubts which she suffered, which she named for herself on Ascension Day of that year.

1. About her vocation and mission;
She wondered if she should leave her husband and follow her earlier vow (to enter religious life)
2. About her spiritual guide;
She worried about her attachment to her director and felt obliged to seek another.
3. About the immortality of the soul;

We see here a woman who had insight into her own spiritual state (20), her inner tensions and contradictions and her turmoil. Her three doubts were answered on Pentecost by three recognitions (as she calls them 'Lights');

1. That she should stay with her husband and would, one day, make vows, and live in a small community, free to come and go, in service of the poor.
2. That God would send her a director whom she would recognise when the time came.
3. That all came from God and that, with such a God, all that was required of her was to trust for all the rest.

In sum, and in brief, one can claim that Louise exhibited certain dependent personality traits and obsessive tendencies and that she was prone to depression. In terms used in her epoch, she would have been described as melancholic. The early letters indicate a woman who was enmeshed in her own limitations and shortcomings and, occasionally, overcome by them but there is little to indicate that this neurosis was anything more than might be expected given her life history.

Examining Louise's life in the light of modern psychological insights

In his *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, Rulla indicates three basic tests for assessing pathological aspects of a person's mental state (21). They are;

1. Affectivity; the person's sense of self and of psychic boundaries.
2. Reality Testing; the person's ability to express and acknowledge concrete reality
3. Concrete Operations; the person's ability to work and interact with others.

In these terms, while there are, obviously, areas of conflict in Louise's life, there is nothing to indicate pathology; she had, and maintained, lasting friendships; her work with the Charities and Daughters shows her ability to interact with others and to undertake commitment to work; and there is no indication that she was delusional in any way.

Rulla also outlines, however, three dimensions of the human person and, in this, as he acknowledges, he draws on Ignatius of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*.

The three dimensions are;

1. The area of good and evil; discernment between the two. This operates primarily at the level of conscious structures. It may be termed the 'manifest self' (22). Lack of maturity at this level will generally be conscious; the person chooses to behave in a certain way (23).
2. The area of the real good and the apparent good. It is the area of the concomitant action of conscious and unconscious structures. Lack of maturity here is generally unconscious and is more likely to be a result of unrecognised inner tensions.
3. The area of normality or pathology; here the freedom to act in a mature way is seriously undermined by unconscious motivations.

It should be understood that Rulla sees these dimensions in every human life and not as distinctions between different types of person. Although, as suggested, her life-experience may have seriously marked Louise, there is little justification for any claim that her freedom in the third dimension was seriously inhibited. Her letters and actions indicate that, in the first dimension, she freely and consciously chose 'the good' and sought to discern the will of God in her life.

The area of interest then, is that of the second dimension, and, in order to clarify the implications of this dimension, we need to look further into Rulla's work, into what he terms Needs and Attitudes, which he sees as directional; giving orientation or tendency to the person (24). In Louise's case, we will examine how possible unconscious motivations may have been at work in her life and, more importantly, how she operated within her 'field of freedom'.

Rulla defines needs as 'innate tendencies related to objects as important to oneself, in contrast to values which are 'innate tendencies to respond to objects as important in themselves' (25). Attitudes are 'habitual dispositions' (26) which may arise directly from a fundamental need or in reaction to a fundamental need. Once again, space precludes any in-depth examination of the full list of such needs and attitudes but a glance at some may give us a greater insight into Louise. In dealing with needs and attitudes, Rulla distinguishes them thus;

- Those which were considered as relevant for Christian vocation and thus vocationally dissonant.
- ☐ Those considered as less relevant for Christian vocation and thus vocationally neutral.

Abasement: to submit passively to an external force.

- It can be seen that such was a major need for Louise. It manifests in her dependence on Vincent and her tendency to belittle herself and focus on her errors or wrongdoing. Her early letters tend to focus on the Crucified Jesus. Yet, as indicated above, this ‘abasement’ must be seen in terms of the tenor of the times and in the nature of the spiritual relationship with Vincent.

- ☐ Achievement: to accomplish something difficult, to master/organise objects, people or ideas.

In Louise we see a woman who overcame many difficulties, both of life-experience and physical health and who accomplished a great deal. Her letters to the Sisters in Nantes and Chars, both difficult locations, show a woman who could deal with conflict and, where resolution was not possible, managed such conflict well and creatively. (Her letter to the Pastor at Chars, who had publicly slighted the sisters and sought to have them under his control, is a masterpiece and Louise does not hold back; “...you intend to use people you can dominate completely; and this corresponds with what you told me about not wanting our sisters to be missioned”; L529b)

- ☐ Affiliation’, to draw near and enjoyably cooperate or reciprocate with an allied other

Apart from the obvious example of her alliance with Vincent, we see this need in operation in the willingness of this woman, born into the nobility, to work both with others of her class and the simple country girls who comprised the early Daughters for the same purpose and goal. Her bond with the sisters is palpable in the letters, and she often encourages individuals to learn to write so that they can enjoy private communication with her and with Vincent (L611). Equally, she often apologises if she is unable to respond individually to each sister in a community (LI49) or if there has been a long gap between letters (L617, 618) and is mindful to keep sisters and their families in communication (L64a, 141, 377) especially those, like the Angibousts (Cécile and Barbe) and the

Ménages (Françoise, Marguerite, Madeleine and Catherine) who were Daughters of Charity in other houses (L548).

- Aggression: to overcome opposition forcefully.
While, as indicated above, Louise could be forceful, in her letters to the sisters she often tempers her reproaches (“I can’t conceal from you how greatly afflicted I was by your last letter, revealing the faults you made known to me”) by directing the lesson to herself; “I don’t consider the evil as great as you make it appear... don’t let this fault embitter you” and, later in the same letter, “I don’t want to discourage those who are a little slow... but I do want to share with you a reproach that God often makes interiorly to my cowardice” (all L121) or by making the reprimand a general one; “ please forgive me for offering this piece of advice because I don’t think such things happen among you” (L113). Again, much of Louise’s own attitude comes across in her writings to the sisters; “...use the right amount of gentleness and forbearance... be brief in your communications...otherwise a person becomes a contemptible bore”. (L634b)
- Censure Avoidance: to conceal or justify a misdeed, failure or humiliation
In her letters both to Vincent and to the sisters, Louise acknowledges her limitations, both psychological and those due to increased pressure of work and advancing old age; “my dear sisters, you know that because of my age I have some inveterate habits” (L121). While this may sometimes strike one as an abasement need (see above) there is also a great deal of honesty in her writings and an acknowledgement that even excusable delays may have caused distress to individual sisters (L547).
- Knowledge: to know, to explore, to acquire information and knowledge.
One thing that is remarkable in reading Louise’s letters is the breath of her knowledge, particularly of medicinal matters, at least within the limitations of her days. But it is clear too that she learnt a good deal by travelling about the countryside, both in terms of what we would now call organisational skills and her understanding of human nature (see especially her advice to various Sister Servants which often combine both; L257, 263, 297, 360). 257 indicates her knowledge also of bureaucracy and how to handle it.

Submission (Deference) to admire and support a superior

While, as has been seen, Louise herself was deferential to Vincent, and to Antoine Portail, and counselled such deference to her sisters (often using the model of St John the Baptist; L546) it was never a servile deference (L531 encourages a sister to see herself as indebted to her director for pointing out her faults as a correction to her vain-glorious thoughts but sees it in the context of freeing oneself for the mission).

□ nomination: to control one's human environment

As was seen above, Louise was able to take leadership and authority but exercised it in a relational way; there are no unilateral declarations in her letters. She directed by example and often, as was seen, by means of a reflection. Reprimands were made gently and often in a general sense; as she herself advises the Sister Servants to do (L125b). In letter 352 she writes; "I don't know why I'm writing this, my dear Sister... it must be because we've seen the bad results here".

Yet she was also proactive in her response; (L645, to Vincent) "to avoid receiving another letter of the same nature, I think we should take a stand for the present and the future, if you agree. Could we, therefore, sit down together for a little council at any time you tell us?" The deference is there but it is in the context of the one who has initiated the response. However, if the occasion warranted, she was not afraid to call a spade a spade; writing to Sr Claude at Angers (who had just been named to take charge of the community there) she writes; "Act freely in your own name, over-coming your timidity – or rather, slight mental laziness" (L554).

• Exhibition: to make an impression, to amaze, fascinate or shock.

Louise was certainly not an exhibitionist in any sense and, in fact, disliked public show of any kind; including titles like Superioress or Reverend Mother (27). She writes to Nicole Georgette at Nanteuil (L613); "I am distressed that you stooped to mockery to defend yourself. In her own writings, the only manifestations are in her gentle humour as she writes to the sisters; "I'm not in extreme need (of a habit), unless, of course, you listen to our Sisters" (L531). Writing to the Sisters at Richelieu she says;

"You must certainly have wept since you left Paris and, if you could talk to that mean Sister Louise (herself), you'd surely give her a piece of your mind! But since you can't, write me everything you'd like to say; you can be sure I'll read your letter" (L254).

- Harm avoidance: to avoid pain, physical injury, illness and death.
As has been seen, Louise, while taking proper care of her health, shows no real signs of compulsive or morbid fascination with it. To Vincent she writes; “I think it would improve (his health) if you allowed yourself to be treated as you would command someone else to be treated” (L655) and gives similar advice to sisters (for example, to Julienne Loret in L354a). Given the high mortality rates and incidence of plague and disease, death was a constant possibility, and one she acknowledges (L231).
- Nurturance: give sympathy, gratify the needs of a helpless other: to feed, help, support etc.
All of Louise’s life but especially her concern for her son, for Vincent, for the individual sisters to whom she wrote and, above all, for the poor, show this to be her dominant trait. Again, there is little to suggest that this was excessive. While nurturing others may have met her own need for succourance (being nurtured by others), it does not seem to be the dominant motivation.
- Organisation (Order): to achieve cleanliness, balance, neatness and precision.
As shown above, Louise had a gift for order and organisation, one which may have bordered, in its unconscious manifestations, on obsession, scrupulosity and compulsion.

Playfulness: to act for “fun” without further purpose.

Although her letters do reveal a gentle humour, as shown above, play seems to have been notably lacking in Louise’s life and it is one thing which Vincent returns to in his earlier letters to her; either in his own playful tone or by gently mocking her seriousness. “Do not think that all is lost because of the little rebellions you experience interiorly. It has just rained very hard and it is thundering dreadfully. Is the weather any less beautiful for that? ...be assured, my dear daughter, that you are no less dear to Our Lord for all that” (V36). In her later life, however, as we saw above, a certain playful tone does enter her writings and she seems to have genuinely rejoiced in play with her grand-daughter; whose name, interestingly, means “Louise reborn”.

