

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

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Editorial

Here, a year late, is the 2021 edition of *Colloque*. Besides the account of the proceedings of a most unusual Provincial Assembly, there are a number of tributes to people well known to the confreres; Fr Jim Duffy and Desmond McGinley both served with us for many years and Michael Daly was a much-loved member of staff at All Hallows College. There are also tributes to Frs Richard McCullen and Michael Prior.

Dee Mansi, who is Vincentian to the core, writes on creative relinquishment or the process of recognising that a work, or ministry, or even the life of a province, is coming to completion – which is a very different experience to ‘ending’. Mike Worthington has written an interesting piece on the travels of Br Jean Parre, an almost ‘Scarlet Pimpernel’ of the time of St Vincent.

Besides his piece on the portrait of St Vincent, Padraig Regan has a reflection on his years working in The Passage, in Victoria, London and co-authored the tribute to Richard McCullen. His co-author, Paddy Walsh, who was with us for many years, also co-authored the obituary of Des McGinley – so there has been a lot of cross fertilization in this issue.

It is hoped that the next edition will not be so long in coming!

Proceedings of the Provincial Assembly

conducted online

21-25 June 2021



As a result of the restrictions imposed in the three jurisdictions (Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland), this Assembly of the Province of Ireland was held on-line, using the Zoom platform.

In the time before the Assembly, confreres had submitted, by postal vote, their decision on a number of matters (Appendix A) and there had also been a preparatory meeting on Saturday 19th June to deal with some practical and technical concerns about hosting a Provincial Assembly in this way.

Monday 21st June

Methodology

Each morning and afternoon, prayer was led by Fr Joseph Loftus; following this, Fr Eugene Curran took a roll call which was noted by Fr Stephen Monaghan.

For the matters which had been dealt with by postal vote, Frs Paschal Scallan and Stephen Monaghan had acted as scrutineers. (Appendix B)

Fr Eugene Curran, having been duly elected Secretary of the Assembly, dealt with practicalities. The *Directory for the Assembly* had been circulated to the confreres previously and agreed upon. (Appendix C)

Ms Cora Lambert had been elected facilitator of the Assembly and it was agreed that, with Fr Eugene Curran, she would also serve as Moderator of the various sessions.

Each day, following the presentation, confreres went into five randomly selected on-line groups to discuss the matter in hand and each group was asked to give two responses. Following the feedback from the groups, there was a brief plenary session.

Monday Morning

The official Assembly began as The Visitor, Fr Paschal Scallon, declared the Assembly open.

Fr Joseph Loftus led the Assembly in prayer and the singing of the *Veni Creator Spiritus*.

Fr Scallon then gave an address to the Assembly. (Appendix D)

Responses from Groups:

Group One

- Group appreciated the clarity in Fr Scallon's presentation and recognised the two platforms.
- There was some debate/discussion on the idea of making progress on all fronts that perhaps more clarity on the nature of the mission that is likely to occur on these platforms other than the parish ministry.

Group Two

- There was some disappointment in the group with the presentation around a perceived lack of missionary vision. We propose that we revisit the missionary statement as a Province, re-write it and re-own it in the light of contemporary reality.
- We feel that the Province is living in a bit of a back-water not networking widely and not responding to the call for the parishes to be Missionary Parishes and we need to link with the Nigerian confreres and the Vincentian Family.

Group Three

- Group Three endorsed the proposition that we engage in greater dialogue with the Province of Nigeria based on mutual recognition and sharing of ministry and that we have a similar initiative for Ireland as well as for the United Kingdom (a dual sharing of ministry).
- We would work to develop a more unified sense of our common mission so that we can inform and inspire each other with the works and efforts of confreres in 'paying out nets for a catch'.
- Develop a means of keeping each other informed about our works and ministries using all the new means of communications available to us.

Group Four

- The group feels strongly that the Province should look at the balance between Vincentian mission and structures because at the moment the focus appears to be on structures instead of the Vincentian mission.

- To make the most of the presence of the Nigerian Province in GB: not an absorbing or amalgamating but an active collaboration.

Group Five

- Memories of past missions such as ministry to priests energises us into a new creative mission to priests today.
- We would like to see the emphasis primarily on mission such as collaboration with the Nigerian Province rather than on structures.

Monday afternoon

Presentation by Fr Stephen Monaghan, Provincial Bursar, and Ms Linda Downes, Financial Administrator, on the financial situation of the Province.

Responses from the Groups:

Group One

- Is there a fund for evangelization in general and in relation to young adult ministry?
- Is there a time limit on the Castleknock loan and has it been added to?

Group Two

- We are happy to know we are in a good place financially which gives a sense of hope for the future but would like to know more about how money is actually directly spent in the service to the poor.
- Would be good to have some kind of financial forecast in a situation like ours (e.g. building project) where we have an upcoming project.

Group Three

- Expressing a deep appreciation of the provincial office and those managing the situation – particularly those in care of the elderly confreres.
- Develop a financial policy specifically related a financial fund for mission with a particular focus on evangelization of the poor or outreach to people on the margins.

Group Four

- There was a sense of relief because of the encouraging situation of the provincial finances but concern that unrealized assets don't guarantee an uninterrupted source of funds for the future also; is there a clear ethical policy of investment?

- There is concern that there is sufficient funding available in the Province to care for mission and evangelical purposes rather than just building. We feel that we are lagging behind other congregations in terms of providing full time nursing care for confreres who need it.

Group Five

- The figures take a little time to absorb and were mesmerizing for some.
- Could there be a comment on the note that we will run out of money (cease to exist) in 10-15 years and comment on the provision for those that remain at that time.

Plenary Session:

- In response to a question about the loan and repayment from Castleknock College, Ms Downes noted there are 7 years remaining on the repayment and in 2017 an additional loan was given by the Vincentians for the building of a sports centre. This has 11 years remaining on the repayment.
- Concern was expressed at the possibility of running out of money in 10-15 years and how to balance out the needs for caring for the aging population and development of the mission. Do we plan enough for new projects and for pension fund/caring for each other?
- It was noted that in previous assemblies we have identified and embarked on different projects but they didn't mature as we had expected them to. How can we ensure that any projects proposed are delivered upon?
- There was a request to address the 'two platforms' idea, and specifically the Mill Hill project, in greater detail.
- There was a concern that all sessions were reports rather than plans.
- In all things, we rely on God's providence; the rest will follow.

Tuesday 22nd June

After prayer led by Fr Joseph Loftus, greetings and prayers of support from the Visitatrices of the Daughters of Charity in Britain and Ireland were read.

Fr Scallion and Ms Eileen Maher introduced the Healthcare Report. Fr Scallion gave a brief overview of the scope of the healthcare committee and its role in overseeing the healthcare of the confreres. Fr Scallion then handed over to Ms Maher.

Ms Maher noted the committee has agreed a governance structure which ensures client confidentiality. She acknowledged all confreres

commitment in adhering to COVID 19 regulations and reminded all to continue to be careful, especially in public areas / public transport. She reminded confreres not to touch outside of masks – to reposition only using ear loops. She added that the commitment and dedication of Vincentian priests are to be commended and that she hopes and prays that all remain well and avoid any future Covid issues.

Fr Scallion re-iterated Ms Maher's words and noted that he is grateful that the Province has been spared any Covid related illness and it is in no small part thanks to Ms Maher's commitment to ensuring the safety of the confreres.

Confreres were then invited to go into groups to share any particular questions or issues which arose with regard to healthcare.

Responses from the Groups;

Group One

- We acknowledge the health team for their professionalism whilst acknowledging that we have co-responsibility for our own health and the health of our confreres particularly in the areas of mental health, e.g. depression, addiction and burnout.
- We would like to see a discussion around the extraordinary remedies for prolonged life. In the light of this confreres were invited to state very clearly in their wills if they want extraordinary means to be used to preserve their lives, and to indicate preferences for either burial or cremation after death occurs.

Group Two

- Is there a policy concerning older confreres returning to Ireland from Britain that addresses their medical care and their being close to their families?
- To establish a care plan for each confrere, to address issues of confreres well-being and to include next of kin and end of life resuscitation issues. Explore development of a working relationship with a nursing home in the Dublin area in order to avoid the isolation of confreres who might require permanent care.

Group Three

- The dedication and care of Ms Eileen Maher was affirmed and there was a recommendation that an assistant be appointed to support her as soon as possible. Could a similar arrangement be made for confreres living in Great Britain?
- We need to plan for confreres who will require long term care in an environment which keeps them connected to the community.

Group Four

- We ask the assembly to consider whether it is necessary to continue spending large sums of money on health insurance when in both the UK and Ireland good public healthcare facilities are to be found and are used by the majority of people.
- Is there a policy regarding confreres returning to Ireland from Britain both in terms of healthcare and family links?

Plenary Session:

- Is there an option for confreres coming towards end of active ministry to move into Sacred Heart Home opposite St Pauls? Fr Scallan responded that we do not have confirmed availability due to demand on beds.
- In relation to wills, there is the opportunity, if confreres require it, to review/update wills with support from the Provincial Office/Superiors.
- Fr Scallan noted that an assistant to Ms Maher is currently being sought.
- He also raised the question as to whether confreres would prefer burial or cremation.

Tuesday Afternoon

Presentation by Fr Michael Edem on the Nigerian Province's presence in Britain since 2008.

Fr Edem outlined the development of the Nigerian involvement and engagement in parishes in Southwark, Salford and Hallam dioceses. He also indicated other ministries undertaken by the confreres in hospitals and prisons.

Given the pressure of time, direct responses to Fr Edem's presentation were invited;

- There are quite a number of confreres involved. What further plans are there, that go beyond parishes – perhaps linked with Irish Province?
- We are exploring how we might deepen the link while respecting the integrity of the two Provinces. There have, of course, been layers of interconnectivity; like grafting plants onto one another.
- We need to take things in hand more resolutely. Will not only involve Nigeria and Ireland but may involve other Provinces in Europe; it won't simply be a process of reconfiguration.
- It was noted that the ministry was multinational and among quite poor people. Interested that two are involved in hospital ministry – a ministry to the poor.

- How well do they integrate into the diocesan project in those dioceses in which they are located?
- The impression is that they are responding to the needs of the time – a very Vincentian thing. The mission defines us, in the way that we respond to it. They have a presence in terms of numbers and where they are; how can we have something constructive to build on what is already there? What are the signs of the times saying to us?
- The New Evangelization has taken centre stage in the Church's thinking – reaching out to those who no longer go to church. We are being challenged to mobilise those who do practice to reach out to those who don't. Pope Francis calls for a conversion of all the structures in our parishes – to focus on the needs of those who don't practice. So, we should have people in the Community working with lay people to help facilitate parishes in best practice. We have to keep this in mind; we are in the Congregation of the Mission. Pope Francis is the voice of God, calling us to conversion; there will be resistance. Need for all to be baptised in the Holy Spirit.

Ms Cora Lambert brought the afternoon session to a close.

Wednesday 23rd June

E Curran gave a presentation on a proposed International Mission in London (Appendix E)

Responses from the Groups;

Group One

- Two contradictory statements. One said not concrete enough. Encouraged by Fr Chinedu Eneh's idea of a fixed project.
- Work with migrants is a global Vincentian mission enveloping a wide and varied constituency of needs.

Group Two

- A worthwhile project that deserves encouragement. We value the development of something that is specifically Vincentian being discerned.
- The experience gained in international chaplaincy ministry to date should not be lost. Important that the dimension of evangelization would be a part of any new project.

Group Three

- We encourage the Provincial to actively encourage this proposal.
- We should associate with individuals and associations with the necessary skills to address particular social needs.

Group Four

- We felt this is an attractive concept that should be encouraged as it establishes a Vincentian Mission which is not parish based. Clarity in the mission statement needs to be developed with the other Provinces involved. Space for discernment unless well managed may become a vacuum which can suck people into Parish work. We remember the “Shadow of Isleworth” experiment and earlier projects.
- This should be seen as a Provincial exercise and not a British matter hopefully impacting on the Irish region in the future.

Group Five

- We are to carefully and prayerfully discern with an open mind what God might be calling us to do at this moment. Something spirit driven, specifically Vincentian and which, at the same time, allows for that Vincentian flexibility and mobility and, when needed, appropriate training should be undertaken for the project.
- Without neglecting the corporal needs of the poor, there is a need for focus on their spiritual needs, often neglected in the service of the poor. Whilst this project is starting in Britain, this should not be the end. It can be extended to impact the whole Province.

Plenary Session:

- Suggested looking at projects in other parts of the world and borrow from their experiences.
- Very pleased with what has been brought up by various groups, but concerned in relation to spiritual discernment that our own ideologies might get in the way. So suggested looking at a clear understanding of discernment.
- Has the project consulted enough with people already working in international projects?
- It is important that freedom to discern is matched with professionalism in the ‘ask’. To have highly talented people is not good enough without training.
- Is there a leader for this new international mission? Without a leader it will be a recipe for disaster
- Spiritual offering should have a place that is meeting a need and be recognised as such.
- Would it be possible for the International Project to have a ‘mobile’ group?

Wednesday Afternoon

There was a more general open-forum discussion on matters discussed so far.

Group One

- Given the limitations of numbers and age, perhaps we should be less ambitious and assist those already active.
- We were encouraged by Fr Chinedu Enuh's enthusiasm for the International Project, as a pathway for others to the Vincentian way of life.
- Possibility of exploring links with Graham Park Parish (north London), as means of involvement with the poor.

Group Two

- We express our views on the Mill Hill building after which those who make decisions decide. It is for the future of the CM in Britain, not just for the confreres living there at present.
- In addition, the care of our confreres needs to include attention to their mental health.
- This Assembly supports the development of the International Mission proposed to us today.

Group Three

- Given the reality of our limited resources and the existence of a mission in Mill Hill, versus the proposal of a new international mission, do we have sufficient personnel or do we have to make some radical choices?
- If the vision for the mission proposed for the new build in Mill Hill could be expressed a little more clearly and if the position regarding ownership of the land could be guaranteed, legally and morally, regardless the cost per room remains a significant block for some people.

Group Four

- Doing nothing is not an option for us at this point, however, in moving forward it is important that we try our best to move together by listening to each other with respect while recognising the demands of our current realities.
- There is need for us to engage more with and support the Vincentian Family because there is a future for us there.

Group Five

- The emphasis was on new evangelization – there are countless *areopagi* springing up and the CMs are not there.

Plenary Session:

- Concern about the leadership in the proposed community in London.
- The one who focuses on urgent pastoral needs to the neglect of evangelical priorities will contribute to the decline of the Church. 80:20 rule. Are we focussed on what we should be doing? We are hopelessly lost. Appeal to revisit the mission statement; in light of prayer, discernment and needs of the modern world; each house in the Province needs to work out its own mission statement. New Evangelization has to be high up on our list of priorities.
- Programme of ‘two platforms’. We have not given any flesh to the concepts of what this means in practice – it needs to be fleshed out. We are missing an important part of the process if we are not doing this regularly.
- Appropriate; we are not yet fully committed to the building of the house of Mill Hill. Four objections; cost, moral ownership of site, is it in response to an evangelical need.
- Heartened by what I heard this morning; drawing in on others from the Vincentian Family. Provincial’s address was on structures rather than vision or mission. If church does not come out of herself to evangelize, it becomes self-referential – and gets sick. Much discussion given to new building in London; not necessary, not demanded, we may not be able to keep it (issue with diocese). Strongly disagree with this building – place contradicts our mission to the poor.
- Thoughts on Mill Hill; very dynamic parish – generous hearted people. Great opportunity for something new; go where you are needed and not wanted, leave when you are wanted but not needed. We are highly institutionalised. Mill Hill contains the foundation stones of a new mission. Don’t become burdened by huge building; we are mobile and ministers of restlessness.
- We need to be ready to move on.
- Concerned for the mental health of the confreres; should be a priority of our health. People under stress – both public and private.
- Priests in time of Teresa of Avila were preaching Christ’s message but did not wish to give offense; people heard but moved on without any change in life. Encourage preaching the full message and the importance of prayer, community prayer and prayer for life. Open to choosing the Lord’s way; may mean suffering or self-denial. Importance of good fraternal union: *fratres in unum*.

- In favour of the building. Is the build about the confreres who live in it or is it about the purpose for which we are undertaking it? The aim is about the vision/plan that the Province has for the future.
- Can we talk about the International Project? We are clouding out the evangelical implications by focusing on planning.

Ms Cora Lambert posed the question; “How do you see the Province being prophetic and making a unique contribution in the coming years?”

A confrere quoted the poet Seamus Heaney; ‘All I know is a door into the dark, outside old iron rusting...’ there is risk of going inside and undertaking something new. We are at a stage where we are being invited to take a step forward. The real task is having the courage to walk inside the dark door. Get away from our own personalities and our positions.

Thursday 24th June

Presentation on Ministry to Priests by Frs Michael McCullagh, Seán Farrell and Aidan Galvin. (Appendix F)

Before the confreres went into session, Fr Scallion read a letter from the Archbishop of Armagh, the Most Rev. Eamon Martin, concerning the Vincentian ministry of spiritual direction to the seminarians at the national seminary, St Patrick’s College, Maynooth. (Appendix G)

Responses from the Groups

Group One

- Very impressed by all we learnt; exceeded what we had understood was happening. Applaud and encourage to continue.
- Ministry to priests is an urgent need at present, central Vincentian ministry and this group are finding a new way of continuing this ministry in our time.

Group Two

- Amazed at how much has already been achieved. However, to get a wider range of acceptance among priests, it might be important to seek the support of the Bishops’ Conference, in that way, when speaking to the priests we can say that the Bishops are behind it.
- Encouraged by the idea of organising a Life in the Spirit seminars for priests. The need for spiritual direction is both urgent and huge, we recommend that those involved undergo training for spiritual direction.

Group Three

- We desire to honour and cherish the diversity of priestly expression in the context of a crisis of identity today.
- We wish to emphasise the tradition of our houses in offering support, solidarity, friendship, and the opportunity for spiritual direction and the sacrament of penance.

Group Four

- An enthusiastic response to the proposals outlined.
- Important to recognise the internet as a normal method of communication for the target group identified.

Group Five

- Group found the presentation very inspiring; would like to affirm the great work of the group – real potential for growth. Look for some continuity of contact with the major seminary so that young priests would be aware of this resource.
- Advise the Province to support this initiative; two year evaluated pilot. Seek endorsement of Bishops and request funding from them for this project.
- Keep younger confreres ‘plugged in’ to the European CM network of younger Vincentians.

Thursday afternoon

Presentation by Fr Eamon Devlin, Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for Safeguarding in the Irish Region of the Province. This was a closed session, limited to confreres of the Irish Province. (Appendix H)

*Responses from the Groups**Group One*

- An acknowledgement of the work that is done; a ministry on our behalf.
- Importance of acknowledging our true feelings concerning this whole area
- A recognition of the importance of the long journey of accompaniment and its importance.

Group Two

- This is a call to ministry to people experiencing a poverty that confreres have created.
- We are somehow prevented from engaging directly in it – and it is left to one or two.

Group Three

- A real concern for Eamon's own personal well-being, carrying this load on our behalf.
- Professional help is good but there is a spiritual requirement as well; healing services may be some part of our ministering to this need.
- Great appreciation for the time and energy that Eamon has invested in this ministry on behalf of the Province.

Group Four

- A strong expression of regret that there has been some abuse and discrimination against the international confreres working in our Province by excluding them from sessions in this Assembly.
- Eamon's talk made an emotional impact but it left significant questions regarding the extent of abuse; whether it is on-going or coming to an end and what should be the moral response of each confrere to this presentation.

Group Five

- We thank Fr Eamon for such a sincere reflection and for his hard work.
- Need to stay with and process what we have heard and where we are at this moment.
- A voice within the group calls and encourages us not to hide or bury our heads in shame but to strive and own up to being a priest even in these difficult times.

