COLLOQUE

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Contents

Editorial

Early Summer 2000 saw the members of this Province gather together for the Provincial Assembly in All Hallows'. The opening address of the Provincial, Kevin Rafferty, and the reflections of Stan Brindley are printed here.

The bulk of this issue is given over to Dan O'Connel's synthesis work for his Master's Degree. It is published in much the same form in which it was written. Given its subject matter (The Travellers in Ireland) and the changes that are happening constantly in Ireland in relation to 'Others', this makes pertinent reading. The bibliography supplied might also be a 'Tolle Lege' to some of us who are looking for resources for our work and reflection in the areas of education and social justice.

Amongst the many changes notable in the Parish in Phibsboro' is one in the Church building itself; the new shrine of the icons of Vincent, Louise and Frederic Ozanam. I am very grateful to the artist, Fearghal O'Farrell (brother of our confrere, Diarmuid) for his reflections on both the process of icon-painting and working on these particular images. Thanks also to Sean Farrell for permission to print the icons here and for supplying the negatives.

In different ways, Noel Travers, Des Cleere and Joe Cunningham continue our reflections on priestly life and ministry today; both from the perspective of those involved in the work of formation and direction. In similar vein, Christian Sens of the Province of Toulouse, reflects on the changing face and challenges of initial formation in the Congregation in Europe today. Though the Irish Province has no seminarists at this time, the issues remain true for all of us in on-going formation and for those whom we train in the vincentian way of ministry and service.

The issue concludes with tributes to John Cleary, who died so suddenly earlier this year at the age of 68. His death was a great shock to the Province, to the Deaf with whom he laboured for so many years and, especially, to the new community at St. Killian's, Raheny, which he and John Gallagher had initiated only some months previously.

The editor is returning Ireland after two years in Chicago. Here, I take the opportunity to thank all those in the various places where I have resided in the Windy City who, in so many ways, by offering technology, advice, services and support, have helped get yet another *Colloque* on the road.

Provincial Assembly 2000: Introductory Talk

Kevin Rafferty CM

Monday, 1 May 2000, All Hallows' College, Dublin.

Welcome.
I would like to begin this evening by welcoming all of you to this Provincial Assembly of the Anglo-Irish Province. I hope you have got your breath back after the Easter celebrations. It is, I think, a good time to be celebrating a Provincial Assembly because we have come through the darkness of the Lenten period and, liturgically, we are living in the light of Easter time over these next few weeks.

A special word of welcome to Fr. Hugh O'Donnell. You will remember that he was with us some 5 years ago at the Assembly in Clongowes' Wood and we are very grateful to him for taking time out of his sabbatical break in Boston College to cross the Atlantic and be with us for these 5 days. When I linked up with Hugh in Paris a few months ago I outlined to him the feedback we got from the Domestic Assemblies and straight away he suggested to me that perhaps the theme we should address is the theme of Light and Darkness. In a few moments he will elaborate on that theme. We are deeply grateful to him for accepting the invitation to be with us here in the Irish Province over this week.

What is the purpose of a Provincial Assembly?
Our Constitutions (Par 143) state:

The Provincial Assembly is a "gathering of members" who represent the Province as delegates and the meeting has the following functions:

1. To establish Norms for the common good of the Province within the limits of universal law and our own law which obtain obligatory force after being approved by the Superior General with the consent of his Council.

2. As a consultative organ of the Provincial to deal with matters which can promote the good of the Province.

3. To act on proposals which, in the name of the Province, are to be presented to the General Assembly or the Superior General.

4. To elect delegates to the General Assembly when required.

5. To make Norms for Domestic Assemblies within the limits of universal law and our own law and these do not need the approval of the Superior General.

At this Provincial Assembly the third and fourth reasons do not apply because we are not preparing for a General Assembly. What I would like to pick out of the Constitutions are the following:-

a) It is a "gathering of the members of the Province." As you know, the Provincial Assembly is now open to all the confreres in the Province. We do have a gathering every year in the two Regions of the Province, but this is a gathering of all the confreres. At such a crucial stage in the life of the Province, it is important that we do come together and to take time out to reflect on where we are.

b) The Provincial Assembly is concerned with matters which can promote the good of the Province. The one thing that the Provincial and the Provincial Council do not get enough of is feedback from decisions we make, so this is the time for consultation of all the confreres about any matter they think is relevant to the future of the Province at present but, in particular, decisions that have been taken over the past five years.

c) We can also establish Norms for the common good of the Province – Norms that concern the Province itself. There is in fact only one statute, which we passed in 1985, that we need to look carefully at and that is because I have taken Chairman's action in regard to the number of councillors in the Province at the moment – I will refer to that again on Friday morning.

Vincentian Mission 2000: a framework for reflection and evaluation
It is 5 years since we formulated our Mission Statement in Marino in 1995 and this evening I am going to distribute the Preamble to it, the Mission Statement itself and a breakdown of Vincentian Mission 2000 under 4 headings:

- Emergent Poverties
- Evangelisation
- Formation for Mission
- Ministry to Young People.

Over the years the Provincial Plan has been updated a number of times and over the last few weeks, in preparation for this meeting, I have updated it again, taking account of decisions which have been taken over the past year. Tomorrow, I am hoping to bring you through it again, step by step. We can take a critical look at the Plan and that means looking at the Light and the Darkness – the Light in terms of ministries that have been brought forward – the Darkness in terms of matters that have not been implemented or which have been left in the shade.

The evaluation process we begin at this meeting will carry on over the rest of this year. The Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney, told me during his recent visit that the visitation of the Irish Province is likely to take place in the autumn of this year.

A Time of Transition; Trust in Providence

I am conscious that this time is an extraordinary time of transition in the Catholic tradition and I have argued elsewhere that it is a time of great transition in the Catholic tradition right across Europe. Fr. Michael Paul Gallagher will have more to say to us on that on Wednesday afternoon. Here again, we can talk about the light and darkness in this kind of experience. I wonder if any of you have seen the play that is on in the Abbey at the moment by Tom Murphy, called *The House.* It is set in rural Ireland, more specifically, in the neighbourhood of Tuam. Those of you of my age vintage will have no great difficulty in recognising certain aspects of the life of the 1950s. It is fashionable today to look very negatively on this period in our history. To tell you the truth, I never saw it quite like that – life was quite idyllic for me growing up in the West of Ireland. What I don't like about the play is that it is so negative – everything is seen through negative eyes, especially the role of the Church at that time.

One way we are challenged at the moment is how do we look out on this changing situation all round about us and to be able to see it both positively and negatively. I think this is what we mean by the word 'crisis.' How can we see the Light and the Darkness at the same time, without letting one blot out the other? Can we be realistic in our assessment of the present situation? What are the opportunities for growth and development if we do not allow ourselves to be paralysed by all the negativity about us.

In his letter to all confreres on January 1st, 2000, Fr. Maloney had this to say;

> Trust in Providence is the key of finding meaning when confronted with the sometimes tragic polarities of human experience: abundance and poverty, health and sickness, life and death, grace

and sin, peace and violence, love and hatred, design and chaos, plan and disruption. The missionary, St. Vincent believed, proclaims hope, good news, even in the darkness. Men and women whose lives witness to meaning and who can speak meaning are ministers of providence.

Honour one another's experience

In my visits to communities over the last 5 years, I have become more aware of the rich experiences that confreres have in all our houses and in all our ministries. There is no visitation I have done over the last 5 years where I haven't come away more aware of the depths and of the richness of confreres' experiences.

When I met a confrere recently, he spoke to me a lot about working with the homeless and he used the language of 'honouring his own experience' and at a certain point in the discussion, I reminded him that confreres have had very rich experiences in other ministries too – in the education sphere, in the formation sphere, in evangelisation, in spiritual direction and so on in all our other ministries too. He accepted this. One of the challenges we have is how do we honour one another's experience in whatever apostolate or ministry we have been engaged in over the years.

Jubilee Celebrations

In the feedback from houses it was remarked that this is a Jubilee Year, so built into the next few days is a jubilee celebration – celebration of the Eucharist on Thursday, followed by a Jubilee Dinner. We have invited some of our fellow workers – Daughters of Charity, members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and people who have been very good to us – to join us on that occasion. During that day we will be thanking the Lord for all that has accomplished to promote His Kingdom over the past five years. We have also timetabled a Reconciliation Service on Wednesday evening to pick up on another theme of this Jubilee Year.

Provincial Assembly 2000: one person's view

Stanislaus Brindley

Introduction

I don't know about you, but I came to this Assembly in an upbeat mood. Maybe this was because I was looking forward to Fr Hugh O'Donnell's presence. But to feel otherwise would have been odd. After all, the Eastertide liturgy keeps ringing in our ears that "The joy of the resurrection renews the whole world." And the profusion of glorious sunshine during our Assembly seemed to be re-echoing this jubilation, reminding us that the Spirit is being poured out on us during Paschaltide.

And hadn't some of us recently been greatly uplifted by experiencing London's "Seing Salvation" exhibition at the National Gallery. Here the packed crowds moved in a reverential silence from image to image as they viewed Christ depicted in various stages of his Paschal Mystery. "These are pictures that explore truths not just for Christians but for everybody", wrote Neil McGregor in his introduction. And it was heartening to observe how much they affected the visitors. Certainly I strode out of the gallery filled with confidence about the relevance of Christianity for today's distraught world.

Encountering Darkness

But darkness comes first in the Paschal Mystery. So Hugh O'Donnell gently drew our Assembly into darkness, into the tomb. We readily accompanied him, having twice before experienced his gentle and hope-filled presence amongst us. We were glad to be enjoying him as key speaker throughout the week. Soon Hugh's reference to Van Balthasar's stress on the silence and desolation of Holy Saturday was sending me back to my copy *of Mysterium Paschale* (heavy reading!). "In the tomb, Jesus is in solidarity with the dead, in the same way that upon earth he was in solidarity with the Living" (p. 149).

Around circular tables (excellent idea) then, knowing Jesus to be in solidarity with us, we shared our darknesses in small groups: imitating the courage recently shown by Pope John Paul II in the Holy Land publicly apologising for sins of the Church. No longer avoiding and denying. "The church is at once holy and in constant need of cleansing" states *Lumen Gentium* 8. Wasn't it about time for us to focus on the latter part? And not to be afraid, since the Paschal Mystery is about being lifted up. These darknesses were later summarised more or less as:

– Diminishing faith observable in our families and in those around us
– Depressing scandals in the Church
– Decreasing energy-level as we grow older
– Difficulty of relinquishing works which we've built up.

Hugh also invited us to sit for fifteen minutes in silence around our tables aware of the presence of God and of one another. This contemplative act is something we haven't been asked to do before. I found it a strengthening and community-building experience.

Emerging into light
While in the midst of these darknesses, what have we been doing? Have we been fatalistically leaving it all in the hands of Allah? No way! Instead we're showing ourselves a bit like that Irish rugby team recovering after their crushing defeat by England. Tending to rise out of the ashes. Showing there's energy in the embers. Learning self-belief (and trust in "the Man Above", to use the coach's words), like unfazed Munster as they won their way against all odds into the European rugby final. "Trust in Providence" was Bob Maloney's phrase. "Nameless confidence, in the silent dark" was Hugh's. Feel grief, you Vins, for weaknesses, yes; but not guilt. And leave no place for fear. "Fear not, little flock" is what Jesus repeatedly stressed.

Honouring our 1995 Mission Statement
So we then went on to honour our own experience as individuals, and as Province. For me it was very heartening when we looked back on our 1995 Mission Statement to see how faithful we have been to our commitments expressed under the four headings:

- popular missions
- formation of clergy and laity" (with a view to collaboration in evangelisation of the poor)
- service of the most abandoned
- foreign missions

Here's what was presented to us:

Popular Missions:
Paul Roche evoked a vivid picture of the dark frustration experienced by the mission team in the commuter-town of Newbridge. Long preparations had failed to ensure more than a paltry turnout. Resulting from this sense of desolation, however, came the creative thought of focussing

more on Stage Two: i.e. working with a core group in the parish who would realise that their future was in their own hands and not in those of a mobile group of outsiders. The aim would be to "give them confidence, help them to take responsibility and share in the leadership of the parish". All of which pointed to collaborative ministry and the desirability of "a satisfactory new relationship with All Hallows College", where formation in such collaboration is a special feature.

Youth Collaboration:
Next we got a vision of John Gallagher loitering around the entrance of Trinity College. Here he was gathering a mixed group of young people who feel happy to come together from time to time and show a certain readiness to celebrate and to serve. So, in the new house over the wall from St Paul's, the St Kilian's Project shows hopeful signs of development in less than nine months from its conception. I particularly liked John's insistence on prayer, trust in Providence, accompaniment and "not just me doing my thing" (since it is a community project).

Service of the most abandoned:
This brought us three very powerful and heart-warming presentations. Vincentian involvement with the Travelling Community which began 30 years ago, received an immense boost in the last year: an Ir£900,000 government grant to be spread over 3 years. It's already having great success in beginning professionally to educate Irish public opinion through radio, television, street posters, stylish publications and displays. As well as reminding the general populace of the personal dignity of every Traveller, this positive publicity is succeeding in affirming the self-belief of all members of the travelling community. Additional affirmation had already been accorded to them by the handing over of the former Provincial House, which has now become the Parish House of the Travelling People. Quite an upgrade from Cook Street.

Refugees and Asylum-Seekers, like beggars in the Maçon of St Vincent's day, constitute a real challenge which has been responded to with the same alacrity and success that Vincent displayed in 1621. Our Founder said we should be ready to sell the chalices if necessary in order to help the poor. In this case it is the sacristy of St Peter's Church, Phibsboro', which has been relinquished. An Taoiseach Bertie Aherne himself came to open this Vincentian Refugee Centre. It is a combined venture of CMs, DCs and SVPs aided by about 20 volunteers. Brian Moore's presentation and his very informative handout make us feel pride in this alert reading of the signs of the times and following the promptings of the Spirit.

The Apostolate of the Deaf has been served by many Vincentians over the years but regretfully it is in the process of being handed over to the diocesan clergy, due to our manpower shortage. As we grieve over this passing on and the sudden passing on of John Cleary we are only beginning to glimpse the truly astonishing achievements realised by John and barely hinted at in his excellent report for the bishops completed just days before he died. Tom Woods and Bill Clarke both spoke with great enthusiasm about what has been done and about what needs to be done. However, it was not regarded as appropriate to take a vote about our continuation in the deaf apostolate.

The Apostolate of the Homeless in London, was laid forcefully before our eyes both in John Concannon's enthusiastic words about his own experiences and in the handouts: 'The Passage' and 'Why are People Homeless?' Involvement in this expanding service of the poor, with its staff of over 50 and about 200 volunteers, is a truly Vincentian work demanding courage and perseverance. It shows commitment and continuity following on from the work of Padraig Regan while he was based for years in Tooting. And now the apostolate has become integrated as a junior partner with Thames Outreach.

Missioning in various parts of the world:
We thought of Padraig and of Joseph Loftus who were much appreciated by Fr Hugh in Taiwan and China. Myles Rearden, in semi-African attire, added colour to our assembly and told us about how the international mission in Tanzania has now become the responsibility of the Indian Province. So we are glad to have him back with us, looking for a job. Meantime can't we envisage Jack Harris on his motor-bike bombing around the Solomon Islands in between earthquakes, liturgies and English classes for the locals, all the while sorting out electronic glitches of one sort or another. Keep it up Jack!

Publications:
Shrinking in numbers we may be, but our publications are increasing. Proof of this could be seen on the table in front of us, offering just a sample of the quality books which confreres have have brought out in the last few years.

Educational involvement:
This is still very considerable, as Sam Clyne pointed out in a long listing of chaplaincies and positions on boards of governors. Yes, there have been closings but also openings and some helpful holdings on.

Viewing Europe 2000

We very much appreciated our session with Michael Paul Gallagher. He showed himself to be an expert communicator. His first image made a powerful statement even before he began to comment on it: four exotically decked young folk pictured face to face with a traditional type of slight middle-aged woman. Confrontation, it suggested at first. But then we could detect a positive relationship between both sides in this cameo. What was it saying? Not to judge differences too quickly as being irreconcilable. Ireland, in the words of Dermot Lane, may, in the last 20 years, have gone through what Europe went through in 200 years. But let there be no panic.

Three other oppositional cameos followed. And then contrasting quotes from the Synod of European Bishops in October 1999, Timothy Radcliffe OP and Cardinal Danneels ("people want spiritual food: do not kill this little bud") being particularly positive. The need to accept bewilderment and confusion, to live with it (relaxing into the pain, as yoga teachers advise), and to try to discern "where are we going?" Asking the questions: "Is this aspect of culture opening me or closing me to others and to God?" (Charles Taylor in *A Catholic Modernity).*

Fr Gallagher told us how convinced he is that we're facing a crisis of imagination rather than an intellectual crisis. "It's imagination which is against us, not intellect" (Newman). It is, really, a crisis of pre-religious imagination. What's needed is to nourish people in ways other than just getting them back into church; by radio for example. He referred to Archbishop Weakland's (of Milwaukee) 1997 lecture reminding Catholic Universities of their task to be artistic. This would include literature, music, architecture… in Ireland too many eggs have been put into the one basket of Sunday mass and very little else. Yet there is a yearning for something more, e.g. meditation with silence and organ music or service to the needy as in the San' Egidio community (which has a branch in Rathmines).

This view was substantiated during Michael Paul's experiences with a group of 120 Italians for a 12 day session of 'Growth through Imagination' in the Dolomites. People don't know their unconscious hungers and desires. They don't know that in 5 years most Italians under 12 will have no brothers, sisters or first cousins! They are only beginning to detect their loneliness and sense of isolation.

Evangelisation, according to Fr Gallagher, is "Surprising people with a gift they don't know they need". Asked what this surprise might be, he replied: "Jesus Christ, the man-God at the climax of revelation seen in Death-Resurrection… presented in the right context." And this links in with the suggestion found in all religions: If you let go and die, then you'll arise.

The first session ended, as it had begun, with a picture portraying opposites, though much more gently this time. The left half was stiff, male and formal while the right was spacious, gracious and female. The French artist Maurice Denis, of the small group called *Nabis* (Hebrew for 'prophet'), seemed to suggest we should ask ourselves the question: "Are you balancing your Yin and Yang?"

In his second lecture, referring to a seminar which included Buddhists and a convert from Buddhism, our Jesuit speaker mentioned the idea that maybe we've got the order of the Trinity wrong. Perhaps we should should start with the Spirit hovering over all of creation and humankind; then the Son comes to reveal the fulness of humanity; and He leads us towards the Father on a way we don't know. Wouldn't this seem to fit in better with our present feelings of confusion and 'tohu wa bohu," as we await the Spirit's coming?

Seeking Vocations to the Community

For Kevin Rafferty this has been the darkest item on his agenda. Yet a flood of energy (or outpouring of Spirit!) was witnessed when we came to express our views on the topic. Vocations to what? Vincentian ministry in general? Lay or religious, male or female? CM priesthood? Don't we need priests for the sacraments: social workers can be hired? Our wells are dried up, however. So what's our future?

Eamon Cowan, as Vocations' Director, went to man a stall at a job opportunities exhibition at the RDS in January. He experienced apprehension beforehand but afterwards felt positive and met no hostility there or in his chaplaincy at St Pat's.

The Glenstal Benedictines, Franciscans and Dominicans get in candidates: is it the clear image they have of themselves or is the habit the attraction? But do we seek people who would be very conservative? Anyway, merely the desire for self-preservation is a questionable motivation. Living out of baptism is the real motive. (In the next issue of *Vmcentiana,* Fr Facelina will argue that this was Vincent's viewpoint).

One oft quoted obstacle is celibacy and perhaps poor RE teaching in schools and the negative image conveyed on the TV, as in *Fr Ted.* "But", as Danneels wrote, "the why and wherefore of the rose is simply the rose; likewise, commitment to Jesus Christ is the why and wherefore of celibacy". Commitment to any one way of life is however a real problem for today. Belonging, belief, behaviour is the new order of things in post-modern times. Those in Europe who ask about priesthood come from "belonging" groups so we need to provide "oases of belonging" and be ready to invite suitable people to come and help. Family prayer has become rare, yet 60% of vocations come from families who pray. So we need more family prayer. And we also need vocations literature to

distribute. A big and positive discussion took place on Friday about such literature and especially about putting ourselves on the Internet.

Westminster Vocations Director, Pat Browne, has 20 possible candidates on his list. Vocations have come to the Paris Province (which had been written off years ago) for 3 reasons:

a) community living;
b) attraction to St Vincent's personality;
c) the desire to give parish missions.

Perhaps such motivation should figure on our promotional leaflets.

When candidates do come they need not a programme but to be accompanied by someone who can model fatherhood for them as well as brotherhood, said Fr Hugh, who deplored the devaluing of fatherhood in the West. A radical re-shaping of life within the clerically controlled Church is taking place after long neglect of Vatican II directives. Perhaps it is good for us to be forced to wait and see while feeling empty. And one way to look is towards our next topic.

Collaborating in Ministry

The five elaborately attired church dignitaries, looking down from the wall of Woodlock Hall, were clinging fiercely to their gilded frames as they listened to our discussions. This was the largest of our meetings since we had invited along numerous DCs, SVPs, and other associates. John Joe Spring, Maureen Traynor and Kevin O'Regan (of All Hallows' College and the Mission Team) addressed us in turn. "We are dealing with one of the most dramatic paradigm shifts in the Church since Constantine" (John Joe). Pushed forward by Vatican II, we face the immense challenge of changing people's mind-set. Domination must give way to collaboration, "starting right from the breakfast table" (Maureen). The emphasis must now be on relationship, trust, humility, acceptance of the frail humanity of us all (Kevin). *Ad Gentes* 21 is quite specific: "The Church is not truly established … unless there is a genuine laity existing and working alongside the hierarchy". Clearly this is a main and growing thrust of what we are doing in All Hallows with its mission of *Docete omnes Gentes.*

Reflecting on the Future

Fr Hugh O'Donnell's' talk was, as had been the case all through the assembly, shot through with a lot of wisdom which he learned in the Far East and from his study of Lonergan and Van Balthasar. Going with the flow or following Providence was what he advocated as an antidote to compulsive voluntarism. "Go empty", he said, like Buddhist U Thant

who, as UN Secretary General, used sit in silent but hopeful emptiness and compassion in order truly to listen to the world's problems. No prejudging, no rushing in blindly to "set things right". That was Hugh's doctrine. He himself has practised this silent emptiness before going to meetings: has found it "transforming". Adopting a contemplative attitude in which there is fostered both love of God and immense respect for the dignity of every neighbour. Allowing the Gospel to become incarnate in us. That was the way of Jesus. He was and is here for us in Gospel and in Eucharist. So, if we are to be 'for' people, we have to allow the Gospel to become incarnate in us, knowing that we can be read by people because they are aware of when we are in authentic relationship with them. Our deeper attitudes have more significance than our words. If we 'feel' the dignity of every person, they will feel it. We become witnesses when God's light is shining through us.