Recognition (Social Approval’): to gain prestige, win honours, get praise or recognition

It is probably true, if we look to her relationship with the de Marillac family, that this was more important to Louise than she

recognised. Yet, in her work, social connections (with the Queen of Poland, the Grande Princesse, the Duchesses de Liancourt, d'Aiguillon, de Ventadour and de Lamoignon and various other notables) were always associated with the work of the Charities and of the Daughters themselves. The second largest number of letters addressed to an individual are addressed to the Abbé de Vaux; only once does a social matter enter their correspondence – when she apologises for not arranging a ticket for his sister to the late king's funeral ceremonies at Notre Dame, the implication being that such a thing was within her power to arrange.

Sexual Gratification: to form and further an erotic relationship.

Their letters, especially, indicate that the relationship between Louise and Vincent was highly emotionally charged, on both sides. Yet, their obvious attraction to one another seems to have been sublimated in a way that was helpful for both. The love remained strong, even across distances and the limitations of encroaching old age. In 1659, the year before their deaths, both confined to their houses because of illness, she writes; “if God did not render me insensible to the sorrow of seeing myself so abandoned, I'd be extremely distressed!” (L609b). The love that underpins the detachment is still very visible.

Succorance: to have one's needs gratified by an allied object. Constantly to seek support.

While, as we have seen, this was a significant factor in the early part of the relationship with Vincent, we see it abating as the years pass. Although the last letter (L655 of January 1660) speaks of ‘the grief of being deprived of a talk with you’ and of her faults of ‘cowardice, self-love’ it must be noted that this is in the context not of her own needs but of the future of the company of the Daughters and the difficulties which she sees lying ahead. Her description of herself as a ‘tortillon’ (a piece of cloth worn on the head – and perhaps also slang for a screwball), ‘a sister in name only’ at the head of the congregation is not simply self-denigration but a real concern that, at her advanced age (at 68, Louise was almost the age of Mere de Chantal at her death) she could be more of a liability than a blessing to a congregation still new and struggling. The letter ends; “as for me, I'll always be the same, with nothing more to say, once I have taken the liberty... to represent the judgements that present themselves to my mind”.

□ Counteraction: to strive persistently to overcome difficult or humiliating experiences.

In brief, this could be a description of her life's struggle to overcome the circumstances of her birth and it is a quality to which she constantly counsels her sisters.

In the absence of any psychological profile for Louise, we may consider her letters as revealing something of her inner self (in the way that Thematic Apperception Tests (TATS) do) and from the letters we see a woman who, while she had some areas of conflict, was, in the main, suited to the Christian vocation. Once again, we must bear in mind the limitations of such a project; Louise was a woman of her time and used the language of her time, both its vocabulary and its conceptual constructs.

Given that we have here, with all the caveats noted, some idea of the personality of Louise de Marillac and, in particular, in terms of what Rulla calls the second dimension (the Real and the Apparent Good) how can we understand her progress in sanctity?

The Journey of the Spiritual Exercises

A great deal has been made of the connection of Vincent, and also Louise, with a school of spirituality nowadays called 'the French School' and it is not my purpose to argue or explore that. But it should also be borne in mind that the Jesuits had come to Paris in 1603 (28) and that both Vincent and Louise were acquainted with them. Furthermore, (a point sometimes neglected) Louise herself was a retreat director and may have had some knowledge of the methods of the exercises. For the purpose of this paper though, my only intent is to use the Exercises as a guide to the progress of a soul in sanctity.

As commented earlier, Vincent seems to have directed Louise primarily through reflection on the praxis of her faith; initially, the work with the Charities and the daily experiences that came her way. Given her propensity towards scrupulosity and obsessive-compulsion, this was a wise move. Louise herself, as mentioned, warned her sisters against excessive introspection (L265; to the Abbe de Vaux). In letter 581, she advises; "Avoid delving into all that passes through your minds. This often ends in an imaginary virtue, makes us moody... and leads in the end to disaffection for solid virtue." (Might this again be a reflection on her own experience?) Yet, in her letters, she encourages them to reflect on the significance of the events of their daily lives. In some ways then, Louise could be seen to make the journey of the Exercises not in one single 'retreat' but over the course of her life.

In the Exercises, Ignatius has divided them into four 'weeks' (although these need not be seen as chronological weeks) (29) each with a particular purpose. It must be remembered that the exercises presuppose a prior commitment to Jesus Christ and to service of people, in public life or in the Church (30). We can see this predisposition in Louise; in her early vow to join the Capuchines but, especially, in her Pentecost experience and in the fact that, in Camus de Bellay, she already had a spiritual director.

The exercises of the first week "turn the memory, understanding and free will toward... sins" (31) and, certainly, Louise's early letters are full of her decrying her own sinfulness and failure; "I trust you will remember to offer me to God... in spite of my imperfection" (to Vincent, L1), "If God gives me the grace of recalling what has passed, I shall have nothing to be proud of... God is very good to put up with me" (L2), "I feel I deserve great punishment because of their (the Daughters') shortcomings" (L8). Nowadays, there is an equal focus on our recognition of our limitations and this too is notable in Louise's writings. In contrast, Vincent's letters at this time and before (Louise's earliest letter to Vincent dates from 1627 but the majority of her letters date from 1638 on) seem to seek to offset this tendency and urge her to moderation and patience and greater care of herself; "be then His dear daughter – quite humble, submissive and full of confidence" (the first of his extant letters to Louise; October 30 1626). Around 1629 he writes; "continue, my dear daughter, to remain in this good disposition and to allow God to act" (V34).

Ignatius' second week focuses on the Incarnation and the earthly life of Jesus. By the mid-1640s, Louise's letters focus less on her own sinfulness and much more on divine Providence at work in the events of human life (L178b to the Abbe de Vaux, 199) and the imitation of the life of Christ on earth (L179) especially in community life (275); "We must be gentle, humble and patient with everyone – to the poor, because they are members of Jesus Christ and our masters, to the rich so that they may give us of their riches to help the poor" (L424).

In the third week, Ignatius focuses on the Passion and Death of Jesus, and Louise, in the midst of letters full of practical concerns and concern for the sisters, returns to the idea of the journey that she and the community are making; "...as long as we are in the Church militant we will have to keep on fighting" (L531). As the years pass, she returns to the thoughts of her own death; "it's evident that God wants to prolong the life (of this frail body) for a short while, but it can't be for much longer" (L547b, 1657). The shortness of life (L580) enters as a theme in her letters as does the need for detachment.

Yet that same letter (L580) introduces a theme of Resurrection, albeit couched in the language of her day; "I must also renounce the abuse of

my senses and passions because no one will rise with Christ who has not previously died in this way". The theme of Ignatius' fourth week, and progressively of Louise's late letters, is that of the Resurrection and thanksgiving. Her letters echo with words like; "may God be praised with all our hearts for the blessings His goodness lavishes on your little community" (L611). Interestingly, there is far more comment in Louise than in Ignatius on the work and movements of the Holy Spirit. While the letters to Vincent remain in the form of the spiritual filiation that Schneiders has mentioned, it is clear that the dependency has abated and that her meetings with Vincent have become, as she says, "the means that for so many years has assured me of doing God's will in what was commanded me" (L622) with the focus on the God who is revealed rather than the director himself.

1658 saw the death of one of the earliest, bravest and strongest Daughters, Barbe Angiboust (obviously much loved by both Louise and Vincent). The delicacy with which Louise breaks this news to Laurence du Bois, who had laboured with Barbe in Bernay for many years, shows a kindness and fellow-feeling; "I am somewhat apprehensive about breaking this news to you... so it is that even here below God begins to reward his faithful servants" (L608). But perhaps the most notable sign of the freedom of spirit which came to Louise with the passing years is that Michel ceases to be a preoccupation and her granddaughter and namesake, Louise-Renee, known as the 'Little Sister', completely a delight in her life. In the late letters, there is a greater tone of acceptance and openness to Divine Providence.

Conclusion

This paper can be nothing more than a brief glance at the psychospiritual development of Louise de Marillac. However, it does, I think, serve to bring her out of the shadows of Vincent de Paul. The mutuality of their relationship may be expressed in the language and mores of another time and place and Louise's expressions of her faith-journey may sometimes sound strange to modern ears but, it seems to me, she is very much a saint for the twenty-first century; a lay-woman, a mother, a seeker after the Divine, a relational leader, a discoverer of new ministries and a spiritual guide, who came to all this very aware of her psychological vulnerability and the scars of her life experience. Her own emphasis on the working of the Holy Spirit through Divine Providence is an echo of that idea of the Transfiguration of the Commonplace; the incidents of everyday life become the means by which the will of God is revealed to us and the people we meet as we go about our daily lives and work – our companions, our families, our co-workers and, especially, those we serve – become the loci of our meeting with the divine made manifest

in the human, the temporal and the limited. It is anachronistic to call Louise a feminist and too glib to say that she was a woman ‘before her time’. Indeed, she was very much a woman ‘of her time’ and it was to that time, and to its people, that she responded in faith, mindful of, but not trammelled by, her own limitations.

Notes

1. McMichaels, Susan W. *Journey Out of the Garden*, New York, Paulist, 1997, 1
2. McMichaels, 2
3. Thompson, William, M. *Fire and Light*, New York, Paulist, 1987, 3
4. 10 February 1960
5. see especially her *Sexism and God-Talk* and Mary Rose D’Angelo’s article ‘Abba and ‘Father’; Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions *JBL* 111/4,623
6. La Cugna, Catherine *God for Us; the Trinity and Christian Life* Harper, San Francisco, 1973,231
7. It can be understood as ‘the one who dwells in our midst’ and is linked, therefore, with Emmanuel, God-with-Us.
8. *Jerome Biblical Commentary*, 43 ; 1 1 8
9. *JBC*, 63-45
10. Schneiders, Sandra ‘The Contemporary Ministry of Spiritual Direction’ *Chicago Studies*, Spring ‘76, 123
11. Charpy, Elizabeth *Petite Vie de Louise de Marillac* Paris, Desclée de Brouwer,1985, 25
12. The reason that father and uncle had the same name is that they were half brothers; Martinez, 101
13. Charpy, 18
14. Charpy, 11
15. Martinez, Benito ‘El Nascimento de Santa Luisa’ *Anales de la CM y Las Hijas de la Caridad*, Madrid, 1 978, pp 95- 1 0 1 , 98
16. Martinez, 95
17. Martinez,96
18. Original in the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity Paris cited in Vincent de Paul, *Documents* 80
19. Charpy, 15
20. In letter 102, to Sr Claude, she writes of Sister’s scrupulosity; “ I fully sympathise...! wish you would send me all your troubles...! might be able to help you, having travelled this road myself.
21. Rulla, Luigia *Anthropology of the Christian Vocation*, Rome, Gregorian U.P, 1986, 182
22. Rulla, 179
23. Rulla, 181
24. Rulla, 132
25. Rulla. 133

26. Rulla. 129
27. Vincent's purpose is always assumed to be in line with his desire that the Daughters would not, in any way, be identified as religious and, thus, subject to certain canons yet it is noteworthy, however, that it was only after Vatican II that the canon (504) against the election of an illegitimate person as a major superior was revoked, though, interestingly, Canon Law continued to prohibit the election of the someone publicly known to be the offspring of an incestuous or sacriligious union. (Interestingly, the declaration was made on Louise's feastday, 15 March 1967). It is possible, therefore, that Vincent was also, to a certain extent, protecting Louise by not giving her such an official title.
28. Charpy, 9
29. Tetlow. Joseph A. *Ignatius Loyola; Spiritual Exercises*, New York, Crossroad. 1996.36
30. Tetlow. 37
31. Ignatian text. Tetlow. 73.