In plenary session, some other points were made;

- We recognise the burden that Eamon carries.
- The importance of healing services in our ministries.
- Much of the prayer of deliverance may be related to unresolved trauma and this can be very difficult to deal with. Often it relates to the 'father wound' or 'orphan wound'.
- Some confreres questioned why non-Irish confreres had been excluded from the session as this is, surely, information that they need to be aware of.
- There was a question about 'quantification': do we know how many confreres have been implicated in abuse and how many survivors (of abuse by Vincentians) there are? Is it possible or allowable to quantify the facts in regards to numbers abused by the Community; physical or sexual?
- How do we know what constitutes abusive behaviour?
- Is Eamon carrying all of this for the Province? What is the personal cost to him?
- There is also the call to reach out to the perpetrators of abuse.

Friday, 25th June

The morning was given over to discussion of proposals which had come from the Domestic Assemblies. (See Appendix A)

There was some discussion beforehand about the reasons behind the exclusion of certain confreres from the sessions on Finances and Safeguarding and a question about what information was not being passed on (for example, specific information on safeguarding cases, the implications of the build at Mill Hill etc).

Proposal One

The mission statement of the Province was formulated in 1985 and much has changed since then.

Proposal: That we revisit our Mission Statement and revise it.

Agree 11 Disagree 8 Abstain 5

Proposal Two

In order to express what each local community aims to accomplish, while being mindful of the constraints imposed by such things as age, infirmity and resources.

Proposal: That each house would draw up a vision statement, written in the light of the Provincial mission statement

Agree 14 Disagree 8 Abstain 1

Proposal Three

In order to discover what is being done in terms of: evangelization of the poor; formation of the clergy; formation of the laity.

Proposal That an inventory be drawn up, dealing with Provincial, local and personal responses.

Agree 14 Disagree 7 Abstain 3

Proposal Four

Proposal: That we investigate how we could engage in the formation of the laity online, together with other interested people, with emphasis on pastoral formation and empowerment.

Agree 22 Disagree 2 Abstain 0

Proposal Five

Proposal: That a concerted effort be made to have a good, well-resourced provincial website and a Facebook page.

Agree 20 Disagree 2 Abstain 2

Proposal Six

Proposal: That a list of trained Vincentian priests who could offer spiritual direction to clergy, be drawn up and circulated.

Agree 20 Disagree 1 Abstain 3

Proposal Seven

To replace the now redundant directory which was compiled by the Vincentians on behalf of the National Council of Priests of Ireland in May 1993.

Proposal: That a committee of confreres, with the help of others, would draw up a new national directory of men and women who are willing and able to offer spiritual direction to the priests of Ireland.

Agree 20 Disagree 2 Abstain 2

Proposal Eight

Proposal: That the Congregation of the Mission establish an online school of Vincentian spirituality and mission, for the main language groups.

Agree 12 Disagree 4 Abstain 8

(It was noted that this was really a proposal for consideration by the General Assembly and, as such, the proposers were invited to send it directly to the Preparatory Committee of the General Assembly.)

Proposal Nine

Proposal: This Assembly supports the development of the International Mission proposed to us on Wednesday, June 23rd.

Agree 17 Disagree 2 Abstain 5

Proposal Ten

Given the number of confreres who now routinely ask to be excused from attending Provincial Assemblies as delegates there is a real risk that representation would not reflect the local communities adequately.

Proposal: that we revert to the practice of delegate assemblies

Agree 3 Disagree 19 Abstain 2

Election of the Delegate to the General Assembly

Eugene Curran was elected as Delegate. In a postal vote which followed the Provincial Assembly, Stephen Monaghan was elected as alternate delegate to the General Assembly.

Friday afternoon session

Confreres considered the responses from the Domestic Assemblies, which had been previously circulated by email and post. (See Appendix A) They were asked to reflect on these and any other matter which had arisen during the Assembly.

Group One

- The group is encouraged by the new ministry to priests.
- We are aware of two ‘elephants in the room’ – safeguarding and the Mill Hill building project.

Group Two

- Felt inspired by the International Mission, online courses and new ministry to priests.
- Could there be a further clarification on the two-platform concept?

Group Three

- Desirable to revisit the Mission statement
- Appreciation of the positive nature of the participants and the contributions.

Group Four

- Most significant report was that on new Ministry to Priests; to be encouraged and promoted.
- The intention of making the Vincentian ‘thing’ a reality in the UK through the proposed Vincentian Family International Mission – distinct from diocesan priests serving in parishes.

Group Five

- Post-Assembly; that the Provincial Council would draw up a plan/ time-line for the proposals it intends to implement, arising from our discussions.
- Our parishes can still, and do, have strong evangelical dimensions to their activities and outreach to the poor as reflected in Fr Edem’s talk.
- There then followed a plenary session in which the following points were made;
- Implementing policy is challenging; might we consider employing a ‘project manager’ to oversee some of the things we wish to see come to be.
- This is a ‘do or die’ moment; do we need to delegate responsibility to some confreres or groups??
- Ms Cora Lambert brought the proceedings to a close with a poem by

John O'Donoghue and the confreres assembled for Mass (by Zoom) at which the Visitor, Fr Paschal Scallion presided. (Appendix I)

- At the end of the celebration of the Eucharist, Fr Scallion declared the Provincial Assembly of 2021 formally closed.

For Longing

Blessed be the longing that brought you here
And quickens your soul with wonder.
May you have the courage to listen to the voice of desire
That disturbs you when you have settled for something safe.
May you have the wisdom to enter generously into your own unease
To discover the new direction your longing wants you to take.
May the forms of your belonging – in love, creativity, and friendship –
Be equal to the grandeur and the call of your soul.
May the one you long for long for you.
May your dreams gradually reveal the destination of your desire.
May a secret Providence guide your thought and nurture your feeling.
May your mind inhabit life
 with the sureness with which your body inhabits the world.
May your heart never be haunted by ghost-structures of old damage.
May you come to accept your longing as divine urgency.
May you know the urgency with which God longs for you.”

JOHN O'DONOHUE,
To Bless the Space Between Us:
A Book of Blessings

Appendix A: Reponses from the Domestic Assemblies.

The responses were very varied; this is an attempt to summarise what was received.

We recognise with joy that Jesus in the ‘rule of the mission’ and this calls us to avoid the three temptations to self-sufficiency, indiscreet zeal and personal aggrandizement. Prayer tells us that everything is in God’s hands. Increased age and reduced numbers are not reasons for despair or dejection; there are signs of growth and calls to action. There is a constant call to ‘conversion/metanoia’: in our community life, in our personal lives, in our ministries and in our understanding of mission and vocation.

Life in community is not about self-preservation but is, essentially, in service of the Mission of Jesus Christ.

Our Context

We recognise that times are changing, including our expression of ministry. Openness to change may shatter our own comfort. St Vincent’s response is a model for us: remembering that he kept respect for the human person as a beloved child of God at the core of his service.

The experience of the effects of pandemic and lock-down needs to be discussed and reflected on openly; how has it changed us, our mission, our ministry and our lives together? How has it changed the world in which we minister and the needs of the people with and to whom we minister?

Response to the changing world

In an increasingly secular and pressurised world, there are always those who seek God and seek peace, reconciliation and healing. We have something to offer these people.

This is also a world of extremes of poverty and wealth; we can work with others to challenge unjust systems, while responding, in direct and personal ways, to our sisters and brothers in need.

We are an international Congregation, part of an international family and members of a world-wide Church

Have Provinces accepted that those who join the CM are called to serve in a trans-Provincial, trans-national Congregation?

How can we make our resources – human, financial etc - available to the wider Congregation?

While celebrating our unique charism, how can we collaborate creatively with others in the Vincentian Family?

To encourage vocations to our way of life, it is important that we celebrate vocation in all its aspects and across all stages of life.

As we widen the concept of Vocation, what are the implications for our understanding and practices in Formation?

Challenges

We are reduced in numbers and there is not always clarity of vision or communication between us; what do we need to do to correct this?

We are part of the Church and, as such, share in its joys and blessings, but also in its shame and sinfulness. Do we acknowledge this?

There are age and cultural differences between those who minister in this Province; how do we address these?

What are the implications, benefits and limitations of the proposed 'Two Platform' approach to our ministry in the future?

What forms might our commitment '*ad cleri disciplinam*' take in this changing world, where ministry extends beyond the sacerdotal and where our resources are more limited? How can we respond creatively to this commitment?

Proposals and Changes to Provincial Norms

*(only the first proposal is, in fact, a change to the Provincial Norms;
the other matters can be discussed during the sessions
of the Provincial Assembly)*

- Given the number of confreres who now routinely ask to be excused from attending as delegates there is a real risk that representation would not reflect the local communities adequately.
Proposal: That we revert to the practice of delegate assemblies
- The mission statement of the province was formulated in 1985 and much has changed since then.
Proposal: That we revisit it and revise our Mission Statement.
- In order to discover what is being done in terms of, evangelisation of the poor; formation of the clergy; formation of the laity.
Proposal: That an inventory be drawn up, dealing with Provincial, local and personal responses.
- In order to which express what each local community aims to accomplish, while being mindful of the constraints imposed by such things as age, infirmity and resources.

- Proposal: That each house would draw up a vision statement, written in the light of the provincial mission statement
- Proposal: That we investigate how we could engage in the formation of the laity online, together with other interested people, with emphasis pastoral formation and empowerment.
- Proposal: That a concerted effort be made to have a good, well-resourced provincial website and a Facebook page.
- Proposal: A list of trained Vincentian priests who could offer spiritual direction to clergy, be drawn up and circulated.
- To replace the now redundant directory which was compiled by the Vincentians on behalf of the National Council of Priests of Ireland in May 1993.

Proposal: A committee of confreres, with the help of others, would draw up a new national directory of men and women who are willing and able to offer spiritual direction to the priests of Ireland.

Proposal: That the Congregation of the Mission establish an online school of Vincentian spirituality and mission, for the main language groups.

Appendix B

Letter to the Confreres

Dear Confreres,

As you can see, we have a logo for our up-coming Provincial Assembly, designed by Donna Pickup, from Mill Hill. It is the continuation of the phrase from the Gospel of St Luke (5:4); ‘put out into deep water...’

We have received the responses of most of the confreres on voting with regard to the Assembly: the results are set out below. A summary of the responses from the Domestic Assemblies is in a separate document.

Participants;

27 confreres have indicated that they will attend each session of the Provincial Assembly and participate in its deliberations. Those who have indicated that they will attend must notify the Provincial if their circumstances change such that they cannot attend either the entire Assembly or some portion of it.

Four confreres have indicated that they will be observers at the Assembly and we will also have, as visitors, who are free to participate in the deliberations and discussions, the confreres from other provinces who are serving in the Irish province.

Groups

For deliberations and discussions, there will be two ‘terrestrial groups’ based in St Peter’s and St Paul’s. All other participants will be divided into ‘on-line’ groups, each of which will have a designated facilitator.

Recording

All plenary sessions of the Provincial Assembly (but not the discussion groups) will be recorded, in order to facilitate the work of the Secretaries.

Election of the Secretary of the Assembly

Eugene Curran was returned as Secretary on the first count, having received the required number of votes. Eugene Curran accepted the nomination and is now the Secretary of the Provincial Assembly.

Proposals re: Provincial Assembly

- Acceptance of the Directory for the Provincial Assembly, 2021:

Agree: 26	Disagree: 0	Carried
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- Acceptance of Ms Avril Gibson as Recording Secretary:

Agree: 26	Disagree: 0	Carried
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- Acceptance of Ms Cora Lambert as Facilitator of the Assembly:
 Agree: 26 Disagree: 0 Carried
- Acceptance of Facilitator as Moderator of the Assembly sessions:
 Agree: 22 Disagree: 5 Carried
- Acceptance of Preparatory Commission as Steering Committee:
 Agree: 27 Disagree: 0 Carried

Nomination for Delegate to the General Assembly

A number of names were put forward but no candidate received the required majority (50% +1).

Confreres who are participants in the Provincial Assembly (27 in all) are, therefore, requested to enter another round of voting. Votes should be sent, by mail, to the Provincial Office, to arrive not later than 12th June. It is important that each voting confrere replies as there may need to be another round of voting before the Provincial Assembly begins and the same people and number should vote in each round.

Please remember to send your vote by post (not by email) to;

The Provincial Offices
 Vincentian Community
 Sybil Hill Road
 Raheny,
 Dublin 5 AE38.

On that note, the voting for a Substitute Delegate will take place after the closure of the Provincial Assembly.

Finally, please remember that there will be an on-line preparatory meeting, for those who are delegates to the Assembly, on Saturday 19th June at 11 am. This meeting will deal with some of the practical, technical and procedural issues involved in an on-line Assembly.

On behalf of the Preparatory Committee
 Your devoted confrere
Eugene Curran CM

Appendix C
Directory Of The Provincial Assembly 2021

(to be proposed for adoption by the Assembly in advance of its first session)

- 1) The Assembly will meet on-line; as such, it will be consultative, not deliberative in nature (see *Letter from General Curia*).
- 2) The Assembly shall be held over five days, Monday 21st to Friday 25th June 2021.
- 3) The Sessions shall be as follows: (each session includes a short break)

Monday:	Session 1	10.00 am - 12.00 pm
	Session 2	2.30 pm - 4.30 pm
Tuesday:	Session 3	10.00 am - 12.00 pm
	Session 4	2.30 pm - 4.30 pm
Wednesday:	Session 5	10.00 am - 12.00 pm
	Session 6	2.30 pm - 4.30 pm
Thursday:	Session 7	10.00 am - 12.00 pm
	Session 8	2.30 pm - 4.30 pm
Friday:	Session 9	10.00 am - 12.00 pm
	Session 10	2.30 pm - 4.30 pm

Section 2: Officials and Members:

1. *The Provincial:* The function of the Provincial is to preside at the assembly.
He will transmit any Norms or proposals that are to be presented to the Superior General for approval (cf. Const. 143, 3*) and, when they have been approved by the Superior General and his Council, to promulgate them to the Province.
2. *The Moderators:* The role of Moderator will be undertaken by the Facilitator, in collaboration with the Steering Committee.
3. *The Secretary:* The role of the Secretary is to record the minutes and decisions of the Assembly. After his election he becomes the

official teller (“returning officer”) for all subsequent elections. On the conclusion of the Assembly, he shall prepare, in collaboration with the Recording Secretary, the *Acta* of the Assembly to be forwarded to the Superior General.

4. *The Steering Committee*: consisting of the Provincial, the Facilitator and the Secretary, and any co-opted members, has the overall direction of the Assembly.
5. *The Scrutineers*: as this is an on-line Assembly, the scrutineers will be the Provincial and Fr Stephen Monaghan.
6. *The norms of the Irish Province state*:
 69. (i) All members of the Province who have passive voice shall be members of the Provincial Assembly unless excused by the Provincial for a serious reason. Delegates shall be required to sign the register in advance of the first session of the Assembly and shall remain for the duration of the Assembly, unless excused by the Provincial.
 - (ii) The Provincial may at his discretion invite as observers but without the right to vote:
 - (a) those who have been admitted to the Congregation but who do not have a passive voice
 - (b) collaborators in the apostolates of the Province

(Norms 1991, 2003)

Section 3: The Opening of the Assembly:

1. The formal opening of the Assembly will consist of a brief period of Prayer as arranged by the Preparatory Commission, and the Provincial’s declaration of the opening of the Assembly.
2. The Provincial, in his role of President of the Assembly, will call out the names on the register, and then address the Assembly.
3. The election of the Secretary will take place in advance of the Assembly. This election shall be decided by an absolute majority (50% plus one). If it is undecided after two ballots, then in the third balloting he is elected who receives a relative majority of votes and in case of a tie, the senior by vocation or age.
4. In advance of the Assembly, the members shall agree its Agenda, Timetable and Method of Procedure.

Section 4: The Agenda:

The agenda for the Provincial Assembly consists chiefly of the following:

- a. Matters proposed by the Preparatory Commission.
- b. Matters proposed by the Domestic Assemblies of the houses of the Province.
- c. Matters proposed by specialised groups of confreres and individual confreres.
- d. Deliberation on any Provincial Norm.
- e. Any *postulata* for the General Assembly are to be sent directly, either by individual confreres or local communities, to the Preparatory Commission of the General Assembly, in accord with the letters sent to the Province in this regard.

Section 5: Rules of Procedure in the Assembly:

1. Each session shall begin with prayer or reading.
2. All elections shall be preceded by nominations for the particular post, and an absolute majority is required for election. In accord with the instructions from the General Curia, all nominations and voting will be by post, addressed to the Provincial Office.
3. Before the business of the session begins, the Secretary shall check the presence of the members, absences shall be noted.
4. In general sessions, all speakers shall address themselves to the Chair.
5. In general sessions questions shall be posed or asked only through the Chair.
6. Members, except when introducing a topic at the request of the Steering Committee, shall be limited to three minutes when speaking and all shall conclude their intervention when given a time warning by the Moderator/Facilitator.

Section 6: Conclusion of the Assembly:

1. When the members have heard and agreed on any norms to be approved by the Superior General, or proposals made in the name of the Province, the Visitor and Secretary of the Assembly shall sign the relevant document(s) on their behalf.

2. It pertains to the Provincial to close the Assembly with the consent of the members (cf. Const. 145) The Assembly will end with the final session and concluding prayer on Friday, 25th June 2021.

Conduct of elections:

Comment on Canon 119 of the present Code of Canon Law:

An election is decided whenever one candidate receives an absolute majority of the votes of those present. An absolute majority consists simply of any number more than one half of the votes, and it is to be reckoned based on all those present for the election, whether or not they have all voted or voted validly. This constitutes a major change from the norm of canon 101 § 1 10 of the 1917 Code whereby the majority was calculated only based on the number of valid votes.

Richard McCullen Easter 2003

Appendix D

Opening Address of the Visitor, Fr Paschal Scallan CM

Dear confrères, it is both a privilege and a challenge to speak to you at the opening of this Provincial Assembly. Perhaps in the future, it will be commonplace to hold gatherings such as these online, in which case the use of the word virtual will be redundant and the meeting or gathering will be regarded with conviction as ‘real.’

Necessity over the past eighteen months or so has made doing business in the way we will this week unavoidable. Under the circumstances of the pandemic, people have had to choose between either postponing or cancelling, or adapting to the possibilities offered by technology that is no longer new but which is really coming into its own. Our lives and our work may have slowed down but we have managed to keep working.

‘Put out into deep water...’

At the closing of the last Provincial Assembly in 2018, I reflected with you on the choice of a theme for that Assembly. I recalled that shortly after being appointed Provincial I asked the confrères in England if I could make a short visitation of the houses to meet with them. Part of the context was the short notice we were working under to leave the house of the Spanish Chaplaincy in Palace Court and find a new house for the four confrères living there. Speaking with Frs Paul Roche and Kevin O’Shea at one stage, I remarked that the feeling I had where the Province was concerned was that where we once had this magnificent fleet, the Province had become a very small boat. In this imagery our great houses had represented, as it were, some of the finest vessels afloat but now our smaller, and in the case of Palace Court, our borrowed house, presented a very different reality. It seemed that we had taken to a smaller boat and we were unsure of ourselves. I was reminded of the fisherman’s prayer: ‘O God, the sea is so great and my boat is so small.’

But it was the more powerful reference in St Luke’s gospel that also spoke to me, and with even greater force. Jesus’ command to put out into deep water struck me as so daring. He challenges everything that appears to be happening in the setting in which he finds Peter and his companions: their fatigue, their sense that their work is over – at least for the present – and the sense that as hard as they may work, there is nothing there for them; there are no fish.