The secret longing of every heart, Hugh said, is to be authentic. As "the way of authenticity" he stressed Lonergan's 5 imperatives:

- Be attentive
- Be intelligent
- Be reasonable
- Be responsible
- Be passionately in love with God (Rom. 5,5)

A challenging and up-beat message from one who clearly practises it himself. All of us are deeply grateful to Father Hugh for his quietly inspiring input and contemplative presence.

Concluding Remarks

A cowardly senior citizen like myself was given a sense of peace when I heard of the financial provisions which have been set in place to ensure that *oul' fellows* will probably not be turned out on the streets in their final years.

"This assembly was very different from the last one", said Kevin Rafferty. It seems to me that, instead of having to treat with documents from Rome or having to take critical decisions, we were getting a chance to deal with how we feel about ourselves while we move into this new millennium as an ageing community. Hugh O'Donnell was particularly well suited to enable us to do this with his gentle insistence on the importance of feelings and relationships. And we even benefitted by not having an outside facilitator. The use of several different chairpersons was good in itself and it affirmed our self-belief. Helpful variety too in our forms of prayer, with incorporation of songs oh CD, thus blending

"secular" with religious, although in some cases the words were difficult to decipher though the tunes felt good.

What I've written above is just my version of the Assembly. Let others please bear with any slant or omissions! I didn't go around trying to guage the assessment of other participants, since my brief was otherwise. But from what I heard in ordinary conversation I gather that people were generally pleased with what took place. And our best thanks should deservedly go to the team which helped Kevin with the preparation and smooth conducting of the assembly: Frs J Gallagher, A Galvin, K McGovern and S Monaghan.

A Welcome in Sheffield Cathedral

Tim Casey CM

Since 1433 AD, the Irish have been coming to Sheffield to seek work. In 1845, the present Catholic Cathedral was built by the then Duke of Norfolk and other wealthy English Catholics but the Irish were not welcome. They were only allowed in a small side-door (still called 'The Irish Door') and permitted to stand at the back, roped off from the rest of the congregation.

They decided to build their own church and bring priests from Ireland; so St. Vincent's was built and the Vincentians came and stayed until just two years ago. Still, the Irish felt unwelcome in the Cathedral and were refused any recognition until now.

On St. Patrick's Day 2000, a special Mass for the Irish was celebrated for the first time ever. I, an Irish Vincentian, preached and said Mass in Gaelic. The Bishop served the Mass. Irish music was played and hymns in Irish sung, including "Be Thou my vision"; sung in Irish by an Northern Irish Protestant.

Many of the older people wept, especially when I was brought by the Bishop to the main door at the end of the Mass to greet the large gathering.

One of the themes of this Jubilee year is the healing of past hurts. I thank God that I, in a small way, was able to help.

"Them" and "Us"; The Importance of Social Justice in Christian Religious Education

Part One; Theology

Daniel O'Connell CM

This is the synthesis project which Dan submitted as a final requirement for his recent Masters in Religious Education at Boston College. It is set out here in the format in which it was presented; three parts – Theology, Education and Practice. Only minor stylistic changes have been made.

Introduction

In this paper, I explore and articulate the Christian vision and living of right relationship, with particular emphasis on the importance of inclusion and participation. Through looking at the Hebrew scriptures, the Incarnation, the identity of God as Trinity and Catholic social teaching, with particular attention to the ethic of solidarity, it is clear that to live in right relationship requires special and careful attention to the margins of our society and the groups that are forced to live there. It is their critique of us, of society at large, that provides an opportunity for conversion and systemic change in a way that is liberating for all. For the purpose of this paper, I draw on the experience of the Traveller community in Ireland to demonstrate the gap between the Christian vision and the reality and how this gap can be lessened and right relationship realized.

Christian Vision

At the heart of the Christian vision is the living of right relationship. It is a vision rooted in the Hebrew scriptures and the Israelites' search for harmony. This harmony was to be found in a way of life that sought to balance one's relationship to God, self, others, and the land. (1) When this harmony was lived, there would be *shalom* among the people and justice in the land. Of the different relationships mentioned, the one that was given most prominence by God as understood by the Hebrews, was the relationship with the poor, with those on the outside. From the early stages of the Hebrew scriptures, we see the action of God on behalf of the poor and oppressed in history. "You must not molest the stranger or oppress him, for you lived as strangers in the land of Egypt. You must

not be harsh with the widow, or with the orphan" (Ex. 22:20-22).(2) As Walter Brueggemann says, "In Biblical faith, the doing of justice is the primary expectation of God."(3) The Jewish law recognized the reality of life for those who were living on the outside of society, who were both vulnerable and exposed. It attempted to address this by building up right relationship and protecting them in the law.

However, by the eighth-century social injustice and idolatry had become prevalent among the people of Israel and there was great strain on the harmony that God sought. They had become closed to God, and to one another, with less and less room for the poor and oppressed. Consequently the prophets emerged to call them back to the demands of the covenant, back to right relationship and care for the people on the margins of the community.(4) But the law had become atrophied and even the great prophets could not heal the divisions, or transform this situation. And so God's own self broke into our history and spoke the word of Jesus.

Incarnation

It is in the life of Jesus that the Christian vision of right relationship is most fully lived and revealed. He came to realize the reign of God, a reign of justice and peace, love and freedom, wholeness and fulness of life for all. He presented a new vision and an alternative to the law and the temple. Neither the law nor the temple had facilitated the living of right relationship; in fact they had fostered exclusion, controlled the means of access to God, and were closed to the 'outsider', of whom there were three main groups, the poor, the sick and the sinners. Those on the 'inside' despised the people in these groups, and maintained their separation from them. (5) Those on the outside were excluded from any meaningful participation in the temple or in society and were forced to live out their lives on the margins and edge of society.

It was specifically to, and through, these people that Jesus lived his mission. He came to show these 'others', that although there was little space for them in society, there was plenty of room for them in the life and heart of God. He did this by affirming their dignity and challenging the prevailing system, the system that was closed to the life and death of these Good Friday People.(6) He became a part of their world and saw through their eyes. It was a relationship characterized by self-gift, transformation, and liberation (Lk. 4:18-19).(7) However, because of Jesus' unambiguous relationship with those on the margins, there was little room for him, his voice and his message among those with power and authority. This meant that he too was closed out of the system, and finally put to death. Slovakian theologian, Miroslav Volf, knows what it means to be an 'outsider', excluded and live on the margins of society.

He puts it strongly when he says that "to claim the comfort of the Crucified while rejecting his way is to advocate not only cheap grace but a deceitful ideology."(8) The life and death of Jesus leaves little room to wonder about our own relationship with the excluded and oppressed. Clearly, the quality of our relationship with God depends on the quality of our relationship with those around us, particularly those for whom the world is a place of closure and exclusion. This cannot be overstated and is at the heart of the Christian vision of inclusion and community.

The life of Jesus shows us that the will to reach out to the 'other' is "independent of the quality of behavior" (9) of the 'other'. The justification frequently given for the exclusion of people who are poor or oppressed or excluded is that they are perceived to be objectionable or to behave in a morally reprehensible manner. The thought pattern is a little like this, "If they did not rob, were not lazy, violent, mean, untrustworthy or drunk, then they might expect me to treat them fairly. They will have to behave themselves better to warrant my help and effort." It must be stressed that much of what those on the 'inside' say about those on the 'outside' is often just stereotypical nonsense, perpetuated in the service of the status quo. Jesus' own relationship with the poor and excluded was profoundly radical for it was neither based on a fixed notion of their identity nor on the perceived moral behavior of the 'other'. To Jesus, they were excluded sons and daughters of Abba, loved because of their systemic marginalization and poverty, not because of any individual characteristics on their own parts, either for good or bad. According to Jesus, at the end of Matthew's Gospel, the Christian community will be judged on the quality of its relationship and love for these people (Matt. 25).(10)

Trinity, Love in Relationship

In their book, *Fullness of Faith,* Michael & Kenneth Himes explain that love or agape is the most basic understanding of God that we have (1 Jn 4:8,16). In the Gospels, the linking of the two commandments, to love God and to love our neighbor (11) is done in such a way as to make them exactly equivalent, and the fourth Gospel collapses them both into one: "Love one another; just as I have loved you, you must love one another" (Jn 3:34). Loving God and the neighbor is the one thing, done in two different ways. There is no separation; love of neighbor is love of God and love of God is love of neighbor. It is the divine nature to love, not because we deserve it but because God is love, and where there is love, there is God. All through the New Testament, God is revealed as the one who is perfectly self-giving. Both Michael and Kenneth Himes describe God as being eternally "giver, receiver, and gift. 'God' is the name of the

relationship of an endless perfect mutual self-gift."(12) God is the lover, the beloved and the love between them. God is communal, relationship, giving and receiving, not the great isolated one, removed from the world, awaiting its completion. Rather God as "the mystery that surrounds all existence, is pure-gift."(13) For God to be, is to love at one and the same time. God does not made a choice to love or not to love, depending on the moral behavior of the person or group, on whether it is deserved or not deserved.(14) No, for God is love (1 Jn. 4:16). God does not love in order to receive love, nor does God just love the deserving good, but all, *especially* those on the outside, for whom the capacity to live life to the full is diminished in any way. This love and relationship within God, leads us to understand God as Trinity. There is Father, Abba, and the Son, beloved, and the Spirit, which is the embrace between them.

It is this same Spirit, this embrace of God the Father, that came to all in the room after the resurrection (Acts 2:1) and allowed them to speak in such a way as to be understood by people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; as well as visitors from Rome, Jews and proselytes alike, Cretans and Arabs (Acts 2:10-11). The gift of the Spirit, of God's embrace, is communion, a harmony within diversity. It does not seek to do away with difference, rather it is active within the differences. The release of God's spirit through the resurrection of Jesus has brought something new into the world, the capacity to offer, give and receive embrace. For God has offered and given God's own embrace to humanity, an embrace across difference and diversity.

Understanding God in this way can help us know what it means to be created in the image and likeness of God (Gen 1:26-27). As part of God's own creation, we recognize the fundamental equality of everyone, for regardless of position, cultural identity, colour, creed, each of us is an image of God, a part of God's own self. This self is realized through the self-giving and receiving of 'others'. We are most like God and true to ourselves when we are in authentic relationship, and particularly when we reach out to 'others' as God has done throughout history, as most especially revealed through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Catholic Social Teaching

The Catholic Church, through its social teaching, reflecting on its tradition and understanding of God, has tried to spell out the implications of living in right relationship for the life and activity of its members, society and the world. The two values that underpin this whole body of thought are, firstly, the dignity of the human person (15) and, secondly,

this dignity as realized in community.(16) Since the middle of the last century, Catholic social thought has made an assault on political apathy,(17) a commitment to the humanization of life,(18) a preferential option for the poor (19) and a commitment to world justice.(20) Catholic social teaching unambiguously affirms that the Church and individual Christians are to be engaged in the work of transforming the world. This is clearly articulated through the General Synod of Bishops in their 1971 statement, *Justice in the World.* It says that "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel, or, in other words, of the church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation." (21) There are many principles within Catholic social thought. (22) For the purposes of this work, however, I wish to make reference to just one of them, solidarity. Most people live in neighborhoods that isolate them from the 'other' and those that are different.(23) Many middle class people pursue community through the cultivation of what Robert Bellah has called "lifestyle enclaves",(24) while holding the view that tolerance is the highest good, "live and let live". However, since intolerance is not the main cause of inequality, poverty and exclusion and the growing gap between privileged social enclaves and those on the 'outside', tolerance is hardly likely to be up to the task of addressing, engaging and transforming these realities in any meaningful way, it is hardly likely to realize the Christian vision of living in right relationship.(25)

Solidarity is what will make this vision real and assist in its coming to life. It moves beyond charity, resisting false generosity and opposing paternalism. It refuses to engage in action that is not transformative, or that does not lead toward liberation. Paulo Freire has spoken about this position when he says, "Rationalizing guilt through paternalistic treatment of the oppressed, all the while holding them fast in a position of dependence, will not do."(26) This is why solidarity is essential, it is a radical re-positioning of oneself, moving closer to those systemically excluded and living on the margins of society. In this ongoing process, one sees from a different social position, sees how things look and feel from the perspective of the 'outsider', seeing oneself and the group one belongs to through the eyes of those oppressed and excluded. This enlarged way of seeing allows for both 'included' and 'excluded', 'subject' and 'object', 'us' and 'them', to work together in a way that leads to personal conversion, the transformation of oppressive and abusive systems and structures and right relationship with God, others, self and creation.

Solidarity is the desire and act of making space and room for 'others' in one's own life and in the life of society. In his encyclical *Sollicitudo*

Rei Socialis,(21) John Paul II looks to bridge and span the gap between personal fulfillment and concern for others. He insists on the importance of interdependence, and on the belief that our welfare and wholeness is intimately bound up with the life and well being of others.(28) He says that solidarity is a moral response and a virtue that is "a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good."(29) It is the vision of the common good, of right relationship and of how things ought to be, that provides the desire to live in solidarity with others. It is much more than a common sense identification with members of one's own group. It involves a choice, an open disposition and action that creates the space in mind and heart to relate to the 'other' as sister or as brother, regardless of who they are or where they are living in the world.(30)

This aspect of living in right relationship can be costly; for Jesus it meant being put to death on a cross, the symbol of ultimate solidarity. The cross is a symbol of God's eternal openness to us, the expression of love freely given, of God being 'for' us, Jesus being open to us, despite our refusal, sinfulness and willful separation. The life of Jesus witnesses what it means to be in solidarity with others. It means being open to 'them' as they are, being with 'them' in their world, and in many ways, on their terms. It means realizing our own incompleteness and need of others.(31) This is what happened to Jesus when he met with the Syrophoenician woman. He refused to heal this Gentile's daughter because he was sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). But she persists. Through this relationship Jesus is changed and he begins to think of things differently and because of this change in himself, he helps her. This encounter with the nameless woman helped Jesus understand his ministry in a new way, the act of solidarity was transformative for both of them.(32) Solidarity allows 'others' to be themselves, it assumes their dignity and subjectivity, while all the time resisting anything that leads to their objectification.

The World

It is this process of objectification that allows many to be indifferent to the situation of 'others' throughout the world. The following statistics clearly show the need for solidarity. Imagine a room with 100 people representing everyone in the world. The following proportions reveal starkly the contrast between the vision of right relationship and the lived reality from a global perspective.

57 would be Asian
21 would be European
14 would be from the Americas
8 would be African

70	would be non-white
6	would control half of the wealth of the group
70	would be unable to read
50	would suffer from malnutrition
80	would live in substandard housing
1	would have a college education
70	would never have placed or received a phone call.(33)

This situation is allowed to persist because those who suffer are not our brothers and not our sisters, not our fathers and not our mothers. Consequently, without a strong experience of interdependence, or connectedness, there is little sense of responsibility for 'others'. Volf draws attention to this when he so pointedly highlights "a glaring incongruity: in a world so manifestly drenched with evil everybody is innocent in their own eyes."(34) Many throughout the world have no sense of immediate responsibility towards the poor, the excluded, oppressed or discriminated against. Their do not believe that their immediate, or not so immediate, well being rests with the quality of life for those 'others', hungry, thirsty, naked or in prison.

Relationship and Identity

This attitude reveals a prevailing view of the person that has been influenced by the Enlightenment. In this philosophical tradition, natural man was depicted as a "solitary creature" and "a free self-determining individual."(35) In her book, *Rights Talk,* Mary Ann Glennon says that for today, this tradition translates into the "right to be left alone."(36) By making individuality normative, and possessing the right to be left alone, and understanding the exercise of freedom as the absence of interference, we inevitably imply that dependency is something to be avoided in oneself and distained in others. Glennon's own view is that "we are not acutely conscious that we spin through time and space on a fragile planet where friend and foe alike are locked in ever-tighter webs of interdependence."(37) Consequently, there is a belief that "we roam at large in a land of strangers, where we presumptively have no obligations towards others except to avoid the active infliction of harm."(38)

From a Christian perspective, this is a culturally popular, shallow and minimalist approach to life and one that does not contribute to the Christian vision of living in right relationship. For, within the Christian tradition, the person's identity is realized in a network of self-giving and receiving relationships, woven into community. This reflects the image of God, not as one absolute alone being, but rather as community, relationship, Trinity and agape. It is in relatedness that we grow in our image and likeness of God, whereas to "deny relationality and to reject

relationship is to hover on the edge of non-being."(39) Humanity and relatedness are directly proportional. We become authentic and truly ourselves, the more deeply we can enter into relationships with ourselves, others, God and creation. In this way we become like God, whose very essence is relationality, and in whose image we are created.

Fundamental Human Right

It is the opportunity to give of oneself in relationship that is of crucial importance. Where this is refused, hindered and prevented, the well-being of the individual is diminished, and consequently the health of the community suffers. "The most fundamental human right is the right to exercise the power of self-giving, the opportunity for entrance into relationship, for deeper participation in the life of the human community."(40) This opportunity for self-giving, the promotion of inclusion and participation is at the heart of the Christian vision. It recognizes the profound dignity of the individual and sees that this dignity is realized in relationship, in community.

Traveller Community in Ireland (41)

However, this opportunity, this right is denied many individuals and groups throughout the world, and the vision in many communities remains unrealized. Through oppression, cultural imperialism, poverty, discrimination and exclusion, individuals and groups are not in a position to give of themselves and their capacity to enter into relationships is diminished. There is an intentional geography of closure at work in their lives. This closure squeezes them out of relationship, and participation, while lessening their opportunity for self-gift, self realization and living in right relationship.

The reality of people and groups objectified and excluded in society and the church, confront the Christian community in a stark and serious way. For their presence and pain asks searching questions of our stated vision and the quality of our praxis. There is clearly a gap between the faith that is professed and the faith that is lived. This gap is an opportunity for conversion.

For many years the Traveller community of Ireland has been critiqued by the 'settled' population. This critique for the most part has been one-way, unfavorable and damaging to them. They have been treated as 'strangers' and 'others' for centuries, defined as second-class citizens in need of rehabilitation and settlement. The settled population fears Travellers, and for years has sought to make 'them' like 'us', particularly through the enforced settlement into houses.(42) It has defined who Travellers are from a distance, from the perspective of the settled person, without regard for how Travellers see themselves, without regard

for how Travellers see the settled community and without recognising that Travellers need to realize their right for self-gift, inclusion and participation.

To live in right relationship with groups who are discriminated against, oppressed or excluded, it is essential to listen to their experience and voice. For Travellers in Ireland, more often than not, their experience throughout the whole of society is one of exclusion, discrimination, and at times outright hostility.(43) This exclusion is based on their distinct cultural identity, which is different to that of the majority population. Travellers' own particular cultural identity has been "ignored, glossed over, assimilated to the dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the idea of authenticity."(44) However, they have resisted this attempt at assimilation and have held doggedly onto their own particular nomadic cultural identity, despite all efforts to make 'them' like 'us'.(45) The systematic attempt to make 'them' like 'us' seeks to fundamentally undermine the dignity of the 'other' and must be resisted.

For exclusion to be maintained, the 'other', those that are different somehow, must be seen to be without dignity and unworthy of respect. This dynamic is worked out in polarities based on difference. For 'we', on our side, view ourselves are superior; we are just, moral, decent, respectable, true and good. 'They', on their side are inferior; they are unjust, corrupt, lazy, guilty, dirty and untrustworthy. This way of seeing, this perspective, legitimizes patterns of debasement and exclusion.(46) Many define their identity by putting down and keeping 'others' out. The 'other' becomes the object of derision, of self-loathing, of fear and ridicule, of blame and of scorn. Often what is ascribed to 'them' are aspects of what the Christian community or society cannot tolerate about themselves. Consequently, the relationship between 'them' and 'us' can tell us much about the quality of how groups see and feel about themselves.

This self-knowledge, gained through relationship with the 'other', is at the heart of conversion. For although the settled community has critiqued the Traveller community endlessly, there has been little improvement in the lives of Travellers. This critique has had limited effect because it was not a critique of the whole situation. It was an aspect of it. For change and transformation, both personally and structurally, the settled community, in particular the Christian community, needs to see itself through the eyes of Travellers. It needs to be confronted with this perspective, to hear the voice of the Traveller community and to begin to understand what it is like to be a Traveller in Ireland today, what it is like to be in relationship with the settled majority population. In this way, the gap between what is stated and what is operative in the life of the settled

communities and individuals becomes clear. It is popularly believed that Travellers want to live on the side of the road and that exclusion is a matter of choice for them. However, listening to Travellers, one hears that they do not like living on the side of the road without toilets, water or electricity and that the reality of exclusion and closure is systemic, not one of their own choice. This process of dialogue provides room for conversion and healing and the beginning of living in right relationship. Through holding a mirror up to the settled community, its closure and exclusion is revealed to itself and God's word and voice can be heard speaking through their experience, calling the settled community to conversion and right relationship, to healing and life.

Consequences

The reality of Travellers lives and the lives of 'others' who are objectified and excluded challenges the stated vision of an inclusive Christian community, a community that appreciates diversity and difference.(47) To live in right relationship, the community must always be open to seeing itself from the perspective of the 'other', listening to the critique and voice of those on the 'outside'. In this way, the Christian community allows itself to be called along the painful, difficult, and sometimes shameful road to conversion and healing. This conversion and healing is not achieved in a vacuum or simply through listening and hearing those on the 'outside'. There must be praxis. There must be action and reflection that leads towards the end of exclusion, while promoting opportunities for self-gift, inclusion and participation. For this to become a reality, the Christian community needs to bring "into contemporary life the revolutionary traditions of the Bible and Christian history."(48) It needs to be bi-lingual, to speak the language of the community, while also speaking the language of social policy in a persuasive and convincing manner in civil society. (49) To do this with integrity and a prophetic voice, it needs first to have allowed itself to be critiqued by the Traveller community and in a process of ongoing conversion and inclusion. In this way, the vision of the Christian community is being realized, and right relationship lived.(50)

Notes

1. In the book of Exodus, at Sinai, God promises to take care of the people if they will keep his covenant. This involved faithful worship of God alone, care for one another, creation of a just community and a special concern for vulnerable members of the community. This included widows and

orphans, the poor and strangers. Later, the community came to understand the importance of their right relationship with the land and of how this must also be a characteristic of their relationship with God (Lev. 25).