The spirituality of the Ethiopian Church illustrated in the life of the monk Ghebré Michael, before his encounter with the Catholic mission

Bill Clarke CM

Youth and monastic education

Ghebré Michael was born at Nefsié in the Godjam district about the year 1788. His name means servant of St Michael and there were other similar names in Ethiopia as there were in ancient Ireland, for example, Giolla Dé, meaning in Gaelic, *servant of God*, which occurs as a surname nowadays in the Anglicised form, Gildea. While Ghebré was still very young he lost one eye in an accident but this did not deter him at all from pursuing intensive studies almost all his life.

His first schooling was in the reading of the Gi'iz language, the dead language of ancient Ethiopia in which the liturgical books were all written and also the ancient chronicles of the history and laws of the kingdom. First steps were also taken in ecclesiastical chant and then learning by heart the First Letter of St John and the Psalms. When this much was accomplished he was qualified to read publicly in the Church,

These classes were conducted in the environs of the monastery of Mertoulé-Mariam which had enjoyed a high reputation for learning in former times but had by this time declined somewhat. Classes were conducted in the Church porch, the visitors' areas of the monastery or the graveyard.

In 1801, Ghebré entered the conventual school of Mertoulé-Mariam. Here the grammar of the language was learned by heart, as it had never been written down until Ghebré himself did it much later in life. He also learned the difficult art of writing the Gi'iz language and he continued his study of ecclesiastical chant. It was reckoned that a perfect knowledge of the chant took at least fourteen years to acquire and from my own memories of the *Liber Usualis* of the Gregorian chant (which is only one section of the church music of the Latin Rite) it would take a good number of years to sing everything in the *Liber* perfectly. I started learning Gregorian myself at the age of eight in the Primary School and I was still learning at the age of twenty-five when I finished my studies in the seminary. I mention this only to show that though the Ethiopians

have a very different cultural background, history and liturgical rite, not everything is so totally different that we westerners can't identify with some aspects of their tradition.

The history they learned was Biblical with some semi-legendary recitals of great events in the Ethiopian past. There was no arithmetic, but numbers were counted by using stones formed into units, dozens and hundreds. There were written cyphers to represent these, but no calculations were written – everybody from king to commoner used stones to calculate different amounts.

The scholars begged their bread from the villagers who generally had a high respect for learning and the monastic life. Sometimes the scholars worked as hired labourers or at some craft they knew. After six years of this life Ghebré Michael achieved the title, 'aleka'. or master-instructor. He was now in a position to choose between a civil and an ecclesiastical career. A civil career would bring him into the service of a prince as a secretary with prospects of becoming a counsellor if he won the princess confidence. Ghebré, however, opted for the monastic life and entered the noviciate at Mertoulé-Mariam in the year 1807.

Sources and expressions of spirituality in the Ethiopian Church:

Although I intend to follow Ghebré's progress in the noviciate. I think it best to look first at the sources and expressions of spirituality in the Ethiopian Church because these must have nurtured and fostered his decision to answer the call of God to the monastic life.

As with all the Orthodox Churches, and indeed with the Catholic Church also, the Eucharist is the principal celebration in the Ethiopian Church. There are nineteen Anafora for the Mass and the one most often used is that for the Holy Apostles taken from Hypolitus' *Traditio Apostolica*, A liturgy of catechumens and a liturgy of the faithful precede the Anafora and the people take an active part in these. All the consecrated hosts are consumed at the Mass and have been made on that very day. So there is no reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, but in each province of Ethiopia there are special fields set apart for growing the wheat that will be used for the eucharistic bread. A Jewish community existed in Ethiopia long before the Christian era. They have influenced the liturgy and the construction of the Churches – a holy of holies which only the priests enter to celebrate the mysteries, a circular space around it reserved for priests and choir, and sometimes the people actually stay outside the Church building while the eucharist is being celebrated.

The Ethiopians celebrate a feast of "our holy fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" and this, like some others, is kept like a monthly observance or commemoration, similar. I suppose to the Catholic First Fridays, here

in the Western Church, or more universally to the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection every Sunday of the year. The Jewish connection is also at work in the legend that the stone Tables of the Law and the Ark of the Covenant were brought to Axum by the Queen of Sheba.

Epiphany is one of the most popular feasts in which the priests dance to the accompaniment of bells, rattles and drums. The altar-stone is placed in a box called *tabot* and this is carried to the nearest river or stream to commemorate the manifestation of Jesus at the Jordan, but it also harks back to the Ark of the Covenant. The young people enjoy this feast particularly as it has a strong social aspect and if they have bought some new clothing they prefer to wear it for Epiphany than for Christmas.

Thirty-two feasts of Mary, Mother of God, are celebrated, including Immaculate Conception, Assumption, and Birth of Mary. A feast of the four animals commemorates the evangelists in the symbolism of Ezekiel's vision and each year is also placed under the patronage of an evangelist. Important saints celebrated are St George, who is seen as a Crusader against the infidel, St Thomas preaching in the Indies, St John the Baptist and forty Ethiopian saints including St Tekle Hymanot of the 'Year of the Agreement', and St Dioscoros of Alexandria who was deposed after the Council of Chalcedon

Fasting in Lent is so severe that men were unable to fight battles at that time. Perhaps this is encouraged by the kind of lives of saints which are popularly read: St Paul the Hermit, St Anthony of Egypt, St Basil the Great and St Athanasius. Two apocalyptic works are also popular: The Apocalypse of St. Peter and the Testament of Our Lord. When I was in Ethiopia myself I was particularly attracted to the paintings of Scriptural subjects done on leather in the style of the Greek ikons. This is a very ancient and strong tradition in Ethiopia.

Noviciate al Mertoulé-Mariam:

Ghebré Michael was familiar with all these aspects of Ethiopian life as a Christian scholar and so he was strongly drawn to take on the monastic life itself at Mertoulé-Mariam. In 1807 he entered the noviciate which was to last for six years. The novices performed such humble and simple tasks as carrying water to the monastery, collecting the wood for the fires, washing, cooking etc. At the same time they pursued a life of prayer and study while celebrating the normal liturgical rites of the Church.

The principal items for study were as follows:

1. The complete Bible.
2. Cyril of Alexandria, letters and homilies.

3. John Chrysostom, letters and homilies.
4. Hymanot Abou, (Faith of the Fathers), a compilation of many tracts and homilies by eastern writers up to the 13th century.
5. Fetha-Néghest, the royal code of laws.
6. The Ethiopian Missal.
7. Two astronomical books which taught the method of calculating the date of Easter and other ecclesiastical feasts.
8. The book of the monks of the 6th century.
9. The Synods or Councils – that is, the Canon Law of the Oriental Church.

There was no writing of notes. Perhaps this was because paper was not as readily available to them as it is to us, but also perhaps because they believed that learning by heart actually brought the material into the hearts of the students and not just into heads. If I may again identify to some little extent with this practice which seems very unpopular in our schools nowadays, when I was at school myself I had to learn a lot of poetry by heart both in Gaelic and English and though at times I hated having to do it and hated being examined by the teacher, still I find, years later, that I remember a lot of those lines I learned and they come back to me quite often and quite unexpectedly, but always with pleasure. I also find it a great advantage in preaching to be able to quote passages of Scripture by heart without having to look at a piece of paper in front of me. However, by the end of his noviciate Ghebré was a walking encyclopaedia of patristic and scriptural knowledge which I certainly am not!

At the age of 25 he became a professed monk in a long ceremony in which the bonnet of perfection was placed on his head. By this time he had also achieved the title of ‘liq’, or doctor of letters, eminent degree. In his life afterwards he always preferred the more simple title of ‘Abba’, Father.

His search for the Book of the Monks:

During his time as a novice Ghebré had already come up against two great obstacles, the loss of the book of monastic spirituality called, *The Book of the Monks*, and the christological disputes about ‘unction’. Since he was so diligent and persevering both as scholar and monk his community delegated him to go and visit other monasteries in search of the lost book on the monastic life.

He set out on his travels then, going from monastery to church to monastery accompanied by some young men who were his disciples. They might stay at a particular monastery for a few weeks or longer while Ghebré gave the benefits of his knowledge to that community if

they wished him to, rather like a visiting lecturer who had specialised knowledge to impart. Although there was almost constant local warfare going on between princes and chiefs, this little band of scholars was never attacked because of the respect for learning which was such a strong feature of Ethiopian society. They also received hospitality from the people of the villages and towns they passed through.

In the monastic houses, however, the reception varied considerably. At Debre-Worq a strong monophysite view flourished and Ghebré was considered soft – they argued bitterly with him and he noticed with dismay that armaments were being manufactured in the monastery in preparation for the war they expected to be fought on sectarian grounds. At Ennefsié they asked him about ‘Unction’ and Ghebré said that the Father was the Anointer. They said, no! The Son in assuming humanity anointed it by absorbing it into his divinity. Ghebré asked how then was Christ a priest according to the order of Melchisedek, an order of human priests? They responded by throwing him out of the monastery. A deacon took pity on him and lodged him in the room off the Church building where the altar-breads were made. He left the following day.

And so it went, sometimes warm and friendly, sometimes cold and hostile, but nowhere did he find the book of the monks. Finally he went to the hermits of Debre-Dima, a wild and rocky place. They told him that he couldn’t expect to find such a book in their remote outpost and that they were simple hermits, not very learned. But they told him to go to Gondar, the capital. Surely he would find the book there? They gave him their blessing and he obeyed their words of advice.