Both Kevin and Paul were also struck by the reference and we agreed in the middle of that conversation that the theme of the Provincial Assembly that year was; ‘Put out into deep water...’ Facing the move out of Palace Court and wondering where in all of London the International

Community might find a haven, *duc in altum* seemed spot on. Another gospel paradox!

Twenty years ago Pope John Paul wrote an encyclical on the vocation of the church in the new millennium, precisely reflecting on Luke 5:4. He addressed the whole church sailing into waters a thousand years across. It's hard to say how far we may get but it is worth remembering that the Congregation is already 400 years out of harbour and this Province almost 200. The Lord provides.

'...and pay out your nets for a catch'

Because I wish to emphasize that we are part of a continuum, it seems appropriate to reflect on the second part of Jesus' instruction to Peter when he says, '*...and pay out your nets for a catch.*' This is the theme of this year's Provincial Assembly, prompted by a sense that Christ has a purpose for asking us to keep to our task even if we may feel from time to time there is nothing more to be done.

One of the strongest assertions of Christian thinking is to hold that Christ does not insult human intelligence. In our present culture that may be a significant act of faith in itself. So we believe that Christ does not keep us at sea simply to be 'all at sea' as it were. Christ has insight and it informs our purpose.

To obey the Lord's command that we should pay out our nets for a catch reveals Christ's faith in us to serve our brothers and sisters whose lives are corroding because of poverty and illness and exploitation. Whether at the liturgy or in our teaching or in the streets, we find vulnerable people who will respond and grow because of the care we take with them. We meet lost and broken people who can, please God, find healing in the care we take with them. This is our catch and it is in the persistence of our prayer and with the last of our energy that we reach them. They are there. Christ has seen them and they are waiting.

The Present

Since 2018 the trends in the life of the Province with which we have become familiar have continued. Most obviously, ten confrères have died but it should be said that these were men who had lived long lives, and who in their day were the readiness and the reach of the Community in this Province to stay at their task even as their energies waned. We miss them and we pray for them but if we are too proud of them to mourn them, there is, I hope, understanding for that in the heart of Christ.

We have also closed another house. But, thank God, perhaps we are learning what it is to be missionary and how to move on.

And, of course, there is growth. Since the last Assembly the Province

has seen and has welcomed two new confrères into vows and into orders. Chinedu and John are men in their prime and they must surely remind older confrères of the hope and joy in our vocation as we ourselves approached ordination. Please God, Chinedu and John will not be the younger confrères for quite as long as some I could mention.

The mission of the Province also exists as part of a continuum. We continue to seek ways in which we can serve as evangelizers, using what resources we have in personnel and funds. As confrères have reminded me; mission still comes first.

Our greatest responsibility, however, is the care of our older and often ailing confrères. This would be true even if the Province had hundreds of confrères and our average age was 45. However, we must recognise that even confrères who are engaged in what we ourselves still refer to as 'active' ministry find that they must be careful to ensure our older confrères have all they need. It is important to remember our care for each other is our first ministry. If we cannot reach out in service to the confrère next to us, especially when he is frail, what quality can our 'active' ministry really have?

As missionaries, though, we do long to be active, to be engaged, working at what we have been prepared for. The last few decades have seen changes in the opportunities for work and ministry that were available in the past. In spite of the diminishment, however, there are ways in which we may develop our ministries.

As we take stock of the situation in the Province there are at least two 'platforms' on which the Province may develop its mission. These two houses have the potential to allow several confrères to work in different ministries. At present the anchor ministry in both Phibsborough and Mill Hill is parish but if only one confrère (perhaps two) is required in this field, others may work from the house, at something else, elsewhere. During the week we will hear, for example, from a group of confrères who are working on how the Community may continue our ministry to priests. We are having to reimagine this ministry outside the institutions which made it stable for so long.

Part of the rationale for focusing on two platforms in the Province is to promote a community life that is, as I have said often, both visible and viable; and to encourage confrères to find work that is both faithful to our charism and that will help sustain a local community. Trying to meet all these criteria will mean that we will have to weigh carefully the decisions we make around ministry but as former pastoral roles are removed others emerge. It has been very encouraging to see how Chinedu has succeeded Fr Padraig Regan at The Passage in London and how Joseph Loftus has taken up his role with the chaplaincy in the new Technical University of Dublin. Stephen Monaghan also has

succeeded Fr John Gallagher in the chaplaincy in Castleknock. These are works that are consistent with the charism of the Congregation and the Irish Vincentian tradition and they are remunerated.

Highlighting the possibilities afforded by prioritising two 'platforms' in the Province does not preclude consideration of confrères living in and working from other local communities either. Practically speaking, unless we diminish to a vanishing point, we cannot all live in the same one or two houses. All the same, in light of the reconfiguration of the Province that has taken place in recent years, it is necessary, I believe, to look hard at repositioning ourselves and to concentrate what resources we will have. This is where the ideal and the real may come into tension with each other but we rely on the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and our God given capacity for discernment.

Future

In the immediate term, I believe it will be necessary to take steps to ensure that the Province remains in Britain. Our presence in Britain now consists of two local communities, in Mill Hill and in New Cross which is south of the Thames. As you know confrères have worked in Britain since 1851 when they arrived in Sheffield. There is no absolute reason why the Province should retain a presence in England. Greater, more enduring missions than ours have come and gone throughout the history of the church. But, all things considered, not least the character of English Catholicism, the vitality of the Vincentian Family there and the sheer magnitude of the mission, it would be, it seems to me, utterly counterintuitive to withdraw from Britain.

We must also recognise that the Province of Nigeria has sent confrères on mission to Britain and at present there are seventeen working in London, Yorkshire and Lancashire. Our two Provinces co-exist in England but one wonders; is there more we might make of this development? It would seem we ought not ignore each other and I look forward to hearing for Fr Michael Edem when he speaks to us during the Assembly.

In order to facilitate our remaining in Britain, though, it will be necessary to continue the overhaul of the site at Mill Hill that began in the 1990s with the rebuilding of the Church and which was augmented more recently with the addition of meeting rooms and other facilities. Now is the time to look at the community house. We have discussed this project already at one of our online meetings earlier this year and we reviewed the drawings and digital models. I know that there are concerns about the project, chiefly to do with the cost and even with the need for it. But here is the scenario I envisage if we do nothing.

Based on our experience in Dunstable, which neither the Province

nor the parish had the means to maintain appropriately, if we allow the house in Mill Hill to deteriorate any further, we will withdraw from Mill Hill within a few years, if for no other reason than that the house will have become entirely unusable and unfit to appoint or expect confrères to live there. Professional advice suggests that the house is be-yond repairing and that if we wish to continue living there, the house must be re-built. It is in light of this that I began the processes of consulting with the Provincial Council and with the Superior General and having received their consent that I authorised preparations to apply for planning permission. There have been many other elements in the process to date but this is the essence of it.

Building a house is no guarantee of anything. The mission will rest on the shoulders of the confrères who will live there and work from there. But the provision of an appropriate house is a key part to our having a mission in London that will last. This is an investment in the future of our mission in Britain, it is an investment in the confrères and an act of faith in them and in what the Province has always believed the Lord has asked of us in Britain.

In short, the work done in Phibsborough in recent years and the work to be done in Mill Hill sets up the two 'platforms' I speak of. We are preparing for a Province that will look and feel differently in the coming years.

This Week

I look forward to hearing and being part of the discussions that will take place this week. The programme is pretty full even though we have cut back on the amount of time in which we will be in session. Conducting business on Zoom has stresses all their own. We are fortunate to have been able to use it during the year but knowing how it works, it is best to allow ourselves work according to its rhythms.

I wish you every grace of this week. An Assembly isn't just a moment in which we need grace to help us through the challenges that may come; simply being part of a gathering such as this is grace in itself.

Appendix E

International Vincentian Project London; A Proposal

Planning committee: E Curran, C Enuh, P Roche,
B Matterson DC, Franca Oqua Edet DC

Proposal

- That some confreres of the Irish Province would work with confreres from other provinces to discern a unique CM Vincentian response to specific need(s) and situation in UK, in collaboration with other members of the Vincentian Family

The current situation

- Vincentian ministry is more than parish ministry
- There is still a unique contribution that the Vincentians can make in Great Britain
- Besides confreres of the Irish Province, there are some 14 confreres of the Nigerian Province in the United Kingdom
- We are part of a much larger family; Daughters of Charity, the Vincent de Paul Society and various lay Vincentian groups etc
- We have already extended this discussion to include the Daughters of Charity and, in broad terms, they are supportive of this initiative.
- We still have a part to play and a contribution to make

To do this would require:

- That the confreres would live together in a house (separate to Mill Hill)
- That, for the time of their commitment, they would sign a contract with the Irish Province and have active or/and passive 'voice' in the Province
- That they would have contracted employment for 3-4 days a week (possibly in the chaplaincies of the local diocese(s)) but the discernment of the project would be their priority
- That they would commit to discerning together, and with others, a uniquely Vincentian response to a specific need in the UK at this time
- That they would commit to a collaborative mode of discerning and working
- That the Irish Province would support them in their discernment and provide a budget for their work
- That the process of discernment would be regularly evaluated and reviewed

Value of this undertaking

- It will be a clear and specific Vincentian response to the needs of some of our sisters and brothers who experience poverty and its effects in modern Britain
- It would have an measurable impact on the lives of some people who experience poverty
- It will be a Vincentian witness to God's presence
- It will allow us to engage with the Worldwide Congregation
- It will distinguish us from secular (parish) clergy and witness to the unique Vincentian charism
- It will allow us to collaborate with other branches of the Vincentian Family

Any undertaking of this kind should be SMARTER:

Specific
 Measurable
 Achievable
 Realistic
 Time-constrained
 Evaluated
 Reviewed

To achieve this, regular reports would be brought to the Provincial and his Council

If this is so, it should also;

- breathe new life into the Irish Province and its ministries
- serve to promote vocations to the Congregation and to the Family

Lessons we have learnt...

- The original intention of the foundation in Isleworth was that a group of international confreres would:
 - Live together
 - Work some days a week in chaplaincy etc to support themselves and the house
 - Discern together a new project initiative for the Irish Province
- For various reasons, this did not work out:
 - The house itself became the Formation House, with focus on the seminarians
 - The Irish confreres were given other responsibilities (DCs etc)
 - The international confreres became involved almost exclusively in ethnic chaplaincies

- We have not yet worked out our relationship with the confreres of the Nigerian Province nor explored ways of working together
- Our ministry in the UK has become focused mostly on parish – specifically Mill Hill.
- Our ministry with the Passage is dependent on a number of factors which we cannot control

Appendix F
 Vincentian Ministry to Priests
 Presentation to the Provincial Assembly

Committee: Frs Michael McCullagh, Aidan Galvin and Sean Farrell

- Invitation of the Provincial Council
- Ministry to Priests was a central element in the mission of St. Vincent.
- Chapter 1 Paragraph 15 C.M. Constitutions
Members should afford spiritual assistance to priests both in the work of their ongoing formation and in promoting their pastoral zeal.
- Memories of the Intercession for Priests
- We have been meeting virtually on a regular basis over the last 5 months and have made one previous submission to the Provincial.
- Our objective: Through reflection, dialogue and undertaking some market qualitative research we have come to the conclusion that our primary objective is to:
 - a) Affirm and support priests in their ministry and encourage their on-going formation.
 - b) To recognise and respond to their current sense of isolation, lack of diocesan peer group support resulting from significant age gaps and reduced number of ordinations.
 - c) We desire to support priests through providing time and space for prayer and reflection.
 - d) To provide hospitality, mentoring and opportunities for spiritual direction and growth.

Who We Are

- Mindful of our limited resources and in the interest of sustainability and developing a like-to-like mission we have expanded our committee to initially include two diocesan priests. Fr Vincent Stapleton from the Archdiocese of Cashel and Fr Leo Creelman, Archdiocese of Armagh. Both were ordained within the last 10 years.
- We expect to be joined shortly by a priest for the Archdiocese of Dublin and one from Archdiocese of Tuam.
- Bishop Eamon Walsh, former Vicar for Priests in Dublin Diocese and Fr Niall Ahearne (Diocese of Elphin) of the Jesus Caritas Priestly Fraternity, Sr Marie Fahy Abbess of Glencairn Abbey (spiritual Director) and Sr. Noreen Shanley (Counsellor) have graciously made themselves available as advisors/supporters to the group.
- We have sought the advice of confreres with experience in ministry to priests.

- We have in place a group of young married couples who have agreed to act as a prayer support group for this ministry.
- The positive responses to date, confirm our conviction that the direction undertaken is touching a cord with clergy.

Our Initial Focus

- Our initial focus will be on priests ordained since the year 2000.
- We have been advised to concentrate on groups of priests according to Ordination years.
- Research has indicated that a lack of Spiritual Direction is seen as a significant contributory factor to the departure from ministry for many young priests.
- 30% of priests leave within the first five years of priesthood.
- The new Ratio for Formation has emphasised the importance of ongoing formation in the early years of Priesthood.

Some activities already undertaken and some planned for the future:

- A monthly *Tuesday Conference* by Zoom with the Maynooth Ordination Class of 2015. (Three have been held to date)
- Provision of an Ordination Retreat in July 2021 based in St. Paul's.
- Update of National Directory of Spiritual Directors and Counsellors previously undertaken by Myles Reardon CM.
- Establishment of a panel of Spiritual Directors and Retreat-givers, including Confreres.
- Organise post-Covid days of recollection in the metropolitan areas of the four Archdiocese of the country such as Larne, Ballyvaloo, Knock and Dublin. First of these to take place in Glencairn Monastery, Waterford July 2021. Some will include an overnight stay and evening of hospitality.
- A clergy retreat is booked for Ballyvaloo, Co Wexford for September 2022. Bishop Donal McKeown of Derry has been invited to lead the retreat.
- In response to the decline of Religious Houses throughout dioceses we desire to consider the establishment of a mobile group of Spiritual Directors who might visit a diocese on a monthly basis along the model undertaken by Fr Mark Noonan CM in the Diocese of Kilmore.
- To explore and develop the further possibilities of spiritual direction/ conversation through Zoom, Skype and other on-line media.
- At a later date to explore the provision of twilight retreats for retired clergy.
- Establishing a dedicated website for Vincentian Ministry to Priests. This to be comparable in digital quality but different in content to

<https://www.worldpriest.com> and <https://www.epriest.com>

- *Production of some podcasts orientated towards the spiritual and emotional wellbeing of clergy.*
- Explore the provision of online Life in the Spirit seminars particular to clergy.
- To encourage our houses to be places of hospitality for priests.
- It is our desire to establish an office for priestly ministry in St. Peter's, Phibsboro.
- Dialogue with existing support groups for clergy, eg Association of Catholic Priests and The Intercession for Priests established by Kevin Scallan CM.
- Provision of an adequate budget to ensure professional standards can be met.
- The committee recognises the importance of on-going formation for themselves and the role of prayer and discernment in this task. Day of reflection for August 2021 to be led by Fr Niall Aherne.
- We value the support, feedback and prayers of the confreres.

Appendix G

Letter from the Most Rev. Eamon Martin, Archbishop of Armagh

17 June 2021

Dear Fr Paschal,

I learn that the Vincentians are unable to continue in the ministry of spiritual direction to the seminarians in Maynooth at this present time and will not be offering a confrère to succeed Fr Seán Farrell when he completes his appointment at the end of this academic year.

I hope that you can in some way continue to make a contribution to the formation of priests in Maynooth as your charism and evangelisation are factors I myself found to be of great help to me spiritually as a seminarian.

I want to express my deep appreciation of the dedication and devoted work of the Irish Vincentians to Maynooth down through the years and hope and pray that we have further confrères in the College at some time in the future.

With every blessing and kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Eamon Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eamon Martin
Archbishop of Armagh

Appendix H The situation of Safeguarding in the Province

Fr Eamon Devlin CM

For most of the last fifteen years or so the emphasis was on three critical aspects of safeguarding; prevention of abuse through creating safe environments for your people in all our ministries; reporting and responding to allegations of abuse, the vast majority of which are historical and relate to respondents who are deceased; compliance with statutory and canonical guidelines as they were developed in response to the growing awareness of the reality of abuse.

More recently, a fourth element has come increasingly to the fore: viz our response to complainants and survivors and our treatment of respondents. These matters have always been part of our safeguarding policies and guidelines but that was, to a large extent, through the very formal structures of professional counselling and legal process for those seeking redress. A small number of confreres with specific roles in safeguarding, ie the Visitor (Church /authority) and the DLP (Designated Liaison Person) met with a number of complainants and in several cases developed a strong pastoral presence and outreach to them and to the members of their families also affected by the effects of abuse on their loved one.

In the last two years, we have noted a gradual development in the way more complainants now seek to engage more directly with the Community. Some of these have availed of formal counselling in a therapeutic way, others have received financial compensation, while others still have sought neither of these. There is a growing awareness that complainants increasingly seek to engage with members of the Community for a number of reasons: seeking greater understanding of the ethos of the Community and the circumstances that permitted abuse to take place while the other members of the Community remained unaware of it; a desire to engage with the members of the Community to which the respondent belonged as being an approximate to that respondent no longer amenable to justice; the search for truth in greater detail; a determination to obtain assurance that living confreres are totally committed to ensuring that abuse cannot recur etc.

This development poses invitation and challenge to us as a Province. It is, after all, true to state that those who have been abused as minors have been profoundly affected and scarred by their experience. Abuse diminishes, damages, devastates and destroys. Survivors are impoverished psychologically, emotionally, spiritually, relationally and, often,

materially. Those who suffered abuse in our schools, colleges, chaplaincies, parishes and missions are the poor we have created. The burning question for us as a Province is whether we will engage with survivors on deeper, more interpersonal level, being available to meet with and journey with them as they process their experience and seek progress in aspects of their story in which they believe we can be of assistance to them. To an extent, this encounter was pre-empted in the past by the requirements of the protocols in place from the National Board for Safeguarding Children, and the Statutory Authorities and professional counselling and formal reporting structures were the primary points of contact/response. Offers of pastoral support, while given, were seldom taken up. It now seems providential that a new phase in our safeguarding ministry is opening up. Please God, we will, as a Province and as individuals, regard this as a central ministry of the Province and respond appropriately.

Appendix I
Homily at the Closing Mass of the Assembly

Fr Paschal Scallion CM, Visitor

Genesis 17 “I am God. Bear yourself blameless in my presence.”
Psalm 127 ‘Blessed are those who fear the Lord’
Matthew 8:1-4 “If you want to, you can cure me”.

First of all, allow me to congratulate everyone and thank everyone for participating in the way you have at this Provincial Assembly. Conducting it online could have been a clumsy experience but perhaps the proficiency we have gained since Pat Collins gave us our retreat last summer has stood to us. Providence has shown us another way in which we can live and deepen our community life.

We have exceeded the expectations of the early stages of our preparations, which began last September when the world was floundering on account of the covid-19 pandemic. I would like to acknowledge from the outset, then, the work done by the Provincial Council, the members of the Preparation Committee: Eugene Curran, Cora Lambert, Chinedu Enuh and Stephen Monaghan and the work done by those who prepared the presentations. And, I would especially like to thank Avril Gibson (Provincial Secretary) for receiving her baptism of fire at her first Provincial Assembly and for being so gracious under pressure.

The presentations were a revelation and I am sincere when I say, I feel there was grace in what was put before us. There was passion and belief, revealing that while we accept we have limitations, our hearts still burn within us to tell what we have seen and heard, that Christ is risen and that is good news to the poor.

In the reading from Genesis in today's liturgy, God's introduction to the man who still calls himself Abram is wonderful. God says, “I am God. Bear yourself blameless in my presence.”

This is how God makes a covenant in that moment with the man who becomes Abraham. We are familiar with this story, with the promises God makes and how God makes Abraham laugh.

One of the most darkly humorous jokes about God asks, ‘How do you make God laugh? to which the hapless response is, ‘Tell him your plans.’

