

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

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Editorial

The reason for the delay in the production of this edition of Colloque can be understood through the photographs in my article; the years 2022-2025 were taken up by the translation of the Community from Sacred Heart, Mill Hill, the destruction of the old dwelling and the building of the new, along with some significant work undertaken in the Church. My own translation, to the office of Director of the Daughters of Charity of the Province of Rosalie Rendu, now affords me some time to return to this journal.

Apart from the records of our Provincial Assembly of 2024 and the homily marking the 400th anniversary of the Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission, the bulk of the other articles are by two main contributors and I am hugely grateful to Fr Pat Collins and our Provincial Archivist, Miriam van der Molen, for them. Miriam also discovered an article which the late Fr Tom Davitt had prepared, from Fr Patrick Maloney's diary. I am also grateful to Sr Vivienne Keely, of the Holy Faith Sisters, who wrote her reflections on her experience of the first course, given at St Lazare in Paris, for Vincentian Guides; a really innovative idea from the General Curia and CIF.

You will note that there are no obituaries in this edition; these will follow in the next edition. We remember with affection those who have died in the past years; Frs Bernard Meade, Jim McCormack, Paddy Hughes, Michael Dunne, Rod Crowley and Stan Brindley, and James (Seamus) O'Flynn, who served with the Irish Province for many years.

Opening Address: Provincial Assembly 2024

24 June 2024, Feast of the Birth of St John the Baptist

Paschal Scallan CM, Visitor

Opening

Gentlemen and dear Confrères, you are most welcome to this Provincial Assembly. I particularly welcome those confrères who are on mission with us from the Provinces of Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Philippines. Your presence among us has enriched us and, please God, you have been blessed among us as well.

This is our first complete in-person gathering since we all last met together in Drumalis for the Provincial Assembly of 2019. Our Provincial Assembly in 2021 met in very constrained circumstances because of Covid, so this is an important moment for us and one, I hope, we can profit from and appreciate, when we leave on Friday that we have been blessed here, that we are thankful and resolved by grace to go on, to live and work as priests of the mission in all the ways we always have for the sake of those to whom the Lord sends us, especially our brothers and sisters who are burdened or broken by poverty.

The Province

Today our Province has just passed its 175th anniversary of affiliation with the Congregation of the Mission. We know we have been Vincentian longer than that, though, longer indeed than since 1832 when that founding group left Maynooth with the express purpose of being part of a new evangelization for that time, going back actually to St Vincent's time and the mission to Ireland and the Highlands and Islands of Scotland in the 1640s and 50s.

With even a slight knowledge of the history, the parallels between our own era and the 1830s are striking. So are the contrasts, of course, but in terms of the need for basic catechesis or even evangelization, no-one doubts that the fabric of faith in Britain and Ireland has worn very thin within society at large even though there are examples of heroic witness all around us.

This means, I believe, our mission is as relevant as ever. As you know, in the Great Commission at the end of St Matthew's Gospel, Jesus tells the disciples to, 'go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them

in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit', and to remember, Jesus says, 'I am with you always, to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28:16–20)

It would be a bleak and asinine thing to say we are back in the 1830s. Britain and Ireland have seen revolutions (mostly peaceful) in social, economic and political life. The 1830s are a long time ago and may seem now to be part of a galaxy far, far away.

But here is what is similar, I think. There are only a few of us, in a few houses, living in a rapidly changing and even unstable culture. We have been gifted with faith and a vocation to share it in ways that are more than casual. We are part of a larger entity, the Congregation, and something larger again, the Church, and at every level we are having to reorganise and refocus.

Each individual one of us is having to find our feet: in our own experience, in our life in the Community and as Christians in the Catholic Church and to compound the confusion, as I say, these larger bodies, the Congregation and the Church are having to find their feet too.

Yesterday's reading from St Mark's Gospel (4:35–41) speaks right into this experience, however. As three-dimensionally unstable as a small boat can be, tossed about on a rolling sea, Christ is the stillness, the compass and the master to whom we look and on whom we call. If others can see something of this stillness in us, then we will have made an excellent start to the mission before we say a word or act on any initiative.

This Week

The week ahead of us is mapped out, to a large extent, in the schedule of the Assembly you have received in your folders, but I hope the work we do this week will emerge in an experience that is as flexible as it can be.

One or two of the working sessions will necessarily be more structured than others but, when the Preparatory Committee, that is, the Provincial Council, were working on the shape the Assembly would take, we hoped the sessions would be conversational, with two or three confrères leading a conversation open to the whole gathering.

We have the benefit of three facilitators for this purpose, Mr Gerard Gallagher, whom many of you will already know, who is currently serving as Secretary General of AMRI, the Association of Missionaries and Religious of Ireland. Gerard is accompanied by two colleagues, Dermot Kelly and Matthew McFadden, both of whom have held diocesan appointments in youth ministry in the dioceses of Armagh and Clogher. Gerard cannot be here this evening as he has been asked to report to the Apostolic Nuncio in relation to the Scoping Inquiry, which is at a critical moment in its deliberations and about which we will hear more during

the week. For confrères on mission in Britain, the Scoping Inquiry refers to an Irish Government inquiry into abuse of students in secondary schools under the patronage of religious communities. However, we welcome Matthew and Dermot and say we look forward to working with you during the week.

Prayer is at the centre of what we are about. Unless we look for the stillness and peace that is in Christ, then the enormity of what is happening all around us will petrify us and we will either be overcome or go into a low-key sort of hiding in which, ultimately, we will participate in the privatisation of faith and religion.

Each day will have moments for Morning and Evening Prayer and the Eucharist. I have asked our jubilarians, of whom we have more than usual this year, to preside and/or preach at Mass each day. I would like to thank them for accepting my invitation and say I look forward to hearing from them.

Conclusion

On that note, having declared our Provincial Assembly of 2024 open, I pray for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit upon us, through the intercession of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, St Joseph, St Vincent De Paul and of all our Vincentian saints and martyrs.

Provincial Assembly

June 24-29, 2024
Manresa Retreat House, Clontarf, Dublin

Monday, 24th June

Session One – Opening of the Provincial Assembly

The Provincial, Fr Paschal Scallan, convened the Assembly at 7 pm on Monday, 24 June.

He took the roll of the members (Appendix 1) and acknowledged those who, for reason of health or mission commitments, could only attend the Assembly in part. We also remembered those confreres who, for reasons of health, would be unable to attend at all.

After the singing of the ‘*Veni Creator Spiritus*’ and a brief time of prayer and reflection, Fr Scallan gave an address to the Assembly.

There followed the election of the Secretary for the Assembly; Fr Eugene Curran was proposed by Fr Eamon Devlin, seconded by Fr Padraig Regan. He was elected unopposed and accepted the nomination.

Fr Curran then proposed the three facilitators to the Assembly (Mr Gerald Gallagher, Mr Dermot Kelly and Mr Matthew McFadden) and they were accepted. He further proposed that the facilitators would also act as moderators of the Assembly sessions and this was accepted by a majority in a show of hands. The facilitators, with the Provincial, Secretary and any co-opted members, formed the Steering Committee of the Assembly.

The Community also accepted, by a majority show of hands, the Directory of the Assembly.

Tuesday, 25th June

This was a day of reflection and prayer led by Dermot Kelly and Matthew McFadden, based on Jesus’ meeting with the woman at the well (John 4). Confreres were asked to reflect on their own relationship with Jesus, in the past and currently, on those things they valued and how this affects and feeds their call to Mission.

Wednesday, 26th June

Session Two – Finance

After a time of prayer, the first session was a presentation on the finances of the Province, led by the Provincial Bursar, Fr Stephen Monaghan and the Financial Administrator of the Province, Ms Linda Downes.

Although there is a general decline in income, there has been steady

and well-planned management of our resources and there have been no major surprises; with the exception of 2022, the markets have generally been favourable and our investments have worked well to serve our needs.

Following a presentation by Ms Downes, there was a time for questions from the floor.

There are certain amounts set aside for various purposes within the Province.

There were questions about our financial capacity into the future; we were reassured that we have the assets to continue and, should God will it, to develop.

Questions were raised about the implications of new trustee arrangements for our schools and what property bank would remain for our use.

There was discussion about the asset of the building and land at Mill Hill; ownership of which is 100% vested in the CM Trust. It was noted that Charity Law and Governance would be in our favour; another group cannot simply lay claim to property which is vested in us.

There followed a presentation by Fr Monaghan on Charity Regulation, especially in Ireland, and its implications for us as a charity, in terms of Governance, Management and Administration. This has imposed a large number of statutory obligations on us, which require professional assistance to ensure compliance. We constitute a 'Section 40' charity as we already had certain tax exemptions before 2014 and had a Charity Number. The *Charities Governance Code* sets out the Standards and Principles we must follow.

We have moved from a time when there was a good deal of flexibility about the use of funds and a good deal of trust and discretion about distribution. Now, the focus is on dual authorisation for receipted payments. All payments must be justified and transparent and follow the SORP standard.

Our stated objectives in relation to our status as a registered charity are: to carry out charitable works connected with the CM and for the advancement of the Roman Catholic religion. Our governing documents are our Constitutions and Statutes, which would be much more extensive than most charities.

In dealing with certain matters, the Provincial is the designated person who operates in the name of the Province as a whole. We have to show that we carry out our charitable purpose for the public benefit. Our duties are: to furnish a proper book of accounts, furnish them to the Charity Regulator and prepare an annual report. We must fulfil disclosure obligations, in cases of theft or fraud. Our accounts must be made public. We can only support or donate to causes in line with our objectives and all requests must be assessed.

It is noted that Religious Congregations do not fit neatly into the categories set down by the Charities Regulator which does not make allowances for the fact that we have very different structures. For this reason, the Provincial Council, as Directors of the Charity, now must have three separate Trustee/Business meetings each year.

Tied in with all of this is our commitment to Data Protection, Health and Safety and Employment Standards. However, it is important that we remember that our focus must be on accountability rather than control.

There followed a time for questions and clarification.

The processes in Ireland are following on the standards for the Charity Commission in the UK.

It was acknowledged that there could be a tension between the ‘public good’ aspect of the Charity and the canonical commitment to care for our members. However, it is acknowledged that this is, in fact, part of our purpose as a Charity. This isn’t unique or new under charity law.

Session Three – Care of Others and Ourselves

A presentation was given by Ms Eileen Maher, who is our Director of Care. She emphasised the importance of good health and maintaining a balanced lifestyle. Fr Eugene Curran spoke about the importance of each of us taking responsibility for our own health and well-being; taking care of our personal hygiene and acting promptly in matters of our health. We also need to be aware that, as we age, not all health challenges may be visible and we need to be tolerant of one another and our frailty. When travelling, it is important to ensure that we have health and travel insurance.

There followed some discussion on these matters and amongst the issues raised were:

- The importance of acknowledging when it is time for us to give up driving
- That we have carers who can support us in maintaining our independence
- That the community has the funds to support travel expenses for confreres
- There were some practical concerns that we will need to pass on to the management of Manresa Retreat House.

Session Four – Care of Others and Ourselves, continued.

A presentation on ‘Safeguarding; a Positive Approach’ was given by Ms Cleo Yates, Provincial Safeguarding Manager.

Ms Yates based her presentation on the following from Pope Francis from Saturday, 18 November 2023:

We cannot stop in our action for the protection of minors and the vulnerable, and at the same time, in countering every form of abuse, whether sexual, or of power or knowledge. In this regard, I would like to suggest three verbs to you, from which you may draw guidance for any initiative: protect, listen and heal. Protect, listen and heal.

PROTECT

- we have robust policies and guidance in our new Handbook
- we have a culture of best practice
- we have a Designated Liaison Person in place (DLP)
- we have regular safeguarding training
- we process our Garda Vetting

LISTEN

- we meet with those hurt and hearing their story
- we offer compassionate and pastoral support to all
- we are learning from our past experience
- we each exercise this through our Ministry

HEAL

- by acknowledging and owning our past failures
- by travelling the Journey with those hurt
- we offer the services of ‘Towards Healing’, to those wounded by abuse
- we offer the services of ‘Towards Peace’ to those who seek spiritual healing

Ms Yates also outlined some recent updates:

- our updated Adults at Risk Policy
- we provide Information Sessions
- we have engaged with the Scoping Inquiry into abuse in religious-run schools
- we have engaged with the Scottish Redress System
- We have engaged with the national Revised Child Safeguarding Policy

Fr Eugene Curran outlined some of the developments recently in the UK, which have proven challenging as it is not immediately clear if our parishes come under the jurisdiction of the CSSA (the diocesan system)

or the RLSS (the Religious Life Groups system). However, in all matters, we are compliant and our systems are working.

There followed a period of discussion and reflection. This brought the day's work to an end.

Thursday, 27th June

Session Five – The Mission in Britain

Mr Ger Gallagher opened the session with a quotation from St John Henry Newman:

‘Dear Jesus, help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go. Flood our souls with your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess our whole being, so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of yours. Shine through us and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with may feel your presence in our souls.’

Frs Eugene Curran and Chinedu Enuh gave a brief presentation on the development of the ‘London Platform’. We form one community based in the houses in Mill Hill and Burnt Oak. This has allowed for the development of a more international community and commitment to various outreaches; the chaplaincies to the Filipino and Ethiopian Communities, to hospital and prison, to the Daughters of Charity and to The Passage. As we establish ourselves more, it will allow us to see how this may develop and plan accordingly. A key theme is that we respond to the promptings of providence and enter a time of discernment.

Following the presentation, there was time for questions and reflection. Fr Paul Roche raised the possibility of forming a core group of members of the Vincentian Family to discern a new Vincentian mission and he was encouraged to formulate a proposal for the Assembly.

During this time, Frs Francis Cruz and Ufayissa Madalcho both offered some reflections on their experiences in ethnic chaplaincy and on the Church in London.

Some of the other issues raised were:

- Is there a danger that parishes and diocesan commitments might dominate any development?
- If we think with the Church, then the focus must be on ‘missionary parishes’.
- Parish offers an opportunity to unite diverse minorities around a primary goal.
- There is a sense of restlessness, which is good to see.
- Where is the Spirit drawing us forward?

- We recognise the decline of an old model and the need for continuous discernment to allow what is new to emerge. It is important that we do not cling to our ideas but pray, discern and work together to see where God is leading us.
- Given our chaplaincy commitments to ethnic groups, prisoners and those in hospital, are there any opportunities for ‘speaking into’ the public forum?

Mr Ger Gallagher concluded the session by posing some questions:

- What have you been hearing this morning?
- Has anything stirred within you?
- What are the emerging questions?
- How do we bring all of this to discernment and prayer?

Session Six – The Mission in Ireland

Mr Ger Gallagher led with a prayer of St Columba:

‘Be a bright flame before me, O God, a guiding star above me.
Be a smooth path below me, a kindly shepherd behind me today,
tonight and forever.
Alone with none but you, my God, I journey on my way.
What need I fear when you are near, O Lord of night and day.
More secure am I within your hand, than if a multitude did round me
stand.’

Fr Paschal Scallon, as Regional Superior for Ireland, and Fr Michael McCullagh led the presentation.

Looking at our situation, we have a commitment to our older confreres and that is a privilege in itself. The flagships of the Province have passed into history but there are new opportunities opening and we need to be alert to them. Part of this alertness is about readying the Province, pruning. There will be fewer of us and fewer houses but there will still be the need for the Mission and for the compassion of Christ expressed in our community life and living.

If Phibsborough is the ‘platform’ for Ireland, then only one or two confreres will be working in the parish. The Lord is doing something with us and we can have confidence in Him. For example, when we withdrew from our ministry of spiritual direction in St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, it may have seemed like something had died but, since then, we have discerned a way forward in ministry to clergy in our ministry to priests at Knock Shrine in Co. Mayo.