2. The Jewish people recognized the powerlessness of the widow, orphan, poor and strangers; (refugees of the ancient world) and sought to protect them through the law and the promotion of equality. It established a profound sense of dignity of the individual and equality of all persons, the importance of community and the need for special care of the vulnerable and excluded.
3. Walter Brueggemann, Sharon Parks and Thomas H. Groome, *To Act Justly, Love Tenderly, Walk Humbly* (Eugene OR: Wipe & Stock, 1997), 5. Brueggemann describes how God hears the cry of the poor (Ex. 22:22) and comes to their aid (Ps. 113:7); that he "is a God of justice" (Is. 30:18) who "secures justice and the rights of all the oppressed" (Ps. 103:6). God delights in the realization of justice (Jer. 9:23), acts for the "widow, the orphan and the alien in the land" (Jer. 7:6) and loves it (Ps. 99:4) and hates injustice (Is. 61:8). The people of Israel did not see God as a blindfold judge balancing a scales but as someone with compassion, mercy and loving kindness, and with a sense of generosity. Despite the broken relationship between the people of Israel and God, Yahweh sought to help them "sleep secure", to "betroth" them "with integrity and justice, with tender ness and love; I will betroth you to myself with faithfulness, and you will come to know Yahweh" (Hos. 2:21-22).
4. Jeremiah tells the people that Yahweh Sabaoth, the God of Israel says this: "Amend your behavior and your actions and I will stay with you here in this place. Put no trust in delusive word like these: This is the sanctuary of Yahweh, the sanctuary of Yahweh, the sanctuary of Yahweh! But if you do amend your behavior and your actions, if you treat each other fairly, if you do not exploit the stranger, the orphan and the widow… then here in this place I will stay with you" (Jer. 7:3-7). Amos says, "Sons of Israel listen to the word of Yahweh, for Yahweh indicts the inhabitants of the country: this is no fidelity, no tenderness, no knowledge of God in the country" and then later he goes on to say, "Israel come back to Yahweh you God; your iniquity was the cause of your downfall. Provide yourself with words and come back to Yahweh" (Amos 4:1-2, 14:2-3) and finally Micah tells the people what God wants, "this is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). All of them name the reality as it is, they speak of the divisions, the selfishness and the separation; they then tell how it should be and help the people to move from where they are at the moment, to where God wants them to be in the future.
5. There was good reason at the time for this common attitude. The sick were believed to have committed some sin and were being punished by God; God was angry with them and no longer their friend. And if God was no longer their friend, then the righteous Jew had no business being their friend. The poor were despised because they could not keep the law. They did not keep the law because they did not know the law. To know the law

you had to study it and to study it you needed education and money. The poor had neither. Jews considered the keeping of the law the most important commandment of God for his people, and so naturally it was believed that God would be angry with those for not keeping it. And sinners, they just excluded themselves through their own behavior and lifestyle.

6. This is the title of a book by Sheila Cassidy, which looks at the place of suffering in people all over the world. In the life of Christ we see him feeling sorry for the leper, reaching out and touching him (Mk. 1:40-45), healing him, affirming his dignity. Out of love for the poor, he is outraged with those who exclude them, "But alas for you Pharisees! You who pay your tithe of mint and rue and all sorts of garden herbs and overlook justice and the love of God! These you should have practiced, without leaving the others undone… Alas for you lawyers also… because you load on men burdens that are unendurable, burdens that you yourselves do not move a finger to lift… Alas for you lawyers who have taken away the key of knowledge! You have not gone in yourselves, and have prevented others going in who wanted to" (Lk. 11:42,46, 52). Jesus understood clearly that it was not an accident of history and circumstance that kept people on the outside, but rather the exercise of power.
7. According to Gustavo Gutiérrez, communion between people and God, and among people themselves is achieved through liberation on three reciprocally interpenetrating levels. They are liberation from oppressive socioeconomic structures, emancipation from oppressed consciousness, and redemption for sinful self-centeredness. The work of salvation is indissolubly linked to improving and rising the conditions of human life in the world. Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Essential Writings,* ed. Jim B. Nickoloff (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1996).
8. Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 24.
9. ibid., 165. And now we have the phrase "the deserving poor" and "the undeserving poor". This implies that the poor who are deserving will receive assistance and help, while the undeserving will receive no help, and have only themselves to blame.
10. This passage reveals the criterion for the Last Judgment, and it is not as we might expect. It is not about whether or not we belong to the church, about our being baptized, attending worship, whether or not we pray, it is not about what we believe in. There is nothing specifically religious in this text. No doctrine, or religious act of worship or ritual turns out to be relevant to the Last Judgment. The only criterion is, how did we treat our brothers and sisters, especially the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and prisoners. It is also interesting to notice that both sides ask him, "When did we see you hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick or imprisoned, and serve you?" They did not think about Jesus when they did or did not do these things for their neighbors. Religious motivation is not the basis for the Last Judgment. The point is not that we love our brothers and sisters for Jesus' sake, but simply that we love them.
11. In response to the question about the identity of our neighbors, Jesus iden-

tified two most unlikely candidates: a Jew lying wounded helpless on the side of the road and a person of the wrong religion, the wrong ethnicity, the wrong locality, a Samaritan.

12. Michael J. Himes & Kenneth Himes, *Fullness of Faith* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 56.
13. ibid.
14. Popular culture in Ireland holds the view that Travellers do not deserve anything, they need to change first, become like the majority population and then, then they will be included and resourced. In contrast to this, God loves first, does not set preconditions on the giving of love, for God is love and it is as a consequence of this relationship that conversion may take place. If God loves Travellers before their conversion, then we who are made in the image and likeness of God, to be true to ourselves and live authentic lives, must do likewise. We must give love and allow ourselves to receive it, to touch God and be touch by God.
15. See "Peace On Earth", and "On Human Work" in David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, eds. *Catholic Social Thought.*
16. See "Peace On Earth", and "Christianity and Social Progress" in David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, eds. Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).
17. Many church leaders, theologians, members of the churches and critics continue to ask how was it possible for the Church to be largely silent and passive in the face of the atrocities of World War II. The answer at least in part, is that the Church and religion had become confined to the private arena. Vatican II rejected this privatization out of hand and the political apathy it engenders. See "A Call to Action" and "The Missionary Activity of the Church" in O'Brien and Shannon.
18. There is a deeper understanding concerning where people flourish and become more human, especially in the context of community, then God's creative spirit is at work in the world. Where people live freely, without fear or shame, where dignity is being realized and humanity nourished, then the work of God is being done in the world at that moment in time, creation is coming into being. See "On Human Work" in Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, eds. *Proclaiming Justice and Peace, One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching* (London: Collins, 1991).
19. The Church has always understood the fundamental imperative contained in the life of Jesus, to serve the poor in a way that leads to liberation. Fidelity to Jesus, requires identification with the poor, oppressed and excluded. In serving these people and communities, the Church under stands herself as serving and being in relationship with Christ. See Medellín and Puebla Conference Documents in Joseph Gremillion, ed. *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching since Pope John.* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975) and 'Economic Justice for All' in Michael Walsh and Brian Davies, eds. *Proclaiming Justice and Peace, One Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching* (London: Collins, 1991).
20. 20. There is a commitment to seek justice/right relationship at all levels, local, regional, national and international and to lessen the gap between the

rich and poor nations of the world. See "Justice in the World" and "One Hundred Years" in Walsh and Davies.

21. 'Justice in the World'. Document issued by the 1971 Synod of Bishops in Walsh and Davies.
22. In the book, *Catholic Social Teaching, Our Best Kept Secret* by Peter J. Henriot, Edward P. DeBerri and Michael J. Schultheis outline many of the main principles of Catholic social teaching, such as the dignity of the human person, respect for human life, participation, equality, preferential protection for the poor and vulnerable, solidarity, stewardship/companion ship, subsidiarity, and the common good.
23. David Hollenbach, "The Common Good and Urban Poverty," *America,* no. 20 (June 1999): 8-11.
24. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, Steven M. Tipton, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985) 73. The People living in "life style enclaves" find their identities in interaction with other people with similar patters of appearance, consumption and leisure. These communal relationships are based on some feature of private rather than public life. The bonds between them resemble those of members of clubs and associations rather than as fellow citizens concerned with the good of the wider community. Much of the concern within these communities is security and protection from the 'outsider', from the poor.
25. Tolerance simply lets other be and does not seek to effect change where there is an unequal distribution of resources and little participation because of exclusion and oppression. It does not demand any change from those who benefit from how systems operate within society, and so the virtue of tolerance is favored by them, naturally.
26. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder, 1972), 26. Later in that page he writes:

    "Solidarity requires that one enter into the situation of those with whom one is identifying; it is a radical posture… true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these 'being for another'. The oppressor shows solidarity with the oppressed only when he stops regarding the oppressed as an abstract category and sees them as persons who have been unjustly dealt with, deprived of their voice – when he stops making pious, sentimental and individualistic gestures and risks an act of love. True solitude is found only in the plenitude of this act of love, in it's existentially, in its praxis. It is a farce to affirm that men (sic) are people and thus should be free, yet to do nothing tangible to make this affirmation a reality."
27. O'Brien and Shannon.
28. This is a view that was at the heart of modern day prophets like Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, and Martin Luther King. For Merton says, "You are the body of Christ and member one of another… And the eye cannot say to the hand: I need not thy help: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you… And if one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it: and if one member glory all the others rejoice with it" *Thomas Merton,*

Spiritual Master, Essential Writings, ed. Lawrence S. Cunningham (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 64. He saw his entrance into monastic life as a protest, a gesture of protest against what he felt were the demonic elements in modern culture. "He insisted that his life was a no to concentration camps, aerial bombardments, staged political trials, judicial murders racial injustices, economic tyrannies and so on, just as it was a yes to all that is "good in the world and in man… to all that is beautiful in the world… to all men and women who are my brothers and sisters in the world" Cunningham, 20. For King there was a sense also of being a part of something much bigger than himself, "and with his black brothers in Africa, and his brown and yellow brothers in Asia, South America and the Caribbean, he is moving with a sense of cosmic urgency toward the promised land of racial justice." *[A Testament of Hope, The Essential Speeches and Writings of Martin Luther King, Jr.* James M Washington (San Francisco: Harper, 1990), 297.] Day always believed that "when the health of one member suffers, the health of the whole body is lowered." *[Dorothy Day, Selected Writings,* ed. Robert Ellsberg (New York: Orbis, 1994), 91.] They all had that connection to others, and that their own well being depended on the well being of others. They all lived the virtue of solidarity.

29. Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, John Paul II, # 38, in O'Brien and Shannon.
30. I know that if my mother were starving in Ethiopia, I would do something. If my brother was being shot in the North of Ireland, I would do something. If my sister was raped in Bosnia, I would do something. But these men and women who starve, are shot and raped are strangers to me, and until I know them as my brothers and sisters, there will be a limit to what I do.

    The following is a good reflection on this theme.

    > A wise man asked the disciples how they could tell when the night had ended and the day begun.
    >
    > One said, 'When you see an animal in the distance and can tell whether it is a cow or a horse.'
    >
    > 'No', said the wise one.
    >
    > 'When you look at a tree in the distance and can tell if it is a neem tree or a mango tree.'
    >
    > 'Wrong again', said the wise one.
    >
    > 'Well, then what is it?' asked the disciples.
    >
    > 'When you look into the face of any man and recognize your brother in him; when you look into the face of any woman and recognize in her your sister. If you cannot do this, no matter what time it is by the sun it is still night.'

31. In *The Soul of Politics,* Jim Wallis tells of an Aboriginal woman spoke with a new development worker, "If you are coming to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together" Jim Wallis, *The Soul of Politics* (New York: New Press & Orbis Books, 1994), 152.
32. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, we read that the disciples were sent to "all the nations" (Matt. 28:19), this according to Raymond E. Brown "revises the restricted sending to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and

not to the Gentiles in the middle of the Gospel (Matt. 10:5-6)." Raymond E. Brown, S.S., *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 203.

33. David Robinson, Council of Latin Americanist Geographers, January 1997.
34. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace,* 79.
35. Glennon, Mary Ann, *Rights Talk* (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 67.
36. ibid.
37. ibid., 16.
38. ibid., 77.
39. Himes & Himes, *Fullness of Faith,* 57.
40. ibid., 61.
41. Travellers are an ethnic nomadic community, indigenous to Ireland. They number about 28,000, almost one percent of the population. They have been a part of Irish life for hundreds of years, some would say that their origin reaches back to the time of the Celts. Some of the characteristics that distinguish them from the majority population is their nomadic lifestyle and mentality, their history and tradition, language, customs, close family ties and Catholic identity. There is little room in Irish society for this difference, and as a consequence it is denied by the settled community, in an attempt towards assimilation and absorption of this particular community into the majority population.
42. This was particularly acute in the 1960s, when there was a huge effort throughout the country to 'house' Travellers. It was thought that travelling was deviant behavior and that making them live in houses would 'settle' them down and they would assimilate. This did not happen because the issue of identity is far deeper and complex than the provision of accommodation.
43. This experience has been well documented over the past 10 years. The most recent publication outlining the life and systematic exclusion of Travellers is *Travellers; Citizens of Ireland,* ed. Erica Sheehan, Dublin: Parish of the Travelling People, 2000. It details the appalling lack of decent accommodation, the daily experience of discrimination, the effect of exclusion on Travellers health, i.e. they have an infant mortality rate three times higher than that of the settled community, and only one in twenty lives over the age of fifty; the monocultural nature of the education system denying cultural diversity, and how the economy makes little room towards the employment of Travellers. All of these together contribute to the systematic exclusion of Travellers from participating in society.
44. Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace,* 19. Assimilation has been the goal of government and local communities for many years. They want Travellers to "settle", to deny their own identity and become part of the majority population; 'they' must become like 'us'.
45. In Ireland, in 1562 there were English laws stating that it was illegal to be an Egyptian or a Counterfeit Egyptian. The penalty was death or deportation. The word 'gypsy' comes from the word Egyptian, the place it was believed gypsies originated in, as opposed to India. The Counterfeit

Egyptian is believed to refer to the local Irish indigenous Traveller. There has been much written about this issue of identity and Travellers, and it is a critical question. In 1995, the Government acknowledged the distinct culture of the Traveller community for the first time. Up to this time, in any of its publications, the view of Travellers was that they did not have their own culture, they were in need of 'rehabilitation', they were 'deviant' and needed to be 'absorbed' into the settled population. The Task Force Report on the Traveller Community, 1995, for the first time listened properly to the Traveller voice. They made many recommendations that take the identity of Travellers seriously and have sought to translate this into social policy, i.e. the provision of accommodation and public services.

46. The exclusion of the 'other' is often seen as their own choice and responsibility. It is believed that they put themselves to the margins of civil society and it is up to them to return when they are ready and in a position to do so. Iris Marion Young describes this in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* when she says that it is in and through the "everyday interactions, images and decisions, assumptions about women, Blacks, Hispanics, gay men and lesbians, old people, and other marked groups" that they "continue to justify exclusion, avoidance, paternalism and authoritarian treatment." Iris Marian Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 164. Often, when people are excluded on account of the group that they belong to, an essentialist meaning of difference is at work. It defines groups as having different natures. However, according to Young, difference needs to be defined more fluidly and relationally, something more akin to the product of social processes.
47. In Genesis this God is revealed to us as appreciating diversity and difference. In the story of the tower of Babel (Gen 11:1-9), there is a struggle between assimilation and authenticity, between uniformity and diversity. The people of Shinar sought uniformity through the creation of a singleplace, a single tongue, and a single tower as pillars for a centralized political, economic and religious system. They sought security in this uniformity. But it had a price. Difference is suppressed and the names of people and tribes erased. God opposed this totalitarian project to central ize, homogenize and control. God's response was to scatter the people, and while on the one hand this felt like punishment, it was done so that false unity can be dispensed with and the search for true harmony can begin.
48. Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 58.
49. In working for social change and justice, it is not sufficient to speak of the God of the Hebrews wanting to protect the poor, and expect this type of explanation to move those in the Department of Finance to give more money to those on social welfare. One needs to know how to speak the language of social policy and development. Without it, the Christian community consigns itself to the ghetto of sectarianism and irrelevance in the public forum.

50. This is a poem by Seamus Heany that picks up many of the themes discussed in this paper.

The Cure At Troy
Human beings suffer
they torture one another
they get hurt and they get hard.

No poem or play or song
can fully right a wrong
inflicted and endured.
History says,
'don't hope on this side of the grave.'
But then once in a life time
the longed for tidal wave of justice can rise up
and hope and history rhyme.

So hope for a great sea change on the far side of revenge
believe that a farther shore is reachable from here,
believe in miracles and cures and healing wells.
Call miracles self healing
the utter self revealing double take of feeling.
If there is fire on the mountain and light in the storm
and a God speaks from the sky
that means someone is hearing the outcry
and the birthcry of new life at its term.
It means once in a lifetime
that justice can rise up
and hope and history rhyme.

“Them” and “Us”:

Part Two; Education

Context

The context for this pastoral program is that a large Dublin parish has found out that there are plans to build a 15 bay halting site (1) for Travellers in their area beginning next year (2001). As happens with the provision of Traveller accommodation anywhere, it is always met with opposition, resistance and closure by many parts of the community. (2) The local Pastor has been in touch with our organization and expressed the need for some help in how they might best open the parish and community to the arrival of the new Traveller families. I arranged to meet with him, along with a work colleague, who also happens to be a member of the Traveller community herself. Through discussion with him, and others in the parish, we designed the following program.(3) The aim is to resource the parish leadership to take a pro-active stance with regard to the provision of Traveller accommodation in their area, and look at how the Travellers could participate meaningfully in the community. The program can be divided into five sessions, and these sessions together follow pretty much the outline of shared praxis as described by Thomas H Groome in *Sharing Faith, A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry*:(4)

This program will:

1st Session	provide an opportunity for the leadership in the parish to learn about their own relationship, prejudice(5) and feeling towards the Traveller community;
2nd Session	understand Traveller identity and culture and, through social analysis, Travellers’ overall place in our society;
3rd Session	look at the implications of the Christian faith on our relationship with Travellers and the action of God’s spirit in the world today;
4th Session	provide opportunities to discuss with Travellers many of the issues that will have been raised in these sessions;
5th Session	make decisions about what this community needs to do in order to ensure the provision of the accommodation and the inclusion of Travellers in the parish and the community.

At the end of the process, the participants will be asked to reflect on the process. They will be given questionnaires that cover issues such as content, process, were their expectations met, what was good, what could have been done better. This will then be summarized by the facilitators and feed back to those who initiated the process and the participants.

1st Session; Experience and Present Reality

The aim of the session (6) is to allow the participants to name and own how they feel really about Travellers and their planned arrival in the community, to find out what is collectively known about Travellers' culture and identity and their place in Ireland. The session begins with prayer. Then there will be time given over the to the hopes and fears of the group, (7) one of the things that will need to be stressed early on is the important of trust, participation and experience.(8) The session will begin with a photograph display of Travellers (9) through a PowerPoint presentation. People will be asked to go into four groups and look at three questions. The first is, "What is your reaction to the images displayed?" The second, "What other words, images and feelings come to mind when you see or hear the word, 'Traveller'?" And finally, "Why is this the case?" Following the discussion in the small groups, they will feedback to the larger gathering and the floor can be opened for wider discussion and reaction to the issues raised. There will then be a break, after which people will be asked to draw or write about how they feel and what they think about the proposed accommodation for Travellers in their parish. They can then share this with the person next to them. Having shared some or all of what was written, the participants will be invited to bring this sharing into the larger group. There the issues can be identified and recorded. Before the meeting ends, the participants will be asked to take a moment and see if some learning took place for themselves during the session.(10)

After the session, the organizers will collate the issues that are most immediate for the group and ensure they are addressed later in the program.

2nd Session; Culture & Critical Analysis

The aim of this session will be to provide an opportunity for participants to situate and broaden their present knowledge and experience of Travellers in a wider context and framework of Travellers' own identity, culture and place in Irish society. After prayer, there will be a review of the last day's work.(l1) There follows an exercise on culture. Each participant will be given a sheet with the word 'culture' on it and lines

coming from this word.(12) They will be asked to write words on these lines to describe how they see and experience their own culture. These words will then be fed back to the larger group and written up on the board. There will be some discussion about what people see written up and the words used to describe their own culture. There will then follow an input on culture,(13) and a description of Traveller culture and its own characteristics. There will be time for a general discussion of this presentation. After the break, the presenters will feed back to the group some of the answers that they gave in the first session to the question as to 'why' things are the way they are with Travellers in Ireland today. They will then outline the process of social analysis, the need for an historical perspective and an analysis of economic, political, cultural and social structures. The theological reflection will be left over for the next session. When the presentation has been made, the participants will be asked to form four different groups and each of the groups will be given one structure and asked how this relates to the Traveller community. (14) When they give their feedback, the presenters will offer some thoughts of their own about these structures and how they impact on Travellers in Ireland today.(15) Having done this, there will be time for questions and discussion. At the end of the session, the participants will be asked what they have learned or see differently. The facilitators will make sure that the session will be recorded.

3rd Session; Theological Reflection

The aim of this session is for the participants to explore the implications of the Christian faith on their relationship with Travellers and to look at the action of God's spirit in the world today. The session will begin with prayer and an invitation to the participants to comment on the last session. They will then be asked write answers to the questions: "What does God want of this Christian community and how do we know?" Then, when this is done, they will be asked to share with the person beside them and feedback some of the answers to the large group. The facilitators then give some input on the life and action of God in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures (16) and the church's teaching on solidarity and community,(17) justice and right relationship.(18) There is then time for questions, comments and discussion. This part finishes with a reading of the poem 'Indifference'.(19) After the break, the participants are asked, "Have you ever experienced or felt God close to you: what happened and what was it like?" Having reflected on this for a short while, people will share in pairs. These will be feed back to the larger group, where the themes of liberation and transformation can be highlighted and shown that the spirit of God is about freedom, whole-

ness and fullness of life for all; and where these things are happening, then the spirit of God is at work.(20) At the end, there is a discussion about what it has meant to reflect on the Christian faith and presence of God's spirit in our relationship with Travellers. The facilitators will ensure that the session is recorded.

4th Session; Dialogue

The aim of this session is for the participants to engage in serious discussion with Travellers about many of the issues already raised, one that will lead to the participants being more open to Travellers in their hearts, minds and lives. The session begins with prayer and any comments, questions or clarifications that are needed from the previous session. There will then be a discussion by ten Travellers, who will sit in the middle of the room facing each other in a circle, surrounded by the participants. The Travellers will then carry on a conversation about what it is like being a Traveller in Ireland today.(21) The participants can only listen at this stage to the Travellers and there will be time for questions later. After this exercise, there will be a break. Following the break, the participants will go into four smaller groups, with a few Travellers in each. They are to carry on this dialogue, in an attempt at understanding what is it like to be a Traveller in Ireland today.(22) Near the end of this session, the Travellers will be asked to leave the small groups and the participants left will be asked as a group to describe what it is like to be a Traveller today. They can do this anyway they like.(23) After they have done this, the Travellers will be asked to respond to what they heard and if it did come near to describing their reality. (24) Finally, at the end of the session, the participants will be asked to share any learning or insight with the group.

5th Session; Good Practice and Making Decisions

The aim of this session is for the participants to make decisions about what this Christian community needs to do in order to ensure the provision of the accommodation and the inclusion of Travellers in the parish and the wider community. The session begins with prayer and time for any comments about the last session. In the first part of the session the participants will be asked what they can do with regard to the provision of the proposed accommodation for the Traveller families. They will discuss this first in small groups and then in the large one. It will be the role of the facilitators to draw out practical decisions made by this group.(25) Following the break, the same process is to be applied to the issue of how these families can be included in the parish and commu-

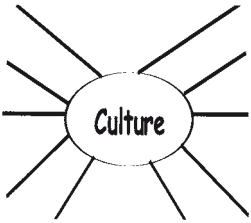
nity and what educational processes are needed to begin the process of receptivity. It will be the function of the facilitators at the end to draw the decisions together, to outline who will do what by when, how things are to happen and what is needed to make these decisions a reality. Following this, there will be a time of evaluation, to fill in sheets that cover all aspects of the program,(26) and a time if anyone wants to say anything about how they experienced the overall program. The facilitators will collect these sheets, the information collated and later feed back to those who were responsible for organizing the process and the also participants. There will be a time of prayer to bring the five sessions to an end.