When God tells Abraham his plans, Abraham laughs at the apparent absurdity of what God tells him but if God is speaking then Abraham must come to the realisation that what he is hearing is, as we hear repeatedly in the scripture, full of grace and truth.

When Abraham meets God at this stage in his life, he is an old and disappointed man, and if I may speak frankly, I think there is something for us to reflect on at the end of this Assembly having heard this reading as it comes to us in an ordinary celebration of the liturgy. There is no set up here. These are the readings of the day. But it is the word of God for us today and it really does seem this is an appropriate time.

I was struck on Monday at the sense of disappointment confrères reflected or reported. It was hard to hear. There was in what was said, I think, a sense that we have lost our focus, or our will to be missionary, to be active for the Gospel.

But when the presentations began our perceptions changed and as the week went on it became clear that there is more happening in the Province than we think. And there are still plans to remain actively evangelizing even if our approach to our mission must adapt.

All my life, I have looked for the words and gestures in our tradition, that speak of God's grace and the ways in which it is possible to live and work in the blessing of God. I noticed as the presentations came that our heads began to lift which is why God's introduction to Abram is so striking, "I am God. Bear yourself blameless in my presence." As profoundly as I think it is possible for me to say this, I want you to feel the Lord say to you, "Bear yourself blameless in my presence."

This is not an exoneration. But it is deeply forgiving. We are not supermen; we work hard but we live with trial and error, success and failure. It is also true that we are at the threshold of a future into which the Lord himself sends us even if we may fear that future is already leaving us behind.

Jesus does not accuse us. Jesus increases the capacity in us to fulfil our vocation, to grow as the Holy Spirit released in us in baptism and at ordination, gives us the gifts to do so. These are the gifts we have known of since boyhood: wisdom, understanding, right judgement, courage, knowledge, reverence, and wonder. Can we believe they are still available to us?

As Vincentians we are missionaries. Our life and our work is the Gospel and a Gospel that is good news for the poor. Anything else we do is at the service of that sense which we must always retain.

One of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is joy. God's promise to Abram seemed bizarre to him at first but God's sense of humour does not detract from his purpose. God's still calls us and our joy will be in finding how we can still follow. For all the right reasons and in different ways, God can make us laugh too.

So, listen to the Lord saying to you, "I am God. Bear yourself blameless in my presence."

Creative Relinquishment

– Act 3 of Our Shared Story

Dee Mansi

“The mind that is not baffled
is not employed.
The impeded stream is the one that sings.”
Wendell Berry

When I consider the opportunities of reflection that advancing age offers, I should be grateful. But sometimes, there is a sense of resentment that my life must change at all! Are my best endeavours yet to come? How can I employ all that experience gained?

During my work and travels among the Vincentian Family, I can empathise with those organizations that are “coming to completion.” My empathetic conversations, however, are met with a range of reactions.

When praising a particularly good historical exhibition of the mission over 100 years, I was met with “well, we’re dying off now”. I was stirred to defend the mighty achievements of the Order, and kindly pointed out that there were many who are grateful for the impact on their lives. Actually, more than grateful – benefitting hugely from the Order’s devotion to the service of others; particularly the young, over 100 years.

These responses came from Orders with medical, social work and educational backgrounds. Surely the reverberations should be delighted in. How could you measure the GDP of a religious order? How has the development of a country, an economy, civil society itself been shaped by all that teaching, counselling, and character building – spiritually and corporally?

So, what’s to be done with all this DNA accumulated in our joint endeavours. Well, just as companies like Ancestry.com capitalise on our desire to know who we are, where we came from, organizations coming to completion can enjoy the legacy they are passing on. Note I did not say “leaving” – as this implies, something laid down and “left.” No, the lifelong legacy bequeathed to those you serve, lives on in their veins passed on through their encounters with family, friends, colleagues.

I have two sayings when talking about this matter. Firstly, I say I am like a stick of rock; “break me anywhere, and you will see Vincentian writ clear” and, I am like a fractal of broccoli. You know how broccoli

has all little symmetrical pieces that exactly mimic the main head. All the mathematical illusions coalesce into one unitary body. The Vincentian charism is like this! We are all in one bunch, each separate but joined.

I glory in the fact that vocations are rising in Asia and there are African missionaries coming to serve us here in Europe. Perhaps, we should direct our introspection outwards and embolden the laity of the world. What if we creatively relinquish our past mission and plan for a glorious future?

“It may be that when we no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work
and when we no longer know which way to go,
we have begun our real journey.”

Wendell Berry

Collaboration in the relief of the poor and suffering French population in North East France between 1653 and 1660

(or the life and times of Brother Jean Parre between 1653 and 1660)

Mike Worthington

*The author is a member of the
Vincetian Family Formation Committee in the UK*

Introduction

France was a country almost permanently at war between 1568 and 1659 when the Bourbon Kings of France were in conflict with their Hapsburg rivals in Spain and the Holy Roman Empire. The major areas of battle centred on the Spanish Netherlands (Belgium today) as well as Catalonia, the Rhineland and northern Italy. The conflicts ended inconclusively in 1659 following the Battle for The Dunes (1658) for Dunkirk as both sides were financially exhausted. This Franco – Spanish war is considered to be a conflict connected to the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648) and the Thirty Years War (1618-1648).

Much of the fighting took place along the supply route the Spanish used to replenish and reinforce their possessions between northern Italy and Flanders. It was known as the Spanish Road and passed through Alsace which was a key part of the security of France. Richelieu wanted to destroy the Spanish influence in these areas and had done so before he died in 1642. Spain then had to rely on logistics by sea which was problematic as the Dutch Navy was supreme.

King Louis XIII died on 14th May 1643 and his five year-old son, Louis XIV became King. His Mother, Anne of Austria, assumed control of the Regency Council. The fighting continued between France and Spain and victories at Arras (France, 1654) and Valenciennes (Spain, 1656) lead to stalemate. The war came to an end in 1658 when the Spanish lost The Battle for The Dunes at Dunkirk. They sought a truce but Mazarin, who had succeeded Richelieu, refused. However, when Cromwell's death occurred in England, peace was signed.

Whilst the Franco-Spanish War (1635-1659) was being waged, a French internal insurrection took place between 1648 and 1653. This insurrection, which was known as the Fronde, came about when the French Government raised the taxes for most of the French population and people began to fear that King Louis XIV was trying to assume

total power and control of France. This civil war rages especially in the areas north of Paris with a significant battle at Rethel (1650). The fighting was very severe and the French army of Turenne and his Frondeurs gave way and, as an army, ceased to exist. Turenne asked for and was granted the young King's pardon and the rebellion collapsed. After a few months of peace, the Court returned to Paris.

From 1635 to 1659 a lot of fighting with big armies took place to the north of Paris. This led to a great loss of life and the devastation of agriculture as well as the loss of livelihoods of many people in the Picardy-Champagne region of France. It is into this situation that Jean Parre comes in 1653.

Jean Parre

Jean was born in Chatillon-en-Dunois in 1611. He entered the Congregation of the Mission on 16th April 1638 at the age of 27. He took his vows as a Brother of the Congregation in 1643. He died sometime after 1660 but there is no record of his death. Jean Parre was one of four Brothers in the Congregation who came to work very closely with St Vincent de Paul. Brothers Bertrand Ducornau and Louis Robineau became the indispensable secretaries to Vincent whilst Jean, along with Brother Mathieu Regnard, worked as Vincent's eyes and ears on the ground, with Mathieu in war torn Lorraine and Jean in Picardy-Champagne. Mathieu made 54 visits from Paris to Lorraine and distributed approximately £800,000 of aid (in today's money) between 1639 and 1649. Jean made 47 visits to Picardy and Champagne between 1653 and 1660 and distributed approximately £1,916,800 of aid to those in need (at today's value). These two Brothers were two of the most intelligent and active instruments which Divine Providence placed in Vincent's hands.

In 1652 there was a truce in the Franco-Spanish war and the Brothers, who had been deeply involved in relief work, were called back to Paris. The truce was providential because the Fronde broke out in Paris and the Brothers were sent to bring relief in the Capital. The respite from the war was only brief and the Mission Team were sent back to their areas. Fr Almeras was in charge in Picardy-Champagne until May 1654 when he was sent to Rome. This left Bro. Jean Parre on his own as the trusted envoy for Picardy-Champagne.

It is reported that Jean was less resourceful than Mathieu in Lorraine but was good at administration and leadership. Following Vincent's direction, he discovered what the poor people and especially the poor clergy needed. He wrote almost weekly to Vincent and the Ladies of Charity in Paris. Vincent had these letters read out to the Ladies at their weekly meetings. They were so moved by his reports of need and its

relief they provided most of the funds for this missionary work. Aid to Picardy and Champagne continued to flow from the Ladies until 1659. However, the amounts sent did decrease with time due to the demands of the war as well as loss of position following the Fronde. Jean also set up Confraternities of Charity whilst in the region. The work he undertook in the Picardy-Champagne region and that carried out in Lorraine by Brothers Proust and Mathieu Regnard were supported by the Daughters of Charity.

Vincent's letters to Jean are recorded from 29th November 1653. In his first letter, he asks Jean to look after himself and to moderate his workload. In addition, he asks that Jean finds him a tailor's assistant as he has need of one in Paris. In almost every letter that Vincent writes, he talks about two things as well as the work he wants Jean to undertake. He is always concerned for the health of his Missionaries and continually asks for prayers. In several letters in 1657 he refers to the plague in Geneva and specifically mentions in letters in September 1657 that two Priests are dying because of it.

Vincent's letters also contain a reference each week to the weekly meetings of the Ladies of Charity. It was at these meetings that Jean's letters were read out and the ideas he put forward were discussed. Once an agreement was reached on a course of action and funding decided, Vincent would write his weekly letter to Jean and explain what had been agreed and how much funding was set aside. Jean usually drew his funds from Mlle Viole using bank drafts. The work which was to be undertaken by Jean reflected the life and livelihood of the area and its times. Tools were purchased for people to work on the land, seeds were provided to enable the poor to become more self-sufficient and direct relief was sometimes given. (Systemic change is the phrase we use in current times to describe this process.) Bolts of cloth were sought after to provide clothes for the people of the area, especially in St Quentin, Laon and Ham. In addition to the cloth coming into the region, there was an industry producing "linsey-woolsey" which was the preferred cloth of the time for clothes making. However, Vincent was always specific in that the bolts of cloth had to be "dark in colour" as that was the most suitable.

The state of the churches in the area and the livelihoods of the clergy also caused Vincent to worry. The area had been ravaged by the armies of the Franco-Spanish war as well as during the Fronde and considerable damage had been done. The Ladies of Charity were able to fund the rebuilding of some churches as well as provide stipends for the clergy. Vincent found altar linens and other items of religious necessity and money was provided for tabernacles and chalices. It fell to Jean to search out the churches most in need of simple restoration and start the

work as well as support the clergy in their needs.

In 1659, on 14th June, Jean arrived once again in St Quentin, having travelled from Laon. There was a letter from Vincent waiting for him. In it, Vincent talked about cloth arriving in Paris – “it must be very dark in colour to sell” – and a small statue found when a 200 year-old tree was felled. Large crowds had gathered and Jean was urged to tell the Bishop! The Bishop of Noyon then asked Vincent if Jean could stay in the area and put some sort of order into the irregular devotions that were taking place. Vincent agreed that Jean could stay for 10-12 days. In fact, he stayed longer and this site eventually developed into a place of pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Paix which continues to this day. Vincent tells Jean in his letter of 26th July 1659 that he “and the Ladies of Charity are pleased with your work”. He then asks Jean if he knows of a suitable priest for the Chapel!

Conclusion

The little that is known about Jean Parre comes from the writings of Vincent and all these writings focus on the work carried out for those in desperate need in the Picardy-Champagne region. The work that Jean undertook in that region was at the direction of Vincent who was able to provide the necessary funding through his collaboration with the Ladies of Charity.

It is a measure of the dedication of his calling that Jean was so completely trusted by Vincent and the Ladies of Charity to carry out such intense work at a time of severe famine and distress caused by both the international and civil wars during Jean's time in Picardy-Champagne. The collaboration between Vincent and the Ladies of Charity led to Jean distributing nearly £2 million (at today's rates) to the poor and the clergy as well as promoting the rebuilding of churches and chapels.

The triangle of Vincent, Jean and the Ladies of Charity clearly demonstrate how good a team they were at providing relief but also how dependant they were on each other. As the funds became scarce following the war and the Fronde, the relief work carried out by Jean slowed down. In his later letters, Vincent writes on several occasions that the Ladies did not meet or he did not attend the Tuesday meetings. This meant that Jean had less to do as “no instructions were given” as we read in Vincent's letters.

Undoubtedly, Jean was a man of and for the times in which he lived. In the seven years of his singular work in Picardy and Champagne he travelled nearly 700 kilometres and distributed £1,916,800 in aid. Most of his movements were on foot although he is told by Vincent to get a horse as the Ladies and himself are concerned for his welfare because of the dangerous roads and situations of the times.

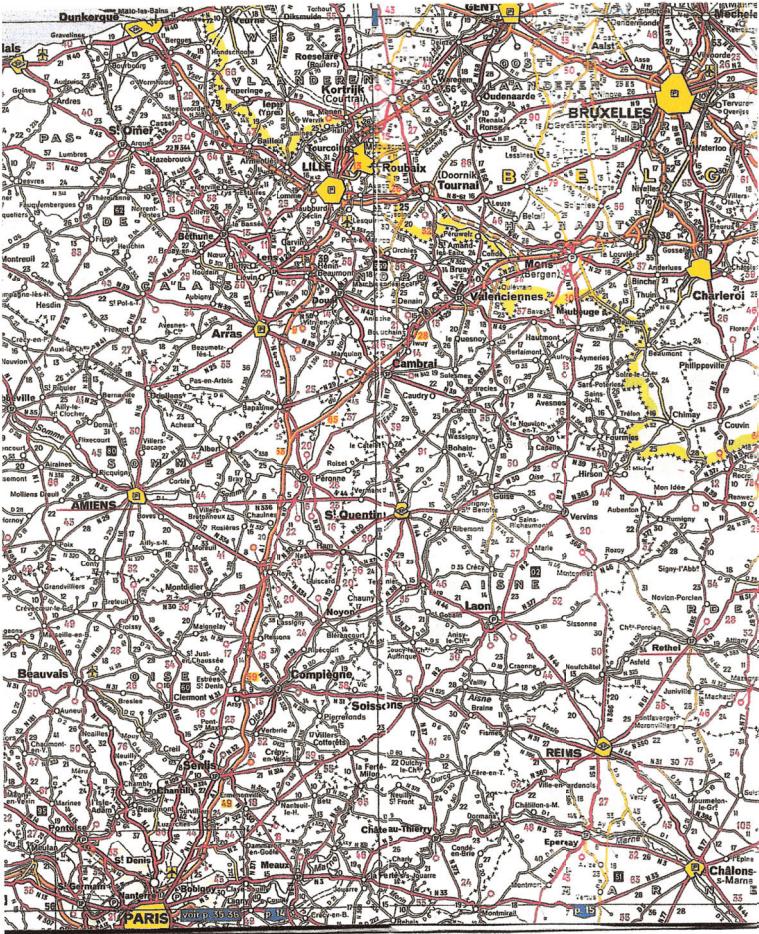
We know little of the life of Jean Parre from his birth to his becoming a Brother of the Congregation of the Mission. We know a lot about his work from 1653 to 1659 but nothing is known of his life after the death of Vincent in 1660. Jean just disappears from history. "How sad!" you may think but how great was the hand of God in these times through the collaboration of Vincent, Jean and the Ladies of Charity. Truly, this was an inspired collaborative effort.

NOTES:

1. CCD: XIV: 436.
2. Maloney, R P., CM, *Mystic of Charity*, 2019, St Louis, Missouri, USA.
3. Michelin et Cie, *Atlas des grandes routes de France*, 1973, Clermont-Ferrand, France.
4. Roman, J M., CM, *St Vincent de Paul, A Biography*, 1981, Madrid, Spain.

Distances travelled
by Jean Parre in kilometres
between towns from 1653 to 1659

Amiens						
86	Ham					
108	54	Laon				
66	20	42	St Quentin			
136	120	85	140	Paris		
152	98	44	86	144	Reims	
167	113	59	101	183	39	Rethel



Beggsboro: Land owned and leased out by the Phibbsboro Vincentians c. 1854-1905

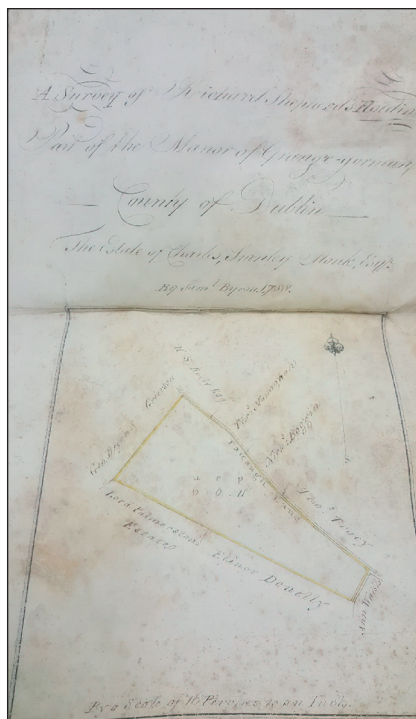
Miriam van der Molen
Provincial Archivist

Article originally published in the Spring 2017 newsletter of the Archives and Records Association, Ireland (ARAI); it is reproduced here with some minor amendments.

The Vincentian Provincial Archive was purpose-built when the Provincial Office was built in 1997 in Sybil Hill Road, Raheny, as an extension to the older Sybil House which is now used as a residence for the Vincentian Community here. The Provincial Office used to be in Cabra Road, Phibsboro, before it was moved to Raheny twenty years ago. The archive contains around 280 standard-sized archival boxes.

There are various projects ongoing at the Provincial Archive, involving the cataloguing of photographs, or papers relating to particular houses or parishes where the Vincentians have been active, and of material relating to individual (deceased) Vincentians. One project, completed by me in 2016, was about the ownership, management, and lease of land in the 'Manor of Grange Gorman' in Cabra by the Vincentians. By 1854, this land was being leased to a tenant called Garret Begg. This land was Beggsboro, although it had been called Workmansfields before this.

The oldest document in the Beggsboro Estate series is a 31-year lease on parchment made on 20 February 1789



*Lease on parchment
made on 20 February 1789*

between the owner of the land, Charles Stanley Lord Viscount Monck, and Richard Shepherd, described as being a gardener.

The size of the land in question was six acres and eleven perches, according to Samuel Byron, the city surveyor. It was situated on Fausagh Lane. This was the hardest document to clean, as dirt always likes to cling to parchment. It was also the biggest document when unfolded fully. The next oldest document is an assignment of lease made on 26 November 1791 between Richard Shepherd and his son-in-law, Patrick Martin, making Patrick Martin the lessee of the lands from Lord Viscount Monck under the terms of the lease two years before in 1789. There are no documents created for the next 65 years, between 1791 and 1856, present in the archive.

From 1854, Garrett Begg seems to have leased the Beggsboro land from the Phibsboro Vincentians, as indicated by a document created by Andrew Devereux, solicitor for Garrett Begg, as part of a court case between 1887 and 1889 to do with rent apparently owed by Garrett Begg to the Vincentian Fathers.

This document shows the poor rate paid by Garrett Begg for Beggsboro from 1854 until 1889. There is also a form headed 'Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881', filled out by solicitor Andrew Devereux.