Fr Michael McCullagh then gave a presentation on that ministry and how it emerged. The ministry is conducted by himself and Fr Aidan

Galvin. Fr Michael spoke especially about the situation of younger clergy in Ireland, whose fraternal links are usually national rather than local. The welcome from Knock Shrine has been more than gracious and they have recently moved to Kiltegan House there. The confreres offer spiritual direction, hospitality, respite and retreats. They also refer priests to counsellors and other spiritual directors. They describe what they do as 'spiritual accompaniment'. Besides local diocesan retreats, Frs McCullagh and Galvin have also organised three annual retreats led by Bishops and have been involved in various priests' assemblies and councils.

Present challenges for priests are:

- Tension between administration and prayer
- A preferential option in favour of those who can carry forward the synodal process leaves some priests with a sense of being overlooked
- Celebrating the sacraments is no longer a ministry of joy or fulfilment
- How productivity is recognised and rewarded at the expense of prayer

What is the future? The confreres are collaborating with others as they develop this ministry and its outreaches.

Fr Pat Collins then gave a brief presentation on the *New Springtime* community, focused on the New Evangelisation. He spoke especially of the training offered for evangelisers; a great many of which have been offered online. They have also been running healing services in churches in Dublin, these services are also being broadcast on Radio Maria. The power of God is at work, as the Good News is demonstrated by signs and wonders.

Fr Eamon Devlin gave a brief update on the situation in St Peter's, Phibsborough. Although other religious communities are handing back parishes to the diocese, we have a mission 'under our nose'! The signs of the times are that the Church is in crisis and many structures are unravelling. We are assailed by the needs of people suffering addiction, poverty, homelessness, self-harm, abuse in its various forms, and suicide. Members of the Travelling Community also approach us for care. Most funerals are outside the Church. We must link ourselves into what is going on – we are not the leaders but rather supporters of those who come to us. We have in the parish the Daughters of Charity, the Ladies of Charity (AIC), the Society of St Vincent de Paul and others. In many ways, the CM is the weakest and most frail of all the branches of the Vincentian Family present in the parish. There was a great response to

the Synodal Pathway and the focus, as a result, is on Evangelisation. We have to acknowledge that the Synodal Pathway is the most important aspect of the way forward.

Fr Cornelius Nwaogwugwu gave a heartfelt thanks to the Irish Province for its mission in Nigeria; it is a cause for hope. The African Church appreciates the support and help of the Irish Church in its emergence and will offer support in its turn. He spoke too of the provision of pastoral care to the African community in the Diocese of Dublin, which has been greatly supported by the Irish Province and, in particular, by the parish of Phibsborough. It has provided a base and springboard for the Chaplaincy which now has seven centres in the diocese. The office for the chaplaincy is in Crosscare, Blanchardstown (an agency of the Diocese of Dublin). Fr Cornelius outlined the developments in service to women, men and young adults. Everything has been done in collaboration with the Diocese of Dublin. The task is now to work on integration and engagement in their local parishes and local communities – in sport, politics and community development.

Mr Gallagher noted that he observes that, sometimes, we have to allow things to die so that something else may evolve.

A further question was raised: is there a paralysis in our thinking in Ireland or is there a role for a community of men in the spirit of St Vincent de Paul?

Again, Mr Gallagher asked what we had been hearing and what was stirring within us as we listened.

Session Seven – Developments – Where next?

Mr Gallagher opened the session with a quote from St Paul:

‘May the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.’ (Romans 15:13)

Fr Scallon gave a brief presentation on some of the challenges, based on Fr Mavrič’s recent letter to CEVIM, and his letter ‘The Whole Congregation of the Mission goes on the Mission’, and the key points raised there; he also gave our current situation in each of these calls.

- Invitation to confreres from other provinces to collaborate with us. We have reached out and will continue to do so.
- Reconsideration of our commitment in parishes/withdrawal from parishes. We will be in Phibsborough as our Dublin Platform. Our involvement in other parishes will not be permanent.

- Parish Missions: we are seeking to do this through the Mission Team in Dublin and the contractual engagement for three years in Burnt Oak.
- Mission to Migrants: we express this greatly through our ethnic chaplaincy work.
- Vocational promotion and the call for a confrere to be released to this ministry. At present, we have the Vocations Team who take this on.
- Parish Visitation: the Mission Team does seek to reach out to support other parishes.

It was noted that neither Mill Hill nor Phibsborough were originally parishes; they were the bases from which we operated our various works and missions; an earlier idea of 'platform'.

After a brief discussion, the group then broke up into smaller groups to discuss the topic 'what are the concrete developments that we would like to make as we go forward together?'.

Feedback from the groups:

Group Four:

We are 'behind the curve' of the Diocese of Dublin, which has the *Building in Hope* programme; all parishes are in partnerships with partnership councils with specific aims, e.g. training funeral teams, and priests are being appointed to the partnerships. Catechesis is moving from the schools to the parishes. Our contribution will be to seek to give a 'Vincentian flavour' to the work of the partnerships. We are not leading it, nor are we in charge of it. It means that the role of the priest becomes ever more pastoral.

Group Five:

There is a significant difference between the developments in Britain and Ireland, which may require different strategic responses.

Leaving a parish in Ireland is a radical change and we need to consider what might continue if we cease to function as a parish in Phibsborough.

We ought to listen to the priests who have been on mission and to people coming from the countries in which they were serving.

Our tradition is to do first and then to evaluate, strategise – as St Vincent did.

Vocation promotion is not an end in itself but is about creating vibrant communities of faith from which vocations may emerge.

Vincentians, and other communities, work 'at right angles' to the work of the diocese or parish.

Group One:

We could link our Mission Team with priests and others in dioceses and offer training and pass on the baton to them.

Vocations: we have to stay with what we have been doing.

Collaborating with Nigerian confreres in the UK; this is a task for the Provincial.

We can also link with the Philippines, particularly with regard to ongoing and initial formation.

We should, as much as we can, maintain our character as mobile.

Group Two:

Bridges have to be built with the Nigerian confreres in the UK.

Agreed policies are not implemented: e.g. the decision taken in Ballyvaloo (2015) on Adult Faith Formation.

We have to be aware of the shift in Church thinking towards synodality.

Group Three:

In the past, St Peter's was a base for mission and this may be emerging again.

We may need to connect with each individual confrere to see where his energy, involvement and engagement are. We need to be respectful of and affirm confreres' choices and commitments.

If St Peter's is the place of Mission, perhaps St Paul's needs to be the house of 'care and prayer', where there is space for them.

Does Strawberry Hill offer us an opportunity for outreach among younger people?

How and where do we actively promote and engage with vocations?

Co-operation with Nigeria is complicated but there is a need for some conversation to take place.

There is a real need for people to engage with the situation of migrants in Ireland today; there is a great deal of negativity.

Communications need to improve amongst us; how do we celebrate what various confreres are doing and share what is going on in our various missions?

Fr Paul Roche gave the example of how our former church property in Sheffield has provided a mission hub and student accommodation. It is a very interesting use and repurposing of a church building which we might have to consider.

Fr Eamonn Flanagan noted Karl Rahner's observation that vocation to priesthood arises from our formation as Christian Catholic men.

Fr Joseph Loftus noted that everyone should be mobilised to be involved in the mission together; to the level they desire and of which they are capable.

Fr Adrian Eastwood raised the question of how we discern the work and ministry of young confreres.

Mr Ger Gallagher brought the session to a close by asking again; what is stirring within you and what remains after the discussions of this day?

Friday, 29th June

Session Eight – Proposals

Mr Ger Gallagher introduced the work of the morning, reflecting on the week that was.

Virtually nothing is impossible in this world, if you just put your mind to it.

Every day may not be good but there is something good in every day.

A number of proposals were put before the Assembly.

1. It was proposed to amend Norm 69 (i) of the Norms of the Province thus (amendment in bold italics)

All members of the Province *and members of other Provinces on mission within and under the jurisdiction of the Province of Ireland*, who have passive voice, shall be members of the Provincial Assembly unless excused by the Provincial of a serious reason. Delegates shall be required to sign the register at the first session of the Assembly and shall remain for the duration of the Assembly, unless excused by the Provincial.

This was proposed by Fr Paul Roche and seconded by Fr Adrian Eastwood.

After discussion, Fr Perry Gildea proposed to add an additional phrase. This was seconded by Fr Paul Roche (insertion in bold italics).

- ...who have passive voice, *in their own Province of origin*, shall be members...

The addition was accepted by a majority; 20 in favour, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions

This complete amendment was accepted by a majority; 22 in favour, 1 opposed, 2 abstentions.

Therefore: With the approval of the Superior General and his Council, the amended Norm 69.(i) is now to read:

All members of the Province and members of other Provinces on mission within and under the jurisdiction of the Province of Ireland, who have passive voice in their own Province of origin, shall be members of the Provincial Assembly unless excused by the Provincial for a serious reason. Delegates shall be required to sign the register at the first session of the Assembly and shall remain for the duration of the Assembly, unless excused by the Provincial.

2. Some amendments to the Norms of the Province in relation to safeguarding were proposed by Fr Eamon Devlin:

It was proposed that Norm 64 be amended into two parts to read (amendment in bold):

64. (i) The Local Superior will submit, at the end of the calendar year, an audit of safeguarding practice in the local community.
- (ii) **On receipt of the annual self-audits from the local communities, the Province Safeguarding Management Team will publish to the confrères of the Province any proposals received with a time frame for their implementation.**

There was some discussion for clarification. The Safeguarding Management Team is the Provincial Council. All proposals will be reported to the Province with reasons for acceptance or rejection and a time frame for implementation.

The proposal was seconded by Paul Roche and passed by 24 votes with one abstention.

Therefore: with the approval of the Superior General and his Council, the amended Norm 64 is now to read:

- 64. (i) The Local Superior will submit, at the end of the calendar year, an audit of safeguarding practice in the local community.**
- (ii) On receipt of the annual self-audits from the local communities, the Province Safeguarding Management Team will publish to the confrères of the Province any proposals received with a time frame for their implementation.**

3. It was proposed to amend/rewrite Norm 21 in two parts:

The Province Safeguarding Management Team will ensure that local communities and houses are safe places of ministry in collaboration with and respecting the views of the local community.

It was proposed that this would replace the current Norm 21. There was some discussion and clarification about the role of the local superior and the balance of responsibility between the local community and the Safeguarding Management Team. A proposed further amendment was not accepted.

The proposal was seconded by Eamonn Flanagan and passed; 22 in favour, 1 opposed and 2 abstentions

In addition, a second part to Norm 21 was proposed, to read as follows:

The Province Safeguarding Management Team will respond to issues of safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults raised by local communities with the same urgency as they would to issues that require the involvement of statutory agencies. To this end, the Province Safeguarding Management Team will, on receipt of a complaint from a local community, set out a clear step-by-step process ensuring transparent and timely response.

There was a discussion and Fr Philip Walshe proposed that the wording be reduced to read simply:

The Province Safeguarding Management Team will, on receipt of a complaint from a local community, set out a clear step by step process ensuring transparent and timely response.

This was seconded by Fr Pat Collins; 14 voted in favour, 6 opposed and 3 abstentions.

The new wording of the proposal was seconded by Fr Paschal Scallon. 18 voted in favour, 1 opposed and 4 abstentions.

Therefore: with the approval of the Superior General and his Council, the amended Norm 21 is now to read:

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| <p>21. (i) The Province Safeguarding Management Team will ensure that local communities and houses are safe places of ministry in collaboration with and respecting the views of the local community.</p> <p>(ii) The Province Safeguarding Management Team will, on receipt of a complaint from a local community, set out a clear step-by-step process ensuring transparent and timely response.</p> |
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Session Nine – Conclusion

Chaired by Mr Ger Gallagher

Fr Paul Roche sought formal support from the Assembly for an initiative to take place in the UK in the coming year. He proposed:

A year-long period of discernment be initiated with a view to establishing an International Vincentian Family evangelising community.
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Confreres including at least one Nigerian confrere already working in the United Kingdom, would be appointed to this task.

The group would be answerable to the Provincial and his Council.

There followed some discussion and clarification. It will probably begin work in October. It could be taken up in Dublin, if desired. The initiative received unanimous support.

Mr Ger Gallagher, who is also Secretary General of AMRI (Association of Missionaries and Religious in Ireland), gave a brief report on his work.

He was originally appointed interim Secretary General. AMRI also includes work on vocations, safeguarding, Towards Healing, Towards Peace etc. Justice, Peace and Creation is an outreach of AMRI, dealing with Migrants, Homelessness and other matters. AMRI offers leadership support. AMRI is conscious of the need for Religious Life Groups to engage with the Synodal Process.

There are still some people choosing to engage with and discern ways forward in religious life. Their experience will be different to those who went before.

He is currently working with some congregations moving towards completion.

The challenges facing communities are the same for most groups. Pope Francis says that we are not living in an era of change but in a change of era. We need to be bold and creative in our responses, even in the move towards completion.

Religious life is active but needs to take its place in the public forum – especially through social media; he recommended the Newsletter at AMRI.ie.

A number of congregations are pooling their archival resources as this is an important move.

AMRI has been engaging with the Scoping Enquiry; we have to tell the truth and shine the light of that truth.

Pope Francis dreams of the missionary option which is a focus for evangelisation and change – not for the preservation of the Church itself. He referred to the book *Poets, Prophets and Pragmatists*; all are necessary for planning for the future.

He heard passion for mission, concern for walking alongside the poor; our legacy is that there are people like him all over the island of Ireland, committed to faith and to Church.

There followed a time of reflection, exchange and questions, reflecting on the role of AMRI and our engagement with it.

Following Ger's contribution, Fr Philip Walshe, as the doyen of the group, spoke words of thanks.

Fr Paschal then declared the Assembly closed and we concluded with the singing of the *Salve Regina*.

There followed a celebration of the Eucharist, the closing homily of which follows.

Closing Homily of the Provincial Assembly

28 June 2024, Feast of St Irenaeus of Lyons

Paschal Scallan CM

In the Scriptures there are many examples of people hiding from God. If memory serves, they include prophets and the possessed. Even Peter has his moment, in which he asks the Lord to leave him because he knows enough about himself to say, "...for I am a sinful man". So, it's wonderfully reassuring to hear Jesus say to the person with leprosy who approaches him in the passage we read from the Gospel today, "Of course I want to. Be healed." It would be too easy for us to imagine, given so much of what we have experienced during our lives in the Community and in ministry, that the Spirit has left us or that the Lord has no regard for us. I don't think this is a vacuous remark given that one of the suggestions relating to human self-awareness today is that humanity – especially in the West – has lost confidence in itself. When I heard that said first, I was struck by its simplicity, and its starkness: human beings and even whole societies have lost confidence in themselves, with the consequences for everything from the environment to human life itself. Imagine, therefore, as we leave this Provincial Assembly, that in answer to the discussions we have had this week and our prayer, the Lord is saying to us, 'Of course I want to...' One of my favourite hymns speaks of the faith the Lord places in each of us individually and collectively. We struggle with faith and others do too, imagining often that faith is a discipline we maintain in much the same way people go to the gym to keep fit. Perhaps the greatest act of faith we can make, though, is to hold onto our sense of vocation, by which we mean our sense that God in Jesus Christ has called us personally. What an act of faith that was. What an act of faith that has always been – which is to say, eternally – that each of us and this Community has had a place in the mind and heart of God, and a task. That doesn't detract from personal freedom. Just because God has always had a plan doesn't mean that Providence hasn't had to deal with human caprice. We go on, therefore, encouraged, strengthened, empowered by Christ saying to us, 'Of course I want to...' Please God, we go on, consciously relying on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Dare we imagine that we might have been touched by Pentecost this week? What might such a sense of ourselves mean in our going out on mission every day, whether that means just along the corridor, across the carpark or up country somewhere we've never been before? As missionaries, the Lord asks us to walk the road with him. This is such an elemental image

for relationship with God and discipleship with Christ. The Lord has given his word into our care for the sake of people who desperately need to hear it. So, let's go, or as we say in Gaelic, 'Ar aghaidh linn!'