And so in 1825, at the age of 37 he came to the capital of his country where the great fortifications of the Portuguese lay half-ruined and a powerless emperor lived a fairly miserable existence in part of the ruined palace. Ghebré received a warm welcome here from the Ichegé, the chief of the monks, and from the other monks also who lived there. Here he became very friendly with the eminent teacher, Weldé Sellasié. Together they studied, discussed and taught the pupils who came. Ghebré, to his great satisfaction, found the *Book of the Monks* and was able to discuss its meaning with his new friend. Also one of the pupils he taught was to become the future Emperor Yoannes.

The more fundamental problem:

Ghebré spent thirteen years at Gondar (1825-’38) and he enjoyed his life there. But gradually he saw that even the *Book of the Monks* wasn’t the answer to everything. The more fundamental problem besetting the Ethiopian Church was that of the sectarian divisions on the question of ‘Unction’ and the underlying problems of the monophysite viewpoint and also of authority in the Church. Who was to say which opinion was

really true? He finally opened his mind to his friend and fellow scholar, Weldé Sellasié, who admitted that he too had serious doubts about the position of the Ethiopian Church. They agreed that the doctrinal disputes were ruining the faith and they decided together not to embrace any of the three christological opinions current in Ethiopia but to search for the Church in which the full truth could be found. Since both had a horror of Rome, Ghebré decided to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem where he could come into contact with other Churches and not be confined simply to the Ethiopian.

On his way to the coast of the Red Sea he again visited the monasteries on his route. He ascended by basket to the famous monastery of Weldebba, perched on its rocky plateau surrounded by sheer cliffs. But here he was attacked furiously because of his moderate, Catholic opinion on 'Unction'. At Gundé Gundé, however, he was warmly welcomed and asked to stay and teach for a while. Here he met the young monk, Tekle Hymanot, to whom we owe all these details of Ghebré's early life.

He reached the port of Massawa on the Red Sea in 1840 intending to go to Jerusalem, but he couldn't get a boat up the Red Sea because of political difficulties with the Turkish Empire. While staying at a monastery near Massawa he met some monks who told him of the expedition being prepared to bring a new bishop to Ethiopia from Egypt since Ethiopia had been without a bishop for twelve years. Ghebré thought this would be a good opportunity to go to Egypt with the delegation and then continue on to Jerusalem. So he returned to the province of Tigré where the delegation was getting ready to depart.

Final testimonies:

One of the members of this delegation was Justin de Jacobis, the leader of the Catholic mission, a Lazarist or Vincentian priest, who was asked to join the expedition in order to secure more protection along the route. It was through getting to know Justin that Ghebré came into the Catholic Church about four years later. After Ghebré's death in 1855, Justin wrote thus of him in his Journal, "(He was) versed in every kind of knowledge and learning of his country. A great teacher of language and of calculating the Calendar and of monastic law of the Oriental discipline, upright and simple in his character. He was always occupied in seeking the true faith until 1840. He never preferred any of the various existing sects of Abyssinia." And writing in 1856 to a Cardinal in Rome, Justin testifies:

"(He) has continually researched by the most severe studies the knowledge of the true faith, clearly demonstrated in the heretical books of the Gi'iz literature which he understood deeply."

This tremendous tenacity he showed in his search for truth can be

reasonably compared to that of John Henry Newman who lived about the same time, though in very different cultural circumstances. Both men exhausted the resources available to them in their own religious traditions and eventually decided that only in the Catholic Church could they find the full, living resources of Christian faith and life. Ghebré became a Catholic in February 1844 while Newman took the same step in October 1845.

Ghebré's tremendous tenacity in his search for truth was finally put to the test of a protracted martyrdom. He endured such sufferings, imprisonments, beatings, interrogations and illnesses that when he died on July 28th 1855 the soldiers who were guarding him wept as they buried his body. One of the soldiers who witnessed his martyrdom, Dejiac Sahlu by name, said some years later, "I have never seen a more courageous man than Abba Ghebré Michael. When everyone out of fear renounced his faith in a cowardly way to embrace that of the king, he alone stood firm and unmoved."

Such solid foundations of his character were undoubtedly laid in the 56 years before his conversion to Catholicism and they bear tribute to the degree of spirituality it was possible to attain within the Ethiopian Church, particularly in the monastic expression of its spirituality. Since the same spiritual resources exist for Ethiopian Christians today, I can only presume that the same degree of spiritual development is likewise possible to them.

40th Report of St. Brigid's Orphanage

John Gowan CM

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Sisters of the Holy Faith, Glasnevin, Dublin)

It is pretty well known that St Brigid's Orphanage was begun by a lady named Margaret Aylward, a native of the city of Waterford. Its foundation was apparently an accident but in reality the work of God. M Aylward had been sick for several years and had no other intention in coming to Dublin about the year '52 but to consult her doctors about a complication of disease that afflicted her. She was naturally a woman of great grasp of mind, uncommon energy of will and, by the grace of God, devoted to works of charity. When she recovered somewhat and was able to go out, she consulted a Jesuit Father regarding the employment of her time. He advised her to take up the sick poor, a species of practical charity very congenial to her. She then founded what St Vincent de Paul calls the "Conferie" (sic), an association of ladies of the world who undertake to visit the sick poor and to help them both as to body and soul. This association, like the other good works of Margaret Aylward, lives and fulfils its mission of mercy unto the present day. Although scarcely able to walk she took her work of visiting regularly. She did not content herself with giving food or clothing or reading a good book. She sat and conversed with the poor till she gained their confidence, and when evil was to be stopped or good done, she had a golden master-key that seldom failed to open hearts. Many a poor family was thus taken out of sin, many also were spurred on to raise themselves from abject poverty. One example will make this clear. Going her rounds she met one day in the early fifties a poor widow who was all but hopelessly sunk in misery. M Aylward, seeing under her rags honesty and talent, asked if she could not embark in some little business. She replied that with a little capital she could do something in the old furniture line. What capital would enable you to begin? About a pound. Here is the pound, and in the name of God begin. That poor woman succeeded so, that, in a few years she had started a shop, and was in the habit of turning over one thousand a year.

It was in this way that M Aylward discovered the great extent to which corrupt proselytism was pushed among very poor Catholic families. She found many Catholic children going to proselytizing schools, and

some in Protestant orphanages and homes, given up altogether by their parents or relations. Poor Catholics stifled their accusing conscience by persuading themselves that the children were too young to be injured by heretical teachings, that in a year or so they would be able to take them back and all would be well. M Aylward had a hard task, first to teach poor Catholics the great sin they were committing; secondly, to provide places of security for faith and morals for these children whose relations could not possibly support and educate them; thirdly, to arouse and enkindle public opinion for, without this, corrupt proselytism could not, humanly speaking, be effectually met and defeated. It is amazing what labour M Aylward underwent, entreating, admonishing, and threatening the poor; procuring places in the few existing orphanages of Dublin for derelict children and trying, by meetings and publications, to stir the Catholic public. Some Catholics treated the whole thing with contempt, others made a joke of it, saying that when Pat got over the hunger he would return to God and his church and make the enemies of his faith a laughing-stock; liberal Catholics, of whom, thank God, there are not many in Ireland, thought they would degrade themselves by fighting the mercenary agents of proselytism. At this distance of time it is not easy to estimate the uphill work that M Aylward had to do. In fact she could not do it without help. Fortunately she had associate ladies who were strong in faith, full of zeal and ready to strike a blow, heedless of human respect. It is just to name some of the more active: Jane O'Hagan, afterwards Mrs Baldwin; Emily Seaver, afterwards Mrs Bowden; the good Mrs O'Connell, who was treasurer; Mrs Scully, who, though English by birth, was always up for strong measures; Anna Campbell, Mrs Mara and Ada Allingham, who was drawn in her early girlhood to the service of the sick poor, became the first helper in St Brigid's Orphanage.

All these early associates in the work of the sick poor are gone to their reward except one who is a Carmelite nun.

These ladies and many others of the same Association performed a great work in their day more than forty years ago; they unearthed corrupt proselytism and forced respectable Catholics to see and believe it. These Catholics knew of course that Bible-readers were going about scattering tracts and repeating texts but, they said, and with truth, that system will defeat itself, but they would not admit that hundreds of Catholic children were domesticated by them, not only imbibing heresy and being saturated with hatred of the faith of their fathers. Mrs Scully was perhaps the most active. She went into their dens, saw and heard what they were doing. The agent, believing that she was a friend, gave her information. She, also with M Aylward, went to their day schools and took the names and addresses of the children as they were leaving school. On one of these occasions the teachers of the Coombe school sent for the police

and charged the two ladies, but the police refused to arrest them. Mrs Scully was thus enabled to turn the proselytising dens inside-out; she got the most part of her experience published and doubters were silenced.

Then came the real tug-of-war, viz: the creation of an opposing system, a Catholic organisation for the protection of the faith of Catholic orphans and destitute children.

The first work of this organisation should obviously be an orphanage. Miss Aylward never contemplated the foundation of an orphanage until circumstance, or rather Divine Providence, obliged her to do it. To grapple with the evil a small orphanage would be of little value. Therefore she proposed to found one that would not stop till five hundred children had been saved. This orphanage she proposed to dedicate to the Most Holy Trinity under the invocation of St Brigid. It may be asked why, of all the great Irish saints, she chose St Brigid. The immediate reason was this; shortly after the great famine a priest (*Fr Gowan himself; ed.*) of her acquaintance happened to spend some time in another country, where he saw and heard the poor Irish relics of the famine derided by contemptuously calling them after our virgin saying, the Mary of Ireland. This priest was shocked and grieved, and vowed that he would try to make the name of St Brigid a name of honour and glory and proposed to call the Orphanage of the Faith after our loved St Brigid.

Here the approbation of the Ecclesiastical Superior was essentially required. Miss Aylward waited on the then Archbishop of Dublin, His Grace the Most Rev Dr Cullen, and begged that he would allow her to begin the work. He hesitated, he would not say yes or no. She waited on him again and again, begging for his permission; still he refused. It might be inferred from this that His Grace was not overmuch concerned for the salvation of his poor children. That would be a great injustice; he felt for those children that were being destroyed by heresy intensely. Why then did he hesitate? He saw what appeared a rash undertaking, an immense orphanage to be founded, depending almost entirely on an invalid who might at any moment be struck down by sickness, and in that case the whole responsibility falling upon him. In this difficulty Miss Aylward applied for advice to her old friend, Dean Dooley, who advised her to go to His Grace and say that if he did not permit her to begin the orphanage she should return the moderate sum of money which she had collected to the owners. The Archbishop, though caring little about money for himself, was very tenacious of what belonged to the Church's charities and thereupon gave his consent.