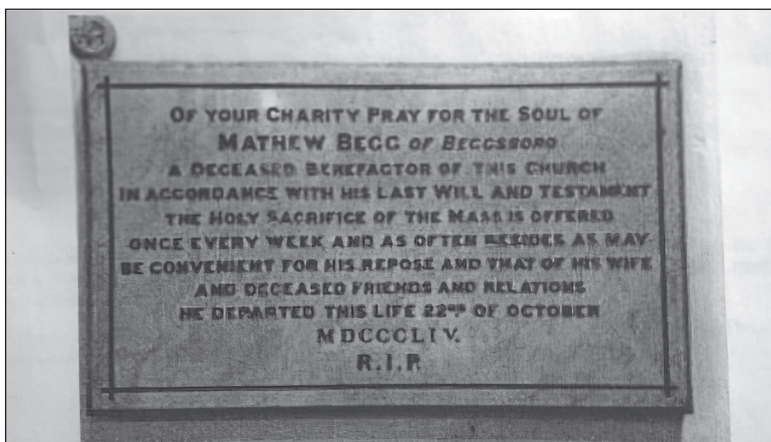
North Dublin Union

Return showing amount of Rates paid and Valuation of the holding
from year 1854 to year 1889 both inclusive

Occupier	Land	Year	Valuation	Rates	
			£ s d	£ s d	
Garrett Begg	Grangeforman North.	1	1854	108 - -	4 10 -
		2	1855	108 - -	4 8 -
		3	1856	108 - -	2 14 -
		4	1857	108 - -	2 14 -
Beggsboro	Electoral Division		Suppld Rate 1854-1889	14 11 -	
Caha	of Glossary	5	1858	108 - -	4 10 -
		6	1859	108 - -	3 10 -
		7	1860	108 - -	4 1 -
		8	1861	108 - -	4 10 -
		9	1862	108 - -	5 8 -
		10	1863	108 - -	5 8 -
		11	1864	108 - -	5 17 -
		12	1865	108 - -	3 12 -
		13	1866	108 - -	5 8 -
		14	1867	108 - -	5 8 -
		15	1868	108 - -	4 10 -
		16	1869	108 - -	4 10 -
		17	1870	112 - -	5 12 -

Return showing rates paid
and valuation of Beggsboro from 1854 until 1889

It is addressed to three Vincentian priests, giving them, among other orders, instructions to fix a fair rent in relation to Garrett Begg's rent for Beggsboro on the hearing of Garrett Begg's case. There are also letters, written by Garrett Begg, present in the Beggsboro series. These letters indicate that he had trouble paying the rent requested, which led to the court case. There is a card from Edward Connolly, deputy registrar of the Irish Land Commission, from 22 August 1889 stating that the 'judicial rent' for Begg had been fixed at £130. Andrew Devereux, solicitor, wanted to have the case reheard, as the rent before this had been £149, which made him feel that the rent was not as fair as it could have been. A valuer then valued Beggsboro and ruled the annual rent should be £110, after which Andrew Devereux, on behalf of Begg, withdrew any appeals as his client was happy with this.



Plaque dedicated to Mathew Begg in St Peter's Church, Phibsboro

The lands of Beggsboro were so-called before Garrett Begg leased them, due to the previous ownership by a Mathew Begg. There is a draft petition, circa 1895, to do with money owed to the trustees of Mathew Begg's will by the Great Southern and Western Railway, which had needed a piece of Beggsboro to extend its railway line. These original trustees were Paul Cardinal Cullen, Father William Youre (sic), and Father Thomas McNamara CM. This draft petition states certain points which tell us that Mathew Begg died 1 August 1854, and his will gave Reverend Doctor Cullen, Reverend William Youre of Arran Quay Chapel, and Reverend Thomas McNamara CM 'his farm of land... formerly called Workmansfields', now Beggsboro, 'held

forever from Lord Monck'. The rents and profits are to go to St Peter's Church forever. The draft petition also states that Mathew Begg himself held Beggsboro from Lord Viscount Monck under a fee farm grant of 11 February 1853, founded on a lease forever dated 23 February 1736 from Sir John Stanley to Richard Workman. This previous lease was renewed 27 December 1843 by Henry Stanley Earl of Rathdown to Mathew Begg. It also states that, as Father Cullen and Father Dixon CM had died, these had been replaced by Fathers James Potter CM and James Kelly CM as trustees by about 1880, to join Father Thomas McNamara CM in this joint role.

Mathew Begg was a relation of Garrett Begg, and there is a plaque dedicated to him in St Peter's Church, Phibsboro, described as a 'deceased benefactor of this church', where the Vincentians still run the parish today.

In 1905, the Vincentians sold Beggsboro to Garrett Begg, who was the tenant of the estate at the time. It is not clear whether this is the same Garrett Begg, or maybe a son. It was interesting to trace the progression of Beggsboro from 1789 to the early twentieth century, even with a rather large gap of over sixty years and not knowing the nature of the link between Garrett and Mathew Begg. It gave a further dimension to our archival holdings, as there is not a lot on the historical possession of lands by the Irish Vincentians in the archive.

Bohdan's Story

Before he returned to Ireland, after many years of service in The Passage, London, Fr Padraig Regan presented a painting he had received to Sacred Heart Mill Hill. What follows is a pen portrait of the artist, which Fr Padraig supplied



Bohdan is 29 years old and originates from Ukraine. He has endured a number of traumatic experiences as a consequence of serving in the armed forces of Ukraine (Russo-Ukrainian war). He first became known to The Passage when he presented at the Resource Centre after four months of rough sleeping around the streets of Westminster in the autumn of 2019.

Upon assessment at The Passage, Bohdan revealed that he had fled to the UK from Ukraine to seek a new life after struggling to deal with the effects of the traumatic events that led to him being enlisted in the Ukrainian army and forced to fight. However, as he had been seeking asylum, when he arrived in the country he was detained at Gatwick Airport for a week and later referred to the Heathrow Immigration Removal Centre where he remained for a further 3½ months.

Ukraine is home to a number of bad memories for Bohdan. He recalls the day that the majority of his troubles began vividly, possibly due to reliving them in flashbacks many times since. He had just been finishing up his Art Restoration studies at university when one day on his journey home he was stopped by 6 policemen who ended up tying him up and continuously beating him for 2 hours using knives and sticks in extreme weather conditions of -20 degrees centigrade. They



Bohdan completed his 'St Vincent De Paul' painting project from his bedroom whilst staying at Passage House

later took him away and forced him to join the Ukrainian military. He served in the war there for 3½ years. During his time fighting, he saw a young man killed right in front of his eyes. This had a profound effect on him, leading him to self-medicate using alcohol and drugs. As a result of these distressing experiences, Bohdan consequently suffered from PTSD, recurring nightmares, flashbacks and depression for a number of months. During his time at HIRC, Bohdan was offered psychological support to explore these issues. Bohdan was concerned that information about his mental health would work against him and affect his immigration case, despite being assured that anything discussed would remain confidential, so he may have been suffering much more than what he disclosed.

Bohdan was released from HIRC in October 2019, almost four months after originally being stopped at Gatwick. He stayed at a friend's house for a few weeks but as this was only a temporary arrangement he ended up leaving with nowhere else to go and no savings to even secure a hotel room. He ended up sleeping on the streets around Westminster for a number of weeks before discovering the Passage Resource Centre.

Staff at The Passage rapidly assessed Bohdan, ensured that he received the necessary medical assistance and ongoing psychological help. They later supported him into accommodation at our Residential Project, Passage House, where he quickly assimilated and was well

supported by the team there. He got on extremely well with Activities and Follow Up Worker, Michael DeGale who motivated him to revisit his creative skills; encouraging him to participate in their weekly art therapy group. In Bohdan's own words, 'art has helped me to detach from the world and to not think negatively.'

Bohdan's art was talented beyond measure! With each piece, his personality and drive seemed to shine through. Bohdan's stay at Passage House coincided with lockdown, which meant that group art activities were forced to pause for a few weeks. During this time however, Michael ensured that Bohdan kept up his regular routine and artwork by setting him personal projects to complete. Bohdan did not disappoint. In September he successfully completed a painting of St Vincent De Paul to mark The Feast of St Vincent. The painting was his way of demonstrating his enormous gratitude and respect for all the opportunities and hope that The Passage and Passage House had offered him. The painting was so sought after by all who saw it, that it was gifted as a very special retirement present for The Passage's much-loved Father Padraig, who had offered his service to the charity for 36 years.

Bohdan is now doing extremely well after having being settled into his own accommodation by the private rented sector. Our Private Rented Solutions worker, Christiana helped him to move in towards the end of September, providing him with a starter pack of all the household essentials needed to make his new housing a home! She has been checking in with him, and just last week he informed her that he was in a good place, happy with his accommodation and currently applying for college to begin his English studies to help him on his path back into work.

Goodbye to the Passage

Padraig Regan CM

Like much of life at present, my departure from *The Passage* is subdued: the Covid crisis has seen to that. I started at *The Passage* as a volunteer in 1984 when Sister Eileen O'Mahony DC was in charge. I returned from Nigeria and Australia in 1989, again as a volunteer, with Sister Barbara Smith DC in charge.

I joined Scott Bernie and four others in December 1990, tasked to open and staff a nightshelter in Westminster Cathedral Hall, planned to open for just three months. The Nightshelter opened on 12th December and never closed. After the Cathedral hall, it continued in Osbert Street, then in Cardinal Hume Centre, then in Neville House (Page Street) and finally, in 2000, in its present home at Passage House; I was in China for the final transfer. Fr John Concanon CM replaced me; he remained at *The Passage*, after I returned, for six years more.

Sr Barbara had left and Sr Bridie Dowd DC had taken the full force of that fraught transition. In 2000, Sr Ellen Flynn DC took charge. Her arrival coincided with my return after two years in China. Sr Ellen decided to replace pastoral workers at *The Passage* with a Chaplaincy, at first with John Concanon and me, later with Sr Rosalie Hayes DC and me.

Mick Clarke followed Sr Ellen as *The Passage* CEO in 2011. He has always encouraged and supported the Chaplaincy. Laterally, Lorraine Richardson has been our sterling supervisor.

Over the years we had Frs Sean Johnson CM, Noel Travers CM and Canon Christopher Tuckwell from the Cathedral; also Sr Marie Casey, Revd Julie Khovacs, from St Peter's Eaton Square, and Anne-Marie McHarg all were volunteers with the Chaplaincy.

In 2013 Sr Bernie Geary DC joined the Chaplaincy Team and suffered my disorganised ways. Bernie replaced Rosalie Hayes. Now Fr Chinedu Eneuh CM takes my place. Welcome Chinedu!

In my thirty years I have worked with and for all five of our leaders – in the inappropriate language of the card-table, a Royal Straight Flush. I am grateful for the encouragement and friendship I received from each. I am grateful too for the many staff – Nightshelter and Day Centre – I worked with, and laterally the Rough Sleepers Team (earlier known as 'Door & Floor' or Hospitality Team) with joyful and grateful memories of Pam Morris, a dear friend whose untimely and unexpected death revealed the depth of our love for her. I am likewise grateful to the myriad volunteers who enhance our work by their generosity and

competent kindness, sharing with clients the wealth of their life experience. Finally, there is the Client group. These are the reason why we all are at *The Passage*.

The Chaplain has an enviable task; to be present and available to every client. Early on, as a volunteer, I worked in the canteen at the toaster providing toast and snatches of conversation for client breakfasts. I thought I was doing a decent enough job. But Sr Eileen had other ideas: "Some of these men", she pronounced – predominantly men in those days – "have had bad experiences with the church. Put on your clerical collar and get out and talk to them". I approached this new task with trepidation. What reaction, I wondered, would I get? I was surprised, joyfully, surprised by what happened. They welcomed the "padre"; we enjoyed bits of banter, but also, and increasingly, they told me, at first in groups, but more and more in private, about their lives. Sad stories of childhood broken by poverty and/or abuse; slings and arrows of misfortune or addiction, snakes & ladders of one step forward and two steps back. There also were strengths reflected on: sport achievement, skills, travel and, perhaps most frequent, their children; early days illustrated with rumpled photos extracted from a worn-out wallet; latterly, on mobile phones. Often disarmingly honest (tinged with humour) narratives of sadness and joy. On one occasion I had been away for a week on retreat. When I came back one client said to me "Father, we missed you". My heart sang! My heart has continued so to do.

I came to *The Passage* with a sense of personal failure as Director of our student community. Clients at *The Passage* gave me something that no therapy could offer: they gave me a sense of meaning in the afternoon of my life. As chaplain, I was a wounded healer, and that enabled me to remind wounded clients of their strengths (recalling therapy training, to encourage exploration of strength), of alternative visions and values – of the presence of a loving God in unexpected places, providing moments or places where they could reflect, experience and nurture the seeds that God has planted in each; talents, initiatives and inner resources that speak of God's graciousness:

*"For Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of mens' faces."*

GERALD MANLY HOPKINS

There are, I believe, mystics sleeping rough on the streets of London. I met them for thirty years in *The Passage*. One day, in the more homespun *Passage* of the 1990s, a client took a felt-tipped pen and scrawled

on the entrance wall: “God lives Here”. I believe that too. But I needed a client to tell me.

I thank God for my years at *The Passage*, for clients, for volunteers and for the staff who accepted me. Someone said that when you work somewhere for a long time, you end up sharing a bit of its identity.

I am deeply grateful.

Homily for the Final Vows of John Ashu

Kevin O'Shea

31 March 2021

Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate Church, Mill Hill

John, you will excuse me if my homily is very much focused on you but it is also addressed to all of us because of our Baptism and each one of us have our own commitments, each one of us have made our promises to God and each one of us renews our promises as we witness John making his vows as a member of the Congregation.

John as a young man growing up in your native village of Otu in the Cameroons, did you ever imagine or envisage that here, in this church on this evening, you would be sitting among strangers? Yours has been a winding path through life, an adventure, but thankfully you have achieved what you wished to do.

You were born into a very caring and loving family, and I greet your father and mother and your siblings this evening. Hopefully they will be with us next year when we will be putting you forward to be ordained as a priest. This little ceremony tonight is a welcoming into the Vincentian family as a full member. So it is right and proper that we thank all of you, members of John's family, for giving him to us. While at school John enjoyed the security and friendship of his school mates. Having obtained some good A Levels, and on the recommendation of his family, his senior brother arranged that John should travel to London to enrol at Middlesex University, where he subsequently obtained a BA and an MSc in International Business.

I admire the courage that brought you here, landing at Heathrow Airport with no one to meet you, and facing an unknown city. Having to find your own way to the University and having to find somewhere to live. To cover the cost of fees, rent and food etc. you had to work in three part-time jobs. So life must not have been easy. Having completed your studies at Middlesex University you opted to become a priest and so joined the Vincentians and began your studies in Allen Hall.

To an outsider that is your chronological life story. But we are not outsiders, we are a community of believers and we know that deep down there is a far more beautiful story – dare I call it a divine love story.

This story does not begin with your birth but began in eternity and will end in eternity. What the Bible says of Jeremiah is true of all of us “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you”. (Jer.1:5) It was God's design when and where

you should be born and that you should be born into a loving and caring family but more importantly a Christian family. Your Mum and Dad brought you to the church and had you baptised – that wonderful sacrament where we are welcomed as children of our loving God. That new life given to you at Baptism your parents nourished by bringing you to church and enrolling you in the catechetical programme. Two of your fond memories of those early years are, being brought to daily Mass by your mother and seeing the seminarians come to teach you the catechism.

Here again God was active in your life – giving you a great love for the Mass and sowing the seed of your future vocation, as you admired the Seminarians and thought of one day following in their footsteps. This desire continued through your school days but on family advice you opted to put it to one side and pursued another course of studies.

But God is patient and he allows the seed to mature. On arrival in London you found your lodgings not in London North West where the University was, but in London South East. Here too Divine Providence was playing its part. Being on your own and needing support you sought out the local church, Our Lady of Sorrows Peckham, where you attended daily Mass.

At that time, the parish was being administered by a Diocesan priest from Southwark Diocese, but shortly after that the late Fr Richard Diala and the Vincentians took over the care of the parish. Although busy with your studies and work you still found time to become an active member of the parish youth group. As you began to complete your university studies the thought of becoming a priest came to the fore and having sought the counsel of Fr Richard who introduced you to Fr Paul. In due course and with the support of your family you joined the Vincentian community. John I want you to be aware, and indeed I know you are, how active God was in your life, how he is still active and will be active as you journey with Him and He with you.

As you come to this all important moment of your life I want you to remember what Jesus said to his first disciples “You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have sent you out to bear fruit; fruit that will last.” (Jn 15:16) The seed of your calling and of your mission was first sown in your heart at Baptism when you became a child of God. Through the working of the Holy Spirit that filial bond between you and your Heavenly Father has deepened and matured through the years. Our relationship with God is one of love. It is God who first loved us. When making your vows this evening you are taking full ownership of your Baptismal promise, you are freely affirming your love of God. By doing so you are imitating Christ who voluntarily surrendered his life to His Heavenly Father.

Our vows are not mere rules and regulations rather they signify the total giving of ourselves to God. In union with Jesus, you are committing your entire life to the service of God and the poor. In doing so you must seek, and never lose sight of Jesus who gives himself to you as a friend and who will journey with you through life. Our vows are very much centred on Christ, in the words of the doxology of the Mass we live them through him, with him and in him. I wish to read some extracts from our constitutions which highlight for us how much our vows are made and lived in union with Christ

Wishing to follow the mission of Christ, we commit ourselves as members of the congregation in evangelising the poor for the whole of our lives.

Imitating Christ in his limitless love for all, we embrace, by vow, perfect chastity, in the form of celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven.

Christ himself, the lord of all, lived in poverty to such an extent that he had nowhere to lay his head; by their vow of poverty, members will show that they depend entirely on god, and thus their evangelisation of the poor will become more efficacious.

To participate in the mystery of the obedient Christ requires us all, as a community, to the will of the father. Mindful of the words of St Vincent, and in a spirit of co-responsibility, should strive to obey superiors as promptly, joyfully and as perseveringly as they can.

These vows which you are about to make are challenging, and nearly impossible at a human level but with the grace of God, the free gift of God all things are possible. Hence the importance of continuing your journey with Christ. This is not just knowledge; it is a daily encounter with the Risen Lord who journeys with us.

When I first read the readings for today's Mass I shied away from them and thought them a little unsuitable for our celebration. But far from being unsuitable, they are very relevant, realistic and meaningful for our lives as Christians. They are very much at the core of our vows as Vincentians. Jesus has invited us to take up our cross and follow him. The church has always identified the suffering servant of our first reading as Jesus and how he accepted his fate in obedience to his Father

For my part, I made no resistance, neither did I turn away.

I offered my back to those who struck me, my cheeks to those who tore at my beard;

I did not cover my face against insult and spittle”.

None of us would want such a life, people today would scorn and recoil even from the thought of it. When looked at from a purely human perspective, what Jesus endured was tragic and horrific. One of His closest companions betrayed Him. The religious leaders of the time betrayed Him. The civil authorities betrayed Him. And all of the disciples except John fled in fear as Jesus was led to his death. However, Jesus did not look at any of this through human eyes alone. He saw it all from the perspective of his Heavenly Father and clearly taught that all of these seemingly tragic events would end in His glory. Like the suffering servant Jesus trusted in God his Father "My vindicator is close at hand The Lord is coming to my help who will dare to condemn me". In our times of trial and apparent absence of God, let that be our prayer also.

We ask where did Judas go wrong? He too was called by Jesus but tragically somewhere along life's journey he changed his priorities no longer was his heart fixed on Jesus and what Jesus had to offer. He became engrossed in human things be it the love of money, power or status. When he saw the error of his ways Judas went back to the chief priests and said "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood" in an apparent attempt to stop the trial. Even then Judas could have repented if he had turned to Christ, Christ would have forgiven him. The mercy of God was there for the taking. But Judas did not turn to Christ. He simply ended his life in ultimate despair.