Homily for the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul, 25 January 2025

400th Anniversary Celebration of the
Foundation of the Congregation of the Mission

Paschal Scallon CM

Every January in the days leading up to the feast of the Conversion of St Paul, the main Christian churches engage in a week of prayer for unity among Christians. It's good to remember what the conversion of St Paul entailed. He was the very zealous figure, Saul, who had been present at and abetted in the murder and martyrdom of St Stephen. On the road to Damascus, he has his moment of inspiration and insight.

To tie a week of prayer for Christian unity to the memorial of the conversion of St Paul is really significant, and in this year, to tie it to the celebration of the fourth centenary of the establishment of the Congregation, is even more so perhaps.

When we read the account of St Paul's conversion, of course, it's clear his conversion was a slow business, or at least, his working out the significance of it was, for all the drama of the original experience.

Unity among Christians requires the same patience and stamina. There have always been deep differences of opinion and understanding among Christians on nearly everything the communion that is the body of Christ has had to grapple with. Sometimes these disputes have become truly divisive and scandalous so that even today, people use them as evidence of the invalidity of Christian faith and teaching.

All the more reason, as missionaries whose vocation is to preach the word of God, to return to the source from whom we assume our authority to speak, namely Jesus himself. In St John's Gospel, we often see and hear Jesus at prayer. In one of these prayers Jesus says; "I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20–21)

It is chastening but also invigorating to read those few words in the middle of that prayer which say, "I ask... also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word." Dear confrères, that is a reference to us – among so many others also of course – and the mission we have

as evangelisers, men who have been given and accepted the vocation to share the word of God with others, especially the poor.

There is no doubt division among Christians is a scandal (literally, a stumbling block to faith, something that trips us up). It is magnified in all the ways divisions mar relations among people and are the direct cause of suffering and death.

At the beginning of this new year, it can seem everywhere we turn, someone is at another's throat for religious and political and sectional reasons, as well as personal and familial. As disciples, therefore, we have a mission: to build the peace of humanity and that begins right now, right here, wherever that is for you, and with whomever.

This responsibility is going to mean conversion, personal change in mind and heart. Saul went to Damascus a convinced believer in the persecution of the nascent sect that would become Christianity but came out of the desert some years later with a new name and a new heart. Christ had become his inspiration and his cause.

In the Vincentian tradition, the Feast of the Conversion of St Paul on January 25th has added relevance. January 25th is the foundation day of the Vincentian Community and in 2025 we celebrate the 400th anniversary of the official recognition of Vincent's new community.

1625 was a bleak time in Europe. The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) was breaking Europe in some of the worst violence the continent has ever witnessed. I think I read somewhere the Thirty Years War took as many as 7 million lives, 50% of the population in parts of Germany. It is sometimes referred to as the last of the wars of religion and, for that alone there is room for pause, for repentance and for conversion, especially in light of present conflicts and the rage they reveal in the hearts and souls of so many people.

This year is a cause for celebration and thanksgiving. To have been blessed with 400 years is of 'biblical' proportions, as it were, but at the end of this week of prayer for Christian unity, it is also a moment of call to conversion. The mission St Vincent took on continues and we stand directly in the succession that takes responsibility for it. We recognise that we have our own issues to address for the good of everyone, so that Christ's prayer, 'that they may all be one', may be answered in our time and that all things will be reconciled in Christ, and here is where it matters for us...with our help.

The First Course for Guides on Pilgrimages to Vincentian Sites in France 2025: a personal reflection

Sr Vivienne Keely CHF

Dr Keely is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Faith, a former Superior General of the Congregation and the author of a number of works, including Dixon of Botany Bay: the Convict Priest from Wexford. St Pauls Publications, Sydney, 2003

In 2024, the Superior-General of the Congregation of the Mission, Fr Tomaž Mavrič, announced the establishment of the Office of Vincentian Pilgrimages:

The goal of such an office is to help make visits to Vincentian sites across France as pleasant as possible from the planning stage to the conclusion, and to give to as many people as possible from around the world the opportunity to undertake such a profoundly rich spiritual experience(1).

Fr Dr Andrés Motto CM, was appointed Director of the Secretariat for Vincentian Pilgrimages and in 2025 he invited me to join a training programme for prospective guides for pilgrimages to Vincentian sites in France. This was the first such programme and was to be both theoretical and practical. As well as formation on the spirituality and charism of St Vincent, participants would visit pilgrimage sites associated with the saint and learn something of the art of guiding pilgrimages. As a Holy Faith sister, an Irish Order co-founded by a Vincentian priest, Fr John Gowan CM, I was delighted to participate with three purposes in mind: to guide other pilgrims should the opportunity arise; to deepen my understanding of the charism of St Vincent; and to encourage reflection among our sisters on how a congregation with declining numbers and an ageing membership can continue to live its mission of solidarity with struggling people.

Insights from Scholarly Literature on Pilgrimage

In focusing on the principal pilgrimage sites outside Paris, this paper aims to offer a perspective which, on one level, describes the places we visited, linking them to the milestones of Vincent's life and mission, but also engages the reader in reflection on insights from the scholarly

literature on pilgrimage. Such scholarly work ranges over a wide range of topics such as motivation, practices of pilgrimage, and action of pilgrims at, or on the way to pilgrim destinations. It includes pilgrims' attitudes to natural or material aspects of pilgrimage, for example, to objects such as water, images, and relics. The concept of pilgrimage has expanded beyond religious sites and the distinction between pilgrimage and tourism is sometimes difficult to maintain. So-called dark tourism brings people to sites of massacres or persecution arising from particular religions or ethnicity or a combination of both. Syria has already become one of the latest attractions for this type of tourism.(2) For some, visiting such places may be just another stop on a tour; for others it has deep personal and emotional resonance. Memorialisation is a significant element in heritage and cultural pilgrimage. Then there is celebrity pilgrimage, for example, thousands visit Graceland – home of Elvis Presley. Our pilgrimage was simple to categorise. It was a religious pilgrimage, following the footsteps of Vincent, which indicates that it was not a single-destination pilgrimage but a journey undertaken to understand more of Vincent's life and motivation, to be touched by the spirit which informed his mission and has survived for over four hundred years to inspire the lives of thousands the world over.

The distances between most of the sites on our pilgrimage ruled out a walking pilgrimage: the efficacy of which is attributed to the physical effort and hardship of walking long distances such as the Camino of St Jacques, the Hajj, or shorter distances over difficult terrain such as Croagh Patrick in the Irish summer. In walking, the body becomes attuned to the spiritual orientation of the pilgrimage.(3) Moreover, hours of walking can distance the pilgrims from their daily preoccupations and create space for periods of solitary reflection. On our Vincentian pilgrimage, it was noticeable that, during the long hours spent on the coach, the volume of chatter gradually gave way not only to sleep, but to long periods of silence, an indication perhaps that, however it is acquired, time spent alone, even on a coach, is necessary to assimilate the experience of one place before immersing oneself in the experience of the next one.(4)

The Shape of the Course

We were a group of ten: four from Panama, one from each of Brazil, Venezuela, Spain, Taiwan, Slovakia, and myself from Ireland. Although there was no common language, Spanish was the predominant language but most Spanish speakers spoke English, so we laughed over a few small miscommunications as we non-Spanish speakers attempted to learn a few words of the language. However, for the daily conferences and tours, translation into English from Spanish was provided. We

assembled at the Maison-mère in Paris on Sunday 14 September 2025 for the course which would run to the evening of Tuesday 30 September. On the first evening, Fr Motto took us through the schedule for the next two and a half weeks. The first six days were to be spent in Paris with input every morning, followed in the afternoon by visits to places in Paris associated with St Vincent. The middle week was devoted to places outside Paris with the final days back in Paris and taken up with sessions devoted to St Vincent, visits to other Vincentian sites, and reflections on guiding. On our last day we went to the burial place of Frédéric Ozanam in rue des Carmes, and then on to the international headquarters of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Rue de la Glacière.

We began our pilgrimage to places outside Paris in the second week by heading to south-western France. We travelled first to Chartres to marvel at the stained glass windows and immediately on leaving the city, were plunged into a new space, that of rural France. Rurality was in many ways at the heart of Vincent's mission, a locus determined to a great extent by the social structures of seventeenth-century France. Chronology and geography are not always perfect matches so, for example, we visited Château-l'Evêque, the place where Vincent was ordained a priest, before we travelled to Tarbes where he received the sub-diaconate. Such practical adjustments have to be made to keep the pilgrimage journey within manageable limits of distance and time. Château-l'Evêque, in the Dordogne, is about 485 kilometres from Paris. As the name of the commune indicates, in Vincent's time, it was a residence of the Bishops of Périgueux but was lost to them after the French Revolution.

Vincent did not live in Château-l'Evêque but in the neighbouring diocese of Dax. The Bishop who ordained him, François de Bourdeille, Bishop of Périgueux was in residence in Château-l'Evêque. The ordination took place in the parish church of St Julien on 23 September 1600 when Vincent was nineteen years of age, several years shy of the canonically stipulated age for ordination. How and why this happened has been the subject of much scholarly debate.⁽⁵⁾ Vincent's first appointment as a priest was indeed an inauspicious beginning to his priestly life. Assigned to Tilh, a small village not far from his birthplace of Pouy, he found his appointment challenged by another priest. Vincent withdrew without entering the lists of the joust and returned to Toulouse to complete his theological studies, graduating with a Bachelor of Theology in 1604. That said, if our group was any guide, neither the circumstances of his ordination nor his first appointment would unduly concern the modern pilgrim. We were content to see his ordination as the platform from which the embryonic spirituality and mission of Vincent would develop and were keen to push on to Vincent's birthplace where we would spend two nights.

The Berceau and Buglose

The place referred to as the Berceau is the birthplace of St Vincent, originally named Pouy and then renamed St Vincent de Paul. The Berceau in 2025 was a complex of buildings set in a rural landscape and hosting several works of the Vincentian Family: the welcome of pilgrims for day visits or overnight stays; catechetics; animation of groups of Vincentian supporters, along with the community of Lazarists and a community of the Daughters of Charity. On entering the house in which Vincent was born or more precisely, the site of the house, silence settled on the group, a natural prelude to the celebration of the Eucharist. We were fortunate to have a skilled guitarist and several good singers among us which enhanced our celebration of the liturgy. The Berceau was one of the high points on the pilgrimage for me and almost everyone else in our group. It was more than the warm welcome and the experience of feeling part of the Vincentian family. I think the reason was twofold and inter-connected in time and place. The fact that we spent two nights there afforded more time to allow ourselves to feel the spirit of the place mediated through the landscape.

At the Berceau, although there were other groups on site, everything was calm, unhurried. The tranquillity of the place seeped into our souls. Standing under the huge oak tree which pre-dates St Vincent reinforced that sense that we literally had our feet on the ground, the ground on which he had walked, worked and grown up in the midst of a large family. There is a view in the literature of pilgrimage that pilgrimage landscape is a spiritual space constituted through embodied performance, that is what the pilgrims do in the space. Thus the landscape hosts the embodied performance but its hosting is not passive: it gives as well as receives.⁽⁶⁾ Vincent is a national and international saint but the particularity of landscape here in the Berceau, the rural setting, the oak tree, birth house, grounds us in the earth of Vincent, in his spirit and mission. Yet here there is yet another, more profound dimension. Reciprocity was sacramentalised in the celebration of the Eucharist. Though we did not know it, the ground was being prepared for Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne.

A digression to Buglose, a small hamlet a few kilometres from the Berceau and a place of pilgrimage in its own right, frequented by Vincent. Devotion to Our Lady of Buglose dates from the 1600s when a statue was discovered which had been hidden in the previous century during the Wars of Religion. The Berceau and Buglose were of particular interest to me as a Holy Faith sister because Fr John Gowan, CM, our co-founder, had visited both places when on a pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1871 in thanksgiving for successful eye surgery. Moreover, he wrote about them in a letter to our foundress, Margaret Aylward. After his visit to the sanctuary of Our Lady of Buglose, he wrote to Aylward that he

had celebrated Mass,

‘at the altar of the Miraculous Statue, and I offered it for you alone. I hope to celebrate tomorrow in the room where St Vincent was born and shall offer it up for the SS of the Holy Faith.’(7)

On the day he wrote the letter, Gowan had visited the Berceau. He was a little surprised that everything had been preserved in such good condition:

‘the house tho’ simple does not betoken so much poverty as he represented his family to be in. There are six apartments on the ground and a loft under the tiles.’

One can imagine the spiritual significance for Gowan in seeing the four-hundred-year-old oak tree where St Vincent reputedly gave alms to a beggar. For Gowan, a man who had already spent many years preaching parish missions and lecturing on preaching, the typically understated emotion of wearing St Vincent’s stole is striking, ‘I had about my neck today the stole which he used in preaching his first mission.’ The simple expression shows how affected Gowan was by this pilgrimage. It is a rare glimpse of the affective side of Gowan’s nature, and the clearest statement of his attachment to St Vincent.

After a brief stop in Dax, we moved on to Lourdes. Dax is a most interesting town with vestiges of Gallo-Roman times and a fine neoclassical cathedral complete with stained glass windows of Vincent. Here Vincent went to school with the Friars Minor in whose residence he lived. He attracted the patronage of Monsieur de Comet, a district judge, and lived in his house for four years, for two of which he acted as tutor to his patron’s sons. It was from Dax that he went to Toulouse to begin his course in theology. Though not specifically associated with St Vincent, it is easy to understand why Lourdes was included in the itinerary. For a group of visitors to France whose first, or only, visit this might be, to travel to Dax and Tarbes but not to go to Lourdes would be inconceivable. From Lourdes we moved on to Toulouse taking time to pay a brief visit to Tarbes where a plaque records Vincent’s ordination as a sub-deacon on 19 September 1598 and deacon on the same date. The ordaining prelate was the Bishop of Tarbes, Salvatus d’Iharse.

Arriving in Toulouse, *la ville rose*, we spent time in the basilica of Saint-Sernin. The theological college where Vincent studied is no longer in the hands of a Catholic body so we stood on the footpath outside the front door before moving on to the College of the Count of Foix where Vincent resided while a student in Toulouse. We had the Eucharist there. Then, it was on to what was considered the third most significant point of the pilgrimage, the place where Vincent founded the Confraternity of Charity, in some places known as the Ladies of Charity.

Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, formerly Châtillon-les-Dombes

Visiting Châtillon at this point in the pilgrimage fitted with the geography rather than the chronology of St Vincent's conversion in Folleville but they are so inter-connected that a reversal of chronology can be tolerated. Having experienced a complete re-orientation of his sense of mission in Folleville, Vincent came to the town on the river Chalaronne in the eastern area of France, in fact a lot closer to Geneva in Switzerland than to either Toulouse or Paris, each at least six to seven hours' drive but longer in time because of the mandatory rest periods for coach drivers. Châtillon is a medieval town in the Diocese of Lyon where Vincent spent about six months in 1617. Here the expression of his practical charity was translated into a formal structure, the first of the trilogy of his foundations: the Ladies of Charity to be followed by the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity with St Louise de Marillac.