Scarcely had the orphanage been founded when a very great difficulty arose, viz: the saving of the faith of forty poor foundlings. How they came to be in danger arose from the fact that the law, which empowered the Protestant Vestries of Dublin to take possession of all

the abandoned children found in the different parishes of Dublin and tax the Catholics of Dublin to enable them to rear and educate all these children in heresy, was repealed. But it will be asked how, did Catholic nurses happen to have those children under their charge. The explanation is very simple. The number of these foundlings was very great and they could not procure Protestant nurses for all of them. Hence they gave some of the very young children to Catholic families to bring them into the great Foundling Hospital in James's Street, at the age of six or seven to be grounded well in Protestantism. The Catholic nurses of the county of Wicklow, according to their custom, brought their little foundlings to the priest and had them baptised conditionally, and when they were old enough, taught them the Catholic prayers, brought them to Mass and confession. Now, when the parson and the vestry-men could not tax the people of Dublin they took care to get the opinion of the then attorney-general. "That all children, the religion of whose parents was unknown, should be reared in the religion of the State." Then they gave notice to the Catholic nurses that they could pay them no longer and that they should place the children in the workhouses of Dublin. These poor people, not being able to rear them at their own cost, brought them into town in the year 1857 to place them in the workhouses. Archbishop Cullen hearing this sent a priest to beg of them to take them back to the country until something could be done for them. They waited three weeks, and seeing no prospect of help brought them a second time to Dublin. His Grace again sent the priest to beg of the nurses to keep them a little longer, but nothing having been done they came into town a third time with the children. Miss Aylward, who kept a close watch on them, came to this priest, before seven o'clock in the morning and said, "All the Catholic nurses are in town already or coming into town and the children will surely be lost; what is to be done?" He said, go over to Francis Street, call upon the Parish Priest and bring him with you to meet all those nurses in the different places to which they usually resort, and make him promise that you will pay them for all those children every half-year, early in January and July. Through the good Providence of God the nurses were satisfied and all the children saved. Of course the Archbishop himself could not take charge of the children, and being a Prelate of delicate consideration, did not order Miss Aylward to take charge of them. Those forty poor foundlings have to thank Miss Aylward for the inestimable Blessing of the true faith and of eternal happiness which it may be hoped they secured through that faith.

The important question of how the children should be reared and educated presented itself now for solution. It was considered that young infants and boys might be reared in the country and educated in the country schools; thai the girls should be educated and prepared for the

work of life by nuns. Miss Aylward procured the cooperation of a community of nuns by a great amount of labour and prudent negotiation. (*this is almost certainly a reference to lite Daughters of Charity tint! the foundation at North William Street, Dublin: ed.*) However, plans which look to be very perfect are sometimes not workable: it was so in this case, and after some time it was thought advisable to rear and educate all the children in the country. This system of home-rearing is peculiarly suited to the orphan whom St Brigid receives. These poor weaklings require fresh air and we give them the genial and health-giving atmosphere of Ireland; there they grow up, naturally every year, getting stronger and stronger and more fitted for the life they must lead – a life of labour. But it is not enough to ensure to those children physical manhood and womanhood, it is especially necessary to guard and strengthen them in their moral constitution. For this purpose St Brigid gives them a home – a moral home. For I assert firmly that the homes of the Catholic peasantry of Ireland, wherein the duties of religion are well practised, are the most rural homes to be found in the world. We give them, instead of the parents whom God has taken from them, a foster-father, a foster-mother, and brothers and sisters. We also give them a good education, the greater number attend schools taught by the Sisters of the Holy Faith. O happy child! You have got a new home, new parents, new companions, and every year you spend in that home (the mutual affections grow and increase.

The orphanage so far had met with considerable difficulties and trials and had surmounted them. But now the enemies of the faith seem to have combined with the powers of darkness to destroy St Brigid's work utterly. The occasion was the admission of a child named Mary Mathews, whom her father had committed to the care of Miss Aylward to be reared and educated in the Catholic religion. Miss Aylward was merely carrying out the intentions and will of the dying parent when she took upon herself the charge of the child.

Anyone who is acquainted with the city of Dublin must know that great promises are frequently held out to poor widows to allow their children to be educated in a religion which they themselves condemn. Mrs Mathews, who became a Catholic at her marriage, now yielded to these seductions and came to the orphanage to demand her child. In the meantime Mary Mathews had been taken from the nurse, with whom Miss Aylward had placed her, without her knowledge, and when asked for the child she was able to declare that she never gave permission to anyone to take away the child and that it was quite impossible for her to restore it.

After a worrying trial Miss Aylward was sentenced to six month's imprisonment in Grangegorman.

What, it may be asked, became of Mary Mathews?

A Catholic; gentleman, who was interested in the case, took her from the nurse, without Miss Aylward's knowledge, and brought her to the continent. She received her education in a Belgian convent, and afterwards became a professed member of the community.

I cannot close this notice without saying that the great Pius XI, when he heard of Miss Aylward's imprisonment and the circumstances that led to it, pronounced her to be a Confessor of the Faith. The Primate of all Ireland, the late Dr Dixon, being in Rome during her imprisonment, was commissioned by the Holy Father to wait on her in person and convey to her the Apostolic Benediction. The Pope, reflecting a moment, said to the Primate. "We must send her a present", and standing up he opened his cabinet, took out a beautiful cameo, a head of St Peter cut in a precious stone and set in gold. "Ah!", said he, "La poveretta, give her this little present from me."

It is only necessary to add that Miss Aylward outlived, though with broken health, all this worry, and on the 5th May, the festival of St Pius V, at nine o'clock in the morning left the prison, having completed her six months to the last hour, walked down to Eccles Street and resumed her work of the Orphanage.

Homily preached on June 26th, 1999 To mark the move to a new Vincentian Residence in Sunday's Well, Cork

Brian Magee CM

The outstanding person in our readings today is the Shunamite woman. The story is a lovely one of a growing recognition by the woman that Elisha is a holy man of God. To be a holy man in her time mean that the person is a bearer of God's word. But word is not just in correct teaching, rather it is in expressing God's love and faithfulness, it is active word in that it brings a change into human lives. As another woman said of Elijah: "The word of the Lord in your mouth is truth".

It is because the Shunamite woman recognises this that she gives Elisha hospitality. Her wealth has not made her mean, she shares generously what the Lord has given her.

We tell this story today to illustrate the words of Jesus in the Gospel. He sees hospitality for those who come in the name of the Lord as hospitality for God himself.

This evening we are having a parish celebration. All celebration involves looking at the past in the light of the present with a view to the future.

We look back and recall; we remember especially the welcome of the people of Cork for the early Vincentians. They certainly welcomed them as men who gave the word of God in truth: and in so doing welcomed the Lord among them. Successive priests of the Mission came here over the next 125 years and all would say they found the welcome of the Cork people a heartfelt one. It would be significant that the priests welcomed here were accepted for their priestly mission, not for their personal qualities. The deep faith of the people made them open to God's word that came even in the accents of Dublin and Kerry, Armagh and Kildare. This close relationship of priests and people bore fruit

The question that the prophet Elisha asked; "What can be done for her?" was asked also by these men about the local people; What can be done for them?

Well, over the years the work of community formation, through Confraternities, drama groups, through choirs and musicals, gave the people self-confidence and local pride. Through their own local schools they were encouraged to see education as the key to a better way of life. And always the focal point was the church here; St Vincent's gave its

name to streets and roads, to sporting clubs and schools. Historians and sociologists will in time write the history of all this and describe the change that came gradually over a century.

Then they will analyse why suddenly in the middle of this century the pace of change accelerated. Generation gaps got narrower; values were not assimilated in the slow and patient way as once they were. Things went so fast that many went off track or lost their sense of direction.

Tonight marks another moment of change in the history of this area.

We look to the future. And again we ask the question; What can be done for them? How can we go together into a new millennium with the faith of our ancestors living still? How can we give a welcome to the prophets in our midst who enable us to see God's truth?

The woman showed her hospitality by giving Elisha a place to live: a table, a chair, a lamp. From the beginning the people of Cork generously provided a place to live for the Vincentians. There was indeed the bed and table and chair, and much else. But what about the lamp?

It has often been said to me by people in the city hospitals how at night they look out and see St Vincent's here on the hill with its tower lights shining out and how it has been a comfort to them.

This church was built at a dark time in our country's history. It was seen as a support, a comfort for those who had little else. But now in these times of prosperity and national self-confidence, we can ask; What light now guides us? Can the faith which formed the parents and grandparents of all gathered here still play a vital part in our lives? What flame of faith still flickers in our lives? The people who walk in the light of the Lord are indeed happy, our psalm says tonight.

The Shunamite woman saw the visits to her home by Elisha as signs of God's love and faithfulness. Whatever about all the changes around us we know, as the psalm sings, that the steadfast love of the Lord lasts forever. Our task for the new millennium is to light new lamps of truth and goodness so that all our people will again come to welcome the word of the Lord.

Then, no matter what the physical changes all around us, we will still be faithful to the vision of those Vincentians who first preached the word of God here.

The Teacher's Teacher; An interview with Fr Donal Cregan CM

First published in *Léargas*, November 1967

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The Institute of Public Administration, Landsdown Rd., Dublin 4.

Léargas: Father Cregan, what was your chief concern in starting the new *Irish Journal of Education*!

Fr Cregan: I was concerned with the simple fact that, apart from *The European Teacher* whose scope is somewhat different, Ireland produced no independent journal which dealt with all aspects of education at an academic level. The implications of this were many and serious. It meant, in the first place, that we had no independent platform from which the problems of education in the modern world – not merely specifically Irish ones – could be aired. Such a journal, I thought, would stimulate thought and discussion and create informed opinion, which is so necessary in times of change. This informed opinion can be created partly by an examination of the way in which those engaged in education abroad are coping with problems similar to our own. I felt, too, that the extent to which educational problems were not being discussed in Ireland at a high academic level was the measure of our own lack of professionalism, and this concerned me very much indeed. I don't say that this is going to cure all these ills, but at any rate I feel we must do what we can.

Léargas: If the standard of the first volume is to be maintained, do you think you will find enough Irish material or enough writers interested in Irish education, to give the Journal a distinctively Irish character and importance? Would the lack of such materials and writers affect the object of the Journal?