As we enter into the holiest week of the year, it is essential that each of us see the journey of Christ this week as our own calling in life. From a worldly perspective, the Cross does not make sense. But from the perspective of the Father in Heaven, the Cross is not only the source of the greatest glory of His Son Jesus, but it is also the path by which we share in that glory. Jesus has given us the Mass and the Sacrament of Reconciliation as the means by which He encounters us and we encounter him as we journey through life. Let us not neglect these powerful means.

John we thank you for your witness you given today, in committing yourself totally to God through the vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and stability. We welcome you as a full member of our Congregation and offer you the assurance of our friendship and support. We pray that you will continue to give that witness of God's love for the poor wherever you live and work. May you always hear the Lord say to you, "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and have sent you out to bear fruit; fruit that will last". (Jn 15: 14)

As an aide mémoire – there is a custom in our community of receiving a vows cross on the day we make our vows and keeping this cross by our bedside or leaving it rest on our pillow. May Christ always be

the focal point of your life. May He welcome you at the end with the words, “Well done good and faithful servant, you have been faithful in a few things, I will trust you with greater things: enter into the joy of your master”. (Mt 25:23)

TRIBUTES

Tribute to Fr Richard Diala CM

Sr Ellen Flynn DC, Visitatrix,
On behalf of the Daughters of Charity, Province of Rosalie Rendu
February 2021

Fr Richard entered the Congregation when Nigeria was still part of the Irish Province and served in Britain in more recent years; he was well known to many of the confreres of the Province. We are very grateful to the Daughters for permission to republish this tribute.

Introduction

Reverend Father Richard Diala CM was an inspiration, a driving force and a brother to those of us privileged to know him.

I was a Provincial Councillor when he entered the life of our Province. Sister Marie Raw DC was the Provincial and Father Fergus Kelly CM the Provincial Director.

I was privileged to accompany the discernment of a mission in Abbey Wood at the request of Father Richard after the initial conversation between him, Sister Marie and Father Fergus.

Sister Patricia Maxwell began in the area long before we had a house there. She and I had a number of meetings with Father Richard. He had a vision for the development of the Vincentian Family in the whole area of Thamesmead which was compelling. He networked successfully with the local church and with many others who could help him to achieve this vision. He was a man who got things done!

This tribute tells the story from the point of view of the Daughters of Charity. It starts with the beginnings of our association and finishes with a personal testimony from Sister Patricia Maxwell.

In the years which followed and as the picture unfolded Father Richard became a friend, a confidante and a spiritual brother.

When he moved to Peckham, we continued our collaboration and met frequently. I found him to be a man of God and a great Vincentian who shared much with me in leadership. I will always remember him fondly and with admiration.

I hope you will enjoy reading this short version of an influential and significant story which demonstrates clearly what can happen when members of the Vincentian Family come together in collaboration, shared mission and spirituality. Today the place is vibrant with a fully functioning community of CMs, DCs, SVP and AIC! Praise God! We are indebted to the diverse culture and spirit of the people of

Abbey Wood who have made a home for us there and brought their own unique shape to the Vincentian charism. May St Vincent and St Louise continue to inspire the work which Father Richard has left as part of his heritage.

Abbey Wood: the beginnings

So many houses had closed, so how could we possibly open another one? This was the question on many Daughters of Charity lips, and this was the answer:

May you walk with Christ beside you
 Saints and angels share your way.
 May the Holy Spirit guide you
 To the dawn of endless day.

This prayer was a stanza from the hymn used at Evening Prayer for the opening of the new house in Abbey Wood on 25th September 2013.

Later in the prayer the Sisters prayed together:
 Awaken your spirit to adventure;
 hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
 Soon you will be home in a new rhythm
 For your heart senses the place that awaits you.

So began the new Mission of Abbey Wood after months and months of discernment and preparation all because of the vision of one Nigerian priest, Fr Richard Diala, Congregation of the Mission.

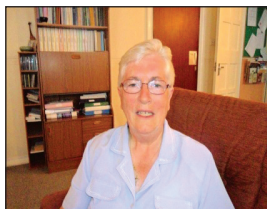
Following the request by Fr Richard for the Daughters of Charity to work in Abbey Wood and if possible to live there, Sr Patricia Maxwell was appointed to begin to explore the potential of a mission for the DC's. Being positively received by the people of the parish, Sr Margaret Barrett then carried out some very informal but thorough research in the area in collaboration with Fr Richard and Sr Patricia.

A number of ideas emerged from this, including:

- Collaboration with the Vincentian Family – the AIC having been already established
- Welfare Benefits work
- Parish work
- Family work in collaboration with the schools
- Making a future Sisters' house a place of prayer and welcome for local people especially parishioners of the parishes now led by the Vincentian Priests.



Sr Patricia Maxwell



Sr Rosalie Hayes



*Sr Johannah
O'Connor*

Fr Richard, Parish Priest of St Benet's, and his Assistant Fr Blaise were keen to have the Sisters working with them, as not only were Frs Richard and Blaise responsible for St Benet's, but also for St John Fisher, about two miles away in Thamesmead. Then at the time of the research they had also been asked to take responsibility for yet a third Parish, the Parish of St David. This church is just about a mile away from St Benet's. Both Fr Richard and Fr Blaise were members of the Nigerian Province of the Vincentians, and had already asked for another priest whom they hoped would be appointed soon. But regarding Sisters from Nigeria, this was not quite so simple, which was why Fr Richard had asked for Sisters from the then British Province.

As a result of all the research, there emerged compelling reasons why the Sisters could possibly be active in Abbey Wood – but where to live, as it proved extremely difficult to find a four bedroomed property without going outside the parish boundaries?

From the beginning Fr Richard made the parish house on St Bride's Avenue available and very generously refurbished it and, although it was clearly not big enough to fulfil all the Sisters would like to do, it was envisaged that two of the Sisters move in there until another house was found. The Sisters were extremely grateful for this opportunity and closed the house where they lived and moved into the parish house.

It was therefore an amazing coincidence (we prefer to think of it as the Providence of God) that the house next door became available for sale. The Sisters were very excited at the prospect of being able to join the two houses, therefore making it possible to fulfil their, and Fr. Richard's, dream of a new mission which would include the people of the area. They were happy to buy the house next door, but this was clearly dependent on their continued use of the current parish house. The running costs of the parish house were to be borne by the Sisters and no stipend was required for their work. Fr Richard was asked to consider this request and of course, the rest is history. (Compiled by Sr Bernadette Ryder DC, Archivist)

The first Community of Abbey Wood

A little later Fr Richard's dream and ours came true. Thanks to the generosity of the Sisters of the Nigerian Province we were blessed to have Sr Francesa Edet Oqua join our Abbey Wood community where she now remains as its current Sister Servant. And what a blessing she has been!

Testimony of Sister Patricia Maxwell DC

When Sr Ellen asked me to contribute to Fr Richard's eulogy I found it difficult to accept that Fr Richard is no longer with us. Then I remembered a poem by Patrick Kavanagh about his deceased mother: in which he envisions her not as someone dead but as a woman as she went about doing her daily chores.' That's how I want to remember Fr Richard not dead but full of energy and vitality as pastor of St Benet's.



Sr Franca

Working alongside Fr Richard was a never to be forgotten experience. He was a Visionary, a dreamer, always on the go... indefatigable. However, there was nothing nebulous about his dreams because he saw all his projects through to the bitter end and wasn't easily intimidated in his fights for the rights of the poor. He had a sharp mind and a brilliant brain and I admired how he could mix comfortably within any group of people. His serious side often camouflaged his joyous spirit. He loved his Priestly vocation and was proud to call himself Vincentian.

His funny side often emerged when least expected like the Sunday at Mass when he was expounding about the work of the Daughters of Charity all over the world. Then to my horror he said 'Sr. Pat how many Sisters are in your congregation now?' I hadn't a clue so the first number that came into my head was 25,000. After Mass he was laughing 'Sister, you did well to increase your number by 10,000.'

I see him sitting around the table with us after Mass on Thursday morning drinking coffee with evaporated milk and eating plantain which he had just fried and sharing our stories. Even when he disagreed with our plans he never made us look silly. I thought of Fr. Richard one day when I read 'people may forget what you did but they will never forget how you made them feel about themselves.' I've seen him sitting with people helping them with their worries and they left him 'with a spring in their step'.

I see him on Christmas Day spending time with the sick people in the hospice. Dressed in his long white soutane he went around with Sr Rosalie and I speaking words of comfort to the patients. I remember his simple delight with this Vincentian visit to the sick and the staff.

Fr Richard was an opportunist. One day he told me that he would

love to have a statue of St Vincent outside the Church. I contacted Sr Ellen who was then our counsellor and learned that there was a statue of St Vincent in Mill Hill. Sr Ellen informed Richard that it wasn't an ordinary statue and would be very difficult to move. Very quickly he had a van and four men who transported the statue to St Benet's. I call it a miraculous statue because the Vincentian family grew from having two priests and one Sister in the Mission to having 13 Nigerian Vincentian Priests in various dioceses in England and a multicultural community of the Daughters of Charity in Abbey Wood. Parishioners love this statue and like to touch it as they enter the Church.

Fr Richard had spent many years persuading the Council to establish a Community of the Daughters in Abbey Wood where the parish owned a house. However, the house was rented and occupied. It took two years and a lot of worry for him until eventually the place was vacated. Very quickly he furnished and decorated it. At this time Sr Margaret Barret and Sr Eileen Glancy had spent two years house hunting but were unable to find a suitable one.

One day Fr Richard suggested that we should occupy the parish house whilst awaiting a more suitable Community house. Providentially, the house next door was about to be placed on the market on the day we moved in. Like Fr Richard I'm an opportunist so I rang Sr Eileen who was in Wales. Sr Marie, Sr Ellen and Sr Eileen were sure that this was an answer to prayer. Eventually the house was purchased and combined with the parish house. Fr Richard's dream was fulfilled and the Community of the Daughters of Charity was established in Abbey Wood. This house has been Sr Rosalie Rendu's idea of a place where the poor can find a haven and lay down their burdens. Fr Richard always talks of the Sisters' house with justifiable pride.

The Vincentian Fathers were offered a parish in Peckham and Fr Richard was appointed Parish Priest as well as being Regional Superior. Fr Richard decided to move quietly from Abbey Wood because he didn't want a fuss. Parishioners were upset and they missed him very much.

Peckham soon became alive and Fr Richard always invited us to the various celebrations as he had always seized an opportunity to celebrate. Our Lady of Sorrows Church Peckham is worth a visit. It is a beautiful place with the statues of Vincent, Louise, and Catherine in prominent places in the Church. Needless to say the statues originated in Mill Hill.

Fr Richard will always be fondly remembered by people who had the privilege of knowing him. My special memories are of his empowerment of people, his joyous spirit, his generosity, his love of the Vincentian charism, his wisdom his prayerfulness and his real goodness. RIP Fr Richard.

Last week I read an article by Michael Harding, who is a journalist and was a contemporary of John O'Donoghue. He talks about 're-mem-bering' and writing is re-mem-bering. In writing I relive my memories.

24th February 2021

Conclusion

In conclusion Fr Paul Roche, our current Director, and all the Sisters join me in offering our sincere condolences and sympathy to Reverend Father Cyril Mbata and our Nigerian confreres, particularly those who live alongside us here in Great Britain and. Indeed, to Reverend Father Paschal Scallon and the confreres of the Irish Province who also mourn his loss. We unite with you all in our esteem of Father Richard. We miss him greatly. We praise God for having known him. We loved him in life. May he now intercede for us in heaven. May he rest in peace.

Tribute to Desmond McGinley

This obituary, by Des's sister, Ann Donohoe, and Paddy Walshe (the 'me' of this piece) was given at the funeral Mass for Desmond, in St Margaret's, Twickenham, 20th January 2020.

Paddy's contribution is in italics.

Desmond was born near the 'Hills of Donegal', in the County's market town of Letterkenny, on 3rd September, 1929. *He was born into a big family, well known and well regarded in political, cultural and medical circles, some of whom are still with us and present on-line [two in Letterkenny, and a brother in Africa.] Desmond's life and Paddy's weaved in and out of each other.*

Growing up, he was a quiet and studious boy. In 1942 he was sent to Castleknock College in Co.Dublin, *a Vincentian boarding school generally regarded as one of Ireland's best.* He was of an academic bent and usually came at or near the top of his class. He excelled in Mathematics; *of which, more anon.*

When his school days were over a place was reserved for him in Hatch St. Hall, a Hall of Residence for male students of University College Dublin. It was envisaged that he would study engineering. But after much careful thought – *and Desmond would remain a properly careful, far-seeing, thinker* – he decided that he wanted to become a priest. And so it was in September 1947 he entered the novitiate of the Vincentian Fathers in Temple Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin – *as Paddy also would 12 years later.*

He spent the next nine years there, cut off completely from the rest of the world – except for his time in University College. *'Cut off completely'? A sibling memory, perhaps, of Desmond's absence for all of 9 years from those special family occasions when the McGinleys would come together again at the family home? Unlike clerical students signed up for diocesan work who got generous home leave, we who entered religious orders could not ordinarily 'stay over' at home during our formation years. (The thought was that we'd left home and parents to follow Christ!) We could visit home – provided home was within reach! And, certainly by my time, we could be visited by family and friends – on a monthly basis, I think. All the same... Desmond himself as a later Spiritual Director of the Vincentian students won a wise moderation – limited stay-over time for students with their families and homes, wherever their homes were.*

There were two universities in Dublin – Trinity College and University College. But Catholics were forbidden to attend Trinity College. At that time in Ireland the seminaries were brimming over with young men in training for the priesthood. So all the seminarians attended University College and every morning they were to be seen in their droves as they made their way on bicycles, wearing their black clerical suits and black felt hats, from the suburbs to the University. They did not mix with the other students and tables were especially reserved for them in the canteen.

Some contextual elaboration. Right up to the early 1960s nearly all Catholic Secondary Schools in Dublin were not only owned by religious orders, male and female, but also mainly staffed by nuns, brothers and priests who had to be trained subject teachers. Hence the high visibility that Ann mentions of the younger, undergraduate versions of those religious teachers in University College, all in their distinctive dress and habits. Furthermore, most lay students were alumni of those schools and were practising Catholics. So when the many churches around us rang out their bells for the midday Angelus, the great majority of everyone working in the main library would get to their feet to mutter it. That seemed quite natural to me, until I saw how it stunned a visiting Italian Vincentian. This was 1961 and how quickly things would change!

In 1952, Desmond graduated with a First Class Honours degree in Chemistry. That had been a 4-year course and after 4 more years of pretty traditional theology, he was ordained to the priesthood by John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin in February 1956. *His first appointment was back to Castleknock College where he then spent 6 or 7 years teaching Mathematics and for a time he acted as Prefect of Studies. That's where I first met Desmond: as my teacher of maths, pure and applied, and General Science in my two final school years. A novice teacher, yes, but endlessly patient and kind and I still remember some of the chemistry he taught us.*

In 1964 he went to the Vincentian seminary in Blackrock where he was Spiritual Director and he continued in this capacity after the seminary moved to St Kevin's in Glenart, Co Wicklow. *In this role he initiated some overdue reforms like the one already mentioned, emboldened no doubt by the Second Vatican Council which was still in session when he began.*

In 1968 he went to St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, to teach not science but theology for the purpose of which he spent a sabbatical year 1969-70, at the University of Washington DC, doing an MA in Religious Education. *I was already at St Mary's to welcome him, which felt like a reversal of the natural order. We were confreres there for*

five or six years, though in different departments. He quickly became a go-to person for students in trouble or needing advice. I had left St Mary's when he was made a Vice-Principal, a senior role that played well to his combination of kindness and creative organisational skills.

In June 1983, Desmond retired from the Vincentians and left Strawberry Hill. He immediately took up the post of Principal at a training centre of Age Concern England in Birmingham. The following year, he moved back to London and became Chief Executive Officer of Age Concern in Kensington and Chelsea. He held this post until his retirement, due to ill-health, in 1995 – though, in a voluntary capacity, he acted as Treasurer of The Friends of Barnes Hospital for a decade or more.

In 1991, he married Jean Jones in this Church. The celebrant was the parish priest, Father Desmond Swan. His brother Joe and wife Lili were present and Fr Stan Brindley CM, as well as Jean's children and grandchildren. He and Jean were very active in this parish until quite recently. Jean acted as Parish Administrator and Desmond was a Minister of the Eucharist and of the Word. *But now we have Jean to consult and our own memories.*

Desmond was a parishioner from 1984 and for the next decade he also looked after both the Monday counting and banking of the Offertory collection and the writing of our communal Bidding Prayers – each of these onerous – and he continued to contribute to those tasks for much longer.

After recovery from serious illness in 1994, and now retired, Desmond remained a wise, humble and deeply prayerful presence at parish meetings, indeed a crucial calming presence and voice at times of parish crisis. Away from the parish, he loved his garden and was an excellent gardener. He was also, as we all could observe, a powerful support for Jean in her role of Parish Administrator as she was of him. A blessed marriage!

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam uasal. At God's right hand may his noble soul be. (That is at once a tribute to the person being mourned and a prayer for the person, for Desmond.)

Rev James Anthony (Jim) Duffy

I am grateful to Mons Martin Hayes, Vicar General for the diocese of Westminster, for permission to publish this obituary of Fr Jim, who was with the Vincentians until his incardination into Westminster diocese. I have also incorporated some information from Robert Whelan, who is one of the executors of Jim's will.

Jim's funeral was on 18 January 2021 at Our Lady Help of Christians, Rickmansworth with Bishop Paul McAleenan presiding. Given the restrictions imposed by COVID regulations, Eugene Curran represented the Vincentians. Jim's ashes were buried in his parents' grave, Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin.

'Working with communities to protect and serve', is the motto of An Garda Síochána, the Irish police. It was well known to James Duffy who was born in Dublin, Ireland on 21 June 1938. His father Charles was a senior and specialist police officer. He and his wife Mary Duffy had four children. Two older brothers and a sister predeceased him; one, Sean, died at the age of seven, when Jim was only a baby and, therefore, had no memory of him. To all intents and purposes, Jim was an only child. The family home was in police accommodation on Garda Terrace in the Phoenix Park, 1,750 acres of urban park to the west of the city centre in Dublin's northside. Jim lived there in the family home from 1938-60. He was educated by the Christian Brothers on North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7. He left school at the age of 18 and took employment as a Credit Controller with Parsons paint manufacturers. His sense of vocation to the priesthood led to acceptance by the Vincentians, the Congregation of the Mission, and he entered the novitiate in Blackrock at the age of 22. In the summer of 1963 he moved on to the Vincentian seminary at Glenart Castle, Arklow, in Co. Wicklow. As a seminarian he studied at University College Dublin. He brought a deep faith and a strong sense of vocation, and experience of outreach to others as a member of the Legion of Mary. He maintained an awareness of, and concern for, the poor and disadvantaged throughout his life and ministry.

Jim was ordained to the priesthood by Archbishop John Charles McQuaid at Clonliffe College on 20 May 1967. Then, at St Paul's College, Raheny – founded in 1950 by the Vincentians to help make secondary education more widely available – Jim had the dual role of bursar and teacher. In 1968, he was sent to Chicago to study Guidance and Counselling, and in 1970 was awarded MEd from Loyola University.

On his return to Ireland Fr Jim took up his appointment at St Paul's College as a careers advisor and guidance counsellor until 1974. He was one of the early members of the Institute of Vocational Guidance and Counselling, and he contributed regularly to 'The Counsellor' magazine. In 1975, he took some time out, for personal reasons, and worked as a salesman selling cloth, 'a disastrous mistake', he later acknowledged. Fr Jim was a popular member of the Vincentian community, being easy going and approachable. His educational background and his skills, his insight and sensitivity equipped him well for his work at St Paul's College.