A walk through the town reveals several memorials of St Vincent. The Place St Vincent de Paul situated between the open market and the Hotel-Dieu, now a museum, is graced with a statue of the saint fashioned in bronze by Emilien Cabuchet in 1856. Typically, it shows the saint with two small children cradled in his arms. The plinth bears the inscription 'good people of Châtillon, wherever I will be, you will be present to me before God.' The said good people had been spurred to action by Vincent in the summer of 1617. While vesting for Mass, Vincent was made aware of a sick and starving family desperately in need of relief. He seized the opportunity during his homily to speak of charity to the poor and, later, on his way to visit the stricken family, he came upon many parishioners on their way to and from the family with food and bedding. On his arrival, other parishioners were making soup and tending the sick. Vincent had publicised the need for impromptu assistance but he was acutely aware of the need for a more organised outreach to the poor and needy and so called together eight women to form a group dedicated to visiting the poor and sick in their homes. Thus was born the first parish Confraternity of Charity on 23 August 1617. Shortly afterwards, Vincent applied for canonical approval for the new association which was granted in December 1617.

The date of the approval probably prompted Vincent to present the Rule he had drawn up while staying in the parish house on the Rue Colbert. Here, a stone's throw from the parish church of St Andrew, can be found the house in which Vincent lived. What appears now to be one large house was in fact two, and is now owned by the Daughters of Charity. The room in which Vincent slept is now a chapel where we were privileged to share the Eucharist. On an external wall is a plaque which reads, in translation:

In 1617, St Vincent de Paul, curé of Châtillon-les-Dombes, lived in this house. At 36 years old, in this parish, his public life took off. To respond to the needs of the poorest, he created in Châtillon the first Conference of the Ladies of Charity.

A painting depicts St Vincent giving the Rule of the Confraternity to the women on 8 December 1617. Robed in a surplice with a biretta in his left hand, he is standing in front of a chair, in the centre of a semi-circle of twelve women, four more than the original eight. The notary, dressed in black, is seated on his left but slightly in front of the women. The composition is balanced by a woman in a kneeling position on the right-hand side of Vincent and in line with the notary. This was Madame de La Chassaigne (Francoise Bachet). Her hand is outstretched to receive the copy of the Rule. For me, this was a particularly poignant viewing because the foundress of my congregation, Margaret Aylward, when a lay woman, established the first Confraternity of Charity in Dublin in 1851, known as the Ladies of Charity, in Dublin. Shortly afterwards, a priest of the Congregation of the Mission would act as spiritual director.

The parish church of St Andrew pre-dates the arrival of Vincent in Châtillon though a church is known to have been on the site since the thirteenth century. The giving of the Rule to the Ladies of Charity is the theme of the three stained glass lancets behind the high altar. The work of Auguste Jean-Baptiste Pasquier Sarrasin, a master glassmaker based in Lyon, the middle register or band of each window elaborates the scene whose composition replicates that of the painting described above. (8) The middle window depicts St Vincent with six women featured in each of the two side windows so that the three lancets can be read from right or left. Other windows in the nave commemorate scenes from the life of St Vincent. It is beyond question that Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne is an integral component of a pilgrimage to Vincentian sites outside Paris and is foundational to helping pilgrims understand the spirituality and mission of Vincent.

Gannes, Folleville and Beauvais

It remained to visit Gannes, Folleville and Beauvais to appreciate the birth and flourishing of Vincent's mission. Following a day back at the Maison-mère in Paris, we set off on a one-day visit to these northern towns. Gannes and Folleville are usually mentioned in the same breath but the addition of Beauvais is important because it was through collaboration with the then Bishop of Beauvais that Vincent entered into the education and formation of priests which would be integrated into the work of the Congregation of the Mission. We visited Gannes first where an erudite, retired academic guided us through the intricacies of

the lineage and inherited wealth of the de Gondi family who would exert such an influence on the life of Vincent and the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission.

Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi married Françoise Marguerite de Silly who brought extensive lands into her marriage. She inherited these from both parents but it was from her mother, Marie de Lannoy, that she was Dame de Folleville and Gannes and so these villages were added to the de Gondi estates. The couple had three children, Pierre, Henri, and Jean-François Paul. In late 1613 Vincent was appointed tutor to Pierre, aged eleven and Henri, only two or three years old, while the youngest boy was a babe in arms. At the same time Vincent held on to his position as parish priest of Clichy employing a priest to act as curate in his stead. He became spiritual director to Madame de Gondi, all the while accumulating ecclesiastical benefices.

Following a profound spiritual experience, he resolved to dedicate himself to the poor and interested himself in the tenants on the de Gondi estates. Our local guide in Gannes observed rather ruefully that Gannes was no longer a parish in its own right but its name lives on in the history of the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission. The events are well known and need not be detailed here. In summary, around 20 January 1617, Vincent was called to Gannes to hear the confession of a dying man who had spoken with Madame de Gondi about his serious sins and about having been away from the sacrament for so long for fear of confessing. Moved by deep concern for the spiritual welfare of her tenants and country people, Françoise turned to action which she framed as 'what shall we do?' She urged Vincent to preach a sermon in Folleville on general confession which he did on 25 January 1617. The result was a spectacular demand for general confession such that priestly reinforcements had to be called in. This date, the feast of the Conversion of St Paul, is regarded as the Foundation Day of the Vincentians even though the Congregation of the Mission was not established until 1625. (9)

Folleville today is an unprepossessing village whose church, though large for the population, is unremarkable architecturally. The pulpit in the present church is not that from which St Vincent preached. However, a fine sculpture of the de Gondis may be found in a niche on the left-hand wall facing the altar. The couple are kneeling in a prayer pose with hands joined and the general is positioned ahead of his wife. Folleville was one of the many residences owned by the Gondis but the ruins of the castle visible from the church grounds give a sense of its former glory.

Beauvais is significant in the development of the Congregation of the Mission in sowing the seeds of the Congregation's involvement in priestly formation. The bishop of Beauvais, Augustin Potier, understood

the need for education and formation of those about to be ordained priests and entrusted Vincent with the co-ordination and development of pre-ordination retreats of roughly a fortnight's duration. The aim was to impart some rudiments of theological and pastoral formation. Having begun in Beauvais, the practice, known as the Exercises for Ordinands, spread to Paris and beyond. Involvement in the formation of clergy would remain a work of the Congregation of the Mission for many years. It would be true to say that, for our group, Beauvais did not evoke the sense of sacred space or presence that the other Vincentian sites did, yet, it is a worthy addition to the pilgrimage as an aid to understanding Vincent's subsequent mission.

Conclusion

With this exposition of the pilgrimage to Vincentian sites outside Paris completed, what lessons were there for the guides? Speaking for myself, I came to realise that the guide is a pilgrim among pilgrims, and that if she is not, she fails the other pilgrims. The guide may have deeper knowledge of some aspects of history or architecture, but this must remain at the service of enhancing the spiritual experience of the pilgrims.

Fr Motto affirms that, based on his nine years of guiding Vincentian pilgrimages in France, the three places which made the greatest impression on pilgrims were the Berceau, Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne and Folleville. Our group's experience would affirm that view. We have seen the importance of place and landscape in the pilgrimage experience. A guide's sensitivity to the power of place will enable pilgrims to drink in the silence and prevent the guide from trying to fill the silence with words of instruction or information. The extent to which place and the memory of St Vincent lead to personal transformation and engagement in the service of the poor ultimately depends on the disposition of the pilgrim and the grace of God. The 'profound, rich, spiritual experience' of which Fr Mavrič spoke in his 2024 letter is not for guides to manufacture but they can facilitate it by creating spaces for silence and opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer so that pilgrims can truly imbibe the message of Vincent and be drawn to express it in the service of people living in poverty.

I remain deeply grateful to Fr Motto and the Congregation of the Mission for their vision in mounting such a programme for guides and offering me the opportunity to be part of it. I appreciate the participation and friendship of the other guide-pilgrims whose dedication to the poor is a challenge for me to emulate.

NOTES

1. <https://www.svp.ie/news/letter-from-father-tomaz-mavric-cm-on-the-occasion-of-the-feast-of-st-vincent-de-paul-2024/>
2. George D. Greenia, "What is Pilgrimage?" *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 6.2 (2018) Article 3. Kevin Whelan, *Religion, Landscape and Settlement in Ireland: from Patrick to Present* (Four Courts Press, 2018). I.S. McIntosh, E. Moore Quinn, V. Keely (eds.) *Pilgrimage in practice: narration, reclamation and healing* (Cabi, 2018). 'Why do tourists visit sites of atrocities?' in *The Economist*, 4 December 2025.
3. Richard Scriven, "Pilgrim and path: the emergence of self and world on a walking pilgrimage in Ireland," *Cultural Geographies* 27(2) (2022): 261-276, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474474019876622>
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5. SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL: Correspondence, Entretiens, Documents; Ed. published and annotated by Pierre Coste, Prêtre de la Mission, Paris, 1920-1925, 14 v. CXIII, 7: cited in José María Román C.M., 'The Priestly Journey of St. Vincent de Paul The Beginnings: 1600-1612', *Vincentiana*, 44, n3.
6. Richard Scriven, "Touching the Sacred: Sensing Spirituality at Irish Holy Wells," *Journal of Cultural Geography* 36, 3, 271-290. Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08873631.2019.1632404>, accessed 22 February 2026.
7. Letter John Gowan to Margaret Aylward, 8 November 1871, Holy Faith Archives, 1/JG/PL/05/25. Vivienne Keely, *Responding to Child Poverty in Dublin: John Gowan CM 1817-1897* (Sisters of the Holy Faith, 2022), 210-211.
8. <https://patrimoines.ain.fr/n/eglise-saint-andre-a-chatillon-sur-chalaronne/n.354>.
9. Bernard Koch CM, "Folleville 1617 – What was its impact?" Editor's note: This is a translation, by the editor, of a piece written by Fr Koch and submitted to *Colloque* at the suggestion of Fr Richard McCullen. *Colloque*, 62 (2012): 583-587.

The Vincentian Charism: *Written for the newsletter of the Association of Church Archives of Ireland*

Miriam van der Molen, Provincial Archivist

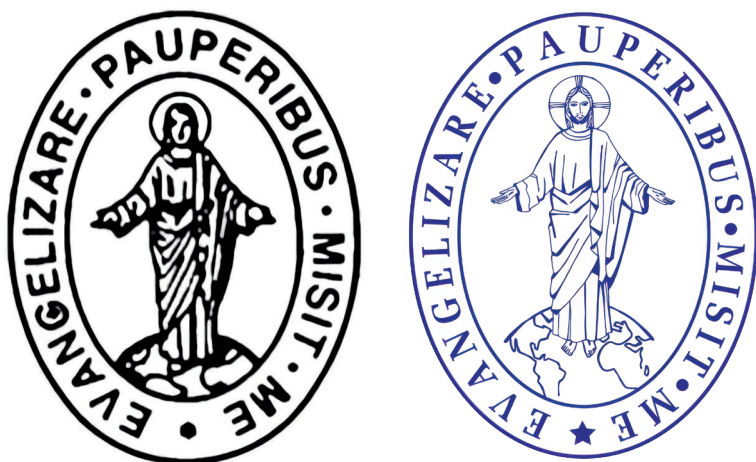
Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) was born in the village of Pouy, near Dax in Southern France in 1581. In 1595, he entered the seminary at Toulouse and was ordained in 1600.

In about 1622, he met Louise de Marillac (1591-1660), widow of Anthony Le Gras. Louise had wanted to be a nun, even before she married.

By then Vincent had been working in his capacity as a priest in the upper levels of French society. Nevertheless, he had two experiences showing the needs of the poor: the first showed their need for spiritual care, and the second was more practical in nature. This was in 1617, following which he decided his calling was to help the poor.



A painting in the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity, probably at least partly painted by Saint Louise de Marillac



Old and new emblem used by the Vincentians of the Irish Province

The Congregation of the Mission, officially founded in 1625, acquired as its motto '*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*' (I am sent to evangelise the poor) during the lifetime of Vincent, but it is unclear who chose it. It was being used as a motto from at least 1655 in combination with the emblem.(1) The emblem itself, showing Christ standing with palms open and facing outwards, is very likely from a miniature drawn by Louise based on a painting in the Mother House of the Daughters of Charity in Paris.(2)

From 1876 it seems to have been more officially used in publications, and now it is widely used, although to this day it has not been set down in the Constitutions of the Congregation.(3)

The purposes for which the Congregation of the Mission was formed were:

- The evangelisation of the poor
- The training of priests

In Ireland, historically, evangelisation of the poor has been done through conducting parish missions, working with the Deaf, with Travellers and others in need of assistance. Regarding priestly formation, examples run by the Irish Vincentians are the former major seminaries of Saint Joseph's Blackrock, All Hallows College and the Irish College Paris; and the minor seminaries of Castleknock College and Saint Patrick's College Armagh.

Today, the Vincentian Family is made up of nine members:(4)



Vincentian Family in Ireland

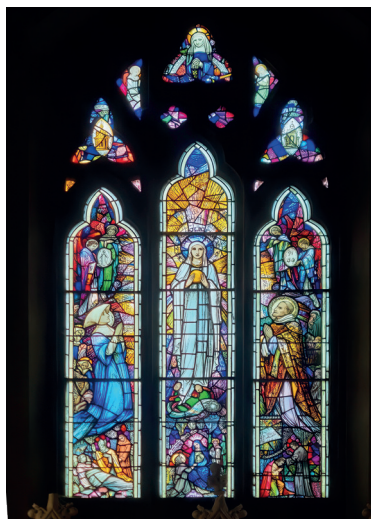
- **Vincentian Fathers**
- International Association of Charity (Ladies of Charity)
- **Daughters of Charity**
- **Society of St. Vincent de Paul**
- **Association of the Miraculous Medal**
- **Holy Faith Sisters**
- **Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice**
(Holy Faith are Partners)
- **Depaul International**
- **Vincentian Lay Missionaries**



Logo used by Irish Daughters of Charity today

In 1633, the Daughters of Charity were founded by Louise and Vincent. The Daughters had a practical spiritual calling, delivering soup and medicine directly to the poor who needed them in the streets of Paris. The motto of the Daughters is 'Caritas Christi urget nos' (The love of Christ urges us on). The logo used by the Irish Daughters today contains the English translation 'The Charity of Jesus Crucified Urges Us'.

In order to briefly explore the Vincentian charism through art, I will here show a few examples from an Irish context.



Statue of Saint Catherine Labouré DC, and stained glass window showing Saint Catherine and Saint Vincent

There is a stained glass window in Saint Peter's Church in Phibsboro, whose iconography depicts Saint Catherine Labouré on the left and Saint Vincent de Paul on the right. Saint Catherine was a Daughter of Charity to whom the Miraculous Medal was shown by the Virgin Mary in 1830 over the course of three conversations. A medal was to be designed and produced so that it could be worn by people in consequence of which Mary would bestow abundant graces on the wearer. The Association of the Miraculous Medal of Mary was founded as a result, and is one of the nine branches of the Vincentian Family. Above both figures in the stained glass, one can see the Miraculous Medal being held up.

In 1999, three commissioned icons by iconographer Fearghal O'Farrell were unveiled at Saint Peter's Church. They are of Saint Vincent, Saint Louise and Blessed Frédéric Ozanam.(5)



Vincentian icons by Fearghal O'Farrell, iconographer

REFERENCES:

- John E. Rybolt CM, 'The Emblem and Motto of the Congregation of the Mission', in *Vincentian Heritage Journal*, Vol. 22, Iss. 2, pp. 123-152.
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- 'The Icons, St Peter's Church': <https://www.stpetersphibsboro.ie/the-icons/>
- John Freund CM, 'Louise de Marillac, the painter' <https://famvin.org/enarchive/2012/10/21/louise-de-marillac-the-painter/>

NOTES

1. Rybolt, p. 137.
2. Rybolt, p. 125.
3. Rybolt, pp. 148-150.
4. Journey Through Vincentian Spirituality With Fr. Mark Noonan, C.M. – VinFormation : <https://vinformation.org/en/vincentian-spirituality-from-an-irish-perspective/>
5. The Icons | St Peter's Church: <https://www.stpetersphibsboro.ie/the-icons/>

Visitation Ordinances for Blackrock and Castleknock 1877-1889

Miriam van der Molen, Provincial Archivist

In this article, as a snapshot of a decade of Vincentian community life in the late nineteenth century, we will take a look at the instructions, or ordinances, of those who conducted visitations in an official capacity to the two houses of Saint Joseph's, Blackrock, and of Saint Vincent's, Castleknock. Four visitations are here presented for each house between 1877 and 1889. There were four in that time for Blackrock, and seven for Castleknock, so only four have been selected here for Castleknock in order to make the comparison easier.