Notes

1. A halting site is a particular type of accommodation that is culturally appropriate to the Traveller community. It is a permanent fixture, one that allows Travellers to live in their caravans or mobile homes, while at the same time having access to water, electricity and rest room facilities. They are made up of about 10 to 20 bays, each holding one or two caravans. Most halting sites have some play area and early learning center for children. They are an accommodation option favored by the Traveller community.
2. There will be public meetings, legal proceedings, demonstrations and marches, anything that will put an end to the plan or hold it up indefinitely. At these meetings, one will often hear people say, "I'm not anti-Traveller but…" before they go on to make quite misleading and inflammatory remarks about Travellers and Traveller accommodation. Much of what will be discussed publicly is poorly informed, anecdotal, and simply feeds the fear in the group at the prospect of Travellers living in the community. There is but one effect of such public meetings and that is closure; closure of imagination, mind and heart, and closure of the community. Those who are more ambivalent or ambiguous about the accommodation of Travellers in their areas are not sufficiently informed about the issues to stand up in these situations and make a case for the planned site, although they would be tempted to.
3. It is most important to meet with the leadership in the parish, to find out what they want, what they need, their level of knowledge and quality of relationship with Travellers. We must determine who the program is for, how often we meet, where we meet, for how long we meet. It must be decided what kind and style of meeting will best suit the group of people the program is designed for. We must be asking "Who needs what as defined by whom?" Jane Vella, Learning to Listen, *Learning to Teach, The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco, Jossey Bass, 1994), 4.

4. Thomas H. Groome, *Sharing Faith, A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry,* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991).
5. It is not possible to grow up in Ireland without prejudice towards Travellers. Many would not agree with this statement and maintain that they have no problem with Travellers and do not discriminate against them. However, our prejudice only shows itself where there is a meeting between the two communities. Where there is no contact or interaction at the personal level, many can quite easily believe that they are quite open to Travellers and Travellers way of life. That is until there is a proposal for Travellers to live in the area, or any other type of contact where the two communities meet. I remember being out for a Christmas party with a group of Traveller women one evening. They had just finished a training program in literacy and were out to celebrate. We had something to eat, and drink and a good few of the women had quite a bit to drink. They were poor women and their lives were very difficult. When Santa Claus arrived into the pub to sing a few songs, a couple of the women who were a bit drunk at this stage went over to him and began to pull at his beard and just make a nuisance of themselves. After a few minutes, they sat down again. When this was going on, I found my own prejudice rising up about Travellers and drink. There are many in Ireland who will say that Travellers drink too much and are always getting into trouble, this is one of those popular myths about Travellers but I had bought into it. When the women were up with Santa, I remember thinking to myself, Typical'. And it was not until later, when I was thinking about settled women out for an office party at Christmas, and that they probably would not have stopped at Santa's beard if they had got that off and gone much further, but I would not have been saying or thinking, 'Typical'. Our own prejudice is so deep and subtle, it is very hard to recognize, accept and change.
6. The session is made up of about 20 adult people. They include those with responsibility for leadership in the parish, clerics and religious, men and women on the pastoral council, finance committee, liturgy committee etc.
7. Through exercises such as this, it is made clear to the participants that they are the subjects of their own learning, what they say matters to the content and shape of the process. This exercise can be done in groups, with one person in each group reporting back to the larger group. These will then be recorded by the facilitators.
8. Because of the nature of the subject, the participants will need to feel safe in this environment. It is the quality of the safety felt that will allow people to express what they really think and feel about Travellers and the Traveller community.
9. I have just put one together on PowerPoint. They are a collection of photographs of Travellers that I have taken over a number of years.
10. This is an important step in helping participants realize that they are subjects of their own learning.
11. The participants will be asked if they have anything that needs clarification or if there is something they want to say about the process or content. This gives the space for their shaping of the learning process and ensures that their agenda is addressed.

12.



13. This input will involve definitions for culture, its characteristics and expression.
14. The participants in group 1, will be asked to look at economic structures and asked the question, "How has/does the organization of resources in our society impact on the life of Travellers?" In group 2, they will look at political structures and asked, "How has/does the organization of power impact on the life of Travellers, who has got power and how is it exercised?" Group 3 will look at cultural structures and asked, "How does the present values system or core meanings in society affect the life of Travellers, how are Travellers thought of in the general population and why?" Finally, group 4 will look at social structures and asked the question, "How are relationships between the Traveller community and the settled community organized and who decides?"
15. This presentation will center around the geography of closure that Travellers live in. It will be based on the analysis offered in Paper II of this Synthesis Project.
16. They would concentrate on the themes of dignity of the individual, importance of community and God's response to those who were excluded.
17. *The Social Concerns of the Church,* John Paul II in Gremillion, Joseph, ed. *The Gospel of Peace and Justice: Catholic Social Teaching since Pope John.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1975.
18. Justice in the World, Statement of the Synod of Bishops, 1971 in Gremillion.
19. *Indifference*

When Jesus came to Golgotha, they hung him on a tree,
they drove great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary:
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were his wounds and deep.
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Birmingham, they simply passed Him by.
They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die.
For man had grown more tender, and they would not give him pain,
They only just passed down the street, and left him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do."
And still it rained the wintry rain that drenched him through and through.
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,
And Jesus leaned against a wall and cried for Calvary.

20. In a parish in Dublin, on a Sunday morning, while Mass is being carried on in the church, across the road, above the chip shop, there is an adult literacy class for women taking place at the same time. It is useful to wonder about the action of God's spirit in these two places. Are the people at mass being transformed, liberated and more authentic or is it the women who are being led to freedom and a realization of their own dignity and humanity? In a way, it's a wrong question, for God's spirit is in both places. But God's spirit steadily seeks to promote harmony and right relationship through social justice.
21. The Travellers will cover all sorts of issues from accommodation, discrimination, education, faith, children, hopes and fears, work, family, holidays, moments of delight and others of death. The experience of poverty and suffering, the experience of hope and humor all will be covered.
22. This dialogue is an attempt to move to an enlarged way of understanding the 'other', to listen to their experience and attempt to see the world, oneself and one's own community from their point of view. In knowing and relating to the 'other', there is a strong tendency to see ourselves reflected in them and then "embrace them in our own image, so as to subject them to our own image." (Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society* [London: SCM Press, 1999],133) In this way difference is denied and people will just say, "they're just like us really, no different after all! The relationship is based on how similar people are to each other and how much groups have in common. This is a very important part of building relationships but there are dangers with it, especially if it only goes this far, towards what is in common. We can become very closed if our communities are only based on correspondence of what is alike between people and groups, without acknowledging or celebrating what is different and distinct. In this way there is no real growth but only the "continually reiterated self-endorse ment of what is already known." (Moltmann, 139) Moltmann gives the example of this principle at work in the so-called 'discovery' of America. The conquistadors and the missionaries only discovered what they were looking for and what they recognized in 'others'. They looked for what was like and similar to themselves. They failed to perceive the difference in kind and unique character of the Indians. The 'others' were made similar to the dominant group and the end was "the uniform colonial culture, the uniform imperial religion, and the uniform, all-leveling language." (Moltmann, 143)

    To know the 'other' we or those doing the knowing must be aware of our own 'otherness' also, and that it is 'others' knowing 'others'. When we encounter something familiar or someone like us, we are endorsed, it is pleasing and reassuring. However, if we encounter something or someone that is different, strange or new, the initial effect is often discomfort and resistance. We experience 'others' through contradiction as opposed to correspondence. We perceive the 'other' with what is opposite in ourselves. It is through dissonance, not consonance, that we become alive to the new. As Anaxagoras says, "We come to know the cold by the hot… the sweet by the sour, the light by the dark… All sense perception, he holds, is fraught with

pain, for the unlike when brought into contact [with our organs) always brings distress." (Moltmann, 143) Coming to know something new can be painful, it can jar with our experience or assumptions. When this happens, we are faced with a choice, to take responsibility for the position we hold or to review it and possibly change it in the light of this new insight or experience. It is through this dissonance that we learn and are awakened to the new in both our own selves and in others. When we are among Travellers we notice that we are settled people, among nomads that we are sedentary, among people who are black, that we are white, among poorer people, that we are middle class. This encounter with those who differ from oneself or one's group can be an opportunity for learning about one's own identity and the identity of the other. Moltmann has put it well when he says that it is "only in the foreign land that we appreciate what home is. It is only in the face of death that we sense the uniqueness of life. It is only in strife that we know how to appreciate peace. It is in the encounter with the other that we experience our own selves. In the like we do not notice what is like in ourselves at all… It is so close that we cannot perceive it." (144).

To come to know the 'other' in their difference as well as their similarity is a very difficult and lengthy process. It can be unsettling to move out of our certainties and become a little vulnerable. It is not easy to move beyond what we have in common, and engage with the differences between us. There is always the temptation to ignore or deny the difference. This must be resisted. To move into a space of understanding the other, without doing away with the feeling of discomfort, awkwardness and fear, we need to develop attitudes of empathy and wonder. Empathy helps us to move into the life of the other, being open to their experience and seeing the world from their perspective. Wonder helps us to be open to everything around us, as if for the very first time. It allows us to be surprised and receptive to events and people that might otherwise seem repetitive and too familiar. It is a disposition that does not let reality pass by, one that seeks to grasp and be astonished by life. Where there is no space or appreciation for difference, assimilation becomes the norm.

23. They can describe it verbally, dramatize it, draw it, sing about it or make up some sort of poem about it, etc.
24. The exercise is an attempt to enlarge the way settled people think about Travellers.
25. This will entail finding out who is going to do what by when, and how it is to be done.
26. These will ask if the participants issues were addressed, ask if the process was helpful, what could have been better, what were the strong points, what needs to be changed? We will also ask for any other comments.

"Them" and "Us'

Part Three; Practice

Introduction

This paper outlines the necessity to have and live a faith that is adequate to the world as it is today, particularly in regard to our relationship to those excluded and forced to live on the margins of our communities, society and world. It looks at the purpose of Christian religious education, the importance of right relationship, the necessary dispositions and characteristics that this education process needs to cultivate in its participants and the importance of being able to do Christian social analysis, so that Christians are able to engage firmly and confidently in the process of social change, transformation and the reign of God.

It is crucial that Christian religious education can engage with the reality of exclusion and the geography of closure that gives rise to people and communities being deemed as 'other', and 'outsiders', while diminishing their opportunities for self-gift and capacity for living life to the full (John 10:10). This engagement needs to be done in a manner and way that leads to inclusion, participation and transformation. This is a difficult task, for the world appears to have become "more complex, society more diverse, and former certainties more ambiguous, even those who are well educated and trained may become overwhelmed, discouraged, sometimes frightened."(1) Within this context, it is challenging to live a life committed to the Christian vision of right relationship with God, self, others and creation. Where this challenge becomes too much, there can be a strong temptation among Christians to retreat into old certainties, putting a little distance between the 'world out there' and the life of the Christian community 'in here'. Although this may seem attractive to some, it must be resisted by all who go by the name of Christian. To be a Christian means to live in right relationship, inserted in the world and to contribute to its well being, particularly on behalf of the wounded and excluded. It is not enough to treat the 'other' with respect, it is not enough to recognize the 'other' as subject, it is not enough to see oneself and one's own community through the eyes of the 'other'. Goodwill along with naivete simply salves one's conscience while maintaining the status quo and clearly is not enough. Goodwill, analysis and action must be combined to effect both one's own conversion and the larger systemic and structural change needed in promoting social justice. This change must go to the heart of the structures that

have maintained the exclusion and objectification of the 'other' and the group or community the 'other' belongs to. However, given the context, this is not easy and, therefore, we must be engaged in a process of life long learning about what it means to be Christian and how we live a life of faith in the world as it is today; a faith that leads to inclusion, participation and right relationship. Hence the need for Christian religious education.

According to Thomas Groome, the final purpose of Christian religious education is the reign of God, human freedom and fullness of life for all, here and hereafter.(2) To live in a way that leads to fullness and freedom for oneself and others, one needs to count life as meaningful.(3) In the *Ethics of Authenticity,* (4) Charles Taylor describes this search for meaning, in terms of the pursuit of authenticity, an activity that most people are engaged in today. However, there are difficulties, because "the dark side of individualism is a centering of the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, less concerned with others or society."(5) Despite this, he points out ways to live an authentic life. One of the most important considerations for him is that the "general feature of human life that I want to evoke is its fundamentally dialogical character"(6) and later on in the book, he points out the need "to fight over the meaning of authenticity, and persuade people that self-fulfillment, so far from excluding unconditional relationships and moral demands beyond the self, actually requires these in some form."(7) He says that where there is not enough attention given to our ties with others and to demands that are self-transcending, authenticity will not be found. This experience is echoed in the work of Daloz, Keen, and Parks in *Common Fire, Lives of Commitment in a Complex World,* where they say that:

> "It is becoming increasingly clear even to middle-and upper-class folk – people for whom our society is presumed to work – that their well being depends not only upon their talent, initiative, and ability to work hard, but also upon the quality of our common life. We have pushed the myth of individual freedom, strength, rights, expression, competition, salvation, and specialization to an edge that cannot hold."(8)

Finally, Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton in *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life,* point out that "real freedom lies not in rejecting our social nature but in fulfilling it in a critical and adult loyalty, as we acknowledge our common responsibility to contribute to the wider fellowship of life."(9) These references go to illustrate that authenticity, freedom and fullness of

life for all, lie in the quality of our relationships with one another: this issue is at the heart of what it means to participate in the reign of God. Facilitating participation in relationships that are life-giving and self-transcending, while promoting inclusion and openness in the wider community and society, are serious matters for Christian religious education.

This education, however, will have failed if it cannot or does not lead to any real or systemic transformation in oneself, others and/or structures that lead to closure and exclusion. It is not sufficient for it to simply inform individuals or groups about God, about the church, about Jesus and about justice and right relationship, without the necessary experience in how to live this faith and engage in social change. It must foster a consciousness of who is the 'other', an understanding of why this is the case and the ability to engage in strategies through solidarity that lead to liberation and inclusion. Christian religious education needs to provide opportunities for "the acquisition of those skills and abilities which allow the adult believer to carry out his (sic) Christian witness in the most diverse circumstances, in the community and in society."(10) Too often it has just given people information, without formation leading to transformational 1) One the one hand, Christians need to be familiar with the fundamentals of the faith,(12) while, on the other, they must be given opportunities for praxis in matters of social change and the promotion of justice. According to Walter Brueggemann, they need to be bilingual, to have the language of the community, while also being able to speak the language of social policy.(13) Much of what I have spoken about will only be picked up, learned and done where Christians have the necessary disposition to this 'way' of being in the world and the desire for right relationship.

Dispositions

Christian religious education needs to cultivate these dispositions that facilitate the living of faith and right relationship in a complex and ambiguous world. A 'critical consciousness' is essential in Christians today. We must be asking why things are the way they are, in the knowledge that things were not always like this, nor do they have to remain like this in the future.(14) We need to ask, "Is the culture leading us towards what is profoundly humanizing and creative of love, or pushing us towards what is imprisoning, destructive, and closed to compassion?"(15) It is vital that people are able to engage in a process of Christian social analysis, for without it, the communities' response to issues of social injustice, closure and oppression will be poorly informed and without the necessary understanding of the reality to effect construc-

tive and meaningful change. The education process needs to facilitate this ability in the Christian community, for it is in the process of questioning and enquiring that assumptions are revealed and predispositions exposed to the light of Christian critical reflection and thinking. In this way change is possible and people realize themselves as agents and subjects, not the passive participants of some large unchangeable, closed and anonymous system.

Another disposition that is crucial for Christians is that of 'dialogue', the ability to engage in 'sustained critical conversation'. As Cardinal Joseph Bernardin & Oscar H Lipscomb point out in *Catholic Common Ground Initiative,(16)* a characteristic of an adult church is a place where there is "authentic unity, acceptable diversity, and respectful dialogue."(17) This facility for dialogue (18) is needed both within the community and outside of the community. Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (19) emphasised the importance of dialogue in the process of freedom and fulness of life for all. He wrote that "Dialogue, as the encounter of men (sic) to 'name' the world, is a fundamental precondition for their true humanization."(20) The ability to be 'in conversation' and 'dialogue' will serve the community well, for it will assist it in discerning the presence and action of God in the world. It assumes the need to listen to others, that they have something to say and offer, that God's presence is active in their lives and there is something to be learned from being with them. The truth is never fully known. This is a disposition that was evident in Paul when he went to visit at Athens (Acts 17).(21)

This disposition towards 'dialogue' and 'conversation', allows for another important disposition that needs to be facilitated by the education process and that is a disposition of 'sacramental consciousness'. It is a consciousness that sees and experiences the sacred nature of the world and God's presence within it. According to Himes & Himes, in the *Fullness of Faith,* (22) "the sacred is the sacramental form of the secular, i.e. the sacred is the secular in its full depth."(23) This modal distinction between the sacred and the secular can distinguish the two aspects of human experience. There is no such thing as secular, if secular means independent of divine action. "But every human act can implicitly or explicitly either affirm or deny its rootedness in the freedom of God… Every experience, every act, every event, can be a disclosure of the sacred depth of reality, including human beings, most especially in their freedom."(24) It is in the exercise of freedom, when we encounter with a shock or whatever the depth of ultimacy in our acts, whether good or bad, agapic or selfish, that we have 'sacramental encounters', this disposition allows us to uncover the radical presence of God among us.

Education Process

The education process itself needs to foster these three dispositions, a 'critical consciousness', 'dialogue' and a 'sacramental consciousness'. Other qualities needed to live a life of commitment to the common good in the world today have been written about by Daloz, et al in *Common Fire, Lives of Commitment in a Complex World*.(25) These include having a sense of trust and agency, recognizing the importance of mentors, working across differences and having transformative encounters with 'others', an ability to appreciate the larger system and how things are interconnected, and finally having an experience of being personally committed to the common good and feeling a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others. These aspects are important to bear in mind when constructing learning situations and environments, and reflecting on present experiences and practices.(26)

Jane Vella, in *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach,* (27) outlines twelve principles for effective adult learning.(28) These, combined with the characteristics outlined in *Common Fire,* give a sure foundation to any Christian religious education project being developed or worked upon seeking to promote the reign of God. Thomas Groome gives a very useful methodology in *Sharing Faith* (29) of how one can construct learning situations and environments that are conducive to good Christian religious education.(30)

Social Analysis

Having begun this essay stressing the importance that Christian religious education lead to transformation in the promotion of justice, particularly for those on the 'outside',(31) it is critical that people learn the skills in the actual doing of justice. The process of social analysis is one such tool and can be brought to bear on a wide variety of social situations. While I outline the basic framework below, in the footnotes I show how it applies to the Traveller community in Ireland today.

Pastoral action on behalf of social justice cannot be done without proper social analysis. How we see issues or problems determine how we will respond to them. If we see things in a simplistic and superficial manner, our analysis will be shallow, anecdotal and our action short term and ineffective. Ills essential that a serious analysis be brought to bear on many social issues today. It needs to deal with the complex nature of problems, the inter-connectedness of events, historical trends, taking into account the deeper structural issues at the heart of any problem in order to affect profound social change. Analysis is in the service of action, it connects faith and the doing of justice in a practical and realistic manner. If faith is to speak to the reality of injustice in the world today, to exclusion and closure, it needs to clearly understand the issues

being addressed and propose alternatives, in keeping with the prophetic tradition of our church.

The following is a schema of how this might be done. It is a model to follow in organizing all the information we have available to us. It begins first with History, followed by Analysis, Theological Reflection, and finally Planning for Action. For this schema, I have drawn on ideas in *'Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice'* (32) by Joe Holland and Peter Henriot S.J., and *'Social Analysis in the Light of the Gospel'* (33) by Sean Healy, S.M.A., and Brigid Reynolds, S.M.

1. History

To do any analysis, we need to know where we have come from and where we are going to in the future. In this way, current events and challenges are given an historical perspective. Every reality is situated in a historical context. It is important that this is articulated and understood. For it can free many people from the tyranny of history's invisible forces, which are "little more than the power of other people to determine the course of our lives."(34) Many have a fatalistic view of history: it has always being like this, some say. Such an understanding can easily lead to the status quo remaining the same and seeing our world as unchangeable. An analysis of history shows that our world as it is today, is the result of decisions made by individuals, communities, organizations and governments; we have made things the way they are and we have the power to change the way things are. Consequently, opportunities can be created for people to shift from being passive objects of history to becoming transforming subjects, communities determining their own lives and story.

In this historical section, we need to get in touch with the lived experience of individuals and communities, particularly those on the 'outside', those who are 'other'. What is the reality of the world from their perspective? How do they critique the rest of society? How do they experience closure and exclusion? What there the effects of this reality on their lives and the lives of their families? How do things look and feel like from the margins of society? How did things come to be like this?(35)

2. Social Analysis (36)

This history and experience is then looked at in a broader perspective of structures. We need to look at four connected and interrelated structures:

economic — economic structures are about the distribution of resources, the question, 'how does our society organize its resources?' reveals the economic structure. There

	are many resources in countries but they are organized differently around the world. Economic resources are at the root of social stratification. To impact on this stratification, we need to engage with the organization of resources.(37)
political	political structures are concerned with the use of power, the question, 'how do we organize power?' will reveal the structures of power. Power is used to organize the resources of a country or community. Often it is useful to look at the laws of a country and see who they support and there get a sense of how economics has shaped the laws of the land and to find out, to whom are these laws advantageous?(38)
cultural	cultural structures are concerned with meaning, the question, 'how is meaning organized in society?' reveals the structures of culture. If economic and political structures are to have any effect they must be meaningful to people. The dominant culture supports the economic and political structures. There are many assumptions in society, i.e. 'those on the 'outside', choose of their own volition to be there' or 'it is the fault of the poor that they are poor' etc. These are often difficult to expose. More than ever, it is the media that form and shapes these assumptions, and give a sense of meaning and defines what is valuable in society. To a lesser extent, education and religion make an impact in this area.(39)
social	social structures are about relationships, the answer to the question, 'how are relationships organized?' will reveal the shape and power of this structure. The economic, political and cultural structures mentioned earlier all give rise to a set of relationships between different groups in society, which can best be described as a pyramid divided into sections.(40)

It is important to remember that these four structures have considerable interaction between them and have only been divided out in this way to facilitate social analysis.