In 1976, Fr Jim Duffy CM was appointed to London and joined the team of Vincentian priests at Damascus House, Mill Hill, engaged with retreats and courses for priests, religious and lay people and for school children on retreat days. Fr Jim was also involved with some parish missions. The death of his mother in January 1979, sixteen years after the death of his father, was hard for him. From 1979 until 1984, he was given permission for leave of absence. He needed time for personal vocational discernment. During this period of his life he helped some friends who had a small hotel in the west of England. He then took employment with the International Red Cross, working at their main office in central London and was promoted to Director of Operations. Going to Mass and saying his prayers remained important for him. After a retreat in Stroud followed by a holiday and the sale of his flat in Hammersmith, Fr Jim returned to priestly ministry, this time in a parish of the Diocese of Westminster. He was appointed Assistant Priest at Sacred Heart, Ruislip, where he served from 1984-87. He was then appointed Parish Priest at Our Lady Help of Christians, Rickmansworth. Fr Jim felt at home in the Diocese of Westminster and he applied for incardination as a priest of the Diocese. With the support of his Vincentian superiors he was incardinated on 10 May 1995. In 1999 it was put to Fr Jim that he might move from Rickmansworth to take up an appointment at the diocesan seminary in Chelsea, but in a letter to Cardinal Hume he made it clear that this would not suit him. In 2002 there was the suggestion that Fr Jim might be appointed to another parish. He was not keen to move, and wrote to the Vicar General of the time, 'I like this parish, and I am sure the people like me'. He described his priesthood as 'the type of priesthood that seeks to build up a loving and caring community supported by the sacramental life of the Church'. In 2006 he was given additional responsibility for the parish of St John Fisher, Chorleywood. He retired in 2013 at the age of 75, after 26 years at Rickmansworth, and went to live on Merry Hill Road in Bushey, a two storey house with a garden, provided by the Diocese, where he was very happy and content. He continued to provide supply ministry,

greatly appreciated by priests in Hertfordshire.

Fr Jim, a priest committed to the teachings of Vatican II, lived simply and did not amass possessions. He bought what he needed from charity shops, always mindful of the poor and disadvantaged. He was quiet and reserved, and described himself as somewhat of a loner. Yet he was able to reach out to people with much warmth, charm and humour when helpful. He had particular concern for those who were ill and those who were homebound. He made visiting the sick, in their homes or in hospital, a priority, giving of his compassion and time generously. His dealings with authority were not always easy and on occasion his communication could be brusque. In 1986 in a letter about the possibility of moving from Ruislip parish he wrote, 'Power and prestige do not interest me... I seek only to be taxed in the service of God's people.' The dignity of the Church's liturgy was important to Fr Jim, he was fastidious but not fussy and did not rush through Mass. He was often seen in church praying the Breviary, the Prayer of the Church, and this carried on into retirement. He died peacefully at Watford General Hospital on 28 December, having suffered a stroke requiring emergency treatment two weeks earlier. May this faithful priest, who served parish communities collaboratively, rest in peace.

Tribute to Michael Daly

Jay Shanahan

Many confreres will have known Michael who worked in All Hallows College from the age of 15 and was a huge part of the life of the College.

I drove from Waterford to Donegal to collect my two little girls from their little holiday. We undertook the 500 mile round trip in line with COVID Virus regulations. On my way up to Donegal I got word of Michael Daly's death. I phoned my family today to tell them Michael had died. My brother Ian, who had met him many times while I was in All Hallows remarked "...When you met Michael, you had never had to ask his name a second time – he left a wonderful impression on you..."

I phoned Pam his wife later and we talked a while on the phone. She told me he got time with all the family and he died with her at his side. If there was a happy note in this sad end it was that the complete family man got time with his loved ones – a joy deprived to so many in these dreadful and strangest of times.

On my journey I thought long about Michael and the joy he brought to my life since I first met him in 1984. I was appointed to All Hallows in 1987. In 2000, I got a MA scholarship to study broadcasting in Switzerland through Eurovision. My choice of thesis was a 30 minute TV documentary. It was called *A Light Undimmed* and was subsequently aired on RTE in 2001. *A Light Undimmed* portrayed the story of All Hallows told through the eyes of 5 different people. When I wanted someone who had lived in and through All Hallows, Michael was my choice. He was bemused when I asked him to do this. He could not for the life of him understand why I or anyone else would have found his life of such interest. In the interview, Michael traced his life from Co Westmeath – recalling his arrival in Dublin at age of fourteen. I still clearly remember him lean forward with arms folded and raise his eyebrows as he referred to seeing "real buses with two storeys...", before arriving at All Hallows and feeling swamped "...by the size of the place..." When I presented the documentary, one of the examiners, Nenad Puhovski, a Croatian television documentary maker remarked "What I liked most was that man Michael in the kitchen. He is terrific. He has this thing about him, this quality... *empatio*... I think you call it 'empathy'... he comes over to me as a really decent human being". In broken English Puhovski had summed up the Westmeath man perfectly – "a really decent human being". Michael's decency was born of the fact that his only agenda in life was the agenda of personal contentment

born of giving one's best to others.

Michael had a wonderful inner freedom. He valued people and appreciated all he had. Most of all he valued his pearls of great price – his beloved Pam and his children and grandchildren. You could hear the love in his voice when he spoke of them. He valued family life – whether that family was his own, the families of those he met, or the family that was All Hallows. Loyalty, good humour, kindness and the art of not taking yourself too seriously – these were the quadrants that formed his coat of arms.

In my days on Missions and Retreats we would return on Sunday. I loved to meet Michael on Monday mornings in the “Pantry” as it was called and he would love to hear stories of where we had been and the decent people, eccentric sacristans and half-cracked priests we met – and if they were totally cracked, even better. He would throw his head back in a full-bellied laugh and utter “yeah... yeah... yeah... God” then smile, shake his head in wonder – and wait for the next instalment. Another great memory I had of him was horse-racing. Cheltenham, Ascot, York, the Curragh – Michael was the man for all seasons. I remember walking into the kitchen one day to see Michael crouched forward three feet from the small TV, slapping his buttock repeatedly and waving a tea-towel in the air as he shouted at the TV. He had bet a 20p treble and was planning to collect. The pleasure of the financial gain was nothing for Michael compared to the joy of the sport. From horses to football, rugby or soccer, Michael lived life to the full.

Nothing to me better exemplified his great sense of humour than the morning tea-break in the pantry with the women who worked in the college. The women took pride in their role as “blue coats” – they could number eight when gathered and Michael was at ease with them all. I remember popping into the kitchen when he had returned from surgery for a varicose vein and the banter was in full tilt. As they had their breakfast, Michael put his foot up on the one free seat, rolled up his trouser leg and showed them his fresh scar. He got the reaction he sought from all but Mrs Collins, the matriarch of the group. She simply tipped the ash of her cigarette into the tray and said “arah Michael that's nothin'... try childbirth...” to which the head went back and out came a deep rich laugh – the laugh of a man at peace with himself and his world.

But there was another side to Michael that went unsung or unseen. His empathy for people enabled him to see what might pass others by. I remember Kevin Rafferty telling me how he met Michael coming up the stairs one day with a tray in his hands. “Fr Rafferty”, he said in a low voice, “there's a pastman over in the chapel. I met him a few minutes ago. He didn't seem too good... he might need a bit of

company” Kevin went to the chapel and met the pastman standing alone in the chapel in front of a station of the Cross with tears streaming down his face. That was Michael’s gift – and one that was largely unacknowledged – because that was the way Michael wanted it. He was happy to help if he could.

I last met Michael at Bob Whiteside’s Golden Jubilee last November. He asked for my family one by one before we got to talk about his. As with all great friendships, our time together was too short.

On my return from Donegal late last night only one vehicle overtook me and I only overtook three in my 250 miles. The emptiness I felt on the landscape was like the emptiness I felt at Michael’s passing. The world has a lost much of its colour. I thought of my journey through ten counties from Waterford to Donegal. In those counties – like the twenty-two others on this island, there will be people who will speak of their memories of Michael Daly that really decent human being. But far more striking is that people on five continents today will pray for and remember with affection, “...the man whose name you don’t have to ask for twice...” Thank God for the wonderful impression he left on us all...

May he rest in peace.

Tribute to Fr Michael Prior

The following tribute to Michael Prior was sent to his niece and forwarded to his sister, Nuala Mulcaire, in August of 2020.

At the suggestion of Fr Fergus Kelly, I am glad to publish it in this edition of Colloque.

My name is Michael O'Driscoll and I was one year behind your uncle, Michael Prior, in the North Monastery in Cork in the late '50s, early '60s.

I only knew Michael as a member of the hurling team which won both the Harty Cup and the All Ireland in 1960. There were members of my class, fifth year, who were skilled enough to be on that successful team whom I obviously knew well but Michael, whom I didn't know at all, always struck me as a most decent person who was an unsung hero of the hurling team.

My memory of him was of a very admirable young man with a shock of blond curls, who exuded lots of good qualities. Imagine my surprise when he stopped me in the yard one day and addressed me by name and we had a conversation. I cannot remember what we spoke about but that encounter has always stayed with me and left a lasting impression. I still cannot come up with a reason as to why he stopped me and how he knew my name but I felt so privileged that he spoke to me: at the time, being such a great hurler, he was one of my heroes. When I heard, during the Summer holidays of 1960, that he had gone off to the priesthood, this news only confirmed my already highly held opinion of Michael.

I only heard about Michael's untimely death when I saw some holy books on the desk of the accountant in RTÉ in Cork, for whom I worked at the time, about ten years ago and, on enquiry, discovered they were written by Michael. It was the accountant, Brian O'Dwyer, who told me of Michael's untimely demise. Brian was very interested in Michael's writings.

The reason I am writing to you is to tell you that recently my encounter with Michael in the North Mon yard 60 years ago has come back to me in a strangely very strong way and on numerous occasions. I have since started to pray to Michael and have been hugely impressed by his priestly Christian life and the causes he championed.

I feel privileged to have known him.

Fr Richard McCullen Remembered

Padraig Regan and Paddy Walsh

Padraig Regan is a still-active Vincentian priest.
Paddy Walsh thanks God for his many years as a Vincentian.

Introduction; Paddy and Padraig (P&P)

Despite good intentions, we had each failed to make Jim McCormack's fine compilation of reflections on Fr. Richard, published soon after his death. Eugene Curran's kind invitation to do a joint piece for *Colloque* came as a welcome second chance and drafting by phone, computer and some social-distanced co-writing in this Covid19 summer has been an interesting experience.

Our brief covers the whole 55-56-year span in which Fr Richard has been in our lives. That's from the early 1960s, with Vatican 2 in full flow, to his death on Christmas Eve 2015. We decided on a chronological framework, but one loose enough to accommodate Padraig having (naturally!) far more exposure to Richard than Paddy and our periods of exposure often differing in time and/or nature.

What we would most of all like is that our memories of this remarkable man will stir up and echo with the memories of our readers.

I – St Kevin's, Glenart: Our Student Experience of Richard (1961-66)

P & P: We'd heard glowing reports of him as spiritual director from students ahead of us, but met him only when we got there ourselves, Paddy a year later than Padraig. Given that this was a four-year long experience, that 'formation' was its set purpose anyway, and that Richard was now the superior, it had to be the most influential of our times with him. How easily we agreed when he died that we'd been extraordinarily lucky, blessed indeed, to have had him as teacher, innovator, leader and example at that time of our lives. So we find ourselves lingering on this period!

Padraig: Richard, the much-loved spiritual director, was appointed superior in July 1961. That was the year I started theology. An exceptional teacher of moral theology, canon law and plainchant, but more than that, Richard brought a deep spiritual atmosphere to the life of the house. And he would bring the two together. I recall, for example, his telling us that the quality of our chanted Office, which we sang on a note, reflected the "spiritual temperature" of the house.

Immediately, he restructured the academic regime. Each of us was required to write an essay for a monthly seminar on current aspects, in turn, of dogma, scripture and moral. Essays were handed to the relevant teacher for correction and then became the subject of discussion in seminar groups of five or six. Some complained about such new demands. After ordination most would express appreciation for the formative training we received.

‘Dickie’ (in our irreverent moments) could be firm, as one student who expressed doubts about the reality of Purgatory learnt, but he was kind and gentle.

I felt, from first arrival, that I was a valued member of the community. For me that was particularly important.

Paddy: We can spotlight the main drivers of his influence – in an ascending order, although each was priceless in its own way. His Open Teaching – especially of moral theology, I’d have said, though I loved your reference to plain chant. Indeed, this openness became characteristic of our (growing) faculty as a whole. After all, the Second Vatican Council (1962-’65) was happening, being publicised, being digested, all through those years. Next, he was a gifted Prefect of Studies (without the title) in the way he led both faculty and students. I seem to remember that when it came to block teaching(1), the logical further development of the essay-writing, we students were involved in its discussion and planning, but anyway we rapidly adjusted to it. I found myself thinking how much more conducive it was to sustained learning than the UCD system I’d just come from. Top of the list, his exemplification of the Vincentian priesthood we were preparing for – well, he would go on to be Superior General! He was so obviously holy, open, scarily empathetic, and devoted – two-in-one devoted: to God and to all around him, very much including us fortunate students.

Padraig: In your retirement speech at the Institute of Education to a hall-full of educators (which I attended) you had singled out for praise the ‘block teaching for best learning’.

Paddy: And that was after 30 years at the IOE. In fact, as a nearly lifelong ‘academic’, I’d more than once described that system for learning/teaching as the best I’d experienced for encouraging depth and productivity of learning.

Padraig: Moving on, there was always something almost mystical about the way Richard celebrated Mass and this impression was probably enhanced in our early Glenart days when there was only one priest

celebrant. Of course, some of us would have missed the main mass downstairs, as we disappeared upstairs at the end of morning prayer carrying a box with chalice and paten to serve individual masses in diminutive 'oratories'. Concelebration came later.

Meantime sermons were rare (and homilies unheard of) in our pre-Vatican liturgy. Our experience of Richard as a preacher then was from occasional Friday 'conferences', in which on his turn he was an exceptional speaker. Following Sacrosanctum Concilium (December 1963), however, we began to learn a renewed form of preaching, the homily, and towards the end of our studies Richard took over the main teaching of Homiletics. He was as accomplished a teacher as he was a preacher. His perceptive comments and criticisms of our efforts at preaching provided us with ideals and practice; also, with an allergy to clichés: 'Holy Mother church...' 'Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ...'; and out-of-date tropes like 'full steam ahead'; all out! He would take us to local churches to practise projecting our voices using pulpit and microphone. Once, he brought me to the Arklow parish church and contrived to have me give an impromptu fervorino while a significant number was gathering for evening devotions. It all added up to an excellent training in preaching.

Paddy: In my final year (and his), Dick brought to Glenart the Commandant responsible for the Irish army's dramatic presentations. Over two days or so, and the faculty as attentive as ourselves, he taught us – collectively, sometimes individually and with some memorable humour, how to calm our nerves, project our voices, hold people's attention, stay audible to the end of sentences, avoid hoarseness, and underlying all, how to breathe properly. And he'd send us out into the grounds to practise what we were learning in the hall.

II – 1966-1974 Richard at Maynooth

P & P: Dick's move to Maynooth as Spiritual Director took him mostly out of both our ways. Fr Cahalan, a wonderful Provincial, now loomed larger in our lives, moving us around to our various appointments, in which our formation continued by association with the likes of Kevin Cronin in Strawberry Hill and Brendan Steen in St Paul's, among so many lovely confreres. However, we both found the odd opportunity, or necessity, to visit Richard in Maynooth.

III – Richard as Provincial 1974-1980

P & P: We were each multiply engaged with Dick in this period, but in quite different ways and places. As close friends, however, we would

catch up regularly – when, for sure, he would sooner or later figure in our conversation. (Paddy adds here that Padraig has been part of his family ever since there was a family.)

Padraig: I worked closely with Dick while he was Provincial, first in Nigeria and later in my capacity as student director.

Nigeria: Almost immediately (1975), he made a dramatic ‘Visitation’, arriving into an unclear and evolving situation.

The Biafran Civil War (1967-70) had disrupted our earlier mission (begun 1960) and we’d had to abandon our sole community house in Ikot Ekpene diocese. Towards the end of the war, Roderic Crowley had come to Port Harcourt diocese.⁽²⁾ Soon, a trickle of confreres new to Nigeria arrived, some to Makurdi diocese but three to join Roderic in what became a 6 year community engagement with Port Harcourt diocese. During the war, it had suffered the enforced departure of Bishop Okoye and all but one local priest.

Some young Nigerian men had already joined us and were continuing their formation in Dublin.

And, after his years as Provincial, James Cahalan had just come as Spiritual Director in the Major Seminary (Bigard Memorial) in Enugu (where he would remain, loved and respected by all, until his death in 1991).

However, by 1975 it had become urgent that our Vincentian mission in Nigeria, now in a post-war and post-Vatican environment, should be set on a sounder, more Vincentian, footing. Our hope was to find a focus on formation of clergy, including our own students, and evangelization through parish missions and catechetics. Dick’s grasp of the situation and his clarity of vision was comprehensive. Many of us felt he enabled us to set our faces towards our future.

Paddy: What decisions did he take?

Padraig: Three main decisions, as I remember it. We would return to our foundation house in Ikot Ekpene diocese, now beside the new Philosophy campus of Bigard Seminary. We would open a house for our Seminaire near the Catechetical Centre in Ogobia, diocese of Makurdi. Dick warned Bishop Edmund Fitzgibbon, Administrator of Port Harcourt diocese, that we would be leaving just one confrere there – me, as it happened – pending our final departure from the diocese one year later.

Thus was re-set the ground-plan for our future Nigerian Mission.

Student Director: After a year in Louvain and another in Simms (as chaplain) Richard appointed me student director to DePaul House in 1978.

He had been closely involved in the earlier changes in the formation of our Vincentian students: from Glenart to Blackrock (from where they attended successively the theology faculties of Clonliffe and All Hallows); then from Blackrock to the new student house in Celbridge in 1977. When appointing me the following year, he told me he considered the proper setting up of this student house to be his main priority as Provincial. He certainly backed this up by the frequency of his visits to celebrate Mass and preach. Many of those present will surely remember the homily ('little bits of the resurrection in our lives'), preached on Easter Sunday 1979. Of course, he didn't know he would become Superior General two years later.

Provincial Council: A small final insight. I had become one of three new Provincial consultants in 1979. The Council had been accustomed to sitting on armchairs for meetings. Noticing one member inclined to nod off, Dick decreed that the new Council would sit upright around a table. Shades of smartening Glenart's academic regime?

Paddy: Richard and James Cahalan were the go-to men when my own Vincentian and priestly vocation was heading for the rocks some eight years after leaving Glenart. While still Provincial, Fr Cahalan remained marvellously sympathetic and discreetly helpful. My burden fell more heavily on Richard when he became Provincial. Over two decision-making years he was the soul of simplicity, understanding, patience, openness, mercy (not unhelpful indulgence: 'you have injured the mystical body of Christ, Paddy'), 'wisdom', in a word. And all that came together in the decisive question he gave me to ponder, in essence: given everything and all the circumstances for which I was already responsible, in which way of life would I love more?(3)

IV – Richard as Superior General (1980-92)

Padraig: Richard was elected Superior General at the General Assembly in Rome in 1980. We were proud to have one of our own the successor of St Vincent.

I recall telephoning the General house in Rome two weeks after the end of that Assembly. Richard himself answered the call. When he heard me he said, tearfully, 'Oh, Padraig, I am so glad to hear your voice...' I realised only then the brutal suddenness that had wrenched this sensitive, loving man leaving him 'thrown among strangers' and isolated from country, province and family. Apart from studying canon

law in Rome after ordination, Richard had never lived or worked outside Ireland.