Blackrock Visitations

The house of Saint Joseph's, Blackrock, has two visitation books preserved among its archives. One of them contains a copy of the text from the other, along with later additions. The books have entries spanning almost a century, from 1877 to 1971. There are ordinances of the Superior General, Commissaries and Irish Provincials which were written up in these visitation notebooks.

1877

The seminary at Saint Joseph's, Blackrock, was founded in 1873, and the first recorded visitation was by Mariano Maller CM, Spanish Provincial, sent by the Superior General, Eugène Boré CM, in 1877 in Father Maller's capacity as Commissary. His visit to Blackrock was one of a series of visitations of 'all the houses of the Provinces of Ireland and the United States'. John E Rybolt CM has written an article, in two parts, on the US portion of the visitation by Father Maller from 1877 to 1878, including the visitation report from Maller to Boré.(1)

The Maller visitation to Ireland preceded the US one. The Blackrock visitation lasted from 29 May to 3 June 1877 and begins, 'I Marianus Maller, unworthy Priest of the Congregation of the Mission, To the Rev. and dear Confreres and Brothers of the house of Black-Rock.' He states that the Blackrock house is the centre of the Irish province. He is happy with the house as a whole, and has just three points to make regarding separation, silence and punctuality:

1. I recommend, especially to our Students and to our Brothers to keep with all care the rule of separation.
2. The rule of silence is, as you know, the great means, not only of preserving outward regularity, but also of keeping ourselves

united to God, and consequently of advancing in perfection. Love that rule and be very faithful to it.

3. One of the things which are most earnestly recommended in the Congregation is punctuality in rising from bed in the morning at the first sound of the bell. Punctuality in all things is very pleasing to God, but in this it is peculiarly so in as much as by it we offer to divine Majesty the first fruits of the day. It also disposes us to go to morning prayer and meditation with fervour and alacrity.

1883

The second, undated, entry is the result of a fleeting visitation by Antoine Fiat CM, who had succeeded Eugène Boré CM as Superior General in 1878. From other archival documents, it is clear that the visitation happened in 1883. The brief entry is written in French, due to 'l'ignorance où je suis de la langue Anglaise et le peu de temps dont je suis'. Because of this lack of English and time, it is not an official visit according to all of the rules of the Congregation. While Fiat reports that the Blackrock house is excellent for students and seminarians, he does list a number of practices that he knows are occurring in the houses of the Irish Province, not just in Blackrock, which he intends to afford closer examination:

- Speaking during evening meals
- Not wearing the biretta
- Not reciting the breviary when on mission
- Not singing Sunday Mass due to a lack of physical space
- Not making beds until after lunch
- Going to recreation three times a day, and
- The need for financial vigilance.

From other archival documents, it can be seen that there were additional issues that Father Fiat had with some of the customs of members of the Irish Province. Some of these are covered in the first volume of *Colloque*.(2)

1886

The third entry, in July 1886, is by Flavian Demiautte CM, Commissary for Antoine Fiat CM, who 'found the genuine spirit of St Vincent Our Blessed Father' present at Blackrock, so only had 'a few ordinances to settle'. These are the reminders to observe the Rules of Separation and of Silence, the second of which would help to suppress uncharitable thoughts. He also exhorts those in Blackrock to beware of 'the comforts and the luxuries of life' leading to 'weakness of character'. He makes the observation that, in the case of Ireland, 'past persecution and present

poverty' have made it harder for such weakness to occur. The clergy, being 'the salt of the earth' must lead by good example in mortification.

1888

The fourth entry sees Maller's return in 1888. He refers back to his visitation of 1877 and is 'pleased and edified to see the same good spirit and regularity' as eleven years previously. The Rule of Separation, however, as he sees 'recommended in the ordinances of former visitations,' is still forgotten too often. He writes, 'it is of greater importance than it appears at first sight'. The other advice he gives is to remember the Rule of Silence, 'allowing us to walk in his holy presence'.

Castleknock Visitations

1877

Maller's visitation of Saint Vincent's College, Castleknock, preceded that of Blackrock, lasting from 19 to 27 May. He reports that he is 'very much pleased with the spirit of piety regularity and union that reigns in this Community' and believes this to stem from the 'principal work of the house, which is the College'. He has very few points of improvement to offer, but one of these is that spoken prayers could benefit from being said with 'more gravity and devotion'. Maller proceeds to name three ways in which the recitation of the Divine Office ought to be improved, so as to prevent its being said too hurriedly:

1. A verse should only be begun when the previous one is completed.
2. A pause should be made at the asterisk.
3. Pronunciation should be distinct and unhurried, and without 'making syncopes', i.e. making sure not to elide any parts of words.

The second point for amelioration is to remember to admonish each other in Chapter when necessary, and not to avoid doing so even if this is done out of respect for the other person!

Finally, the lay brothers appear to frequently break the rule of silence and should remember to follow it.

1878

From 1878 onwards, it was the Provincial who conducted visitations that were recorded in this book, rather than a representative from the General Curia. Peter Duff CM, Irish Provincial 1867-1888, found a 'spirit of regularity and piety' when he visited. While the Divine Office is recited well, vocal prayers are 'said too hurriedly', and the brothers should be more punctual attending their spiritual exercises.

Priests and brothers must remind themselves to observe the Rule of

Silence for 'that spirit of recollection so essential for our progress in virtue'.

He regrets that, since Maller came the previous year, community members are still neglecting to call each other out on their misdemeanours in Chapter, which he refers to as the Duty of Charity. He says, 'it is one of the misfortunes of those living in the world that they find no one to tell them of their faults, even of such faults as sometimes make them subjects of ridicule'.

1886

Father Duff conducted a visitation each in 1880, 1882 and 1884. The next one was in 1886, when he witnessed an 'excellent spirit of union and kind charity' with the community members' 'labour in the discharge of their respective duties' through 'unremitting zeal'. He reminds them to 'make still greater progress in regularity and fervour' in providing a good example for postulant brothers and ecclesiastics. He notes that the Rule of Silence of the lay brothers also sets a good example to the other community members. He finishes by reminding all to slow down their saying of vocal prayers as there is 'a degree of precipitation [...] which a little attention will easily remedy'.

God expects, of the College
The Servants, and the Postulant Brothers also
know that ~~the~~ our Dear lay-brothers have their
Rule of Silence to observe, and they are highly
edified when they see our Brothers observe the
Silence faithfully which their Rule prescribes,
and are encouraged by this good example to give themselves to God
in the manner of Sacramental P.

1886 – Ordinance regarding Rule of Silence following Castleknock Visitation

1889

Thomas Morrissey, Provincial 1888-1909, was very pleased with the community. He reminds the men to take special care during mental prayer to prepare for it well, and to make up any missed part of morning prayer in the evening. Punctuality and silence as part of saying prayers makes it a more profitable exercise. His final point is a reminder to be clean and avoid waste by being economical in the use of gas, fire and meat in a spirit of poverty.

*Summary of Comparison between
the Blackrock and Castleknock Houses*

A comparison of the issues mentioned in the ordinances of the two houses can be seen below and shows that each house had particular items of discipline that it struggled with. It is interesting that the ordinances appear to indicate that the Rule of Silence was consistently mentioned for both houses; however, the need for improved punctuality, and for better adherence to the Rule of Separation, were of greatest concern at Blackrock; and the need for admonishment at Chapter, and an ongoing need to be more earnest and mindful when reciting prayers, were issues specific to Castleknock.

Saint Joseph's, Blackrock	Saint Vincent's, Castleknock
1877 – Maller	1877 – Maller
• Rule of Separation • Rule of Silence • Punctuality in Rising	• Prayers lacking gravity • Admonishment needed in Chapter • Rule of Silence
1883 – Fiat	1878 – Duff
• Speaking during evening meals • Not wearing the biretta • Not reciting breviary on mission • Not singing Sunday Mass • Making beds too late • Recreation three times per day • Too little financial vigilance	• Prayers said too fast • Rule of Silence • Admonishment needed in Chapter
1886 – Demiautte	1886 – Duff
• Rule of Separation • Rule of Silence • Excessive comforts	• Greater regularity and fervour needed • Rule of Silence • Prayers said too fast
1888 – Maller	1889 – Morrissey
• Rule of Separation • Rule of Silence	• Due care needed when saying prayers • Cleanliness • Being economical with resources

NOTES

1. John E Rybolt CM, "American Vincentians in 1877–1878: The Maller Visitation Report (1)", *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 18 (1), Article 3 (1997).
2. John E Rybolt CM, "American Vincentians in 1877–1878: The Maller Visitation Report (2)", *Vincentian Heritage Journal* 19 (2), Article 3 (1998).
3. James H Murphy CM, "A Hundred Years Ago", *Colloque* 1 (1979), 29-37.

Events On A Journey To China(1)

Note: This transcribed text is from a diary that was in the possession of the family of Father Patrick Moloney CM, and was lent to Father Tom Davitt CM in 2004 when he typed the following transcription with explanatory notes. Father Moloney was educated at Saint Patrick's College Thurles and at Castleknock College.

Patrick Moloney CM (1835-1871)

With Notes, and translations where necessary, by Tom Davitt CM

I have put the original Latin or French in small italics, followed by my translation in square brackets. His French is somewhat idiosyncratic and I have left it as he wrote it. Those who understand French will realise that, even though he is writing in English, very often he is thinking in French.

A.M.D.G.

+

J.M.J.V.(2)

Oct. 1871

29

The 29th 8bre we embarked at Marseilles at 4 o'clock in the evening. We were obliged to remain in the port until 8 o'clock the following morning on account of a rupture in the steamer.

The evening passed very agreeably in company with 2 Jesuit fathers, 3 fathers of the Marists & 2 of the H.G.(3), besides 3 Sisters of St Joseph.

The following morning Mr Wynhoven(4) & I said Mass in our little cabin. The other priests & sisters assisted. One of the Jesuit Fathers had the same happiness.

30

What a day of sorrow & melancholy on board. Some looking like ghosts, others vomiting, others lying down sick, or fearing to be so but all in one way or other little comfortable.

I was sick all the day. Slept well during the night, had not time to take off the douillette(5) on account of the internal revolution which threatened.

31

No Mass on account of the dread of sea sickness. At 8 o'clock we passed by the Strait of Bonifacio which lies between the islands of Corsica et Sardinia. Nothing important took place. All were well after the sea sickness.

+(6)

November

1. Wed.

Deo Gratias. All the fathers said Mass. Fr LaP said it in the cabin at which several were present. All as gay as possible with good appetite this morning at breakfast. At 8 o'clock we perceive the Liparian Islands. At 12 I am quite close to one of them which is covered over with little houses, all one story high. Here & there are to be seen a few little chapels.

At the other side I see the volcano of Stromboli continually emitting white clouds of smoke which envelop the top of the mountain.

About one o'clock all our hope of the beautiful view of Messina is dissipated by some derangement in the engine.

In this position we are obliged to remain until the following morning. In vain have they hoisted the flags. No chance of advancing. The night comes on & with a dreadful storm. From ten to 2 o'clock in the morning great lightning & thunder. The Captain gave orders to return instead of advancing lest the ship be thrown by the tempest on one of the surrounding rocks and driven into [the]

+

Carrytides of Messina. During all this time I slept as sound as possible so that I neither saw the lightning which threatened to destroy the masts nor heard the roaring of the waves which put the alarm in the hearts of many.

Sit nomen Domini benedictum. [Praised be the name of the Lord].

2

At 4½ all awoke in our cabin. The P.J. cried out: Mass, Mass!(7) Oh how glad will not be the poor souls of Purgatory today. Great discussion to know if one could say Mass of the Dead with white vestments: Missal, Ordo, also all the Fathers are consulted. At last the case is found in Gury & fixed by a quotation from St Liguori. Vive St. Lig. cried out the Père Jenin.(8) Not bad.

At half past nine we were just in the Straits of Messina. On one side is to be seen the tomb of St. Clement, disciple & successor of St Peter. It is a large round tower projecting far into the sea. Under Trajan he was cast into the sea with an anchor about his neck, & as the Christians prayed the sea went back so that the body of the saint was found with the anchor where he was cast down.

+

I could not see the Carytides with satisfaction. It was a little late when breakfast was over. All seemed very well pleased with Messina and its beautiful mountains studded over with a variety of villages at the foot of the different mountains which spread far & wide on all sides. We looked

on with great pleasure at the beautiful belfries of the many churches which were to be seen. We unanimously saluted our amiable Saviour in each of them and told him to be ever our sole and only guide to the port of eternity. The morning passed beautifully but the evening was stormy and threw a gloom of sorrow on the countenances of all.

3

The morning stormy. All were more or less sick. No Mass for fear of sea sickness. No sight of land during the whole day. I had an agreeable chat with Fr Lagrange on the happiness of those who love God, etc. The Dominican Fr Paul Balañac O.D.O.P.(9)

4

Lat. Nord 33°49'. Long. E. de P. 23°18'. Distance parcourue(10) 290 miles.

5

Lat. N. 32° 0, long. E. de P. 28°27'. Dist. Parc. 270 miles. — à P.S. 90.

4

All pretty well. No sight of land. Mass was said by five or six of whom I was one.

5. Sun.

All well & said Mass. Fr Janin said it in the 1st cabin at which several were present.

In the evening at 3 p.m. we saw Damietta, a miserable looking place. I saw two wrecks in the port. About 8 we reached Port Said where we remained till 8 o'clock the following morning.

6

MM Wyn. Janin & Moger went out into the town of P.S. to say their Masses at the church of the Franciscan Fathers where they were well received and got a supply of wine and breads for the holy Sacrifice. At 10 o'clock we met a caravan of Arabs with numbers of dromedaries. Some said they

+

were going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. About 10 o'clock p.m. we arrived at Ismailia. The castle of the ex-emperor Napoleon is to be seen with the little chateau which was made for the Empress of France at the time of the inauguration of the Canal of Suez. From time to time we met some little fly boats belonging to the Arabs. Nothing but a wild desert to be seen on both sides. In the evening we remained in a lake called Salt Lake

for the night until 7 o'clock next morning. It was the first very warm day we met with.

The length of the Canal of Suez from the Med. Sea to the Red one is 64 miles or 87 kilometres.

+

7

In the middle of the Salt Lake we all said Mass. About 10 we reached Suez where we saw about 4 large boats or steamers anchored in the harbour. One was crowded with a large number of Mahometans all bound for Mecca. From the port can be seen the town of Suez, which appears very antiquated & badly formed, surrounded with a vast desert on the N. & W., having the Red Sea on the E. & S., and on the South East a chain of mountains called the M. of Suez. At 3 o'clock P.M. we left Suez: it was a delightful evening. What a wonder of grave & terrible souvenir: the Passage of the R. Sea. How have we not admired the wonder of God in his work. At the left the Captain showed us Mount Pharoah which is not far from Mount Sinai but which was seen only at 6 o'clock the following morning. In sight of land until the following evening. Kilom = $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile

$$\begin{aligned} 85 &= \frac{3}{4} \times 85 \\ &= 225/4 = 63\frac{3}{4} \end{aligned}$$

+

8

Octave of All Saints Day. All said Mass. Delightful weather. We were gently wafted on by a gentle strong breeze. Saw land on one side until dinner. We met 2 islands – uninhabited. On one of them there was a lighthouse.