3. Theological Reflection

Having done the work of the earlier two sections, it is important that we understand this experience and information in the light of living faith, scripture, and tradition. We need to listen to the voice of God, speaking

to every reality, and with others, discern the movement of God's spirit in particular situations. As Joe Holland has put it so well, "The creativity of human culture is humanity's participation in the creative Spirit of God who brooded over the waters in Genesis and still moves within the depths of human civilization."(41) One of the assumptions that Christians bring to this kind of analysis is that God is still at work in the world. God's own spirit creates space for life and healing, all in the service of unity and communion. It is in the careful discernment of God's own spirit, a spirit of creativity, liberation and life that we come to be partners in the realizing of God's own reign in concrete situations. This can best be done in the context of a community reflecting on the present reality in the light of their lived faith, scripture and tradition. This can lead to them being in tune with God's own transforming word and a ready heart to help move the world from where it is, to where God wants it to be.(42)

4. Planning & Action

In the light of the Historical Perspective, the Analysis, the Theological Reflection, we need to ask what response is called for by individuals, communities and Governments? The response needs to be planned carefully so that it is most effective in both the short and the long term. The planning needs to be done 'with' where possible and not 'for' those it seeks to help. How this process is done, will determine the shape and outcome of the plan. If it was a number of experts, doing all this analysis on behalf of the 'poor' and this same group coming up with the planning for the future, it is very likely that it will not work in the long run. A close and intimate connection needs to be kept with those who are on the 'outside', those for whom there is no space or room in society, those who are 'other'. Their participation in the whole process of social analysis and transformation is crucial and of the utmost impor-tance.(43)

Conclusion

When dealing with the reality of exclusion and closure, it is absolutely crucial that Christian religious education passes on the skills and praxis of social analysis and transformation. It needs to facilitate an ability to understand complex issues and the dynamics that lead to groups being deemed 'other', and squeezed from any real or meaningful participation in society, consequently living precariously on the edge of life. This ability enables the participants and Christian community to engage in their own conversion and critically, systemic transformation. It is this combination of analysis, conversion and transformation that leads to right relationship and the reign of God. As Martin Luther King once

said, "Any religion concerned about the souls of people and not concerned with the slums that damn them, the economics that strangle them and the social conditions that imprison them is a molly coddle religion awaiting burial."

Notes

1. Laurent A. Parks Daloz and others, *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 5.
2. Although the reign of God was rarely used in Hebrew scriptures, the reality that it represented by the time of Jesus was always vital to Hebrew faith:
   - God's saving activity in midst of human history;
   - God's intentions that all people live in peace and justice, love and freedom, wholeness and fullness of life, and for the integrity of creation (shalom);
   - the responsibilities that the covenant places on people to do God's will and to live in right relationship with God, self, others and creation, as God relates to humankind.
   - Jesus preached the reign of God in continuity with these core convictions of his Jewish tradition; he made it the symbol of the central theme and purpose of his life:
   - he presented himself as God's definitive agent in history for he advent of God's reign;
   - and radicalized its law by making universal love of others as ourselves the measure of our love for God.
3. This search for authenticity, fullness of life and meaning is at the heart of the social mission of the church. Gaudium et Spes spells this out as the healing and elevation of the dignity of the human person, the building and consolidation of bonds of solidarity in society and the endowment of daily human activity with a deeper meaning and worth. *Gaudium et Spes, #* 40.
4. Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).
5. ibid., 4.
6. ibid., 33.
7. ibid., 73.
8. Laurent A. Parks Daloz and others, *Common Fire,* 10-11.
9. Robert N. Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press) 1996.
10. *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community, Some Principles and Guidelines. United States Catholic Conference.* (Washington, D.C.: Office for Publishing and Promotional Services, 1991), 42.
11. It is my experience in Ireland that Christian religious education programs in some colleges and some parishes, point out matters of social injustice and encourage people and communities to be involved in these issues.

However, I believe that this involvement has been limited. It often has been at the level of personal contact with the poor and excluded, of helping someone with money or accommodation difficulties, visiting the sick or those in prison. This is good, but more is needed. Much of the education has facilitated this interpersonal contact through pastoral reflection groups. But it has not asked sufficiently the critical question, "Why?" Why does that person need the money, why does that person need accommodation, why is this person is hospital and why, in a prison in Dublin, are three quarters of its population from six socially disadvantaged areas of the city? Having asked these questions, it is important that some get involved at the level of social policy, advocacy and the systemic promotion of inclusion. This critical conscious and systematic approach to justice needs to be learned and practiced, Christian religious education programs need to do this.

12. In an article called 'Basic Christian Understandings', Bernard J. Cooke outlines five fundamentals that are needed in Christian education. They include: the church, Jesus, the Christ, the God who saves, divine/human communication and authentic Christian life. He says that the reality of God acting in human life is the ideal of what religious education tries to achieve, and that religious studies emphasizes the interaction between cognition, affectivity, and action. Basically there is need for both experience of the reality and accurate knowledge. With regard to the church, he stresses that the church is not that which Christians need to pass in order to reach God, but that it is they themselves who are the context of the divine presence. Much is needed to be known about he historical Jesus of Nazareth and also the presence and action of the risen Christ in the world today. In understanding God, Christians need to look at the question of what it is that God is doing in their lives and so enable them to reach their destiny. To do this, there must be understanding of two issues, firstly, sin as infidelity, social oppression and injustice, and secondly, the saving and transforming action of God in the world, which is grace. Cooke goes on to look at the need and action of prayer and finally the importance of what it means to live a good Christian life, particularly looking at such themes as sin, guilt, conscience and conversion. Bernard J. Cooke, "Basic Christian Understandings," in *Education for Citizenship and Discipleship,* ed. Mary C. Boys (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989), 79-95.
13. Walter Brueggemann, "The Legitimacy of a Sectarian Hermeneutic: 2 Kings 18-19", *Education for Citizenship and Discipleship,* ed., Mary C. Boys (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1989), 3-34.
14. The following story illustrates the need for a critical consciousness. Once there was a town built upon the bend in a large river. One day as some of the the children were playing beside it, they noticed some bodies floating in it. They They ran for help and the people quickly pulled the bodies out of the water. One One body was dead so they buried it. One was alive, but quite ill, so they put put that person in hospital. The third turned out to be a healthy child which they they placed with a family who cared for it and who took it to school. From that that day on, every day a number of bodies

came floating down the river and every day the good people of the town would pull them out and tend to them, taking the sick to hospital, placing the children with families and burying those who were dead. This went on for years, each day brought its quota of bodies and the people of the town came to expect a number of bodies each day but also worked at developing more elaborate systems for picking them out of the river and tending to them. Some of the people became very generous in tending to these bodies and a few extraordinary ones even gave up their jobs so that they could tend to this concern full-time. And the town itself felt a certain healthy pride in their generosity. However, during all those years and despite all that generosity and effort, nobody thought to go upstream, beyond the bend that hid from their sight, and find out why, daily, those bodies came floating down the river.

15. Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols* (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997), 122.
16. Joseph Bernardin and Oscar H. Lipscomb, *Catholic Common Ground Initiative, Foundational Documents* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Book, 1997).
17. ibid., 40.
18. According to Bernardin and Lipscomb there are a number of characteristics in the use of dialogue. It needs to take place in an atmosphere of integrity, where no one group feels itself to have a complete monopoly on the truth, all proposals need to be tested for their pastoral realism, the good faith of those with whom one differs needs to be presumed, and the best possible construction on differing positions needs to be made. Joseph Bernardin and Oscar H. Lipscomb, *Catholic Common Ground Initiative, Foundational Documents* (New York: A Crossroad Herder Book, 1997), 43. According to Paulo Freire, there are many things needed for authentic dialogue. Love is the first of these. It gives courage and embodies a commitment to others, a commitment that is unsentimental and free of manipulation. Humility allows us to recognize our need to know from the other and to work with the other. To believe that humankind is able to create and re-create, make and remake requires faith, a faith in humankind's vocation to become more fully alive. This leads to trust, a trust that allows and facilitates an every deepening partnership in the process of freedom. It is a hopeful process, a hope that does not give way to despair in the face of oppression but as long as the struggle goes on, then people continue to be moved by hope. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed (New York:* Herder, 1972).
19. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder, 1972).
20. ibid., 107.
21. Initially the people there disgusted him, but after some time, he had a change of heart and was able to see the seeds of the gospel among that community. He arrived at a more positive intuition into the values of the Athenian people, only through listening carefully is this type of discernment possible.
22. Michael J. Himes and Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., *Fullness of Faith, The Public Significance of Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993).

23. ibid., 80.
24. ibid., 82.
25. Over a number of years, interviewing 100 people from different back grounds, nationalities, religions affiliations, and gender mix, they found a number of similar characteristics in all people interviewed that enabled them to live meaningful lives, in the service of the common good.
26. These characteristics were very helpful to me in working with Travellers on a project to bring much needed educational equipment to an orphanage in Romania. The idea came from a few Travellers as we were away on a pilgrimage in France. They wanted to know if there was some way they could do something for someone else. It was at the time many of the Romanian orphanages were in the news all over Europe. When we returned to Dublin, two of the Travellers and myself linked up with a Romanian relief organization in Dublin, and made plans for the Traveller community to provide educational equipment for the orphanage and then drive all the equipment made, collected and bought over ourselves. The learning in the trip was enormous for us all. It gave those of us involved a sense of 'agency', that we could indeed make a difference. This is something that people who are oppressed and excluded their whole lives have some doubt about and lack confidence in this aspect of their lives. We went round collecting money from the different camps and sites where Travellers lived, organizing raffles and collecting money. It was the first time that Travellers throughout Ireland were asked to contribute to something like this, one woman simply said, "It was nice to be asked." This action affirmed the fundamental dignity of that woman, but also of many, many others. To be asked to give, the presumption being that you have something to offer is very affirming. This process valued very highly the importance of inclusion and letting people know, no matter how excluded or oppressed that they have something to contribute. The appeal was called the Travellers Appeal for Romanian Children'. It allowed for 'transformative encounters with otherness', Travellers and settled people were now working together, not on something that would be the cause of division, like the provision of accommodation, but for the good of children in Romania. It was in this working together that much prejudice and stereotyping was brought into the open, challenged and changed. The 'other' became subjects, people with names, with families and stories. In the whole process there was a sense of 'trust' built up in the working group itself but also among many different Traveller families and among some Travellers and settled people. We went there in four Toyota Hiace vans, (these are vans typically driven by Travellers), with the words Travellers Appeal for Romanian Children on the sides of them, and through the coverage of the media, Ireland saw the Traveller community bringing out thousands of pounds worth of educational equipment and money, that they had built and raised themselves, to children in Romania. And for a moment, the prejudice of settled people was interrupted. When we went out there, we met with Gypsies in different countries and Travellers began to move beyond their own 'tribe' and make connections with 'others'. When we got there, and met with the children, everyone began to ask the 'why'

question and began to develop a 'critical consciousness'. In the planning, the trip itself and the return there was much dialogue and conversation, some prayer and religious rituals, all trying to make sense of what we were involved in. The points made in *Common Fire,* certainly held true for us and resonate with my own experience of working with different groups, the qualities outlined in the book are very helpful.

27. Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach, The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications, 1994).
28. They are: needs assessment, participation of the learners in naming what is to be learned; safety in the environment and process; sound relationship between teacher and learner; careful attention to sequence of content and reinforcement; praxis; respect for learners as subjects of their own learning; cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects: ideas, feelings, actions; immediacy of the learning; clear roles and role development; teamwork: using small groups; engagement of the learners in what they are learning; accountability: how do they know they know? See Jane Vella, *Learning to Listen, Learning to Teach, The Power of Dialogue in Educating Adults,* 3-4.
29. Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith, A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, The Way of Shared Praxis* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1991).
30. The following is a method of shared praxis, a praxis done in the context of community. It is a process or method to educate, to realize freedom and make the reign of God present in this historical situation.

Movement 1	Invite expression from life around the theme. This allows people to speak from their own experience, to tell their own story and give expression to themselves and what it is that needs to be shared.
Movement 2	Encourage reflection and sharing together. Ask questions such as, 'Why?' 'Why are you thinking like this?' 'How did this come to be?'
Movement 3	Give access to Story and Vision of Christian Faith as pertinent to the theme, group, context, etc. Here scripture or tradition might be useful. It is an offer as opposed to imposition.
Movement 4	Encourage appropriation – making one's own. We might ask, 'Having heard what has gone before, what are the implications for the participants?' 'What might people add to it, what do they see for themselves?' Invite other wisdom and sharing.
Movement 5	Invite decision – to "Faith Alive". What does all of this mean now, for my head, hands or heart or all of myself?

    Thomas Groome, *Sharing Faith.*
31. Ronald Marstin has said that "justice has been described as a matter of who is included and who is excluded; a matter of who and what we can tolerate neglecting." See "Reflections on Ethos and War," *Yale Review* 73 (Summer 1984): 481-486.

32. Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J., *Social Analysis, Linking Faith with Justice,* (Washington: Dove Communications and Orbis Books in collaboration with The Center of Concern, 1980).
33. Sean Healy, S.M.A., and Brigid Reynolds, S.M., *Social Analysis in the Light of the Gospel* (Dublin: Folens & Co., 1983).
34. Joe Holland & Peter Henriot, S.J., *Social Analysis.*
35. There are many different theories of the origin of the Traveller community. Unfortunately, there is very little written history about Travellers and what written history there is, is often from the perspective of settled community. Travellers have only recently begun to write their own history, drawing from their strong oral tradition. At present there are three different theories as to the origin of the Traveller community. They are: Travellers are/were products of poverty and displacement having been evicted from their land; they are descendants of travelling craftspeople; and they are descendants of Celtic or pre-Celtic peoples.

    The one that is most prominent in the popular imagination is that of poverty and displacement. In the past, there were many ways in which people's land was taken from them. When we look at the 17th century, we see Oliver Cromwell and his armies evicting families from their land and in the mid-19th century the Great Famine killed off millions and put many more on the roads. It was and is thought that this is where Travellers appeared in Ireland. This particular interpretation of Travellers history is fraught with difficulties. Through it, many people today see Travellers as dropouts. The popular view is that they are the ones who lost the land during the famine or before and were unable to make their way back onto it and return to a settled way of life. The presumption is that the settled way of life is normative. In official policy, up to recently, the life of Travellers was equated with vagrancy, therefore the response was one of rehabilitation and absorption. This was the stated position until 1983 but in many areas of public and private life, it is the operative one at present. This view led policy makers to attempt to 'settle' Travellers, to get them off the roads and into houses and living in a manner that is keeping with the settled population surrounding them. There was no recognition that nomadism might be a valid way of life in itself and that Travellers themselves might have pre-dated the events of the 17th and 19th centuries, while certainly having their number added to by people who were indeed put off the land during these times.

    Some say that Travellers are descendants of craftspeople. One idea is that their ancestors were indigenous craftspeople-who were either separate from, a distinct subgroup within, or drawn from the Celtic invaders-who never became sedentary. Another view is that there was not enough demand for certain trades in a given area, like tinsmithing, so the people in those trades adopted a nomadic lifestyle to enable them to profitably continue in their trades.

    Finally, Travellers are sometimes thought to date back to Celtic or pre-Celtic ages. Eoin MacNeill in *Phases of Irish History* dates the Travellers to pre-Celtic times: "The tinker clans of recent times in Ireland

and Scotland may well be survivals of some of these ancient [pre-Celtic inhabitants of Ireland] industrial communities." Others say that Travellers came from some of the Celtic groups that invaded Ireland over several centuries.

This work of identifying Travellers origin and history will go on for a long time to come, but the question of identity is crucial. For if Travellers are seen as dropouts and really just poor settled people travelling along on the side of the road, then the nature of the relationship between settled people and Travellers will be based on this, leading to paternalism, assimilation and a denial of cultural difference. Whereas, if the history of Travellers points to them being a separate nomadic group of Irish people with their own distinct culture, then their relationship with the settled community and the state will be quite different. It requires a different response, one that is appropriate to the identity of Travellers and in keeping with their distinct culture. There is enough evidence to show that Travellers are a distinct cultural group, with their own ethnic identity. See *Irish Travellers, Culture & Ethnicity,* Mary McCann, and others, ed., (Belfast: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1994). The relationship needs to be based on partnership, integration and a respect of cultural difference.

At the beginning of this century, Travellers lived in tents and got around by walking. In about the 1930s, wagons and horses began to be used. Later, as mechanization became more and more widespread throughout the country, caravans and vans replaced these. Now also, many Travellers live in houses. This is not necessarily out of choice but because it is just too difficult to live on the roadside without water, toilets and electricity; along with the difficulty of not being left in any one area for very long. However, many Travellers would leave the houses they are in at present, if they were presented with a proper halting site to live on. In the 1930s, many Travellers made money through tinsmiths, chimney sweeps, hawkers and horse and donkey dealers. Living on the margins of society for so long, Travellers have become very versatile and innovative in how they earn their living. These forms of work remained strong until after the World War II, when Irelands economy changed and became more mechanistic and the need for these earlier forms of work became less and less.

Today many Travellers work for themselves, and work is done in the context of family and is something to do when money is needed. It is not a way of life or career. Today, many Travellers work in recycling scrap, dealing in horses, laying tarmac, spraying sheds, selling carpets, markets, while more and more are beginning finding employment in community development work within their own community.

Despite this, it is very difficult for Travellers to find employment because of social exclusion, discrimination, prejudice and poor formal education. Many, when applying for a job will not say they are a Traveller and when working in a job will not tell anyone that they are a Traveller for fear of losing their job.

36. In Ireland communities and individuals do not see, or refuse to imagine a space that Travellers can be welcomed into. There is a closure of mind

and heart. This closure shows itself in prejudice and racial attitudes. The ideological space that is operative at the moment for the majority of settled people in relation to Travellers, is one that fosters negative stereotyping and leads to an exclusion of the 'other', Travellers in this particular case. This exclusion shows itself in the economic, political, social and cultural realities and experience of Travellers in their day to day lives.

37. In the past, Travellers were involved in useful economic activity through out the country. They used to provide seasonal labor in the fields, they made buckets, repaired farm equipment, bought and sold horses, cleaned chimneys and in an overall way managed to fill a gap. There was an economic space for them. However with the advent of plastic and the use of more modern farm machinery this space began to disappear. They were no longer useful or needed on the land. In the 1970s many families drifted to the urban centers looking for ways to make a living. This has not been easy. Over 90% of the Traveller community is in receipt of social welfare assistance. There is a great deal of material poverty, very high illiteracy, poor access to health care, low participation in education beyond primary level and over half of the population live without the most basic accommodation requirements, while most of the rest live in sub-standard accommodation. They are without the necessary resources to participate meaningfully in society.

    Having said this, many families work for a living in the informal economy. They have found some space in the recycling of metals through scrap metal collection, others pave roadways and spray sheds, some go to the markets buying and selling and a small but growing number are getting training and finding employment in community development work. In this way, some are able to make and find some space at the level of individual effort. However, there is little economic space, little of the resources available to the Traveller community that are required to live fully and flourish as a community.

38. This present situation is not the result of huge indiscriminate, uncontrollable forces. This reality is as a result of numerous decisions made by people over many years. It is not an accident nor is it set in stone. In the past, Travellers had very little say in the decisions made concerning their way of life and their future. In the first Government report, The Commission on Itinerancy Report, 1963, Travellers were described as 'deviants' in need of 'rehabilitation' through 'settlement'. There were no Travellers on this committee. There was no room for their voice and so were not a part of the decision making process. The underlying presupposition of the report was that Travellers needed to live in houses and become like the majority population.

    This exclusion of and refusal to hear the Traveller voice in the decision making process is very detrimental to the welfare of the Traveller community. This refusal and inability to hear this voice happens at the level of government and social policy, in areas like accommodation, education, provision of health care, and discrimination legislation. It also happens more locally, in local government, local schools, local parishes, and local

communities. There is little desire to hear the Traveller voice or space made to have it articulated in order that our liturgies are more inclusive, communities more welcoming, our classrooms more intercultural or the accommodation provided culturally appropriate.

Some of this has happened at the level of government with the publication of the Task Force Report on the Travelling Community, 1995. This was two years in the making and the Traveller voice was very much a part of the process and final recommendations. It is a very good report with many good recommendations. At this level, some good things are happening but it takes time to make any difference in the lives of ordinary people living on the roadside.

39. All of the above happens and takes place because it makes sense and is meaningful in the imagination and life of the settled community. If it did not, it would not happen. The imagination of the settled community is flat and narrow, closed to how things might be in relationship with the Traveller community. There is no appreciation of the Traveller culture nor of its value. The following extract is revealing. It is an article by Mary Ellen Synon, describing Traveller lifestyle under the banner headline, "Time to get touch on tinker terror 'culture'". She says:

"It is a life of appetite ungoverned by intellect. It is a life which marauds over private property and disregards public laws. It is a life of money without production, land without cost, damage without compensation, assault without arrest, theft without prosecution, and murder without remorse. It is a life worse than the life of beast, for beasts at least are guided by wholesome instinct. Traveller life is without the ennobling intellect of man or the steadying instinct of animals. This tinker "culture" is without achievement, discipline, reason or intellectual ambition." (Sunday Independent, 28th January 1996)

For her, and many others in Ireland, the Traveller culture is without merit and hence it is left without space to live and air to breathe. Travellers are racially stereotyped in a negative and debasing manner, thereby giving permission to the majority population to exclude, discriminate and collude in the practice of closure and asphyxiation.

40. The result of economic disadvantage, political deafness is exclusion and a particular relationship between the settled community and the Traveller community is set up. It is characterized by closure, exclusion and discrimination. For in these social relationships there is at work a geography of closure. This is most clearly seen in the local communities' rejection and sometimes-violent refusal to allow Traveller accommodation to be built in their area. It is closed to the outsider and stranger.

Not alone is the area closed to the provision of accommodation, it is also closed in more subtle and less obvious ways. Many Travellers end up living in urban wastelands and therefore have few linkages with the working economy, local community and services provided in the area. There is a clear separation between 'them' and 'us[1]. They are 'Traveller' and we are 'settled'. Travellers' physical location isolates them from large sections of the settled population. This separation leads to stereotypical ideas and

misrepresentations of Travellers, these then take on a significance that is unrepresentative of the reality of Travellers' lives, misleading and distorting relationships in a destructive way.

This separation does not just happen between Travellers and settled communities, it also takes place within the Traveller community itself. For much of the oppression has been internalized. One of the ways it shows itself is in a spiral of violence among and between the community itself, violence between families, leading to feuds that span generations and domestic violence. There appears to be a lot of pressure between families and within families. Traditionally families live in small numbers, with extended members of their own families travelling with them. Now it is very difficult to travel and many families are forced to live on top of one another in large ghetto type temporary sites, with only the most basic of facilities. Many families will say that there is 'little space to breathe in these places'. In the past, if there was tension between families, one might just go on the road and move away for a while. But now that is not so easily done and people are left on top of one another to resolve tensions in ways that are unfamiliar to them. Unfortunately, this is often done in a destructive manner. There is little room to find some space or take a breather.

For most settled people, Travellers are second class citizens and are not part of civil society. There is a profound inequality at the heart of this relationship. Proper recognition or space has not been given to the inalienable rights of Travellers, nor to their proper place in society. They do not more easily in relationship with settled people, their relationships are hampered and diminished because of prejudice. Many Travellers are followed around shops and refused entry into laundries and hairdressers. They have to think twice before opening the door of a pub, for fear of being met with "Sorry, not tonight folks." Travellers live always with the fear and expectation of refusal and hostility.

41. Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, S.J. *Social Analysis,* xiii.
42. Theological reflection brings into "contemporary life the revolutionary traditions of the Bible and Christian history" as described by Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society* (London: SCM Press, 1999), 57. It leads us into doing a social kingdom-of-God theology, one that endeavors to strengthen a culture of life, for as Jon Sobrino says, "The kingdom of God is life, life in abundance and the fulfillment of life" as quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, 69.

    There are a number of themes that need to be worked out in a theological reflection. Much of these have been dealt with in my first paper. They include the Hebrew scriptures, Christian scriptures, Incarnation & Trinity, reign of God, & Catholic social teaching. But there is also a need to look at people's present experience of God and place of liberation and transformation in their lives. For Travellers, God and Gods own presence is woven into the fabric of their everyday lives. There is no question about the existence of God or of God's activity in the world. This activity reveals God's own closeness and care for them, despite being forced to live on the margins of society, and while being the 'stranger' and 'other' for the majority population.

Despite the exclusion from society, and the many hardships in their lives, Travellers are aware of God's goodness and blessing. They know that there is room for them in the very heart and life of God, along with Mary and all the saints, and that this closeness to them is a blessing in itself. From the moment a baby is born, its parents seek to place it under the protection of God. This is done through blessings and Baptism, some will attach medals to the child's clothes, others will have the baby blessed by priests and holy people and most important of all, each will be baptized. All through life, people seek out this protective presence and look to live under and with it. Participation in the formal sacraments of the church and many other 'sacramental practices' all contribute to the life of this relationship between the Traveller community and God.

The relationship that Travellers experience with God and the one they have with the rest of the settled community stand in shape contrast to one another. In the former there is room and space, one for another, and in this space self-giving love; with the latter, there is little room, and this closure stifles life, communion and diversity. The difficult task is to search for where God's spirit of love, embrace and liberation is at work, both within the Traveller and settled communities.

In the absence of solidarity, less and less room is given to the 'other' to be themselves, to flourish and have life. What we see taking place in the relationship between Travellers and settled people, is that the life of the white, settled middle class Catholic is normative and universal. This life is center and subject of what it means to live a normative life in Ireland today, any group or individual that deviates from this norm is objectified and pushed to the margins. And it is here on the margins that Jesus inserted himself in our world, amongst the people who did not live according to the norms of that time. For Christ, they were subjects, people and communities and he sought to transform the system that excluded and diminished them in the name of God. He did this so that they and all might have life in abundance, while calling all to conversion and communion. For this he was put to death. But he rose from the dead and his spirit is in our world today. A spirit of transformation and liberation. Through work and contact with excluded people and groups who are finding and experiencing new life, whilst realizing their own dignity, we might find ourselves in the company of the crucified and perhaps be in tune with the God's own spirit.

43. There are many courses of action that a group could involve themselves in having done this analysis. They might choose to concentrate on accommodation or discrimination issues or focus on the provision of intercultural education, they could engage at the level of government, local authorities, or the local community; they might decide on leadership training or training for employment. But whatever the particular action is going to be, somewhere behind it will be the need to practice what Hannah Arendt calls an "enlarged way of thinking" as quoted in Miroslav, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 213. We need to create the capacity to reverse perspectives, and reason from the others point of view. To see with

their eyes, understand their perspective and share their experience. This means letting the voice and experience of the 'other' resonate within ourselves, to see ourselves from their perspective, and then when we need to, readjust our perspective and relationship in the light of this encounter.

This 'enlarged way of thinking' and 'reversing of perspective' is the action that creates the space for the work of the Spirit. When Jesus met the Syrophoenician woman, he refused to heal this Gentile's daughter because he was sent "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24). But she persists and finally Jesus helps her. This encounter with the nameless woman, helped enlarge Jesus' own understanding of his ministry. His perspective changed, it was enlarged in a way that called for a change in his understanding of his ministry. He made the necessary adjustment and immediately after this meeting, he goes to the Sea of Galilee and attracts Gentile crowds whom he heals and feeds (Matt 15:29-39) and at the end of Matthew he tells his disciples to go and make disciples of "all the nations" (Matt 28:19).

This 'enlarged way of thinking' and seeing from the perspective of the 'other' needs to be replicated within society and local communities. It can be done by creating opportunities for transformative encounters with those who belong to another group, or belong to the group on the outside. The actual physical encounter with people that one understands to be 'other' can be very powerful and transformative. One the one hand it can dispel many of the fears one has in relationship with the 'other'. They are no longer a stranger, an object or a threat. They become a person, with a particular history and lifestyle. There is an opportunity for appreciation of difference and diversity. At the same time, this encounter can deepen one's own understanding of oneself. Previous to this encounter, someone might have thought that they are quite liberal and without prejudice, taken for granted that they are settled and middle class. But when they reflect on such an encounter, they might be surprised at the feelings before, during and after such a meeting, while realizing that their own lifestyle is not the norm for everyone. It is useful to explore the feelings surrounding meetings with those who are 'other'. They might be ones of fear and apprehension, perhaps impatience and anger, sympathy or empathy. These can be useful indicators to the quality and truth of our relationship with the 'other'. It is important to remember that when these encounters take place, they are often at the initiative of members of the settled community, the ones with the power and voice, the ones on the 'inside'. They are rarely organized by Travellers themselves, they are rarely in a position to do so. It is a matter of choice for the settled community to either meet or not meet with Travellers. Travellers themselves do not have this choice or luxury. These transformative encounters are very important, but on their own are not enough. These meetings need to be placed in the overall framework of the Traveller community in its relationship to the settled community, which is one of exclusion and closure. Otherwise, the encounter can easily be misleading and give a false impression that it is simply up to individual members of the Traveller community to make something of their lives and the more

structural issues of injustice will take care of themselves. Finally, we must remember that it was on the cross that “God made space in God’s very self for others, godless others and opened his arms to invite them in” Exclusion & Embrace, 214. In being followers of Christ, we must create space in ourselves, our communities, our society and our world for ‘others’, this in done in making space for their perspectives on us and our perspectives on them.

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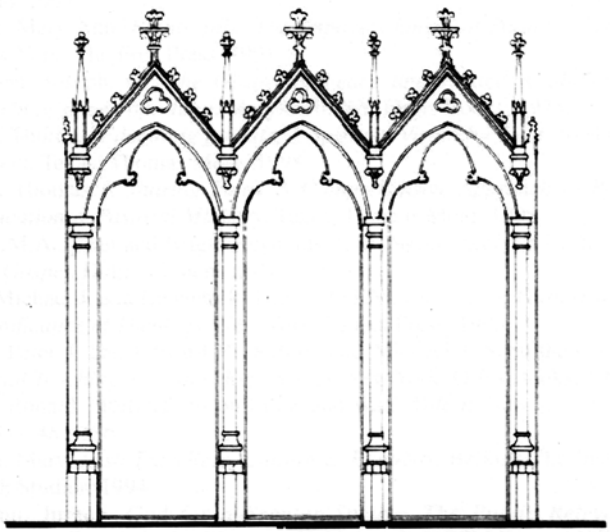
The Vincentian Icons at Phibsboro': Some Background

Fearghal O'Farrell

The original brief was straightforward: to create an icon of St. Vincent de Paul. The brief was then extended to include the Vincentian family, St. Vincent de Paul. St. Louise de Marillac and Blessed Frederic Ozanam. The suggestion was that they could be incorporated into a triptych. The icons were to be installed in St. Peter's Church in Phibsboro'. The church itself is a beautiful, rather large. Gothic-style church. The proposed site for the icons was 10 be one of the old confessionals (see below). This was to be converted to a shrine. The confessional was formed in a very fine carved limestone niche with marble columns. It was obvious that this space would lend itself to three individual icons rather than a triptych.



The initial study for the icons consisted in searching out some of the wellknown paintings and images of the three saints. The appearance of both Si. Vincent and St. Louise were well charted in many pictures. The general public would be well aware of these and would be well acquainted with their likenesses. It would be a foolish man who would try and portray them in a different form. Frederic Ozanam on the other

hand was not so well known and in fact it was quite difficult to find good portraits of him. But it was felt this could be an advantage as it was hoped to present him as a young man.

Many of the pictures of the saints showed them performing works of charity but I thought it essential that each icon would concentrate on the actual saint and so tried to render him present rather than portray his actions. I did not come across any icons of the saints, though there was one interesting, if rather severe, one of St. Vincent which showed him seeing Christ in the beggar *(the icon by Meltem Akbas in Rosati House in Chicago; ed.)*

The Theory

As these were to be icons, as opposed to paintings, I will set out some indications of the approach to icon painting, how they are prepared and how I became involved. Historically icons (Greek; *images)* were extant throughout the early church. Some of the earliest examples of such images are still be seen in the catacombs of Rome. However, they really developed and matured in the eastern part of the "Roman Empire". As Byzantium, Nova Roma, Constantinople, flowered, so also did iconography, spreading through the entire Eastern orthodox world.

There had been, throughout the early period, intensive arguments within the church as to whether one could make portraits of Christ and the saints. The Old Testament ban on "graven images" was always there to support the banning of images. Even though the Trullan Council had declared "that from henceforth icons should represent instead of the Lamb of old, the human image of the lamb… Christ our God" the Iconoclastic movement lasted many centuries. It was finally defeated after the great council of the 9th Century which declared "What the Gospel proclaims to us by words, the icon also proclaims and renders present for us by colour". Even after that the puritan objection to images was to resurface on many occasions.

Whereas the Iconoclasts had argued "how could you represent God" since John says in his Gospel "No one has ever seen God" (Jn 1:18) we know that when God became man, the invisible became visible. We then can portray him and of course the saints – temples of the Holy Spirit. As Christ himself said "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14: 2-9) and Paul echoed "He is the image (icon) of the invisible Father" (Col. 1: 15).

The image is said to share in the likeness of the prototype but not in the essence and the icon proclaims the presence of God as does scripture, for God became human so that we could become one with him "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). "In his unbounded love God became what we are, that he might make us what he is" (Irenaeus). *Theosis*

or deification indicates the goal of human life as union with God. In creating an icon we create a point of contact between the material and spiritual worlds and as such the icon is an empirical manifestation of the spiritual in the material – theosis – a visible expression of the invisible. The icon does not exist by itself or for itself. It is a means to lead us to other, to Christ, the Trinity, *theotokos* (Mother of God) and the saints.

The reality of theosis as both a present and future reality, one that potentially affects all of creation, is representationally present in the icon. The icon "proclaims and renders present" that "new creation". While the icon of Christ is the unique icon of the Father, all other icons, including those of the Mother of God, are theological extrapolations of the regeneration accomplished by Christ.

Personal Experience

I became interested in painting icons through my involvement with the Charismatic movement; not a connection that would be expected. In fact, I had been wondering for quite some time why this huge movement of the Spirit had not inspired an outflowing of Sacred Art. If the Spirit was so active among people I was sure there would appear some great manifestation of the Spirit in visual art form around the world. I think I may have been expecting to see a new sort of Impressionist movement with free swirling colours to match singing in tongues. Artists would be "set free' from all the old restraints and the Spirit would be manifest in some new, far out "ism" (Maybe I was projecting my thoughts – and God should follow me?). I was certainly forgetting that most of the twentieth century "isms" were the result of different artists or groups trying to pursue their own ideas, their own professional visions, their own agendas and to create their own visual world. While we may sing to the Holy Spirit "…melt me, mould me, use me" we see nothing inconsistent in our striving to achieve fulfilment by doing our own thing. I think Sinatra"s "I did it my way" was such a success because it really captured the cult of the individual.

When I was first asked to paint an icon I was, to a certain extent, still looking on the task as a rather severe discipline with a whole set of traditions and Canons which would restrict my freedom. However, without realising it, I must have sensed the incredible spiritual quality of icons. And icons were totally based on scripture and tradition as, of course, were the charismatic songs sung at the different prayer groups. The concept of the deification of matter would not have actively occupied my mind but in effect it was being recognised unbeknown to me. The joy and celebration of the charismatic movement was finding its echo in the joy and celebration of the icon. "What the Gospel proclaims by words the icon also proclaims" began to have real meaning.

In the Byzantine world the iconographer was not some unique artist with a highly personalised talent. He was one of a team and usually a monk. He would work with many others, fasting and praying, preparing wood, gesso and paints. Many of the iconographers would be largely anonymous outside of their monasteries. While the outstanding ones are known to this day, e.g. Andrei Rublev, Theophanes the Greek, many would have laboured, crafting away within a deep spiritual framework. This has continued for centuries within the Orthodox tradition.

In the west, particularly from the Renaissance on, art became far more secularised and also far more individualised. Too often artists sought to portray Christ in a more realistic or naturalistic form. Inevitably this meant a portrait that became more secular and earth-bound. It was often the model that the painter had used that one looked upon. There are many beautiful paintings of Christ, Mary and the saints with tremendous human perfection but often little spiritual content. Worse still, at some periods distracting sentimental content abounded. They can truly be best described as holy pictures or pictures of "holy people".

Probably the ultimate achievement of "realistic" painting was the *trompe I'oeil* painters who were so skilled that it was difficult to tell illusion from reality. However, by the end of the nineteenth century there was a strong understanding of the limits of realistic painting. This continued into the twentieth century with many movements and "isms". Abstract painting of various kinds took over. Many western artists sought to find new ways to express spiritual concepts and often did so very beautifully and successfully. Though many of these artists could be considered secular they still came out of a largely Christian ethos.

Unfortunately the modern artistic vision is largely divorced from Christian values and though it often aspires to a spiritual vision it seeks to do so in the language of the modern secular world. There are many largely negative works of art, often abstract and often brilliantly and accurately exposing the vacuousness of much of the world's current aspirations. Spiritual concepts are in many instances successfully evoked in an abstract manner. But Christianity is not founded on an abstract sense of spirituality, a somewhat vague mystical force greater than the human. Total abstraction can portray the Spirit in many ways, the sense of transcendence and power, but we must remember as Paul said "we preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. I: 23). This is no woozy spiritual force for good – this is Christ, the Son of the living God – true God, true man. Christ himself was quite definite "I am the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14: 6). So it is not just Jesus the historical man who has to be portrayed and made present but Jesus Christ incarnate.

The 'Phibsboro' Icons'.

I now come to consider how could I draw icons of St. Vincent, St. Louise and Blessed Frederic. It is all right to have lofty ideas but entirely another matter to put them into effect. Also I was not coming from a highly developed Orthodox tradition. I hadn't prayed, fasted and studied in the Orthodox tradition. It is true I had been painting icons for about nine years but I was still very much on a learning curve, on a pilgrimage and will hope to continue on that pilgrimage for many years to come. So would my efforts be good enough? I wouldn't dream of attempting to answer that question.

I certainly fell each icon should be strong and relate directly to the viewer. They would also have to relate well with each other. The figures should be as large as possible and should face the viewer for maximum impact. This led me to prepare designs of large half length figures allowing the faces to be relatively large. I also decided thai all three saints should be shown reaching out to the viewer. This gesture is not so normal in icon painting where the saint normally takes a more distant posture. There was also the possibility that it could be interpreted as a begging hand (more church collections'.'). However, I felt it was justified and while Vincent's and Louise's hands are open the younger Frederic is more reaching out to shake hands.

The Vincentians have a double tradition of both contemplation and mission. I wanted to reflect this in the icons. Thus, while drawing from well known portraits, the faces and figures generally should be portrayed in the traditional spiritual manner of the icon. Their practical mission of mercy could be portrayed more realistically and directly. Thus, each saint is shown holding a symbol of their practical service to the poor and needy. As these icons were to be seen together the symbols could relate to all three. In practice, Vincent is shown with bread, the staff of life and symbol of the Eucharist. Louise is shown with a towel and water as service to the sick and Frederic with clothes for the needy. All three are in service.

So much for the overall design. I also had to concentrate on the preparation of the icons which in itself is symbolic and should also be prayerful. It is not just the finished icon which is the prayer. Icons are painted on a timber support which brings to mind the wood of the Cross. The board is then sized with rabbit-skin glue or similar. Then a natural cloth, e.g. linen or cotton, is stuck over the entire board reminding one of the shroud. It also has a practical purpose, providing a strong base to combat any movement of the timber. Then up to twelve coats of gesso, made up of whiting, a calcium carbonate from the earth and rabbit-skin glue from the animal kingdom. These are scraped, sanded and polished ready for gold leaf and paint.

The gold leaf, symbolising uncreated life emanating from God before creation, is then applied. Only then does the painting commence. The paint is egg tempera, pigment from the earth mixed with egg yolk, symbolising life and resurrection, with a bit of vinegar added. The actual painting process proceeds from dark to light, i.e. the flat dark backgrounds are painted first and then the lighter highlights are gradually introduced. The symbols of the works of mercy could be painted quite naturalistically in keeping with the practical actions involved. Thus, for example, there is no real stylisation of form in the depiction of the bread that Vincent holds.

The spiritual foundation of the Vincentian mission is indicated through the iconic form of rendering the figures, particularly the faces. Icon painting, in seeking to present the infinite spiritual "reality" in which Christ, his mother and all the saints exist along with ourselves, turns very clearly to the symbolism of light. All light is shown lo emanate from Christ or the Spirit within the saints: "I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will not walk in darkness" (Jn 8: 12). Thus there are no shadows as we know them in icons, for shadows in the natural world are cast by the sun or artificial lights, all created objects are as nothing compared to the "light of the world". "They need no lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light" (Rev. 22:5), So the entire icon seeks to proclaim God's glory.

This understanding of light is emphasised by the use of gold as mentioned earlier and usually used in halos: "the righteous shall shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father" (Mt. 13: 43). The face is the most important part of the icon and is always painted last. Here the base colour or protoplasma applied flatly over all the skin areas is a sort of olive brown colour, symbolising the earth. Introduced into this is an orange colour of burning light which is gradually built up with light tones, thus dispelling the darkness and the almost pure white highlights being the last lo be applied.

The whole face should emphasise a detachment from mundane excitements in order to belter grasp the spiritual world. In most icon figures the nose is usually drawn thin and noble, scenting the sweet odour of Christ rather than the scents of this world. The mouth is closed because true contemplation requires silence. It is usually drawn finely to eliminate sensuality. The eyes do nol reflect any external light shining on them. In portraying the likeness of the saints not all of these techniques may be realised in practise.

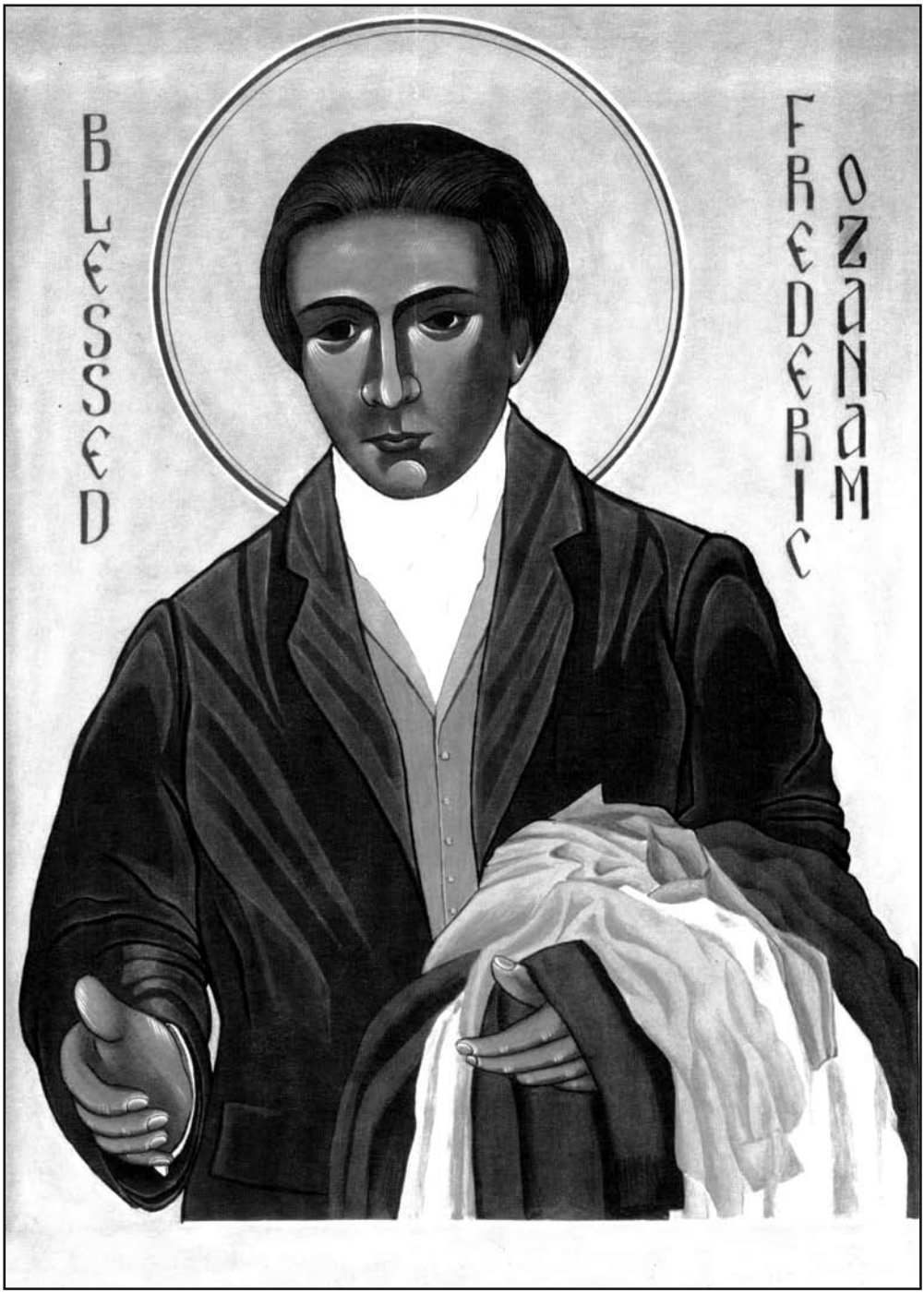
Finally the name is painted on. It is an intrinsic part of the icon, indicating the imparting of the presence in preparation for the blessing. In Genesis, we read of where God brought all the animals to Adam that they might be named: "Whatever the man called every living creature

that was its name" (Gen. 2:19).

In the last analysis, of course no amount of preparation, theory or technique is necessarily going to produce a successful icon. It's success will entirely depend on whether it does induce viewers to venerate the saints and through them to listen 10 Christ, to see him in all whom they meet and to express his love in whatever way they are called.


ST. VINCENT DE PAUL


ST LOUISE DE MARILLAC


BLESSED
FREDERIC OZANAM

Priesthood Today

Joe Cunningham, C.M.