Fr Cregan: At first, I think, we shall have to rely largely on contributions from other countries: fortunately, we have wide contacts abroad. But as the serious study of education in this country expands – and to this we hope the journal will contribute – we may expect that the number of Irish contributors will increase. Perhaps there is an analogy here with Parkinson's Law! However, we would never wish that the journal should have a distinctively Irish character in the sense that all the contributors should be Irish and that all the topics covered should deal with specifically Irish situations. This would be almost tantamount to assuming that

an Irish journal of chemistry should confine itself to distinctively Irish chemical problems [laughing]. If Irish chemists were to ignore the contributions of chemists abroad I suspect that chemistry in this country would be very much the poorer. Seriously, however, young people are basically the same the world over and we cannot afford to ignore accumulated knowledge concerning, for example, the development of the child, new methods of teaching and educational thinking generally.

Léargas: There is an Educational Research unit in St Patrick's College, but none in the universities. Why has this come about, and how would you like to see research into Education expanded?

Fr Cregan: The existence of an Educational Research unit in the College is due to the fact that for some years we had been looking for one and the Department of Education undertook to finance it. I should like to see research into education expanded here in the college and also in the universities. One of the functions of an educational institution is the active pursuit of truth and this is accomplished partly by means of research. There is, too, a clear connection between good teaching and research; the one invigorates the other. A government department of education is in the unique position of being able to provide essential data for the educational researcher such as it did in the excellent report of Professor Patrick Lynch and his team, entitled *Investment in Education*, which was sponsored by OECD. There is always the need for basic research into fundamental psychological areas whose relevance may not be immediately apparent. This type of research must never be pushed aside because of the urgent need to provide answers to practical problems posed by teachers and administrators. What I am saying therefore is that research must expand in two directions, fundamental and applied. The precise problems to be investigated then will depend on the theoretical orientation of the research worker as well as the requirements of the educational system.

Léargas: What is lacking most for research: interest, finance or qualified people? How can this be remedied?

Fr Cregan: The greatest need is for trained personnel. One could almost count the number of our fully trained educational researchers on the fingers of one hand.

Léargas: Education in Ireland has always been a private enterprise, more specifically, a religious one: do you have any reservation about the increasingly dominant role of the State in education?

Fr Cregan: Speaking in very general terms I should say that education in Ireland has been a private enterprise and more specifically a religious one only in the secondary sector and there the reason was historical necessity. I welcome without reservation the State's increased recognition of its obligation towards the education of our children. I would, however, be concerned if the state's more liberal financial support were to be accompanied by illiberal policies towards the workers in the field. Increased government support should mean greater, not less, freedom for the teacher. A responsible citizenry will emerge only from schools in which teachers and children (according to their age and capacity) are treated as responsible persons.

Léargas: We hear a good deal about the desirability of unifying the teaching profession. Do you think that this would be a good idea?

Fr Cregan: Obviously, education would benefit if there were much more contact between teachers at different levels. To separate teachers into three distinct compartments' primary, post primary and third level, is quite unsound. All teachers share certain common problems and all are dealing with the same human persons at different stages in their development. Fundamentally, then, I think the profession should be a unified one. In the education and training of teachers I think there should be a basic area of study common to all teachers with a different balance between professional and academic subjects for the different types of teacher. I believe, of course, that all teachers should have an opportunity of taking university degrees during their period of preparation for the profession and that there should be the possibility of easier transfer from one level to another.

Léargas: Is there not also a significant radical division between clerical and lay teachers, a division which tends to frustrate the initiative and ambition of some of the profession?

Fr Cregan: I would think that many teachers feel this. In the past, especially in secondary education, this division was generally due to economic reasons: a lay person simply could not afford to set up a school. With more generous state provision and with the general breakdown of barriers between laity, clergy and religious, I very much hope, and indeed I believe, that in the future the ambition and initiative of the laity will have more scope. I would, for instance, envisage nuns, priests and brothers teaching in schools under lay control and I think, in fact, that a great many of them would very much welcome this development.

Léargas: Are you worried about the secularisation of education in general?

Fr. Cregan: I am no more worried about the secularization of affairs which were partly in religious hands than I am by the clericalisation of things secular! Actually, in a great many ways I think that the distinction between clergy and laity in the Church will tend, to some extent, to disappear. This is part of the theory of the 'People of God'. I sympathize with the desire of the laity to take a more active part in church affairs. I envisage them as not only interesting themselves in the day-to-day problems of church affairs but as taking a more active part in the church's spiritual apostolate. For example, I think the laity will become more active in the foreign mission field. Many protestant communities, notably the Methodists, were a century ahead of us here.

Now the involvement of the laity in the affairs of the Church will inevitably reduce the work of the priest. In spite of appearances to the contrary, there is quite an amount of talent among the clergy and religious and they cannot be reduced almost to inactivity [laughing]. If the laity are going to mix themselves up in religious affairs, as we should hope them to do, then nuns, priests and brothers must inevitably involve themselves more in lay affairs. There will, therefore, be a two-way traffic with barriers broken down. Now there is no more appropriate way in which religious can involve themselves in secular pursuits than by placing themselves at the service of the community in the domain of education. But in education, of course, they must neither ask for privileges nor be denied equality.

Léargas: In a very general way would you like to say the kind of things you would wish to see taking place in Irish education?

Fr Cregan: I would, of course, like to see every child in the country, irrespective of its parents' financial means, provided with the education best suited to the development of its character and abilities (obviously this does not mean that every child should receive exactly the same education). To do this, a radical reform of the school curriculum, primary and post-primary, would be necessary. The curriculum of our schools, especially the primary schools, is much too academic and too narrow in its scope and content. It concentrates too much on memory work and book learning and does not seek to involve children in activities which are valuable in developing the child's personality. The last major revision of the primary school curriculum was undertaken more than forty years ago. Since then a new Ireland and a new world have evolved for which we ought to be preparing our children: instead we are still educating

them for a vanished world of half a century ago. A curriculum, however, needs to be kept constantly under review. If children were more actively involved in the learning process it would change both the young people produced by our educational system and also the teachers themselves. The curriculum imposed on the Irish teacher is such that he almost inevitably thinks of himself as one possessed of information which he must somehow communicate to his class. Consequently Irish children, primary and post-primary, are almost passive in the educational process. And to the extent to which they are passive they are not being educated but indoctrinated. Rarely are they asked to think for themselves, to judge for themselves, to make decisions for themselves and surely this is what education is all about.

Donal Cregan: Historian, Educator and Priest

Thomas Kellaghan
Educational Research Centre
St Patrick's College, Dublin

Delivered as a Round Table presentation at the Conference
'Catholics and Confederates':
A Conference Celebrating the Life and Work of Donal F Cregan
March 26-27, 1999

I have some difficulty in addressing one of Donal Cregan's *personae*, whether it be that of historian, priest, or the one on which I have been asked to speak, educator. I can see the logic of the categorisation, but it seems a bit atomistic. I knew Donal Cregan as a colleague and friend, one in whom the various roles he played were not clearly distinguished, where the *Gestalt* was much, much, more than the sum of its parts. If you lose sight of this, you lose sight of the man – how he functioned, how his experience as a historian affected his views of education, how his experience as an educator coloured his interests and approaches to history. Thus, his interest in the educational background of his historical characters is probably more than coincidence. On the other hand, his historical interest found expression in education in the centrality he accorded the arts, exemplified by the introduction of symphony concerts to the college and his display of Irish art on the walls students passed every day. His commitment to priesthood underlay everything he did. He was not a typical priest of mid- to late-20th century Ireland: how could he be, and fill the many roles that fell to his lot in life? But he had a clear vision of the implications of his priesthood for every aspect of his life, much of which was spent in the secular city, something he did with great ease. But that did not compromise in any way his values or vision of life.

In considering his contributions during his life, and his legacy to future generations, it is possible to distinguish between his involvements in history and in education. History was clearly his first love and, probably, if he had been free to choose, he would have devoted his life to it. His commitment to education was less an individual choice, though it was probably implied in his decision early in life to join the Congregation of the Mission, which had a considerable involvement

in second- and third-level education in this country. As things turned out, administrative duties in education dominated his life: as president of his old school Castleknock College from 1950 to 1957, and then as president of St Patrick's College from 1957 to 1976, a period that also included two years (1973-75) as professor of education at University College Dublin. Except for a number of years spent teaching history in Castleknock early in his career and a period (1969-71) as president of the Irish Historical Society, he held no position as a historian until, after his retirement from St Patrick's College, he was appointed in 1977 to chair the Irish Historical Manuscripts Commission. However, despite his administrative duties, which many people might have regarded an adequate burden for any one man, he maintained his interest in history throughout his life, continued his reading, research, and writing, and providing guidance for young students who showed an interest in the 17th century. I don't think he ever considered himself an educationist in the academic sense. While the positions he occupied and the decisions he had to make, particularly ones relating to provision for the education of teachers, inevitably meant that educational matters occupied much of his thinking, he wrote little on the topic. His testament for the most part has to be inferred from his actions, though his limited writings and interviews do provide insights into his values and aspirations for education.

Father Cregan's most obvious contribution to education was in the sphere of building. When he took office as president of St Patrick's College, the buildings consisted of the beautiful 18th century Belvedere House and several buildings to the north which had been added at the end of the last century, following movement of the college to its present site in 1883.⁽¹⁾ The buildings, which comprised lecture halls, dormitories, and a chapel, did not meet the standards one would expect in a third-level educational institution in the middle of the twentieth century.

Soon after Father Cregan's arrival, planning commenced for the renovation of existing buildings and the construction of new ones. In commenting on the transformed buildings, which had taken shape by 1966, and which included residences, a chapel, auditorium, gymnasium, administration block, and dining hall, the Incorporated Association of Architects and Surveyors noted that 'the dominating factor in the minds of both client and the architect has been the real needs of the students and staff' and concluded that the end result 'must help appreciably in developing the education and cultural standards of future teachers' ⁽²⁾

The physical renovation of the college was not, as the citation of the Incorporated Association indicates, an end in itself. On coming to the college, Donal Cregan, as T. J. McElligott has pointed out, faced a situation in which students' preparation for teaching was 'in an atmosphere little different from that of a boarding school and subject to the same

irksome restrictions. It was monastic in its insistence on the observance of times for rising and sleeping, for meals and leisure. The curriculum was limited and the arts largely ignored'.⁽³⁾ Donal Cregan's objective in the reconstruction of the college, physically and culturally, was to change all that.

Donal Cregan placed a major emphasis on personal development as the goal of education. Not for him the Instrumentalist or Napoleonic view that the purpose of education is to control the masses, or the current popular objective of meeting manpower requirements in the economy. For him education should free, not enslave, and while he recognised that it should also contribute to the preparation of students to fill their varying roles in society, this he believed should be done by developing potential, not by social engineering. His belief in the importance of personal development received concrete expression in his arguments for a university degree for student teachers, which had a successful outcome in 1974, and in the structure of that degree which involved studying to full degree level a humanities discipline, together with education (4).