In the night we met with a lighthouse which gave a beautiful light. It was on one of the barren islands which are in the B. G. It seems that men come from the shore to light it etc.(11)

9

The Fathers said Mass D.G. Getting very warm. All in good health.

10

All said Mass. Fr Mauger sick. The sea as smooth as a glass and the heat seemed insupportable to many. No breeze. No land to be seen the whole day. The night very warm, almost impossible to sleep. Many remained on board.(12)

11

Beautiful morning. All said Mass except Fr Mauger who is sick. On the left of the steamer we have some barren cliffs. There is an excellent

breeze. Fr Wyhn. sick on account of a draught of air. We saw the Straits of Bab el Mandeb about midday. We saw land all the evening.

12 Sunday

Delightful morning. All said Mass. The Père Callu said Mass in the 1st cabin.

+

13

After saying Mass we left Aden about 8 o'clock A.M. Excellent weather but the ship appeared lonesome on account of the diminution of the passengers for the Islands of Bourbon & Mauritius. The Rev. Fathers of the Holy Ghost viz. Callu and Mauger with the three Sisters of St Joseph left us. Also Mr Biberon & Fr Lagrange. We had a beautiful view of the Mountains of Arabia until late in the day. We saw nothing on the other side.

14

All said mass: a fine breeze. No sight of land until 10 o'clock when we came in sight of the African coast and passed the Cape Guardafui about 7 in the evening.

+

15

All said Mass D.G. A nice breeze, very cool. No land to be seen.

16

I said Mass D.G. A pretty rough day. All more or less sick. We have had rain in the evening.

17

We had 4 Masses D.G. Pretty cool morning. I was witness of a chat in politics between Frs Jen. Lap. & young Martin. I saw the little use of using harsh expressions & I was able to appreciate the necessity of the spirit of sweetness.

18

Delightful morning. We were nourished with the Bread of Angels. *Laus tibi Jesu et M.* [Praise to you Jesus and M.]. No land to be seen.

19 *Dimanche* [Sunday]

The Père Kirk said the 7½ o'clock Mass. All well. Pretty warm weather. We passed the Maldives & Laquedives Islands between 5 & 6 o'clock P.M. but did not see them, being supper.

+

20

All said Mass D.G. The sea was as calm as could be. Very warm for some time. It became very rough in the evening. The greater part of the passengers sick. I was the only one who had a good appetite for supper. Mr Wynhoven sick.

21

Presentation of the B. V. Mary. We had 3 Masses D.G. I said mine for Fr Tom Kennedy. Delightful morning. All quite well. We put anchor about 10 o'clock A.M. After some minutes we went ashore and saw the P.P. who received us very kindly.

+

22

All the other Fathers were ashore. Mr Wynhoven & I said Mass in our cabin as usual. Mr Wynhoven was delighted with the reception he met with from Frs Janin, Forde, Kirk, David & Laporte. As also with the P.P. of Point of Gal, Father Perez.

We left the harbour in good health about 2½ o'clock P.M.. There was a nice breeze and one of the most ravishing views I ever had as we went along the Coast of Ceylon. All the land near the shore as also the numerous little mountains scattered everywhere in the Island were all covered with cocoanut trees. We had sight of land till 6 in the evening.

+

23

We all (3) said Mass D.G. Nice morning. Mr Wynhoven slept nothing for the last three nights. A magnificent sunset.

24

We had Mass D.G. Weather as usual. *Laus tibi Jesu et Mariae Immaculatae*. [Praise to you Jesus and Mary Immaculate]. We passed the Penang islands at 10 P.M.

26 Sunday

Delightful morning. Saw the island of Sumatra as soon as I came on deck. I said Mass in the cabin & Mr Wynhoven said it for the passengers. We had sight of land almost all the day: met a great deal of floating timber and some few sailing boats.

27

The morning very close in the beginning but about 8 o'clock a heavy shower of rain. Mass was said with the greatest ease and pleasure. Praise be to Jesus!

+

28

A fine morning. Mass D.G. After passing an immense number of little islands we harboured in Singapore dock-yard about 10 o'clock. We met two ch. brothers who came on deck. We went ashore with them and after a pleasant trip, though with two different ponies, we reached their school. Thence we went to see the Bishop of the place.

We met a Jesuit Father and two other Fathers of the Foreign Missions. We were at last at home, for we got a very warm reception. Mgr asked us to dine that evening at the procure & to remain there also. We gladly consented.

+

29

Having said our Masses & taken a cup of coffee we took leave of our hospitable abode and reached the dock about 7 A.M. The Père Coste came with us & left us about 7½. We only left the dock about 9 A.M. the sea was pretty calm but very soon a very heavy storm of rain put all in agitation. The sea became rougher as we advanced we lost sight of land about 7 o'clock P.M.

30

I said Mass Deo Gratias with the greatest ease. Mr Wynhoven was sick as also a great many other passengers. The roughness of the sea continues.

Names of passengers: Mr Justin Emile Belen, *S-directeur de la filature de soie de* [Assistant manager of the silk-weaving factory in] Comeoka, Yokohama. Mr Prat, Mr Brunat et Madame, Mr et Mme Rappard, Benson Spencer, Mr Lyons, Walshe, etc, Le Père Chamaison.

+

Décembre. Le Premier vendredi. [December. The First Friday]

I said Mass, thanks be to Jesus & Mary. A very nice day but somewhat stormy. Many sick among the passengers. We passed the island of Pala Kondor about 1 o'clock P.M. The same monotony reigns during the whole day. We arrived at the port St James about 10 o'clock P.M. where we remained till the morrow.

2

A delightful morning we both said Mass. We entered the river Saigon about 10½ and after a nice sail up the river we reached Saigon about 3 P.M. It was extremely warm. We went to the Missions seminary after dinner where we were received with great warmth. (13) I was greatly

edified by the singing of the Rosary in the chapel. We were 12 missionaries at dinner the following day, amongst whom was Mr Col...

3 Dimanche

Nous avons dit la Ste Messe chez les Missions Etrangères. A deux heures et demi nous nous sommes embarqué et à trois heures nous avons quitté le port de Saigon. Au tombeau de la nuit nous avons rencontré un bateau annamite dans laquelle il y avait 9 personnes. Le bateau fut mis en mille morceaux & les gens se sont jetés à l'eau, ou y furent jetés par l'impétuosité du choc. On a baissé un canot et on a sauvé 6 ne sachant pas ce qui est devenu de 3 autres. Pauvres gens!!

[3 Sunday. We said Holy Mass in the house of the Foreign Missions. At half past two we went on board and by three o'clock we had left Saigon harbour. At nightfall we rammed a Vietnamese boat with 9 persons on board. The boat was split into a thousand pieces & the people jumped overboard, or were thrown overboard by the suddenness of the impact. A boat was launched and 6 were rescued not knowing what became of the other 3. Unfortunate people!!]

4

J'ai dit la Messe D. Gratias. [I said Mass, thanks be to G.] We have seen the coast of China all the day. According as we advanced it became much rougher.

5

No Mass. Extremely rough & almost all sick.(14)

6

No Mass. Very rough in the morning, it has become much calmer in the course of the day. Hopes of saying Mass tomorrow.

7

No Mass. The morning very wet & rough. Mr Bellen Justin Emile, S.Directeur de la filature de soie de Tomeoka, Yokohama. Le 8 Dec. à Hong Kong.(15)

8 Im. Con.

Calm sea. All said Mass. We arrived at Hong Kong at 10 A.M. Mr Martine came to meet us to the steamer. In the evening we paid a visit to the Italian Fathers, viz. Raymundi etc, & also to the Dominican ones.

At five o'clock P.M. we went to Vespers and were extremely edified by the beauty & good order which reigned in the whole proceedings.

9

We went with Brother Pharagyn to see the Happy Valley in a little boat and came back in a Lee-back.

10 Sunday

I went to H. Mass at 8 o'clock at which one of the Fathers preached in Portuguese. I was sorry that I could not comply to the wish of some of the Fathers to preach at the 10 o'clock Mass.

The rest of the day passed in giving & receiving visits etc, & in going aboard

+

at 3 o'clock. The Fr.Fr. Osouf & Martine were with us.(16) We did not leave the harbour until the following morning at 9 o'clock.

11

We said Mass Deo Gratias. We passed by an immensity of little Islands all appeared quite barren. This day passed on well.

12

Mr Wynhoven sick all the time. No Mass. Very cold.

13

No Mass. Want of one to hold the chalice.

14

Mass Deo Gratias.

15

Mass, *O Jésus soyez à jamais loué et béni de toutes les créatures.*

L.J.C. [O Jesus, be for ever praised and thanked by all creatures. P(raised be) J(esus) C(hrist)].

+

We remained at Shanghay until the 19 when I embarked on the Glengyle for Kiu-Kiang. In the meantime we visited in the first place our Sisters who are ten, all quite happy. The Consul of France. Les Missions Etrangères, les Pères Jésuites, & le 18 nous sommes allés à Sicabé où nous avons vu les Orphelins et les Orphelines comme aussi les Enfants Trouvés. Nous étions tous contents de cette visite. Le mercredi soir à 8 heures je suis venu à bord, accompagné de Père Aymeri et mon cher compagnon de voyage Mr W.(17) Notre séparation était un peu triste.

[The (Paris) Foreign Missions, the Jesuit Fathers, & on the 18th we went to Sicabé where we saw the male and female orphans and also the foundlings. We were all happy with this visit. At 8 o'clock on

Wednesday evening I came on board, accompanied by Fr Aymen and my dear travelling companion Fr W. Our parting was rather sad].

21

A fine day. No Mass but let Jesus be for ever blessed.

+

22

A pretty nice day. About 2 o'clock we passed Nan-King which seems to be nothing more than a miserable little village. In the morning we were obliged to remain about ten hours without moving as there was a great thick fog. D.G.

23

A delightful day. No fog. No Mass. Oh! Jesus be propitious to us poor sinners. About ten o'clock we passed the town of Gnan-Kiang where I saw a pagoda extremely high, elegantly ornamented and having bells suspended on all sides of it. What a heartbreak to see such triumphs of Satan over poor creatures bearing the image of Jesus imprinted on their very souls.

+

A.M.D.G.

J.M.J.V.

Route de Kiu-Kiang à...(18)

20

The 20th of January 1872 we left KK about midday hoping to reach Hou-Keou the same evening. Our hopes were soon frustrated for in a short time our boat-men pulled on side of the river where there were already many little boats harboured. They said the weather was too rough and that they could not venture further on. We went to take a walk on the side of the river. There nothing but a few cabins were to be seen. A mandarin [??] jing with a sort of great pleasure at a little white pony. (It seems that horses are rather scarce in this country. The ones I have seen resembled starved asses more than anything else). We regretted in some respect to have left that day for we had no prospects of having Mass the following day. We thought to return on foot as it was only 20 lis, i.e. about two leagues, and to return early in the morning, but the proposal had a good many difficulties. Then we said we would arrive early at Han-Keou and that we could say it in the wharf which belonged to the Europeans there.

21

Finally another more agreeable reflection came into the mind of Mr Portes.(19) It was that of trying to erect a little altar in our little bark which was readily done & in a most fantastic & graceful style. The following morning, feast of St Agnes, at the break of day we got up the altar & both said Mass. *Deo Gratias et laus tibi Jesu*. [Thanks be to God and praise to you, Jesus]. About 9 o'clock we reached Hou-Keou where we were obliged to wait the visit of the Custom-House officers ere we could advance. That was the affair of 4 or 5 hours.

+

Vers 4 heures du soir nous sommes arrivés à la Koung et vers les 9 heures du soir à Pang Fung. Tout était bien tranquille. Le port était déjà rempli de petits navires qui devaient y passer la nuit. Le lendemain il y avait un vent très fort et pas moyen de partir, ainsi nous étions à y rester toute la journée. J'ai proposé à Mr Portes d'aller monter la montagne qui était à coté à nous. Après diner nous voilà en route, etc., etc.

[Around 4 o'clock in the evening we arrived in Pang Fung. All was quite calm. The harbour was already full of little ships which were to spend the night there. The following day there was a very strong wind and no chance of leaving, so we had to remain there the entire day. I suggested to Fr Portes that we go climb the mountain which was close to us. After dinner we got away, etc. etc.]

23

Lou-Yie-Miaou. Nan-gang. (U-tchen).

The las-pan avait 1000 sapèques pour cette pagode mais le lac fut trop violent et il n'a pas pu aborder où il a fallu pour y aller. Il a dit que c'était notre Dieu qui a fait cela car il n'a pas voulu qu'il y aille à cause de nous. Vers les 3 heures du soir nous voilà à U-tchen. La neige tombait à grands flots et il gelait au même temps. Mais nous avons eu l'espérance d'être à la maison de la Mission en quelques instances. Mais nos esperances sont trompées. Les officiers de la douane viennent pour examiner nos effets, et voyant que nous étions européens ils ont dit qu'il fallait attendre un examen minutieux, afin de nous empêcher de poursuivre notre route etc., et nous chercher des Chrétiens.

[had 1000 sapeks for this pagoda but the lake was too rough and he was unable to get as near as was necessary to get there. He said it was our God who brought this about because he did not want him to go there because of us. Around 3 o'clock in the afternoon there we were at U-tchen. Snow was falling in big flakes and at the same time it was freezing. But we had been expecting to be at the Mission residence in a few moments. But our hopes were disappointed. The Customs Officers come to inspect our belongings and, seeing that we were Europeans

said it would be necessary to wait for a detailed examination, in order to hinder us from continuing our journey, etc and contacting Christians].

+

Ayant passé ce soir dans la barque nous sommes allés à la Mission le jour suivant. M. Portes est allé voir le mandarin et lui a demandé la raison de tout cela, lui disant etc., etc. Pendant tous ces entrefaits je suis resté à U-Tcheng jusqu'au 28 et alors après la Ste. Messe, diner, etc., je suis parti pour Kieu-tchang vers 2 heures du soir. Notre petite barque s'en alla rondement car il fut porté par un vent très favorable. Après 3 heures de marche nous voilà abordés par les gens du gouvernement. Ils ont demandé beaucoup de choses. Il me semblait qu'ils connaissaient mon nom, car je l'ai entendu repeter plusieurs fois. On s'est arrêté là, soit par force ou par leur propre vouloir. Je n'en savait rien.

[Having spent this evening on board the boat we went to the Mission the following day. Fr Portes went to see the mandarin and asked him the reason for all this, telling him etc, etc. During all these event I stayed in U-Tcheng until the 28th and then after Hly Mass, dinner, etc., I left for Kieu-tchang around 2 in the afternoon. Our little boat headed off briskly because it was carried by a very favourable wind. After walking for 3 hours we were approached by government officials. They asked many things. It semed to me that they knew my name, because I heard it repeated many times. We were kept there, either by compulsion or because they wanted to keep us. I didn't know anything.]

29

Le lendemain, fête de St F. de S. on est parti seulement vers les 8 heures du matin. Comme il n'y avait pas de vent on fut obligé de courir ou plutôt marcher très lentement sur le bord trainant la barque par des cordes.

[The following day, feast of St F. de S., we did not move on until around 8 o'clock in the morning. As it was windless we had to run, or rather walk very slowly, along the bank pulling the boat with ropes.]

30

Le lendemain meilleur temps pour voyager. On a hissé les voiles. Vers les dix heures un mandarin avec sa suite est venu voir mon passeport. En arrivant j'étudiais tranquillement. Il m'a salué gracieusement et instinctivement je la lui ai rendu. Joinant les mains et s'inclinant et ensuite les élevant jusqu'aux yeux {indéchiffrable words} il a le {indéchiffrable words}. Il m'a demandé une foule de choses. Je n'ai rien compris.