Thinking about priesthood today, Jubilee 2000 comes to my mind: "Jesus Christ is the same today as he was yesterday and as he will be forever." (Heb. 13:8). He is the eternal High Priest, missioned by his Father to establish the Kingdom of his Father on earth. Those, whom Christ calls to be priests, are to be other Christs, living and ministering in persona Christi, promoting Kingdom values among the People of God. The Church's appreciation of priesthood deepens with time (and the Holy Spirit!). While the core remains the same, the exercise of priesthood changes in response to the pastoral needs of God's people. Vatican II, in *Presbyterorum Ordinis,* deals specifically with priesthood, but all its documents are a teaching on priesthood, for what concerns the Church concerns priests.

Priests (and religious) today carry a particularly heavy cross. Indifference and hostility to the Gospel message have been par for the course since the time of Christ. But the fall-out from the scandal of sexual abuse, perpetrated by a tiny minority of priests, casts a huge shadow over priests. The violation of a child's innocence and trust is a betrayal of priesthood. Though the priest remains a symbol of trust, he shoulders a cross, which Christ himself did not have to bear. St. Vincent, in the Common Rules: "Christ allowed himself to be falsely accused of the most appalling charges, following his wish to be overwhelmed with disgrace. Yet he loathed unchastity so much that we never read of his having been in even the slightest way suspected of it, much less accused of it, even by his most determined opponents." (Ch IV par 1). This, like any other cross, can draw us into greater intimacy with Christ, to experience his presence and strength, and realise with St. Paul: "There is only Christ; he is everything, and he is in everything." (Col.3:ll).

The presence of the Holy Spirit is evident in various ways in priesthood today (as indeed it always has been!). A symbol of this is the intercession for priests in All Hallows, as well as the many groups and gatherings which involve priests. Charismatic prayer, faith-sharing, shared scripture, devotional movements and pilgrimages nourish the spiritual lives of priests together with their people and foster vocations for priesthood. Some seminarians have left the 'nets' of promising and lucrative careers, to follow Jesus into priesthood. They are courageous as well as generous, for their decisions can bring hostility and ridicule, from those people who march to the sound of a different drum.

Vatican II has made a seismic impact on the church. Or perhaps, more accurately, it has the potential 10 do so. Shortly after the Council

ended. Bishop Christopher Butler, a peritus, predicted to a friend that it would take about 30 to 40 years for (he message of the Council to be fully active at parish level (priestly level?). A few years later he changed his estimate. It would lake some 130 years! Every item, every atom of Vatican TI is speaking to priests! Tolle et lege! I offer a few reflections,

The Vermicular

It was like a new Pentecost when the vernacular was first introduced, the people at Mass hearing the priest speaking their language. The novelty has now worn off; it is taken for granted. The new Eucharistic prayers have lost some of their gloss. The priest is challenged to be a poet, as well as a prophet! Living liturgy is the goal, using the imagination and talents of both priest and people, so that they may experience the Eucharist as the summit and the source of all Christian living – the Eucharist, which Fr. Vincent Ryan O.S.B. describes as "the heart-beat of the Church."

The celebration of each sacrament, through which Christ touches our lives, is always a priority for the priest. The Baptismal rite is rich in symbols and prayers, readily appreciated, especially after catechetical instruction and preparation. It was through the sacrament of reconciliation that Fr. Timothy Ratcliff O.P. grew to love his priesthood, in discovering the wonder of mercy, as he and his penitents together "heard and experienced God's mercy". The rile of ordination comes alive when the bishop, with the help of a commentator, draws all present into the ceremony, an unique experience for them, a touching insight into priesihood.

Readers and Eucharistic ministers bridge the gap between benches and sanctuary. They too. like the priest, are touching the sacred. Their duties can be imaginatively developed and expanded by the priest to meet pastoral needs of parishioners. Their knowledge and appreciation of Scripture and the Eucharist can be deepened so that these ministers can become nuclei for the promotion of devotions emanating from Scripture and the Eucharist – the Emmaus experience.

Scripture

Love of Scripture is one of the great treasures promoted by Vatican II. The Council declared " that all the preaching of the church, as indeed the entire Christian religion, should be nourished and ruled by Sacred Scripture". *(Dei Verbum* par. 21). At ordination the deacon, holding the book of the Scriptures, is thrilled to hear the Bishop say: "Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you now are. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practise what you teach." Shortly after the Council Fr. Joseph Ratzinger, as theologian, wrote "the priest must be a

man who lives off the Word, who is impregnated by the Word, totally at borne in the Word… that this Word becomes symbolically the burning bush out of which the Voice emerges which summons and claims not also the priest but the priest above all." *(Priestly Ministry* p. 19). Today scripture is becoming a burning bush for priests and seminarians (and lay people). Regarding preaching the word of God, Ratzinger observes: "the task of making the word of God contemporary to our time – the 'today-ifying' of that Word – can only succeed if we, the preachers of that Word, have first become its contemporaries".

Spirituality

Personal relationship with Christ is the core of a priest's spirituality and ministry. It could be described as the source and summit of all he is and does, for it flows into ministry and is strengthened by ministry. Prayer fosters this relationship with Christ. St. Theresa of Avila describes prayer as "an intimate friendship, a frequent heart-to-heart conversation with Christ by whom we know ourselves to be loved." Scripture is vital in this encounter for in it Christ is speaking to us. Karl Rahner states: "It is from his association with the Word that the priest's prayer should gather its force."

Cardinal Hume writes: "Every line of the Bible, every line of the New Testament, is addressed to me personally, for I am the leper, the blind person, the deaf and dumb person." *(Ugh! of the Lordp.[2\)* It is from rumination on the Word of God that the priest communes with Christ. The practice of lectio divina, being based on the following Sunday's gospel, provides daily reflection and prayer.

As well as prayer, lectio divina is a preparation for the Sunday homily, and a basis for the R.C.I.A. programme. Some priests come together weekly to participate in lectio divina, and seminarians are very attracted to it. And, of course, it is something to be promoted and fostered among parishioners.

The Council states that the entire Revelation of God is summed up in Jesus Christ. No wonder St. Jerome said "Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." To know Scripture is to know Christ. The little verse in the office of readings is succinct:

> "In the Scriptures, by the Spirit,
> May we see the Saviour's face,
> Hear his Word and heed his calling,
> Know his will and grow in grace"

Ministry itself is an integral par! of a priest's spirituality, for it is encountering the person of Christ in those with whom Christ identifies, The priest is living constantly in the mystery of Christ. He is totally

an Eucharistic person, drawing strength from, and being inspired by, the Risen Christ, whose victory over sin and death is encapsulated in the Eucharist. Every fibre of his life and ministry is Christed. To gift a person with the Body of Christ is a fragment of the Last Supper. On the other hand, to encounter hostility and ridicule in people is to encounter the disfigured Christ: "Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him), no looks to attract our eyes." A Gethsemane experience for the priest, and an occasion for divine help.

The People of God

Newman was once asked how he would define lay people. He replied that he did not know, but that Church would look rather foolish without them! The Council has given the term "People of God", and the People of God are the Church: "All those, who in faith look towards Jesus, the author of Salvation and the principle of unity and peace, God has gathered together and established as the Church…" *(Lumen Gentium* par. 9). The Church is totally missionary, including and involving every member, each of whom is called in baptism to serve the Church and further God's Kingdom on earth. This has huge implications today. The shortage of vocations to the priesthood is concentrating minds. Priests will be needed to make lay people aware of their commitment to the church and to her ministry, to foster their spirituality, and provide formation. This is an exciting and challenging time for the church, a time when "I will pour out my spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men see visions." (Joel 3:1). The Holy Spirit is probably telling us that we haven't seen anything yet!

The more priest and people come together today, the more clericalism wanes. The pedestal is a lonely and isolating place for a priest. He needs to be treated as a person, and to feel being a person among people. Pope John Paul writes that "it is important that the priest should mould his human personality in such a way that it becomes a bridge and not an obstacle for others in their meeting with Jesus Christ." *(Pastores Dabo Vobis* par. 43) Karl Rahner writes on priesthood: "The priest is not an angel sent from Heaven. He is a person chosen from among people, a member of the Church, a Christian. Remaining human and Christian, he begins to speak to you the Word of God.

The Poor

Pope John Paul speaks of "the cry of the poor" and goes on to state a mind-blowing question: "Was it not in order to respond to their appeal as God's privileged ones that Christ came, even going as far as to identify himself with them?" *(Evangelica Testificatio* Par. 17). He was speaking

to religious, but his message is particularly apposite for diocesan priests. The way to respond is "the conversion of hearts, from liberation of all temporal encumbrances. It is a call to love." The Pope asks another question: "How then will the cry of the poor find an echo in your lives?" That cry found an echo in the heart of Oscar Romera, as it did in the heart of St. Vincent de Paul. Since Christ's fundamental option is for the poor, so too is the Church's and that includes priests. St Theresa of Avila makes the connection: "Christ has no body on earth but yours, no hands but yours, no feet but yours. Yours are the eyes through which must look out Christ's compassion on the world. Yours are the feet with which he is to go about doing good. Yours are the hands with which he is to bless men now." In their seminary formation today, students are provided the opportunity, in their pastoral work, of meeting with people living on the margins of society: Travellers, homeless persons, prisoners, AIDS victim…

There are pastoral reflection groups, enabling students to evaluate how they acted and to become aware of how their experience affected them, in preparation for future ministry. The cry of the poor is a haunting one!

Ecumenism

There may be many priest and ministers and their people quietly taking ecumenism to heart and exercising Christian love. But in general the movement seems in the doldrums – not dead, but not very alive. Yet the very first sentence of the decree on ecumenism is startling: "The restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principle concerns of the Second Vatican Council." This calls for leadership from the priest in the parish, and perhaps he needs to deepen his understanding of ecumenism. Personal renewal is certainly part of the equation. Cardinal Suenens once said that the road to Christian unity is the road between each Christian heart and Christ. A fundamental and substantial beginning !

Priestly celibacy

When I was ordained, celibacy was seen as part and parcel of priesthood, without much further consideration. Today it is an issue. It is a challenge, which faces the student entering the seminary. If it is seen as merely a requirement of Church law, (which can be changed) he has little motivation for observing it. But he can see priestly celibacy as vocational, as a particular way of loving Christ, and serving him in his people, on a parallel with spouses loving Christ in loving each other and their children, in the vocation and sacrament of marriage. Priestly celibacy calls for sacrifice, so does marriage – in the cause of love. In priestly celibacy Christ becomes the priest's vision, kept in focus by the

Word of God, sustained by prayer, in a developing personal relationship with Christ, the celibate High Priest.

Friendship is vital for a priest, especially when he is leaving the seminary. "No man is an island." He needs to be human, in tune with people. Loneliness is of concern to a seminarian. The friendship of fellow priests is vital for him. They can come together for a variety of reasons – a meal and a chat, sport, the prayer of the Church, lectio divina, a day of recollection, homily preparation, study… Friendship with married couples can be mutually supportive and inspiring, as also with female friends.

Formation

The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope John Paul, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), is the blue-print for priestly formation in the seminary today. "I will give you shepherds after my own heart." (Jer.3:15) The sacrament of Holy Orders "Configures them to Christ" the Pope identifies the four main areas of priestly formation: human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral.

Human Formation

Human qualities and virtues are to be cultivated, so that the priest is a balanced, loving person. "Of special importance is the capacity to relate to others. This is truly fundamental for a person who is called to be responsible for a community and to be a 'man of communion'. This demands that the priest not be arrogant, or quarrelsome, but affable, hospitable, sincere in his words and heart, prudent and discreet, generous and ready to serve, capable of opening himself to clear and brotherly relationships and of encouraging the same in others, and quick to understand, forgive and console." (par. 43).

Spiritual Formation

"The spiritual life is, indeed, an interior life, a life of intimacy with God, a life of prayer and contemplation." (par. 49). It is the Holy Spirit who leads the candidate "to a deep communion" with Jesus Christ, and "leads to the total submission of one's life to the Spirit, in a filial attitude towards the Father and a trustful attitude towards the Church." (par. 45). Scripture and the Eucharist are highlighted: "A loving knowledge of the Word of God and a prayerful familiarity with it are specifically important for the prophetic ministry of the priest." (Par. 47) Lectio divina is stressed as a "an essential element of spiritual formation" and a form of personal prayer. "The first and fundamental manner of responding to the Word is in prayer." The Eucharist is seen by the Pope as the "high point of Christian prayer". Its celebration is "the essential moment" of

the seminarians' day. They are to perceive and appreciate " the beauty and joy of the Sacrament of Penance". They are to meet Christ not just in prayer but in the people they serve, and there is special emphasis on formation on priestly celibacy, focusing on evangelical, spiritual and pastoral motives.

Intellectual Formation

Intellectual formation serves the understanding of faith. Pope John Paul refers to indifference and agnosticism. This "strongly demands a high level of intellectual formation, such as will enable priests to proclaim, in a context like this, the changeless Gospel of Christ and to make it credible to the legitimate demands of human reason", (par. 51) Emphasis is placed on Sacred Scripture, "which should be the soul, as it were, of all theology. *(Optatus Totius* par. 16)

Pastoral Formation

Seminarians should become true shepherds after the example of Jesus Christ, teacher, priest and shepherd. They should have a special training for the ministry of the Word, gaining a deep understanding, and making it their own through meditation. They are to serve, rather than being served and their ministry in general will cover the various aspects of the Church's life. "It is particularly important to prepare future priests for *co-operation with the laity"* being willing to listen and take note of what they say, recognising "their experience and competence in the different fields of human activity, (par. 57)

Conclusion

Today is an exciting time to be a priest, because the challenge is great. Superficiality and mediocrity do the Church no favour. Christ is the core of a priest's being and ministry. He can resonate especially to St. Irenaeus: "The glory of God is man fully alive; the life of man, however, is the vision of God" – the vision of Christ. An echo of St. Paul: "I am crucified with Christ. Do I live? It is no longer me, Christ lives in me. My life in this body is life in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:19)

Some thoughts on Priesthood Today

Desmond Cleere CM

I was the sixth of seven boys born to my parents. They were wonderful parents in caring for us as faithful members of the local church and in rearing us in all our needs.

Every one of us received a College education – at St. Vincent's, Castleknock – unbroken from 1922 to 1940. When my turn got nearer I began to dream of joining the College but somebody said I wouldn't be able to go. At that time (the 1930s) there was a financial depression. My dream burst! I can never thank my parents enough for the sacrifice as they generously sacrificed themselves for me. And therein lay my attraction to the Vincentians.

My ordination to the priesthood took place on 26 May 1946 in Clonliffe College, Dublin, along with Frs Andy Spelman and Pearse Gallagher, both now in St. Peter's, Phibsboro'. The ordination Mass was celebrated by Archbishop McQuaid. At the Communion Antiphon, he recited John 15; 15-16:

> I do not call you servants any longer, instead, I call you friends because I have told you all that I have heard from my father,

and I was reminded of the words of Shakespeare's Hamlet;

> The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
> grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.

Prayer

I came across a quotation from St. Vincent recently but I have no record in my memory;

> The Congregation will last as long as it is faithful to the practice of prayer which is an impregnable bulwark and a spiritual arsenal… we must receive it from God if we are to give to others, just as Christ taught to others what he had heard and learnt from his father.

Someone has said that a spiritual life without prayer is like the Gospel without Christ and to pray means to think and live in the presence of God. Thanks be to God for the training presented to the seminarians in St. Joseph's, Blackrock, in my time.

Jesus means 'prayer' when he says; "Apart from me you can do nothing; those who dwell in me, as I dwell in them, bear much fruit" (John 15; 5). Prayer is not what is done by us but rather what is done in us by the Holy Spirit.

The Decline

In the latter years of the 1930s, clerical students comfortably filled St. Joseph's, Blackrock, along with CM priests who trained us along the

path to priesthood as Vincentian priests.

In the 1940s, a big change came about by authority in forming a new structure. It was arranged that those students who were studying theology were to exercise their scholarship in a new setting called St. Kevin's, Glenart Castle, in the countryside two miles from Arklow. The remainder stayed in Dublin at St. Joseph's. They looked after their philosophical studies plus the university and their spiritual development. So we were able to exercise two staffs as well as two bodies of students. My stay in Glenart was from 1949-1960 and, thence, to England (1960-'66) at Strawberry Hill and then to nine years in St. Edmund's College, Ware, as Spiritual Director.

What I call the 'Decline' in the number of priests first came to my notice at the end of the 1960s as certain priests ceased their missions. Gradually came the decline through a withdrawal of seminarians and priests. The Universe published on 23 July 2000; "The Dublin Archdiocese has revealed that only nine priests are under the age of thirty; eighty are aged between thirty-one and forty, one hundred and seventeen between forty-one and fifty; one hundred and fourteen between fifty-one and sixty, while two hundred and forty-five priests (that is forty-four percent of the total) are over sixty". And I, myself, am now over eighty!

Similarly, there is a decline here in England thought some gaps have been filled by converts from the Church of England.

Why this decline? A variety of reasons may now be in action.

- Perhaps families have become more deeply materialistic at the expense of religious values and spiritual activity, even to the point of disinterest.
- Families now tend to be smaller and may be less likely, or willing, to support a member who might be showing interest in the religious life.
- Vocation to the priesthood may be less attractive due to the public ity given to priests who may have weakened against the expected ideals.
- Possibly, the spiritual life and direction may have weakened. Prayer is vital. I remember often to pray with the heart of the Virgin Mary, after Jesus' birth and when the shepherds and angels had gone, she 'treasured and pondered all these things' (Luke 2:19).
- The celibacy rule is thought to be a major reason behind plummeting vocations. The number of priests in England and Wales has fallen from 7,021 in 1980 to 5,600 in 1998.

With pressure growing stronger on the priests in many places in these islands, I am glad to hear that lay ministry may be supported with many people doing various courses in that field, including those who are in our own All Hallows' in Dublin. Maybe Divine Providence is in action!

A Course in Spiritual Direction in the Ignatian Exercises

Noel Travers CM

I started an Ignatian Spirituality Course two and a half years ago. It is a three-year course conducted by the Sisters of Our Lady of the Cenacle and by some Anglican priests. Some of our tutors are laymen and laywomen. It takes place once a week in Margaret St, London near Oxford Circus. We begin work at eleven and we end at four, with a break for lunch.

In the first year we looked at the history of Christian Spirituality. This included the lives and teaching of the women and men who lived as hermits in the desert or who lived a type of community life. The Celtic tradition, St Benedict, St Francis, St Dominic, St Ignatius of Loyola and other people who belonged to the Orthodox and Anglican traditions. In the morning the theoretical work was done. The afternoon was devoted to practical work which included giving and receiving spiritual direction. We were encouraged to allow the day work to become part of ourselves and not to take on any extra work later in the day. I found that this was very sound advice as it was not always easy for me to discover my feelings! It was recommended to us to have a Spiritual Director who could help us deal with any matter that might need to be investigated or explored. We also read the autobiography of St Ignatius of Loyola.

The second year was devoted to a detailed study of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius. At times it was hard going – trying to understand the text and the commentaries on it. But it was very enriching. I was advised to do the Exercises in daily life. This means that instead of making a Thirty-Day retreat one can spend about thirty weeks or more going through the programme laid out by St Ignatius. The saint encourages the director to be flexible – everything is geared to the needs of the retreatant. I found that the link between prayer and life was made obvious by this type of retreat. I was blessed by God to have had the opportunity of making this retreat. I highly recommend it! The afternoon sessions focussed again on the practice of spiritual direction and later we reflected on our experience.

We were asked to write an essay during our summer holidays on our lives, focussing on our experience of God – from a spiritual and a psychological viewpoint. I took this to mean: " How have I experienced God during my life and how do I see myself?" I got great benefit from this essay. I began to see where God is in my life and I became more

aware of my thoughts, feelings and emotions.

Our third year has been spent learning how to conduct retreats, both eight- and thirty-day retreats. We are expected to be directing one or two people in real life, apart from the course. Then we are encouraged to bring to our little group of colleagues and tutor what has been happening in us during our directing sessions. This is an experience of supervision.

There are twenty-five people in the group, seven sisters, eleven laywomen, five laymen and two priests. One of the laywomen is a parishioner of the Church of the Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate, Mill Hill. We have been together for a long time. This has helped us to be willing to share our experiences and our thoughts and feelings. We come from a variety of Christian backgrounds. This is a rich source for us all. It helps us to prepare to work with people whom we may meet in the future in the context of spiritual direction.

The opening paragraph of "The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius" reads as follows: "by the term 'spiritual exercises' is meant every method of examination of conscience, of meditation, of contemplation, of vocal and mental prayer, and, of other spiritual activities that will be mentioned later. For just as taking a walk, journeying on foot, and running are bodily exercises, so we call Spiritual Exercises every way of preparing and disposing the soul to rid itself of all inordinate attachments, and after their removal, of seeking and finding the will of God in the disposition of our life for the salvation of our soul".

Paragraph Four of the Introductory Observations reads: "Four weeks are assigned to the Exercises given below. This corresponds to the four parts into which they are divided, namely: the first part, which is devoted to the consideration and contemplation of sin; the second part, which is taken up with the life of Christ our Lord up to Palm Sunday inclusive; the third part, which treats of the passion of Christ our Lord; the fourth part which deals with the Resurrection and Ascension;"

I included these paragraphs for your information. St Ignatius gives a number of observations that are useful for the retreatant and the director. I mention some of these which have helped me. Ignatius encourages the retreatant to begin the Exercises with magnanimity and generosity towards his Creator and Lord. When the director gives the retreatant some material for prayer it is sufficient if the retreatant understands what he or she has to do. Then later "he may find something that makes them a little clearer or better understood. This may arise either from his own reasoning, or from the grace of God enlightening his mind. Now this produces greater spiritual relish and fruit than if one, in giving the Exercises, had explained and developed the meaning at great length. For it is not much knowledge that fills and satisfies the soul, but the intimate understanding and relishing of the truth"

My last quotation is from observation number fifteen, the last sentence, "Therefore the director of the Exercises, as a balance at equilibrium, without leaning to one side or the other, should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord"

This last quotation from St Ignatius has helped me to realise that it is God who is the director in the context of spiritual direction. The retreatant and the director together try to discover what God is asking of the retreatant. God can make up for any mistake that I might make as a director. I have learned that it is not my job to solve any problems that the retreatant or directee might discuss with me. My job is to listen to what the person says to me. I have learned to be aware of any feelings that might be expressed. Feelings are linked to one's desires or attitudes. Desires are the source of our actions. We have been encouraged on the course to develop our own style of directing. We are given weekly assignments. These have to do with the method of presenting the different parts of the Exercises or how to present shorter retreats. It is a privilege to share in another person's experience of God. Hopefully this course will help me to be present to people when they talk to me about their experience of God. Their example encourages me to look out for God in my own life. I have been very happy following the course in the company of my Christian brothers and sisters.

Vincentian Identity; In a world of change, for the youth of today

Christian Sens CM
Visitor of the Province of Toulouse.

This address was delivered by Christian at the gathering of those from the European provinces who are involved in the work of formation of our own seminarians and students. Fr Sens has kindly given permission for it to be published in Colloque. The translation is by the editor.

Despite the title of this presentation, I do not claim to be giving a conference on vincentian identity or on the manner in which it should be presented in formation. My intent is a good deal more modest. I simply want to set before you some reflections in order to spur on your reflections in the language groups.