In addition to his contributions to mainstream teacher education, Donal Cregan established in 1961 a course for teachers of children with learning difficulties to provide graduates for the growing number of special schools and special classes in primary schools throughout the country.

In the 1960s also, he realised that institutional arrangements for research in education needed to be substantially improved. Though great changes were occurring in education at the time, and were set to continue, Irish-based research was not available that might provide information on educational needs, how those might be met, or how approaches to meeting needs impacted on the educational, economic, and social systems of the country. The establishment of the Educational Research Centre in 1966 was intended to address these issues.

Father Cregan also saw a need for disseminating the findings of research and for bringing to the notice of the public, and particularly of teachers, information on educational developments in other countries. To meet this need, he founded *The Irish Journal of Education*, which when it published its first issue in 1967, joined *Studia Hibernica*, first published in 1961, as the second journal he had started. His commitment to fostering open and critical discussion of education was also exemplified in the series of public lectures he organised in the 1960s, with speakers from Britain, the United States, and Germany attracting large attendances.

Through all these activities, Donal Cregan's extraordinary immersion in history continued. He considered Europe his home and heritage, long before free movement between the countries of the Union became

a reality. And his vision of Europe was not confined to the countries of to-day's Union. Prague was a favourite city and, on one of his visits there, he spoke about John Amos Comenius, one of the few educators he wrote about. One of the things that attracted him to Comenius was that he saw in his theory and practice an anticipation of the interests and concerns of the modern world. He also empathised with Comenius' vision of teaching 'all things to all men.' Education for Donal Cregan, as for Comenius, was not to be the prerogative of one class, but should be available to the poor, no less than to the rich; to girls, no less than to boys; to children in remote rural areas, no less than to those in cities and towns; and to the handicapped and slow learner, no less than to the academically gifted (5).

Donal loved central Europe, especially Vienna, the home of the Hapsburgs (whom he admired), with its orgy of Baroque buildings and its associations with Mozart and Beethoven. Among his favourite novels were Lampedusa's *The Leopard* and Thornton Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, reflecting his empathy with Latin Europe and Latin America. One of his favourite paintings was also Latin-Velazquez's portrait of Innocent X, with its brilliant crimson, powerful head, and imperceptible brush marks that signalled the end of Tiziano's influence and the beginning of a move that would eventually culminate in nineteenth century impressionism.

Donal's familiarity with European traditions of music, art, literature, and architecture was astonishing. In his observations and conversations, past and present merged. I remember his joy in observing Gian Lorenzo Bernini's figures in the spectacular Fountain of the Four Rivers in the Piazza Navona, shielding their eyes so that they would not have to look at the church of S Agnese in Agone, the troubled creation of Bernini's melancholic and irascible rival, Francesco Borromini. And how, on admiring the Obelisk in St Peter's Square, he recalled the story of ropes beginning to sever as it was being erected, and someone shouting just in time 'Throw water on the ropes', to ensure not only the erection of the monument, but also to change the course of his own life as he savoured a reward for his intervention, being turned overnight from a workman into a nobleman, proving that the ideas of meritocracy and social mobility were not the invention of 20th century sociologists.

On another occasion I walked with him through the burial vault of the Hapsburgs in the Capuchin Church in Vienna where he behaved as if he were visiting friends, telling me that the tomb we were now looking at contained the niece, or grandmother, or mistress of the person we had 'visited' a few minutes earlier.

In a similar somewhat surrealist situation, I remember one evening in St Patrick's College, Donal in conversation with fellow historians and

friends, which included Dudley Edwards and Desmond Williams, discussing the bishops of 17th century Ireland, their origins, education, and relatives, and the influences they had used to secure their preferment, with an immediacy and intimacy that one might have associated only with talking about one's contemporaries.

Yet again, musing on the fog and humidity in Lima de Peru, I remember him speculating, that if there had been adequate consumer protection in 16th century Latin America, would the Quechua Indians have got away with pawning off such an unhealthy place, surrounded by coastal desert and overshadowed by the Andes, on the hapless Francisco Pizarro and friends.

While obviously steeped in history in his thoughts and interests, Donal Cregan was also remarkably modern and forward looking, a futurist anticipating needs and developments. He rejected the view of some traditional exponents of a liberal education that the classics and history belong to 'culture', and that science does not. He also had great respect for contemporary behavioural and social sciences, and what they could contribute to education – more perhaps than some social scientists have. I was surprised that he liked North America, though not admittedly as much as Latin America, probably because Latin America retains much more of its European heritage than its northern neighbours.

He would certainly have rejected labels, but it is possible to think of him as an early feminist when he welcomed young women into the college for the first time in 1972 and, when the desirability of prescribing a dress code was being discussed, quickly concluded the discussion by saying he had every confidence in the judgments the young women would make themselves about how they dressed. He also, on more than one occasion, expressed surprise that male religious thought that they were competent to regulate the lives of female religious.

His observations on, and prescriptions for, what goes on in schools also anticipated future developments. In an expression of dissatisfaction with the situation in Irish schools, a situation incidentally endorsed in the 1954 Report of the Council of Education (on the function and curriculum of the primary school) (6) Donal, in an interview published in the Institute of Public Administration periodical *Léargas* in 1967, voiced the view that pupils were being educated in an environment in which they were rarely asked to think for themselves, to judge for themselves, or to make decisions for themselves (7). Elsewhere, he remarked on the irony that the word 'school' was derived from a Greek word meaning leisure (8). He saw a need for radical reform of the curriculum, to bring about a situation in which teachers and students would be treated as responsible individuals, and in which students would be actively involved in the education process. Can we see here a foreshadowing of the current

preoccupation of education reform movements to improve students' higher-order thinking skills and problem-solving abilities, or even of constructivist views of learning?

I started with the idea of Donal Cregan as a person, but I doubt if I have conveyed to those of you who did not know him, what he really was like. The picture I have tried to paint suggests an intellectual, which he was, a historian, which he was, an educator, which he was, an innovator, which he was, a man steeped in his cultural heritage but one very much in tune with the times he lived in. But he was more than all these things. Those of you who did know him could add much about his simplicity, his humanity, his tolerance, his compassion. They will know that he was equally at home in west Limerick talking to 'strong' farmers as at high table in an Oxford college, not only because he could identify with the interests of people he met in any situation, but because he respected everyone, and people intuitively recognised that. Not only those who were privileged to know him, but all involved in Irish education, now and for many years to come, can be grateful that his answer to the call to serve resulted in such a long and fruitful career.

Notes

1. T Ó Ceallaigh, Coláiste Phadraig, St Patrick's College. Centenary Booklet 1875-1975. Dublin: St Patrick's College.
2. Cited in T Ó Ceallaigh.
3. T J McElligott, *This Teaching Life. A Memoir of Schooldays in Ireland*. Mullingar: Lilliput Press, 1986. P.134.
4. See D F Cregan, Education and the University. In *Contemporary Developments in University Education VI*. Dublin: Academic Staff Association, University College Dublin, 1971.
5. D F Cregan, "The Relevance of Comenius for Our Age". *Revue Internationale des Etudes Comeniologiques*, 1972, 3, 47-49.
6. Report of the Council of Education as Presented to the Minister for Education. (1) The Function of the Primary School. (2) The Curriculum to be Pursued in the Primary School from the Infant Age up to 12 Years of Age. Dublin: Stationery Office, 1954.
7. The Teacher's Teacher. Interview with Father Donal Cregan. *Léargas* (Public Affairs Review), November 1967, No 11, 2-3.
8. D F Cregan, The Irish System of Education. (Paper Read at University College Cork, 28th February 1965). *Castleknock College Annual*, 1965, 1-12.

A Letter of Edmund Barry CM (1613-1680)

Thomas Davitt CM

In Sant' Isidore, the Irish Franciscan college in Rome, among the papers of Luke Wadding OFM (1588-1657), the founder of the college, is a letter written by an Edmund Barry in 1653 from Richelieu. I wrote to the librarian and received a very clear enlarged photocopy of it. In the index to the 1957 Wadding tercentenary commemorative volume (1) Barry is described as "sec. pr", but he signs himself as a priest of the mission.

The letter has been published three times that I know of, by Patrick F Moran in 1874 (2), by Brendan Jennings OFM in 1950 (3), and by Mary Purcell (4). Neither Moran nor Jennings, understandably, looks at the specifically Vincentian links of the letter. It is printed below with permission.

The letter is written in English and the addressee is not mentioned by name. I look at the question of the addressee below, after the text of the letter.

Edmund Barry was born on 24 June 1613 in the diocese of Cloyne. He was ordained priest in Cahors in 1639 and entered the Congregation of the Mission in St Lazare, Paris, on 21 July 1641. He may have heard of Vincent de Paul from Alain de Solminihac, who was appointed bishop of Cahors in 1636 and who figures very prominently in Vincent's correspondence from 1633 onwards.

Barry remained in St Lazare till 1646, when he was appointed to the mission team being sent to Ireland by Vincent. Most members of the team were back in France by the end of 1649. After giving missions in the diocese of Cashel two of the priests of the team, Barry and Gerard Brin, from Cashel, were in Limerick in early 1650. In April 1650 Vincent wrote to Brin there and thanked him for the news he had received (IV 15). This shows that letters were getting through in each direction. Unfortunately we do not have the letter(s) from Brin to Vincent. On 21 December 1651 Vincent tells Lambert aux Couteaux, the CM superior in Warsaw, that it is believed that Barry and Brin have died, indicating that news from Ireland was still reaching Paris (IV 288-291). Three months later, on 22 March 1652, he had better news for Lambert, telling him that Brin and Barry had escaped from Limerick. Brin, along with the Vicar General of Cashel, headed for Cashel. Barry headed for "some mountains which he names" and was sheltered there for a period

before getting back to France. Vincent says that Barry is in Nantes at the moment of writing (IV 340-343). There is a local tradition that Barry stayed in the neighbourhood of O'Callaghan's Mills in Co. Clare, and this tradition was honoured some years ago when the church there was renovated and St Vincent de Paul was named as an additional titular. On 3 May Vincent tells Lambert that there is still no news of Brin (IV 379). Brin did in fact get back to France and was in Dax, preparing to give a mission in the neighbourhood, when Vincent wrote to him there on 22 September 1652. Brin, understandably, had wished to see Vincent and had proposed going to Paris via Nantes or La Rochelle. Vincent tells him that the roads are too dangerous, and says also (that Barry had been in Nantes and had wanted to come to Paris to see him but he could not, again because of the state of the roads. Vincent had advised him to go to Richelieu "where he now is" (IV 481-4).