[The next day had better weather for traveling. We hoisted the sails. Around ten o'clock a mandarin and his entourage arrived to examine my passport. At his arrival I was quietly studying. He greeted me politely

and I instinctively returned the gesture. Joining hands and bowing and then raising the hands to eye level {*indecipherable words*} he {*indecipherable words*}. He asked me a whole load of things. I did not understand a single word].

+

Ayant vu le passe-port il m'a salué et s'en retourné. Alors nous avons visite des gens de la douaine et ayant vu que j'ai quelques bouteilles de vin dans un panier qu'on m'avait donné pour Mgr B. un de ces gens a prit une bouteille et l'ayant regardée plusieurs fois il m'a dit quelquechose en me montrant la bouteille. Je l'ai pris de ses mains et je lui ai fait signe que c'était pour boire. Il a voulu l'avoir main je n'étais si bon et je l'ai envoyé un rudement; les autres en ont ris. Ce soir-là nous avons quitté le lac Panyang. Ayant monté un fleuve quittant les montagnes, nous sommes resté je ne sais où. Même on a marché pendant la nuit et avant le jour. C'est à peine là on a fait quelques li, car il y avait un vent contraire. On m'a dit qu'il y avait encore 300 li à faire. Nous sommes resté à un endroit qui fut tout occupé de pêcheurs. Il m'a semblé qu'il y avait au moins 4000.

[Having seen my passport he bid me farewell and withdrew. Then we had a visit from the Customs people. When they saw that I had several bottles of wine in a basket, which I had been given for Mgr B., one of these people took a bottle and having looked at it several times he said something, pointing at the bottle. I took it back from him and made signs indicating that it was for drinking. He wanted it in his hand and I was not so good and rudely sent him away; the others laughed. That evening we exited from Lake Panyang. Having gone up-stream on a river coming down from the mountains, we stopped I don't know where. We had even walked during the night and before daybreak. At that place we travelled only a few *li*, because there was a headwind. I was told that there were another 300 *li* to be covered. We stopped at a place crowded with fishermen. There seemed to me to be about 4,000.]

Février 1

Une belle journée. Le soleil parait et on a eu un peu de vent favorable. Tout va bien.

[February 1. A fine day. The sun came out and we had a bit of a favourable wind. All goes well.]

2

Fête de la Purification. Je suis encore loin de ma destination. C'est un beau jour. On avance, mais lentement. Je suis empressé avec mes confrères pour célébrer les Saintes Mystères de Jésus Christ... {about three words, too faint to decipher}.

[Feast of the Purification. I am still far from my destination. It's a lovely day. We make progress, but slowly. My confreres and I hastened to celebrate the Holy Mysteries of Jesus Christ...]

+

On m'a dit que nous avons encore 240 li à faire avant d'arriver à Fou-tcheou; et 400 avant d'arriver à Kieu-tchang.

[I have been told we still have 240 *li* before arriving at Fou-tcheou; and 400 before reaching Kieu-tchang].

3

C'était une belle journée. Un vent fai...{?}. Nous avons rencontrés dans le soir le Kei-Fan. Il est venu me voir et il voulait me faire comprendre beaucoup de choses. Mais c'était temps perdu. Demain j'espère savoir tout.

[It was a beautiful day. A wind...(?). In the evening we met the Kei-Fan. He came to see me and wanted to make me understand many things. But it was a waste of time. Tomorrow I hope to know everything].

4

Dimanche de la Sexagesime. Un vent très favorable, nous avons fait 80 li à peu près. Nous avons passé de petites collines, une ville considérable et un grand pagode. Tout près de Fan-tcheou nous passons la nuit. Demain Deo Gratias j'espère de dire la Ste Messe. Quel bonheur.

[Sexagesima Sunday. A very favourable wind, we did almost 80 *li*. We passed some small hills, a largish town and a big pagoda. We spend the night quite close to Fan-tcheou. Tomorrow I hope to say Holy Mass. What happiness].

5

Nous sommes arrivé à Fan-tcheou vers 7 ou 8 heures du matin. Je suis allé à l'Orphélinat, mais pas moyen de dire la Messe. Comme j'y entrais on a sonné la cloche et tous sont allé à la chapelle, chantant etc. On m'a entouré de toutes sortes d'attention mais je n'ai pas pu parler et ainsi après quelques moments je suis parti. Trois sont venu m'accompagner au barque.

[We reached Fan-tcheou around 7 or 8 in the morning. I went to the Orphanage, but there was no way I could say Mass. As I was going in the bell was rung and every one went to the chapel, singing etc. I was surrounded by all sorts of attention but I was unable to speak and so, after a short while, I left. Three people accompanied me to the boat].

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6

Nous sommes parti ce matin d'un endroit tout près de Fan-tcheou. Il a plu toute la journée; on a bien marché; un vent très favorable. On

m'a dit à diner que nous sommes à 40 li de Kieu-tchang. Quelle joie pour mon pauvre et peu vertueux coeur! Il en a sent les heureux effets. Laudetur Jesus Christus, etc, Amen.

[We left this morning from a place very near Fan-tcheou. It rained all day; we walked a lot; a very favourable wind. At dinner I was told that we were 40 li from Kieu-tchang. What a joy for my poor not very virtuous heart! It had felt the happy effects of this. Praised be Jesus Christ, etc, Amen].

7

J'étais complètement trompé dans mes espérances. On n'a pas bien marché; un vent contraire. Pas moyen d'arriver quoique nous sommes bien près.

[My hopes were totally shattered. We didn't get far; a head wind. No way of getting there though we were very close].

8

Un vent favorable. Vers 8 heures on s'arrête. On m'a dit que nous y sommes. Après une promenade d'une heure peut-être je me trouve dans l'endroit si longuement souhaité! Béni soit Jésus j'ai dit la Ste Messe, et j'avais tout fini pour le dîner.

[A favourable wind. We stopped about 8 o'clock. They told me we were there. After walking for about an hour I found myself in the place long wished for! Blessed be Jesus I said Hly. Mass, and had everything done by dinner time].

L.J.C.

La neige est restée pendant 15 journées à peu près après. Enfin je commence le chinois. Je ne le trouve pas trop difficile quoque je ne fais que très peu de progrès. Pâques arrive; beaucoup de Chrétiens viennent malgré les pluies presque continues. Mr Anot(20) est ici pour Pâques et il est resté jusqu'au lundi de Quasimode.

[The snow remained for about 15 days afterwards. At last I begin Chinese. I am not finding it too difficult although I am not making much progress. Easter arrives; many Chinese come despite almost continuous rain. Fr Anot is here for Easter and is staying until the Monday after Low Sunday].

+

De Kieu-tchang à S. Kiao. Lundi le 27 mai 1872 Sa G[randeur] Mgr Bray,(21) accompanied by Fathers Rouger,(22) Ou et Moloney est parti for Kiou Kiang. He was accompanied as far as the boat by the seminarists & Christians. There was music all the time & great was the joy of the Christians. We embarked about midday. I was very sad leaving Mr

Rouger & the seminarists. Having a fine breeze & the current of the river we reached Fou-tchou about 7 o'clock in the evening. That evening Mgr went to the residence. I reached there the following morning & remained there till the 3rd of June. On Wednesday morning, the 5th, we reached N-tchang & remained there till the following day, & on Saturday the 8th we reached the district of Phong-tcheou-fan. The following morning about ten(23) o'clock San-Kiao amidst the cracking of petards & the numerous body of Christians.

Hic habitabo quoniam elegeram.

[Here will be my dwelling place because I have chosen it]. (Ps 132:14)

L.J.C.

NOTES

1. This is the author's title. He was a first cousin of the grandmother of Frs T & P Dunning CM. He was born in Co Tipperary in 1846, and joined the CM in Paris 1866, ordained 1871. He died in China 22 January 1882.
2. A.M.D.G stand for Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam, To the Greater Glory of God. J.M.J.V. stand for Jesus, Mary, Joseph, Vincent; this practice used to be common at the start of letters, etc.
3. H.G. seems to refer to Holy Ghost priests, (Spiritans).
4. This is the spelling consistently used by the author for Frans-Huub Wijnhoven (1848-1894), a Dutch Vincentian. All Vincentians mentioned in the diary will be identified in the notes.
5. An ankle-length overcoat worn by French priests over their soutane, especially outdoors. We had some in my time in St Joseph's.
6. The sign + indicates a new page in the manuscript; each page has this sign at the top.
7. "The P.J." probably means "The Père Jenin" which occurs a short while later.
8. The end of the line is torn and scraped but it seems obvious that the reference is to St Alphonsus.
9. The author wrote O.D., presumably meaning "Order of Dominicans". A later hand added "O.P.", for Order of Preachers, the usual letters used after a Dominican's name.
10. The French word for "covered", referring to distance.
11. The second letter may be Y. Obviously the two initials refer to some area of the sea south of Suez, but I cannot find anything on a map that would identify it.
12. Given the context, "on board" must mean "on deck".
13. There is an indecipherable abbreviation before "Missions".
14. The last word at the bottom of the page is indecipherable.
15. The words from "Mr Bellen" to "Hong Kong" have been inserted in pen, in smaller writing, probably later. Some of the names are not spelt the same as elsewhere.
16. The "Fr.Fr" is an abbreviation for "Fathers", following the French usage of "MM".
17. Angelo Michele Aymeri (1820-1880), an Italian Vincentian.
18. He did not insert a place name after à. Unfortunately, he did not write an account of how or where he spent Christmas 1871 or the start of the New Year 1872.

19. Ambroise Portes (1840-1902), a French Vincentian.
20. Antoine Anot (1814-1893), a French Vincentian.
21. Gérard Bray (1825-1905), a French Vincentian. He became a bishop in 1870.
22. François-Adrien Rouger (1828-1887), a French Vincentian. He became a bishop in 1883.
23. He wrote “till” very clearly, just as he had written it a few lines above. He must have meant “ten”, though.

Vincent de Paul: Model of Holiness and Evangelisation(1)

Pat Collins CM

Introduction

The Second Vatican Council stated that there were two universal callings which were shared by all the baptised, namely the calls to holiness and evangelisation. One cannot be truly holy without evangelising, and evangelisation will only be fruitful to the extent that we are holy. St John Paul II could say in par. 90 of *The Mission of the Redeemer*,

“The universal call to holiness is closely linked to the universal call to mission. Every member of the faithful is called to holiness and to mission. This was the earnest desire of the Council. The Church’s missionary spirituality is a journey toward holiness.”

What I want to suggest in this reflection is the fact that St Vincent de Paul was the living epitome of what the Council and St John Paul spoke about. He was born in 1580. There was not a single year during his lifetime when France was at peace. As a result, his native country was afflicted by many problems, wars, death and destruction, dislocated lives, destitution, disease etc. From a religious point of view, Vincent was living in the Counter Reformation era which followed the conclusion of the Council of Trent in 1563.

Life

Although he was born into a conventionally Catholic family and was ordained, illegally, at the age of 19, there was little or no evidence that Vincent was either particularly holy or committed to evangelisation at that time. Indeed, the evidence points to the fact that he was worldly, unscrupulous and ambitious to advance his career. It was only a number of years later, when he had endured a spiritual crisis, that he really began to take his priestly duties seriously, and began to evangelise, firstly on the vast estates of the de Gondi family where he was the tutor to the de Gondi’s children. It was during that time that Vincent began to grow in holiness and in commitment to the evangelisation of the poor country people. From the beginning he augmented his preaching with practical deeds of mercy, e.g., with the aid of the Ladies of Charity, and the Daughters of Charity who he had founded together with St Louise de Marillac. In the final decades of his long public life, Vincent de Paul

had achieved national prominence for his role in the post-Tridentine reformation of the Catholic Church in France.

Death

In the early hours of 27 September 1660, after a long and painful period of failing health, Vincent de Paul died at the age of seventy-nine while sitting fully clothed in a chair. The very next day, on the morning of 28 September, the chapel of Saint-Lazare was filled beyond capacity by a crowd that included the papal nuncio, six bishops, many other ecclesiastical dignitaries, members of the nobility, as well as Ladies of Charity, Daughters of Charity, Vincent's own missionaries, along with the common people, who were there in large numbers. Following the requiem mass, the coffin was placed in a stone vault in the choir of the church.

On 23 November 1660 the funeral mass was followed by another occasion during which bishop Henri de Maupas du Tour, the bishop of Le Puy, delivered a eulogy. He was chosen for this task because he had known Vincent ever since the time he was a chaplain to the de Gondi family. Apparently, du Tour was a relative of Emmanuel du Gondi. Not only that, but he was also a long-standing friend of Vincent's and admired him greatly.

When one reads the published version of the bishop's eulogy, which took more than two hours to deliver, it is evident that he thought that, because of his many virtues, Vincent was a saint. He made three main points about his mentor. Firstly, he stressed the fact that Vincent was extraordinarily humble. Secondly, he drew attention to Vincent's remarkable charity.(2) Thirdly, he highlighted the fact that Vincent was a wonderful peacemaker and prayed continually that France would be peaceful.(3)

Soon after the delivery of the eulogy, another bishop, Louis Abelly, who knew Vincent ever since 1633, wrote a three-volume biography about his friend. It was published in 1664. It was not only based on what bishop Maupas du Tour had said, but greatly expanded the content with quotations and recollections about the founder of the Congregation of the Mission. Fr. Edward Udovic CM, an American Vincentian scholar, has stated that it is clear that both bishops intended to inaugurate a process of reflection that could come to fruition with the canonisation of Vincent.

Initiation of the canonisation process

At the time, Church rules stipulated that fifty years had to elapse before a person's cause for beatification and canonisation could be introduced. However, in 1697 the General Assembly of the Vincentians decided to initiate remote preparation for a formal submission in 1710. This

was prudent in view of the fact that there was a tremendous amount of preparatory work to be done, such as collecting documents, interviewing people who knew Vincent while they were still alive and collecting supportive letters from seventy-two prominent members of Church and state, e.g., Louis XIV of France, James III of England and bishop Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet. On 1 January 1713, the Lazarist Superior General, Jean Bonnet, wrote in his New Year's circular letter that he estimated Vincent's cause might only take five or six more years to complete. His optimism proved unfounded. Vincent's cause was formally opened in Rome on 4 October 1709. Sometime later his body was exhumed in 1712, i.e., 53 years after his death. The written account of an eyewitness stated that "the eyes and nose alone showed some decay". However, when the body was exhumed again in 1737, it was found to have decomposed due to an underground flood.

The devil's advocate

Cardinal Prospero Lambertini, who was later elected as Pope Benedict XIV, was appointed to act as the devil's advocate. As the author of a massive work entitled, *A Treatise on the Beatification and Canonization of the Servants of God* (1734-1738), he was for a time a formidable opponent. In 1717 he presented his three main reasons why Vincent should not be canonized.

- Firstly, he questioned Vincent's orthodoxy in virtue of the fact that he was a friend of a well-known Jansenist called *Jean du Vergier de Hauranne*, the Abbot of Saint-Cyran, (1581 – 6 October 1643). He was a French Catholic priest who introduced the heresy of Jansenism into France. While Vincent didn't accept the Abbot's views, his relationship with the Abbé, was generally close and amicable until 1644. After Saint Cyran's arrest, Vincent refused to testify against him or gave testimony so confusing that it was useless.(4)
- Secondly, in his earlier years as a priest, Vincent had abandoned several of his parish appointments.
- Thirdly, as a result of claiming to have been the slave of an alchemist in North Africa, Lambertini maintained that Vincent's knowledge about mixing medicines was considered to be a flirtation with the occult and therefore the devil.(5)

Apparently, the postulator of Vincent's cause had no difficulty in nullifying Lambertini's objections.