Weeks after his appointment he returned to Dublin to hand over the office of Provincial to his successor, Frank Mullen. We were chuffed, as we gathered for Richard's last provincial council, to have as chairman he who now represented St Vincent de Paul. Apart from a first flourish of congratulations, Richard made it business as usual.

In 1988, I called on Richard in Rome, en route from Nigeria to Australia to start a sabbatical year. I was downcast following Pauline-like struggles with the 'beasts of Ephesus' as student director. I had entered a cloud of unknowing regarding my future. Richard listened attentively to my story. He did not offer me a ready prescription. I continued on my way.

In April 1990, he wrote in a letter to me for my Silver Jubilee:

'The 25 years have been very fruitful ones – even if they brought with them sufferings that perhaps are only best known to yourself...'

Paddy: A memory of those 12 years is finding myself by chance in Rome, by now a reasonably seasoned layman, and ringing Dick on the off-chance. As ever, he had all the time in the world. We hung-out on the phone for, I think, about an hour, catching up, exchanging snapshots of our current lives, whatever... I remember clearly now only how happy the call made me.

Such an exceptional capacity for 'having time' must rub off on its serial beneficiaries. I developed a reputation for it, especially among my students (though in my case it came with a flip side 'keeping people waiting').

P & P: But then there is also the 300-strong collection of 'homilies, talks and letters' from Richard's twelve years as Superior General in *Deep Down Things* (2005) – and what a title that is and how very well the contents live up to it. Our own growing experience of this work is of a standing invitation to drop in and explore – for inspiration in a particular project, to get a flagging prayer-life off the floor or a faltering commitment to the Eucharist, to enjoy again how truly well-wrought they are, or simply to remember and meet the man, Richard, himself (Ss Vincent and Louise probably hovering in the background). Or, often enough, a little of all these things at once.

V – Richard in Retirement (1992-'94, Drumcondra; 1994-2015 St Paul's)

Padraig: I remember calling on Dick in St Paul's, about 2014. He gave that sense of welcome and of having time to talk and to remember; which we did. That was our last meeting.

I have two further letters from Richard, the first relating to my Golden Jubilee in April 2015.

May the Spirit of God renew the grace of your Ordination day 50 years on, on the coming Good Friday... Apart from the altar of Sacrifice you kept close to the person of Christ through your devotion and dedication of yourself to the persons of the poor. "You have the smell of the sheep about you" Padraig, and that is incense in the sight of the Lord.

The second was a letter of condolence. My sister, Maria, died in June 2015 (six months before Richard). He had wished, he said, to attend her funeral, but had to attend a hospital appointment. In expressing his sympathy at the loss of my dear sister he promised '*to raise her up to God on the paten at Mass*'. He observed, too, that as we age, and our siblings and close friends die, loneliness slowly invades our lives. These, along with the earlier one, are three precious letters.

Paddy: I saw quite a lot of Richard in this period. Annually, three or four trips to Dublin normally included a visit to St Pauls to spend time with Jim McCormack and Joe McCann, but also with other confreres, such as Brendan Steen (with whom I'd had a long connection). And Richard, of course, once he'd landed there. My wife, Pat, came with me the first time – I recall his encouragement of her blossoming career in teaching medical ethics. Generally, however, I went there by myself and – courtesy of the community's phenomenal hospitality – was privileged to be a bit-part of Richard's later years: mid-morning Masses, community meals, occasional walks in the grounds, and many meetings with him in his room.

Not being occasions for 'minutes', my memory of those meetings is hazy: Richard's hospitable kindness apart, a tendency for us to gravitate, via health and family enquiries, through current affairs in church and state, to matters theological bordering spiritual, all ending in a prayer or two. There is one bit of visible evidence: my copy of *Deep Down Things*, a gift from the author during a summer 2014 visit, and an inscription referring us both to 'the ocean of God's love and knowing'. Also, I do recall an animated discussion about the point of 'purgatory' in a late meeting, Richard's adamant '*cannot be punitive*' evoking my (daring?) '*intrinsic to getting used to God*'.

Looking back now at those St Paul's meetings – in number they had to be well into double figures – I realise that I, his once student and counsellor, had by then become also one of his multitude of friends – a very pleasing thought (also rightly entertained by Padraig, I know).

Hospital Visit

In late 2015 I flew a day trip to Dublin to attend Brendan Steen's funeral in Phibsboro and visit Richard in the Bon Secours hospital. One visit would become one and a half when he spotted me returning an hour later for my forgotten mobile phone and waved me in for more. Again 'no minutes', but: (a) typically welcoming (x2), (b) atypically, he did most of the talking, (c) mostly about what a serial sinner he'd been – his sins far outnumbering the miniature pimples decorating the back of the crucifix he held nearly all the time and to which his gaze kept returning, so (d) conversation (if a bit one-sided) as prayer, (e) an outpouring of humility not soon to be forgotten, and (f) for all its moving authenticity, a hunch that some part of teacher and director, Richard, was aware how much I needed a lesson in humility.

Just a few days ago, I chanced on the final item in *Deep Down Things*, viz. the July 1992 interview of Richard at the end of his Twelve Year Mandate – and the following sentence within it: '*I feel that when I appear before God in judgment, my hands may look full of grain, but on closer inspection there will be found much chaff.*' So, consistency in humility from 2015 back to 1992 and, for sure, back much further.

Hearing of his Death

Fifty-plus years after Glenart, I was working on a lay-homily for the under 10s at our local Christmas Eve Mass, for which being a seven-times grandfather was about my only qualification, when an email informed me that Fr Richard had died a few hours earlier. I fell on my knees at the computer to pray for him – but, some minutes later had to smile when I caught myself asking his help with the tricky assignment. It had come so naturally to make that switch!

That lay-homily, however, didn't go so well! But something else did.

VI – Westminster Cathedral

P&P: A Phone-call

Having seen Richard in hospital some weeks earlier, Paddy decides not to go back to Phibsboro for the funeral. Instead he would take in the coinciding lunchtime Mass in Westminster Cathedral. On the train it occurs to him to ring Padraig at the Passage (which is a few hundred metres from the Cathedral).

'Can you get away to join me for Mass at Westminster?

'Why?'

'It coincides with the Dublin funeral.'

'Whose funeral?'

Incredulously: *'Have you not heard...?'*

No, Pdraig had not heard – the Christmas weekend is busy for parishes. But we attended the Mass together. Where even just two are gathered together...

Paddy: Something happened during the Mass – or seemed to.

My thoughts and prayers were rolling around Richard's life and death, what I and others owed him, that killer criterial question,⁽⁴⁾ contrition, thanksgiving for Pat and family – my marvellous, totally undeserved 'second-chance' – all that kind of thing. As you do at funerals, I was probably addressing Richard as well as praying for him.

Then – out of the blue and to my stupefaction – I seemed to experience him admonishing me to be sure to look after my second vocation. It was less than 'hearing his voice', but a lot more than just thinking that's what he would say.

It fair shook me up at the time – but in a wonderful way! And, of course, it remains with me: a boost to my faith, as well as an admonition to keep heeding.

VII – Final Remarks

Pdraig: Richard was the confrere who made the greatest impression on my life, as teacher, as leader, but most of all, as a Christian Vincentian priest.

Paddy: I owe Richard so very much.

PADDY WALSH

Family: I was fifth of seven children – on the Donegal coast, to which I regularly return. My wife, Pat, English of Irish parents, works in medical ethics and has a particular interest in autism. We have two children and seven grandchildren.

Education etc: from a one-teacher national school to Castleknock and Vincentians, thence to St Joseph's Blackrock – seminaire and philosophy (an enduring love) in UCD – and on to Glenart and ordination.

Post-Glenart (or Post Ordination?)

Appointments:

1966-67: St Paul's school, happily learning to teach.

1967-74: St Mary's, Strawberry Hill, teaching (philosophy mainly), supervising teaching practice, further part-time study, much pastoral work.

Critical years:

1974-77: Return/adjustment to the lay state facilitated by 1-2 years in Damascus House with Brian Doyle and Eamon Cowen; part-time school teaching; and further study and part-time employment, soon becoming full-time, in the London Institute of Education [IOE]. As also, by marriage to Pat and parenting of Conal – followed later by Aoife.

IOE etc:

1978-2006: inter-disciplinary Curriculum Studies Department, teaching, supervising, examining, and managing multi-national classes up to doctoral level, much of the time alongside Institute-wide roles, and all of the time struggling to find time for writing and research. From c.1990 onwards, all such activities were likely to involve regular trips abroad, for me to some 19 countries (repetitively in many cases), mainly in Europe. My enjoyment of these never palled. (Covid19 and Climate Change are already putting such work on-line; the future?)

Gradual Retirement

2006-2020: Part-time work in diminishing amounts at/for the IOE (now UCLIOE); busy governorships at catholic secondary schools, one inner-city and one leafy suburb; (very slow) writing about the theory and practice of catholic/christian education; a life with Pat, our children and grandchildren.

DEO GRATIAS FOR IT ALL

Notes

1. Concentrated teaching on one (major) discipline at a time – over, say, 1-2 weeks. It could be described as a very strong form of modularity, I suppose.
2. in January 1970. I got this from his own account in *A Surprising Journey*.
3. By the time the dust had settled, however, I would need and I did receive help, advice, and forgiveness from a double-decker busload of good people – and, still, from Richard; my mother had a letter from him, probably when my Dad died. I recall her reading just some of it to me later, with a comment to the effect that she had loved it.
4. See end of section III above.

OBITUARY

Father Aidan McGing CM

When first asked to write an obituary note on Aidan I declined as I felt I could not do justice to someone whom I held in such high regard and who was my mentor and director throughout my years of seminary formation. Furthermore, over the years there were long periods when our paths did not cross.

Personally, I always regarded Westport as Aidan's home place therefore I was surprised to find that he was in fact born in Leeds, and was baptised at St Paulinus' Church, Dewsbury. He was the eldest and only son in a family of five. Some years later the family moved to Bath Road Hounslow where his father practiced as a medical doctor. Among his registered patients were a community of French Vincentians (Isleworth). These made a big impression on his father because of their very impoverished circumstances and missionary spirit. Perhaps it was here that the seeds of Aidan's vocation were sown, as he often expressed to his family, his desire was to become a missionary priest in China.

Aidan first attended St Anne's primary school, Hounslow before moving to Gunnersbury Grammar school which was run by the Diocese of Westminster. While there Aidan continued to show an interest in becoming a priest, as he and a number of fellow students regularly attended vocation seminars/retreats at the cathedral.

The family left London and returned to Westport in 1938 and Aidan went to the Gaeltacht College in Ring Co. Waterford and subsequently attended St Jarlath's, Tuam and St Vincent's, Castleknock. He entered St Joseph's in September 1943.

Kind and sensitive by nature, Aidan was greatly loved and appreciated by those of us who were fortunate enough to be his students, especially during our Glenart days. At times he must have found our behaviour somewhat immature and trying. When I once suggested this to him he charitably attributed it to the confined seminary regime of our day, which tended to dampen all initiative and creativity. Fortunately for us this was something Aidan sought to address when he was appointed to Glenart.

During his years at St Joseph's, he chiefly taught Philosophy, a subject he found rather tiresome. Much to our delight he frequently meandered into discussing other topics during class time; a recent article or a book he had just read were often introduced as welcome digressions. Always prefacing it with, "yes gentlemen I know, I know we must get down to work but..."

His appointment to Glenart was primarily as spiritual director but he was also called upon to do some teaching. Both he and Richard McCullen set about reviewing and renewing the curriculum. They sought ways in which they could engage the students in a more active participation. Each week we were asked to prepare a paper on one of the core subjects. This was followed by a seminar where the topic was discussed at some length. As students we did not welcome these innovations but in later life we greatly appreciated their worth. A steady stream of external speakers were invited to visit and address us on various topics, such as their profession, special interest or the current issues of the day. It was at this time we also began to play Gaelic, rugby or soccer against some local teams.

Although qualified as a Doctor of Divinity (*cum laude*) from the Angelicum in Rome, Aidan never taught Dogma. Instead, he taught New Testament (the Pauline Epistles) for two years, Liturgy and Homiletics, subjects he never formally studied. A sure tribute to his broad and versatile intelligence. His passionate approach to all three subjects were not only engaging but resulted in his students becoming enthusiastic and appreciative of his wider curriculum.

Aidan was gifted with a bright, sharp and resourceful intellect – always wanting to share his latest insight. Without any prompting he would seamlessly divert into other fields of interest during class or a conference. Something which we thoroughly welcomed and enjoyed.

‘Modern church architecture’ was one such topic. He spoke with great enthusiasm of some of the churches he had visited in Germany during his summer break. For him, the Germans were the trail setters in twentieth century church architecture and in order to be better informed he set about studying German, and subsequently had two short sabbatical breaks studying Church Architecture and Liturgy in Trier.

After twelve active years in the Rock and Glenart, Aidan felt in need of a break and so opted to join his cousin, a priest, in Birmingham for a year. He saw this as an opportune time to gain some pastoral experience.

On his return to Ireland he was appointed to St Patrick’s College, Drumcondra where he remained for the next fourteen years. Initially, he found it difficult to adjust to ‘team-lecturing’. His natural propensity to meander into related topics led him into trouble as many times he wandered into the material prepared by his colleagues. They, on discovering that Aidan had already covered sections of their course work were none too pleased. They quickly made him aware of their annoyance and he readily promised that he would in future not allow himself to be side-tracked by his students’ suggestions.

In 1969 he was made head of the newly formed religion department. During his term of office, he and some of his colleagues prepared an

in-house textbook *An introduction to Theology*. Thus they endeavoured to provide material which would give the young teachers a better understanding of their faith and so help them to be better equipped to share their faith with the children.

Aidan's next appointments were; three years as Spiritual Director at St Patrick's College, Maynooth; followed by four years as assistant priest at Sacred Heart, Mill Hill; before being appointed Parish Priest in 1990. This was a significant appointment for both him and the parishioners, as it was during his term that the new church was built.

For decades, the old church, built in 1923, was a source of endless concern, as its foundations continued to subside due to an underground stream. Countless efforts at structural repair work proved futile. Now the gable end had broken away from the main building. The proposed solution was to surround the entire edifice with a steel girder. There was no guarantee that this would work. The alternative was to demolish the church and build a new one. This was a very clear cut choice that Aidan had to present to the parishioners during his first year as Parish Priest. They overwhelmingly voted in favour of demolishing the old church and replacing it with a new one.

Acknowledging that he himself lacked the relevant skill to lead such a project Aidan set about forming a handpicked team of those in the parish who did have such expertise. These became members of the Executive Committee and under their leadership a number of sub-committees were formed – the Building committee, the PR, Finance and Fundraising, Group, Architecture and Liturgy and others.

On being informed of the Parish's intention to build a new church, the Diocese began to take over, much to the annoyance of the Executive Committee who felt their role was being usurped even before they had begun. The matter was ultimately resolved at a meeting between the Diocesan Finance Committee, the Vincentians and the Executive Committee, where it was agreed that the Parish would remain under the management of the Vincentians who in turn would act as guarantors for the necessary bank loan etc. Various Banks were approached but as the AIB Bank offered the best terms, it was chosen.

'A Church for 2000' was the catchphrase or mantra used by the PR committee. It not only referred to the upcoming millennium but more significantly as a church to serve the estimated 2000 parishioners of Mill Hill.

Three sets of architectural plans were prepared and displayed in the Parish hall and all parishioners were invited to peruse and offer suggestions. also Members of the other Mill Hill churches were invited. Later it was opened to the public. One positive outcome was that members of the Mill Hill Preservation Society visited the exhibition and approved

of the chosen plan. Hence they were happy to support the project from the outset.

The estimated cost was in the region of £650,000, and it was proposed that each family where possible covenant £1,000. over a period of time. Thanks to the generosity of the people the entire debt, just short of a million pounds (including additional costs) was cleared by December 1999. It was truly 'A Church for 2000'.

These years were very intensive ones for Aidan, attending to his parish duties and keeping a watchful eye on the building project which was not without its' problems and tensions. He attended all committee meetings, both executive and sub committees, quietly helping to coordinate their work and proposals. To keep the parishioners informed he regularly published a progress report bulletin. Great credit is due to him for so successfully bringing everything together.

The new church, which is widely acknowledged as one of the most beautiful ones built in the UK in the second half of the twentieth century, stands as a fitting monument to his time as parish priest. His interest in church architecture and liturgy stood him in good stead as he carefully incorporated what was of beauty in the old church, the altar, the statue of the Risen Christ and the Stations of the Cross with some new artefacts of his own choice. The statues of the saints, carved in wood, and the icon of St Vincent sharing a meal with the poor give the church a particularly Vincentian flavour.

Shortly before the consecration of the church by Cardinal Hume in September '96, Aidan was of the opinion that his task was done, and on the recommendation of the Provincial, opted to take a sabbatical break. On hearing the news of his imminent departure, many parishioners expressed their disappointment that he was unable to enjoy the fruits of his labour but gratefully acknowledged his immense contribution to their parish and his need of a rest.

Always a man of wisdom, his farewell message was genuine and sincere *"More important than any church are the people who come to it and pray there, and most important of all is their closeness to God and to each other. May these buildings truly bring you closer to God and to each other. The years in Mill Hill have been the happiest of my whole life"*.

Thankfully, Aidan found his subsequent appointments less stressful and considered his time at St Joseph's to be one of the more restful periods of his life. There he found ample time to pursue his interest in reading and writing. Aidan did publish a number of articles in the Furrow and other such publications but never realised his lifelong dream of writing a book, although he had done extensive preliminary work on two possible books.

As his term of office as Superior drew to an end, I spoke to him in my capacity as Provincial, about his possible retirement. Later that month, while both of us were attending a confrere's funeral in Cork, he confided that he would like to be appointed as 'support priest' at Sunday's Well. I was more than pleased with his offer as the Sunday's Well community had lost three confreres within a few short years.

Aidan quietly and gently immersed himself in the lives of the parishioners at Sunday's Well, showing great interest in their welfare and always being available for a chat and a supportive word. Some two years later, when visiting the parish, one lady took me aside and said; "Thank you Father, for sending Fr Aidan to us, he is a very holy man, a saint, and you know something, Father, we see him 'as one of our own'. High praise indeed but I suspect Aidan would have opted for sainthood rather than be enrolled as an honorary 'Corkonian'.

As his health began to deteriorate Aidan was appointed to St Peter's, Phibsboro and shortly after his arrival he transferred to the Nazareth House Nursing Home, where he was greatly loved by his fellow residents, staff and sisters. He very much enjoyed the frequent visits from family members. Their challenge was keeping him supplied with reading material, particularly in his new found interest in Irish and Russian history. Incidentally, his father and mother spent their final days at the same nursing home. After a long illness he died peacefully at the age of 94.

May the Lord he served so wholeheartedly bring him to the fullness of life He has prepared for him

Mark Noonan CM

AIDAN MCGING CM

Born: 31 May 1925 (Leeds)
 Entered CM: 7 September 1943
 Vows: 8 September 1945
 Ordination: 19 May 1951 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS

1951-53: Castleknock
 1953-55: Rome (Angelicum)
 1955-60: St Joseph's
 1960-68: Glenart (Sabbatical 1967-68)
 1968-75: St Patrick's, Drumcondra
 1975-77: All Hallows (Continues teaching in St Pat's)
 1977-82: St Patrick's, Drumcondra
 1982-85: De Paul House, Celbridge
 (Spiritual Director in Maynooth)
 1985-86: 4 Cabra Road (Sabbatical)
 1986-96: Sacred Heart Parish, Mill Hill
 (Superior and PP 1990)
 1986-97: Isleworth (Sabbatical)
 1997-99: St Stephen's Parish, Warrington
 1999-2005: St Joseph's, Stillorgan Park (Superior)
 2005-13: St Vincent's Parish, Sunday's Well
 2013-20: St Peter's, Phibsborough

 Died: 21 March 2020
 Buried: Deansgrange