In the transcript which follows Barry's own English, Latin and French spelling is retained, as also is his punctuation and use and non-use of capital letters. He obviously had particular trouble in deciding whether the words *priest* – and *friend* were spelt with *ie* or *ei*, and in some cases after he had written the vowels in one sequence he altered them to the other, not always correctly. Where he used conventional abbreviations for some Latin and French words T have inserted the omitted letters in square brackets. He did not put any accents on the French words at the end of the letter. At the top of the letter he did not insert the day of July.

+

Pax Xti

From Richelieu the of July
1653

Rd father

And much honored friend one of my dearest friends being resolved to returne for Ireland, together with another goode preiste and expose their lifes to healpe our poore catholickes, have earnestly desired me to write unto your Reverence in their behalfe and intreate you to procure such faculties for both as you thinke requisitte to worke in our lord's harvest in the realrne of Ireland. England and Scotland. They can scarce find any Bishoppe in any of those three kingdomes from whome they may derive authorilie. wherefore i pray goode freinde doe your possible to obtaine from his holynesse for them (5) such faculties as followeth (6); 1° power to absolve ab o[mn]libus casibus reservatis el Censuris tarn a iure quam ab homine. 2° to administer all sacraments usually administered by parish preistes, et hoc in terra papali. 3° to

dispense in gradibus (7) prohibitis. 4° Commutandi voia simplicia etiam officium canonicum in itinere et in partibus hereicorum. 5° to dispense super fructibus bonorum ecclesie male perceptis, benediciendi indumenta sacerdotalia. et altare portatile si fieri potest, concedendi indulgentiam plenariam iis quos reconciliaverint, et iis (8) quorum confessionem generalem exceperint. Concedendi Ap[osto]licam benedictionem in articulo mortis, and such others as you thinke *fine*. I expecte (hat favour from your bontie and charitie, and will hould il as donne unto my selfe. The one is named fa: Geralt Geraldin Cluonensis doctour in divinitie and a speciall friend of my lord Bishoppe of Corcke. The other fa: James Geraldin Artfertensis (9). They had charge of soules heretofore in Ireland. Both are very learned men and irre-prochable in their lifes. If your reverence can obtaine these faculties for them I pray cause them to be written in somme litle thinne parchment which may be so safely fowlded up in their dub lets, and directe it unto monsieur des espineties Chesneau banquier derneurant a l'entree de la fosse pres la porte St Nicolas a Nantes pour fairetenir a monsieur Geraldin preltre hybernoiset docteur en theologie demeurant dans la mesme ville (10).

The newes I heare from Ireland are that there is noe hope of accommodation or libertie of conscience for the poore catholickes there, those of the Irish armie who forced us to render the cittie of Limericke unto the ennemyes (11) upon soe base conditions, were hanged at Corcke vide: Coll. Ed: Pencil, and leut. Coll. William Bourke of Brittas. All the clergie were banished to very fare; as I am informed there is the matter of three score of those exiled preistes for the present at Nantes. Litle James Strich wrote unto me of late from St Malos. He tels me his mother, greatmother, bretheren, sisters, and uncles remaineth in a litle Island upon the river of Limericke caled Aghnish. His uncle Patrick Strich dyed four dayes after his arrival! to Si Malos. You have beene informed I beleeve of your Cousin James Creagh fitzAndrew his death and his daughter Mary (12). I would wish you had there one of Thomas Strich his children to be presented to some Cardinal. I reste

your affectionatte freinde
and humble servant to
commande
Ed: Barry preiste
unworthy of the Mission

I should be very glad to heare from you, when you be pleased to write unto me, you may give your letters unto the Supr. of the mission there,

with whome I would you had acquaintance. He is a speciall friend of mine and very goode (13).

There are two inscriptions on the back of the letter, in another hand. Each is at the top of one of the folds of the letter.

Rx . 8 Aug. 1653

fa. Edmund Barry
e
fa. Gerald Brin

Some points about the letter need clarification.

To whom was it addressed?

The addressee is not mentioned in the letter. It was obviously written to an Irish priest in Rome, almost certainly a priest from Limerick. He is a cousin of James Creagh fitzAndrew and is given snippets of local Limerick news. This priest was in a position to obtain the faculties requested, and also, apparently, would be in a position to introduce one of Thomas Stritch's children to a cardinal. Finally, the addressee is a "much honoured friend" of Barry. Unfortunately all these pieces of evidence so far have not produced a definite identification of the addressee.

When Moran printed the letter in 1874 he did not make any mention of the addressee.

Was the letter addressed to Luke Wadding? It is preserved among the Wadding papers in Sant' Isidore, and I wonder why; perhaps the addressee passed it on to Wadding for him to deal with the request. In the Wadding tercentenary volume the letter is mentioned in a section headed "Letters to Wadding", but the editor of this section put [to Wadding?] after mentioning it. Mary Purcell states, in 1973, without any reservation, that it was to Wadding. But it would not seem that Wadding meets the requirements mentioned above.

Brendan Jennings ofm in 1950 states that the letter was to Fr Gerald O Brin (14). I do not think that this is at all probable. It would seem unlikely that Barry would presume that Brin had gone to Rome. Brin knew, in December 1652, from Vincent's letter referred to above, that Barry was in Richelieu. So it is likely that by July 1653 Barry would have known where Brin was. Finally, the whole tone of the letter does

not seem to be that of a letter to a fellow-Vincentian, especially the reference in the postscript to the Vincentian superior in Rome.

Who was the CM superior in Rome mentioned in the postscript?

The superior in Rome in 1653, referred to in Barry's postscript, was Thomas Berthe. Vincent nominated Rene Almeras as his preferred successor as superior general, but in view of Almeras' poor health in 1660 he nominated Berthe as his second choice. Berthe was born in 1622 and entered the CM in Saint Lazare in November 1640. Edmund Barry was born in the diocese of Cloyne in 1613. He was ordained in Cahors in 1639 and entered the CM in Saint Lazare on 21 July 1641, eight months after Berthe. They would therefore have been in the internal seminary together for more than a year. Barry remained in Saint Lazare till he left for Ireland in 1646; Berthe was ordained that year. In a legal document dated 11 December 1679, in the French National Archives in Paris (S 6708), Barry is described as a doctor of theology. In 1653, while Barry was in Richelieu, Emerand Bajoue CM, the superior of the seminary of the diocese of Montauban asked Vincent to send Barry to the seminary (IV 583). The seminary moved from Montech first to Nôtre Dame de Lorm and then to Montauban itself. Barry was on the staff from 1653 till his death in 1680, being superior 1657-64 and again 1675-80. It is quite likely, therefore, that he also taught theology in Saint Lazare up till 1646, with Berthe as one of his students.

The additions on the back of the letter.

I wonder who wrote "fa: Edmund Barry e fa: Gerald o Brin" on the back of the letter, and why. "e" is the Italian for "and", so why would an Irishman write the two names in this form on the back of a letter in English, and why put Erin's name there anyway? Perhaps the addressee, or Wadding, passed the letter on to Propaganda, where they would know of the return of Barry and Brin from Ireland shortly before the date of this letter. In 1653 Brin was superior in Notre Dame de la Rose. In a letter to Propaganda, between 1652 and 1654, Vincent proposes Brin, Thomas Lumsden and John [Mc]Ennery as missionaries to be sent to the Scottish highlands and the Hebrides (IV 493-4). Perhaps someone else was toying with the idea of Barry accompanying Brin.

Why was Barry requesting faculties for two non-Vincentian Irish priests?

A possible answer to this would seem to be that one of the priests was from Cloyne, as was Barry, and is referred to in the letter as one of Barry's "dearest friends". The letter is addressed to a priest who is Barry's "much honoured friend", and who is in a position to obtain the desired faculties.

Notes

1. *Father Luke Wadding, Commemorative Volume*, edited by the Franciscan Fathers, Dún Mhuire, Killiney. Dublin, Clonmore & Reynolds, 1957, 652 pp. The Barry letter is referred to in an article by Benignus Millet OFM "Guide to Material for a Biography of Father Luke Wadding" on page 261. This is in section (B) of the article, headed "Letters to Wadding", but the author puts [to Wadding?] after his mention of the letter.
2. Moran, Patrick Francis: *Specilegium Ossoriense*, First Series, Dublin 1874, pp 402-404.
3. Jennings, Brendan: "Miscellaneous Documents III 1602-1715", in *Archivium Hibernicum*, Vol. XV, 1950, pp. 25-26.
4. Purcell, Mary: *The Story of the Vincentians*, Dublin, 1973, pp. 28-29.
5. "for them" was inserted in the margin.
6. The Latin expressions in the five requests mean: 1° from all reserved cases and censures, whether reserved by law or by man; 2° and this in the papal territory; 3° in forbidden degrees; 4° commutating simple vows and also the divine office when travelling and in lands of the heretics; 5° as regards ecclesiastical property illegally received, blessing priestly vestments, and a portable altar if possible, granting a plenary indulgence to those whom they have absolved and to those whose general confession they have heard, granting the Apostolic Blessing for the moment of death.
With regard to 2°, it should be noted that parts of Ireland at that time were under papal jurisdiction. Even today, the Pope, as well as being Bishop of Rome is also Bishop of Kilfenora; the latter diocese is administered on his behalf by the Bishop of Galway and Kilmacduagh.
7. The words "in gradibus" were written twice, and then the second pair was crossed out.
8. The word "iis" was inserted above the line.
9. Cluonensis is the diocese of Cloyne, and Artfertensis, correctly Ardfertensis, is the diocese of Ardfert, a former small diocese in Kerry.
10. Monsieur des Epinettes Chesneau, banker, living at the entry to the channel beside the St Nicolas Gate in Nantes, to be delivered to Monsieur Geraldin, an Irish priest and doctor of theology, living in the same town.
11. The words "unto the ennemeyes" were inserted above the line.
12. Abelly says that the mayor of Limerick, Thomas Strich, was killed by the Cromwellians (Livre II, ch. 1, p. 154). Perhaps little James Strich was his son, or grandson since Barry mentions Strich's mother, grandmother, brothers, sisters and uncles, but not his father or grandfather. "Little" might suggest grandson. Much of our knowledge about the mission to Ireland comes from Abelly. After the 1661 General Assembly the new superior general, René Alméras, commissioned Louis Abelly to write a biography of Vincent. He had known Vincent since about 1625, and in preparing his book he had access to the letters written to Vincent by the missionaries who had been in Ireland; unfortunately none of these letters have survived. Just when he had finished his book Abelly was appointed bishop of Rodez, in June 1664.

13. The subscription to the letter was written in short lines in the centre of the page, as printed above. This postscript was then written in smaller script in the resulting blank space to the left.
14. *Ut supra*, p. 25.