An apostolic, fraternal and spiritual dimension.

An apostolic dimension

It was, principally, for the evangelisation of the poor, "of the poor country people", that St. Vincent founded the Congregation of the Mission.

> It is our mission, in conformity with Our Lord Jesus Christ, who had made it his principal, in coming into this world, to help to poor and to take care of them; "He has sent me to bring Good News to the Poor…" And should anyone ask Our Lord "What have you come to earth to do?" – "To help the Poor". Anything else? – "To help the poor".
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> Thus, are we not happy to be in the Mission for the same purpose which has called on God to become human? (XI, 108)

A community dimension

The mission is based in community and we know how important that dimension was for M. Vincent. At Chatillon, he experienced the necessity of organising charity as 'in a body', 'together'. He was filled with the conviction that the challenge of the differing poverties and miseries called for communal responses, to ensure that they would be efficacious and would be long-lasting.

A spiritual dimension

It is in the contemplation of the Mystery of God, of his loving design, in the contemplation of the Mystery of Christ, and, for us, of Christ the Evangeliser of the Poor, that the Mission finds its source. That is why prayer, praying and the contemplation of the face of Christ in the person of the Poor, are at heart of the vincentian missionary experience. But we know also that Vincent de Paul rejected prayer which is not open to action and involvement. "Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be by the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows" (XI, 40). Action, involvement with and for the Poor, testify to the authenticity of our prayer and praying. Doubtless, that is why St. Vincent was able to assert that resolutions were the most important aspect of prayer. They effectively indicate that prayer is open to action and to involvement.

Vincentian identity turns on these three inseparable dimensions. We are a missionary community. We are in community for the mission. Mission and fraternal life are rooted in a spiritual experience. Prayer and praying together are at the heart both of the life of the missionary and of the communal experience. To put it another way, these three dimensions are constitutive, but as a unity, of vincentian identity. "Give me a man of prayer and I will make him a man of action", "We must receive God in order to give him to our neighbour", "We must put on the spirit of Jesus Christ… it is a spirit of perfect charity". It is not necessary to multiply quotations in order to show the unity of these three dimensions in vincentian experience.

Vincentian identity also involves, for us, the five virtues; simplicity, humility, meekness, mortification and zeal, *(it is worth noting that the word for meekness, 'douceur', is more commonly translated as gentleness, Ed.)* St. Vincent presents them in terms of the theology and spirituality of the times. The language must, evidently, be updated. But the virtues orient us at the same time towards God and towards others, the Poor. They are constitutive of vincentian identity for the priests and brothers of the Mission.

Vincentian identity and the order of experience

Vincentian identity is, obviously, presented throughout the process of initial formation and especially during the internal Seminaire. It will be interesting, therefore, in the language groups, for you to share the ways in which you present this, the aspects which, perhaps, you emphasise more today, as well as the methodology which you have developed in order to allow the seminarists to experience it and to begin to unify the apostolic, fraternal and spiritual dimensions.

But we know that vincentian identity is something we experience

('of the order of experience') and not merely something we think about. It can, and must, be something we can see. The candidates discover it in the formation which is given to them. They discover it, they must be able to discover it, also in the face of the Province and in the local communities. But, whether it be at the provincial, local or personal level, it is clear that there is always a distance between the identity as it is proclaimed and the ways in which it is concretised in the life of provinces and communities. The unity of the three dimensions, apostolic, fraternal and spiritual, is never fully realised. The apostolic dimension of a community may be very rich while fraternal life is poor and prayer is rarely shared. Community prayer may be very intense but without any real link with the mission. The mission of each individual confrere might be very dynamic and really oriented towards the Poor, but without actually honouring the community dimension, 'mutuality', through lack of information or sharing. The unity of these three dimensions is always 'a work in progress'. And we always have to question ourselves on the manner in which we honour them. Vincentian formators, you have the task of facilitating the discovery of the vincentian identity and allowing the candidates to experience it. As formators, you have, doubtless, questions to ask and suggestions to make to the Visitors and Provincial Councils, in order that the face of the Province and of the communities may truly allow this vincentian identity to shine through.

Vincentian identity today

The vincentian charism which is a gift that God makes to the Church, for the world, did not expire at the death of M. Vincent. It continues to inspire women and men. The Vincentian Family is a large one.

The charism has its source in the Gospel (Luke 4;16, Matthew 25) and it is always current. And, if there is a question we must ask ourselves, it is not so much about whether or not it is relevant but, rather, about the ways in which we make it relevant, both in word and in deed.

The vincentian charism, like the identity from which it comes, is not outside of time. We receive it in the garb of one culture, that of the 17th century. We are, therefore, obliged to undertake a work of inculturation. We must confront the charism and the identity that we receive, as a tradition and a history, in the language and culture of the 17m century, with the culture, or cultures, of our time, the 'today' of the Poor and the powerless. This demands, at one and the same time, both a deepening of the intuitions and convictions of the Founder and an understanding of our cultural, social, economic, political and ecclesial context.

Fidelity to the identity is not measured by repetition of what is always said or done. That is the traditionalist, fundamentalist *(in french 'integriste')* temptation of reproducing the past identically for fear of

losing what one believes to be the original identity. Fidelity to the vincentian identity is, on the contrary, audacious, 'inventive', in order to allow for responses which are better adapted to the current experience of the Poor and of their evangelisation.

How can we undertake this work of inculturation in formation? Allow me to suggest this question since it must, of necessity, be of interest to vincentian formators.

For the evangelisation of the Poor

What the vocation of the C.M. is, we know and ceaselessly affirm. The candidates who call to our doors do not seek to live out either the ministry of a diocesan priest or a monastic life. If they are seeking that, they quickly learn their mistake. They are attracted, certainly, by the mission and by the poor and are, therefore, desirous of consecrating their lives to the evangelisation of the poor. It is for this that formation must prepare them.

I affirm all that without 'stating my case and bringing my proofs' but allow me to offer you some personal reflections.

There is, certainly, a distance, of greater or lesser dimensions, between the end of the C.M. what we affirm and the practice of our provinces. We all call ourselves missioners, but the entire Church is also missionary as all the baptised are called to be or to become. The characteristic of the Congregation of the Mission is not only the mission but the evangelisation of the Poor. Do our provincial practices always express this reality?

Do the location and mission of our communities always give the image of us as a congregation resolutely oriented towards the announcing of the Gospel to the Poor, in solidarity with the most deprived? We have parochial commitments and we live, certainly, in the vincentian spirit there but how does our way of acting differ from diocesan priests? Might not this type of involvement, which is still very common in our provinces, and not always in underprivileged areas, risk us losing that mobility which, above all, characterises the missionary?

When we talk about the originality of the vincentian mission, obviously we name the missions *ad gentes,* formation of the clergy (even though this is no longer such a reality in our provinces) and popular missions. This discussion in the Congregation has, it seems to me, a major emphasis on the popular missions. Without a doubt, this same discussion goes on in formation. But, in reality, how many mission teams are there in our provinces (in France, there is one in the province of Paris) and how many confreres are actually involved in this mission? It certainly isn't the majority, contrary to what our discussions might lead one to believe. I have no intention of negating or denying the good achieved through this type of mission. But the vocation of the

Congregation of the Mission is the evangelisation of the poor, not the popular missions, which are only a means or 'strategy' to that end. The missions are a means, but certainly not the only one, of announcing the Good News to the Poor. It is not even sure that this means is suitable in all circumstances or in all contexts. Their renewal, which often arises in discussions and documents, is not always evident.

The theme of this session is obviously not the popular missions. My question is simply this; How can we, in formation, present today popular or parochial missions, given that, in reality, this is fairly limited? What can we say of the originality of the vincentian mission? Apart from the popular missions, what other types of mission can we present to the candidates for our community? What missionary models, in line with the end of the congregation, might they discover in our provinces? Formators, you have something significant to say to all of this. You are well situated to make the voice of the new generation, with their sensibilities and mind-sets, heard. While they may be few in number in certain provinces, they will be the ones who carry out the vincentian mission tomorrow. What do they themselves say? What do they await? What missionary involvements attract them today? What do they ask of our provinces? What attracts them to us? What makes them question?

Tribute to the late Fr. John Cleary C.M.

Maura Buckley

Shock, disbelief, anger… and then great sadness and a sense of great loss are our feelings when we received the news of Fr. John's death. Fr. John was a very big part of our lives in the Deaf Community. I have known him for nearly 30 years. I have worked with him for many years.

Fr. John joined the Deaf in 1970 when he became Fr. Sweeney's assistant. Fr. Sweeney died suddenly the following year and the big responsibility fell on Fr. John's shoulders. He took his new position very seriously. He did not waste his time. He went on to learn Sign Language and took up many courses to understand us.

Fr. John worked very hard. Yes, he was a workaholic. He wanted the very best for the Deaf. He took part in many sectors of the Deaf Community. Not only was he our Chaplain, he was the Chaplain to St. Mary's and St. Joseph's Schools for the Deaf, Cabra. He was President of the Dublin Deaf Association and took great interest in all deaf affairs. He was on the Board of the National Association for the Deaf and there he influenced the Board Members with his deep thinking and belief that work can be done to improve life for the deaf.

He was one of the co-founders of the International Catholic Foundation for Services to Deaf People. At a Conference in Belgium in 1986, he succeeded in putting Ireland on the map with his brilliant presentation on how deaf children receive the Word of God. Bernadette and I were very honoured to be part of Fr. John's team there. The work was hard, yet we had so much fun.

Fr. John, of course, officiated at many weddings of deaf people and baptised their children, not to forget the Holy Communion and Confirmation of deaf children in Cabra Schools.

One deaf couple, Patrick and Mary Power from London, faxed the chaplaincy to say that they will never forget how reliable and sincere Fr. John was. They highlighted one example; when they asked him to marry them. Given the date, Fr. John reacted quickly saying that he would be in Lourdes but told them no to worry, he would be there. On the day of the wedding, he arrived in Dublin Airport from Lourdes, then drove up to Sligo and officiated at their wedding. That was Fr. John. He never let the deaf down. We always trusted him.

Fr. John had a great love for sports. He was a faithful member of the Irish Deaf Sports Association. He even took part in many sports with us. He travelled to the World Olympics for the Deaf. He was a great supporter and thrived on our successes at the Olympics. He raised funds and interpreted for the Deaf there.

Last Wednesday, as he was dying, he was talking about the Sports Weekend in Galway at Easter. He knew he would not be there to say Mass for the Deaf on Easter Saturday. To ensure that the Deaf were not to be forgotten he made arrangements that the Mass is to go ahead for them on Easter Saturday. That was Fr. John. He was always very thoughtful.

Fr. John was a true priest. He was very close to God. That was evident in his many roles in the deaf community. He had a huge influence on us. He showed us how to pray. He started prayer groups. He brought hearing people to our prayer meetings. Many of them have remained to this day our very sincere friends.

Fr. John had a powerful presence in the Deaf Community. He helped us to see God in people, in nature, in our work and, of course, at Mass. He began the Deaf Choir because he believed that the Deaf can sing their praises to God. He organised many weekends for young deaf and hearing people away from Dublin to spend time in prayer and to form friendships with one another. Many people owe it all to Fr. John. He has deepened their faith.

Fr. John believed in us. He was our Advocate. He was the first to encourage the Deaf Drama Group to do a public show in his home town, Carrick-on-Suir. He believed that we should run our affairs by ourselves. He developed a weekly meeting with the deaf and hearing people (about 10 of them) and it was called the Wednesday Group. The emphasis was on prayer and discussions on deaf issues. This has, of course, influenced later the set up of the Irish Deaf Society.

Fr. John was a very sincere person. When he left us to take up a new position in Celbridge in the late 80's he left the doors open for us to visit him. Many of us did. He did the same when he was Parish Priest of Cork. Many deaf stayed in his place.

I could go on and on about how wonderful Fr. John was. We were overjoyed when Fr. John came back to us in September 1998. His new mission was to look after the Country Deaf. He was zealous with his country visits. He organised many social gatherings. He listened to them. From this he embarked on a very important project. He drew up a report to tell the Bishops that the Country Deaf need a Chaplain. He put all his energy and time into the Report. He completed it only three weeks ago. Two weeks ago at my sister-in-law Terry's house, Fr. John talked about how happy he was that the Report was done. I will never forget his face when he said with a beautiful smile; "I have handed the Report in for the Bishops. My work is finished. I will be able to relax now."

Little did I know that his work is really finished. Little did I know that he is really relaxed… in the company of different people. He is in the Community of Saints in Heaven. His wish has come true. He told one

deaf member that he hoped to die among the deaf.

It is strange that the Episcopal Conference of Bishops are meeting as we are celebrating Fr. John's Funeral Mass. They are meeting all this week in Maynooth. Fr. John's Report is there. It is on their Agenda. It has taken years to get our Report on the Agenda. It took a good man like Fr. John to finally put it on their desk. I still can't believe how Fr. John completed this important task and then quietly slipped away.

I am concerned now about the Country Deaf as was Fr. John. What will happen to them? We cannot fail them now. We owe it to them and to the memory of Fr. John. I know that Fr. John will have an even greater influence on the Bishops this week. He will be watching them from Heaven. He will make sure that the Bishops listen to the Country Deaf.

We, the Deaf Community, mourn the loss of our great friend Fr. John. The Deaf Community is poorer now… but we are very grateful to the Vincentian Priests for enriching our lives with Fr. John. We thank God for Fr. John. We loved Fr. John and will never forget him.

We sympathise with his sister Helen, his brother Gerry, his sisters-in-law, Bernadette and Ann, his nieces and nephews and Fr. Gerry and all the Vincentians on their great loss. I would like to finish with this with a verse from the Gospel of St John; "The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them." (John 15: 13) Fr. John had done this. May he rest in peace.

OBITUARY

John Cleary C.M.

I first met John Cleary in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, in October 1960. I was a first year student in St. Patrick's at that time, fresh from the Leaving Certificate. He was the college bursar. I soon got to know John as the energetic trainer of the basketball team. I have a very clear memory from those days of John as a tall, athletic figure striding across the College grounds with much purpose. He was also the patron of the college musical society and would regularly give the loan of his record playing equipment for our musical sessions. Many years later in De Paul House in Celbridge, I was at the receiving end of John's generosity when he gave me the loan of his car to do a driving tour of France. John was like that. His philosophy was that things were to be used and he gave material things willingly and gladly. He was not in the least possessive. It was one of his many endearing qualities.

His sincere, honest nature was another endearing quality. No matter what John did, he brought a tremendous zeal to the task, whether it was bursar in St. Patrick's, Drumcondra, chaplain to deaf people in Dublin and Ireland, director of vocations, parish priest in Sunday's Well or superior of the formation house in Celbridge. Whatever John took on, he gave it everything he had. There were no short cuts or half measures.

Castleknock College was very special for him. He was a faithful member of the Past Pupils Union and attended Castleknock functions whenever he could. His love of the college began with his school days and especially from the time when he was Head Prefect. (1949-50). He would surely have approved of being buried there. John was an excellent athlete as a youth, and was a very good tennis player with many cups and medals to prove it. He also played rugby for Castleknock and one of his regrets was not playing at scrum half in the Senior Cup final in 1950. A passionate follower of the game of rugby, he spent his last few weeks of life searching for tickets for one of the rugby international matches in Landsdowne Road. He got the tickets but the illness which was to take him from us so quickly prevented him from going to the game.

He was very proud of his Tipperary roots and there was nothing he liked better than a few days at home every couple of months with his nieces and nephews. John loved the family and talked about them from time to time. At heart he was a family and community man and he often put himself out to make a quality contribution to community life. He loved to cook a meal, smoke a good cigar, have a nice glass of wine and enjoy good company. Those qualities made him a great homemaker

during his time as superior of the communities in De Paul House and in Sunday's Well.

For relaxation, John loved a game of golf. He was a good golfer and we played many times together. Needless to mention, he nearly always won. He was so competitive but he would always return from the game, full of bounce and energy, ready to take on everything and anything. Sometimes one got the impression that he brought his energetic disposition to bear on enjoyment as well as work. He also loved to shop. When I was Bursar in Celbridge and John was Superior of the community, he would go to some wholesale place, every couple of weeks, and fill the car with all kinds of goodies for the house. Afterwards he would show me what he bought and talked about the bargains he managed to get. The fact that he was doing my job never entered his mind or, if it did, he didn't say so. He loved being a Bursar and to be fair he was very good at it.

Occasionally John talked about his introduction to the deaf world. For many years he had been a very successful bursar in St. Patrick's, Drumcondra and the late James Cahalan's request for him to work with the deaf came as a bolt from the blue and was quite a shock. He was happy in St. Patrick's, and, admiring the late Fr. Donal Cregan, he liked working with him. The last thing he wanted was to move house up the road to St. Peter's and start learning the deaf sign language. Nevertheless he jumped to the invitation with alacrity, at no small cost to himself, let me add. After only five months of introduction to deaf work, he found himself catapulted, on Derry Sweeney's sudden death, into an appointment as director of the deaf chaplaincy with responsibility for the pastoral care of 2,000 adult, deaf people as well as chaplain to the Schools for the Deaf in Cabra. That was a very difficult time – March 1971. Needless to mention, he faced the challenge head on and by 1977, when he formed the Friends of the Deaf, he was firmly established in the deaf world. Obstacles and difficulties brought out the best in him.

That appointment to the chaplaincy for the deaf was to prove a turning point in his life. Surely it was a defining moment. It started a life-long love for and relationship with deaf people. He became, in time, a champion of their cause with church and state, not only in Dublin, and throughout the country, but also abroad. He was one of the Co-founders of the International Catholic Foundation for Deaf Services and he put Ireland's deaf on the map in Europe. He was President of the Dublin Deaf Association. He was on the board of the National Association for the Deaf, and the Irish Deaf Sports Association. He was a life long member of the Catholic Institute for the Deaf. But one of John's most noteworthy contributions to the deaf community was the setting up of the National Chaplaincy for Deaf People in 1977. The chaplaincy

established direct lines of communication with the bishop's conference, which resulted in an annual grant for the chaplaincy. It also served to raise awareness of the needs of deaf people in every diocese. There were few bishops in Ireland at the time who didn't know that John Cleary was a Vincentian and that he wanted the best for deaf people. He never gave up, even when his ideas and plans were rejected. Typically, he spent the last weeks of his life compiling a report for the bishops' conference on the needs of the country deaf. I understand the report was on the agenda for their meeting on the day of his funeral Mass in Phibsboro.

John was very pastoral in his approach and his pastoral instincts were nearly always correct. One pastoral problem that attracted his attention, during his early years with the deaf, was the apparent weakening of faith and lack of Christian vision among young, deaf adults. John invited some of the leaders of the deaf community to come together for well-prepared search weekends using the Avec method-a method which some of us heard a lot about. At those weekends they discovered their spiritual and emotional needs and gifts. He was very proud of having initiated those weekends and I have no doubt it was a huge contribution to the faith development of young, deaf people at the time.

Much of his pastoral work with deaf people was centred on the social centre in Rathmines. Aware that the deaf community in Dublin needed a bigger and better equipped social centre, he formed an active group of people, experienced in business affairs, who called themselves the Friends of the Deaf. John's gift of attracting people of influence to support his various initiatives was a notable feature of his ministry Their aim was to raise funds to build and equip a suitable centre for the social and educational needs of deaf people.

But his dream of a social centre was not to be realised under his leadership. His failure to build a new purpose built deaf centre was one of his frustrations in dealing with the deaf world. His dream was partly realised later on, under the leadership of Gerald Doyle, when the Deaf moved to the Sacred Heart Home in Drumcondra. I have no doubt John contributed to the move with his vision for a new centre about which he spoke so much and for which he worked so tirelessly.

A very special interest in liturgy is one of my abiding memories of him. He appreciated the importance of liturgy in helping people to raise their hearts and minds to God. Liturgies with deaf people created a real challenge for him. He was responsible for putting together a video of professional standard to describe how the faith is passed on to deaf children. Fr. Sean Swayne of the Carlow Liturgical Centre, encouraged John to celebrate visually stimulating liturgies. It was at this time that the deaf choir was formed. No doubt he had a hand in that too. The choir has continued to grace liturgies for deaf people by signing the words

of hymns when hearing people sing the words. The deaf choir played a prominent part in his funeral Mass.

There were times when his zeal and intensity about his mission got in the way of his relationship with people. They say our strengths can be our weaknesses and so it was with John. He must have been very hurt at the way people reacted to his insistent and zealous nature. He knew all about the cold shoulder. Nevertheless, his goodness and sincerity was never in doubt and he never harboured grudges. He had the ability to bounce back again and keep going.

A brief word about his time in formation as superior of De Paul House and director of vocations. That was a difficult appointment. It took him away from his beloved deaf people and launched him into a very different world for which, in his own estimation, he was ill equipped. In truth he brought a wealth of experience to the task. John tended to measure his self worth by success. Anything to do with vocations gathering at that time did not enhance one's self worth. Nevertheless he gave outstanding example to the students of hard work, simplicity of life, daily prayer and commitment to the vincentian community. John was very loyal to the vincentian way of life and took much pride in each production of the Vincentian News when he was the editor. He saw it as a service to the Province to keep us in touch with each other and with what was going on in the Province.

The suddenness of his illness and the quickness of his death took our breath away. It was hard to believe that someone so energetic and full of life, who always looked much younger than his age, could be taken from us so quickly.

His funeral Mass in Phibsborough was an extraordinary event. It was a celebration of a life spent in total dedication to the deaf community. There was standing room only. Where John stood in the affection of the deaf community was obvious for all to see and feel. Deaf people had come from Cork, Tralee, Galway, Donegal and other parts of the country as well as England and Scotland. There was a crowd of parishioners from Sunday's Well, where he had served as parish priest for six years. There were many of his friends from the parish in Phibsboro, Celbridge and St. Patrick's, Drumcondra. But his funeral Mass was a day for deaf people to honour John's ministry and they did him proud.

The tribute by Maura Buckley left a crowded and hushed St. Peter's in no doubt of what the deaf community in Ireland thought of John Cleary. Maura described his personality very well. Among other things, she said "he was a workaholic with an obsession for perfection and a great loving generosity with his time. He wanted the very best for the deaf… He was a true priest and was very close to God." How true! She summed him up very well. Her tribute was a collective cry from the deaf

of Ireland, mourning the loss of somebody they had loved, who had championed their cause, through thick and thin, for so long. There were few dry eyes in the church.

May he rest in peace.

Mark Noonan CM

JOHN CLEARY CM

Born;	Carrick-on-Suir, 15 October 1931.
Entered the CM:	7 September 1950
Final Vows:	25 December 1955
Ordained priest:	15 June 1957 in Clonliffe College by John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin.

APPOINTMENTS-

1957-'58:	St. Patrick's, Armagh
1958-'70:	St. Patrick's, Drumcondra
1970-'83:	St. Peter's Phibsboro
1983-'88:	Celbridge
1990-'97:	St. Vincent's, Sunday's Well
1997-'99:	St. Paul's, Raheny
1999-2000:	St. Killian's, Raheny
Died:	9 March 2000
Buried:	St. Vincent's, Castleknock