Vincent and the fruits/charisms of the Spirit

Although the main sign of holiness was and continues to be the exercise of virtue and the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Gal 5:22–23, i.e.,

“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” All the evidence pointed to the fact that Vincent was richly endowed with these Christ-like characteristics. Those discerning whether a person should be beatified and canonized also look for evidence of the exercise of the charismatic gifts. As far as this was concerned Lambertini said, ‘Although charismatic graces are not necessary to prove heroic virtues, and therefore it is not necessary that St Vincent de Paul should have been endowed with them in order to perceive that he had attained to heroic virtue; but, we will bring forward many matters of moment, from which it may be inferred that the servant of God was possessed of those gifts which are now the subject of discussion.’

Unfortunately, Lambertini did not offer examples of Vincent’s charismatic powers. One could hazard a guess that he thought that Vincent had the gift of the utterance of wisdom and knowledge, as well as the gifts of the discernment of spirits and seeing visions, e.g., when he had a prophetic type of image at the time of Jane de Chantal’s death. It would have to be said that Vincent did not exercise the charisms in the way that people like St Vincent Ferrer, Francis of Assisi and Francis of Paola did. Pierre Collet said in a biography that was published in 1747 that during his lifetime Vincent was instrumental in the spiritual healing of a Visitandine nun at the monastery in Troyes in 1637.

Confirmatory miracles

The Church only canonizes a person if two confirmatory miracles take place as a result of prayers which are offered through the intercession of the saintly person. Testimonies of twenty-one such miracles were collected after Vincent’s death. Vincent de Paul was beatified on August 13 1729 in St Peter’s Basilica, Rome. On 24 June 1736 Pope Clement XII accepted two miracles as being supernatural: a nun was cured of ulcers, and a laywoman was cured of paralysis, and so the canonization could go ahead. The superior general of the time, Jean Couty, was very conscious of the enormous expense involved in a canonization ceremony. He resolved, therefore, to wait until a number of other causes came to completion. Then he would propose a single ceremony with shared expenses. On 13 June 1737 Vincent de Paul was finally canonized together with St John Francis Regis, SJ (1597-1640). I presume that the Jesuits and Vincentians shared the expenses.

Canonization and ongoing influence

The canonization procession in St John Lateran, began at six a.m., and lasted more than three hours due to the enormous gathering of people. Twenty-six cardinals, bishops, patriarchs, and other clergy participated. During the ceremony, the Pope was presented with two decorated and

painted candles weighing sixty pounds each, two turtle doves, two golden loaves, two pigeons, and two barrels of wine, all donated by noblemen, cardinals, and friends of the Congregation.

A century later, in 1835, the French scholar Blessed Frédéric Ozanam called a lay Catholic organization he had founded to help the poor, the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Some fifty years later the Church designated St Vincent as the special patron of all charitable associations in 1883. All the members of the Vincentian Family who are influenced by the spirituality of St Vincent de Paul, can clearly see in his life the close connection between holiness and evangelisation.

NOTES

1. Talk given by Pat Collins, CM, at the launch of his book, *Reflections on the Life and Spirituality of St Vincent DePaul* (Maynooth: St Paul, 2022) in Castleknock College, Dec 6th 2022.
2. Speaking about Vincent's response during a time when there was a food shortage, Bishop Maupas du Tour said, "For three months he distributed armfuls of bread daily at the doors of Saint-Lazare to feed two thousand poor people, and sometimes as many as three thousand or three thousand five hundred."
3. Maupas du Tour described how Vincent mobilized his missionaries at Saint-Lazare to undertake unceasing prayers for peace by means of an extraordinary novena. Every day for nine years the community of Saint-Lazare prayed for peace. Two or three confreres would receive communion for this special intention. Each day a priest from the community said Mass for this intention, and a brother took communion at this Mass that could appropriately be called a Mass for peace. The priest and the brother then spent the rest of the day fasting. Monsieur Vincent took his turn at this novena for peace. At the end of nine years, a general peace was concluded.
4. It is worth mentioning in passing that in 1713, 53 years after Vincent's death, a papal bull entitled *Unigenitus* was published. Although it was designed to put an end, once and for all, to the Jansenist controversies, it actually led to deep divisions not only in the French Church but also in the Congregation of the Mission. On the eve of the Congregation's ninth General Assembly, held in Paris in August 1724, Jean Bonnet, the superior general, announced the expulsion from the community of two leading French Lazarists, Pierre Himbert, the superior general's first assistant, and Antoine Philopald Delahaye, because they were influenced by Gallicanism and their views on *Unigenitus*. The delegates supposedly "amidst perfect order, peace, and tranquility" unanimously affirmed, "without trouble and without hesitation" the Congregation's full adherence to *Unigenitus*. At the eleventh session of the Assembly, held on 11 August, the delegates voted to require all priests, seminarians, and novices in the Congregation to indicate their acceptance of the papal bull. It is possible that this controversy delayed Vincent's canonization.
5. Speaking about Vincent's familiarity with alchemy Pope Clement XII said at his canonization, "he made better use of it than those who try to change the nature of metals; for he has converted evil into good, the sinner into a just man, slavery into freedom, hell into paradise through the many works undertaken by his Company and by the ingenuity of which a zealous man is capable."

“I am the Immaculate Conception”

Pat Collins CM

This article will focus on the central role of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. It begins with some observations on the notion of the development of doctrine. It has long been recognized, e.g., with Vincent of Lérins’ 5th century *Commonitorium*, that doctrine “evolves” over time. This notion was proposed and deepened in the 19th century by St John Henry Newman in his book *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. He defined an authentic development of dogma as the:

Process, whether it be longer or shorter in point of time, by which the aspects of an idea are brought into consistency and form, I call its development, being the germination and maturation of some truth or apparent truth on a large mental field. On the other hand this process will not be a development, unless the assemblage of aspects, which constitute its ultimate shape, really belongs to the idea from which they start. (Chapter 1. Section 1, Paragraph 5).

In the 20th century Newman’s views were endorsed by the Magisterium of the Church in par 8 of the *Constitution on Divine Revelation*. It says that,

Tradition which comes from the Apostles develops in the Church with the help of the Holy Spirit. For there is a growth in the understanding of the realities and the words which have been handed down. This happens through the contemplation and study made by believers, who treasure these things in their hearts (cf. Lk, 2:19, 51) through a penetrating understanding of the spiritual realities which they experience, and through the preaching of those who have received through Episcopal succession the sure gift of truth. For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfilment in her.

Even before the Protestant Reformation, such development in the understanding of nascent doctrines in the New Testament was quite evident. For example, the doctrine of the Trinity, which is implicit in Mt 28:19 and elsewhere in the New Testament, was developed in St Augustine’s masterpiece, *On the Trinity* (5th century). In 451 much the same thing happened when the Council of Chalcedon discussed and

developed an agreed understanding of the relationship of the divine and human natures of Christ.

The same evolution is evident in the understanding of biblical ethics. For example, passages in the Old Testament sanctioned forms of temporal slavery for Israelites as a means to repay a debt. Slaves, captured in war or purchased, were enslaved for life. In the New Testament the letters of St Paul sometimes address slaves directly, indicating their presence in early Christian communities. In Eph 6:5-8 and Col 3:22-24 Paul instructed slaves to obey their masters. In 1 Tim 6:1-2 and Titus 2:9-10 he reinforced the need for obedience. The letter to Philemon was a personal one where Paul asked the Christian slave owner to receive his runaway slave Onesimus as a "beloved brother" – though he stopped short of demanding Onesimus' freedom. I think it would be true to say that no outright condemnation of slavery appears in the New Testament. Instead, it reflects the norms of the time. Over the centuries however, as a result of prayerful reflection the Church began to question and then to condemn slavery. For instance, in par. 2414 of *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* we read,

The seventh commandment forbids acts or enterprises that for any reason – selfish or ideological, commercial, or totalitarian – lead to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity.

St John Paul II was even more emphatic when, echoing the teaching of Vatican II, he said in par 80, of his encyclical *The Splendour of Truth* that the following practices are intrinsically evil:

Homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide, mutilation, physical and mental torture, attempts to coerce the spirit, subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, *slavery*, prostitution, trafficking in women and children, degrading conditions of work.

Without pursuing the whys and wherefores of the Church's change of attitude, it could be argued that prayerful reflection on the meaning and implications of what Paul had written in some of his letters eventually led to a revaluation of the Church's understanding of slavery. For instance, in Gal 3:28 he said that in Christ,

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

The phrase “neither slave nor free,” is not meant to deny that in actual fact there are social distinctions among people. It is merely meant to affirm that for those who are united to Christ these things do not matter. In fact, when such distinctions no longer matter, when people treat each other as true brothers and sisters in Christ regardless of their social standing, then the power of such distinctions is broken, and a basis is laid not only for social change but for the Church’s contemporary teaching on slavery.

Development of Marian doctrine

Although Protestants implicitly accept that doctrines develop, when they accept credal statements about the Trinity and the two natures in Christ, they are reluctant to accept the same principle where Marian doctrines such as the Immaculate Conception or the Assumption of Mary are concerned. They too are based on a deeper understanding of statements in the New Testament. In the remainder of this reflection, we will look at a contemporary way of understanding the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

During the Second Vatican Council there was the intention of publishing a document on Mary. But then that plan was replaced by another, namely, to talk about the mother of Jesus in chapter 8 of the *Constitution on the Church*. This contextualized Marian doctrine within an ecclesial context.

When Mary appeared to St Bernadette Soubirous of Lourdes in 1858 she responded to her oft-repeated question, “*who are you?*” by replying, “*I am the Immaculate Conception.*” This response echoed what Our Lady had already said to St Catherine Labouré in the Rue du Bac in 1830. Many years later in the 20th century, Maximilian Kolbe (1894-1941), a Conventual Franciscan who died a martyr’s death in Auschwitz, had an enormous devotion to Our Lady, and was intrigued by the meaning and implications of Mary’s announcement that she was the Immaculate Conception. She didn’t say that she was conceived or born immaculate; she said, “*I am the Immaculate Conception*”, which is actually a strange phrase. For many years Maximilian reflected upon what Mary had said about herself. He began to make notes with a view to writing a book on the subject. Just before he was arrested by the Nazis in 1941, he dictated his key ideas to a secretary who wrote them down. His thought is dense, profound, innovative, and not easy to express in simple, clear terms. Having reflected quite a bit on what he said, I will do my best to give you some idea of what he had in mind.

Maximilian maintained that there are two “Immaculate Conceptions.” Firstly, the Holy Spirit is the divine *uncreated* Immaculate Conception who is eternally begotten by the Father and the Son and as such is the

prototype of all conceptions. He wrote these notes entitled, “Who then are you, O Immaculate Conception?” (17 February 1941) a few hours before he was arrested,

And who is the Holy Spirit? The flowering of the love of the Father and the Son. If the fruit of created love is a created conception, then the fruit of divine Love, that prototype of all created love, is necessarily a divine “conception.” The Holy Spirit is, therefore, the “uncreated, eternal conception,” the prototype of all the conceptions that multiply life throughout the whole universe.

I must admit that this was a new idea for me: the notion that the Holy Spirit was the uncreated and eternal Immaculate Conception begotten by the Father and the Son, by their mutual love.

Secondly, Mary is the human created Immaculate Conception who from the beginning of her existence was free from original and personal sin. That was why the angel Gabriel was able to greet her by saying, “Hail, full of grace.” Speaking about this plenitude of grace Kolbe said:

It is above all an interior union, a union of Mary’s essence with the “essence” of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in her, lives in her. This was true from the first instance of her existence. It is always true; it will always be true.

On another occasion, Maxamillian wrote,

In the union of the Holy Spirit with her, not only does love bind these two beings, but the first of them [the Holy Spirit] is all the love of the Most Holy Trinity, while the second [the Blessed Virgin Mary] is all the love of creation, and thus in that union heaven is joined to earth, the whole heaven with the whole earth, the whole of Uncreated Love with the whole of created love: this is the highest expression of love.

Therefore, we can say, Mary is the spouse of the Holy Spirit. He maintained that as the Son became manifest in Jesus, the Holy Spirit became manifest in Mary. Although she was, and is a creature and not divine by nature, she has been divinised by the free gift of the grace of her Son. As a result, in her life the Holy Spirit becomes visible. In the remarkable words of St Maximillian Mary is the “quasi-incarnation” of the Holy Spirit. She reflects the Third Person of the Trinity especially in two qualities or attributes, those of receptivity and fruitfulness. For example, at the Annunciation she received God’s love and in cooperation with the Holy Spirit made that love fruitful – infinitely so – in conceiving the Incarnate Word. As Pope Leo XII said in par. 14 of his encyclical on the Holy Spirit, entitled, *Divinum Illud Munus*,

“You know well the intimate and wonderful relations existing between her (Mary) and the Holy Spirit, so that she is justly called His Spouse.”

So, we could say in a qualified sense of Mary,

He or she who sees her, sees the Holy Spirit, just as those who see her divine Son see the Father.

Kolbe was keen to avoid any misunderstanding of what he was saying, so he wrote:

The Holy Spirit is in the Immaculate as the second Person of the most Holy Trinity is in Jesus, but with this difference; there are in Jesus two natures, the divine and the human, and one sole person, the divine. The nature and person of the Immaculate are distinct from the nature and person of the Holy Spirit.

So, while the union of Mary and the Spirit is not of the same order as the hypostatic union linking the human and divine natures in Christ, it remains true to say that Mary’s action is the very action of the Holy Spirit. If you are not familiar with theology, you might not follow what exactly Kolbe is saying here. He’s stating that Jesus is the divine, uncreated embodiment of the Father, whereas Mary, is a human, created embodiment of the Holy Spirit, who was given to her in an anticipatory way, in virtue of the future death and resurrection of her Son.

Speaking about one important implication of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, St Maximilian felt that it might explain why one third of the angels in heaven fell from grace. He wrote,

When he had created the angels, God willed that they should spontaneously give him proof that they would always and everywhere accomplish his will. He revealed to them the mystery of the incarnation and announced that one day he would call into existence a human creature made of body and soul, a creature that he would raise to the dignity of Mother of God.

Kolbe maintained that when they heard about the future Immaculate Conception of Mary, who would be the Mother of the incarnate Son of God, some angels rebelled. They realised that although Mary would be a human being with a material body, she would be elevated far above their status as archangels and angels. When they realized this, they envied and resented Mary’s future status, dignity and role – and they said to God “we don’t accept this; we will not serve on these grounds,” so they lost

their place in heaven and were cast down to earth (Rev 12:2).

We are told in the Book of Revelation that subsequently when the birth of Jesus was due to take place:

The dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne, and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God. (Rev 12:4-6)

I was interested to see in a study Bible that this passage is one of key importance in the Book of Revelation because it depicts the struggle between the people of God, represented by Mary, and the power of the evil one. In Catholic circles Mary is sometimes depicted as the new Eve, who crushes the head of the serpent with her heel. In other words, together with her Son, she is mighty in the struggle with the powers of evil. Of course, victory is inevitable as a result of the triumphant death of her beloved Son, Jesus, on the cross.

The Immaculate Conception and the assumption of Mary into heaven

It seems obvious that if Mary was conceived without sin and remained sinless throughout her life the doctrine of her Assumption into heaven is a logical consequence. The Bible teaches that death is the penalty of sin (cf. Rom 6:23). In view of the fact that Mary was sinless throughout her life, she was exempt from that penalty. In the Old Testament we are told that, in spite of their faults, Enoch and Elijah were assumed out of this world. St Thomas Aquinas argued that

Elijah was taken up into the atmospheric heaven, but not into the heaven which is the abode of the saints. Likewise, Enoch was translated into the earthly paradise, where he is believed to live until the coming of Antichrist. (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 49, a. 5)

There is a belief that both Enoch and Elijah will return to earth before the second coming of Christ when both will die a physical death. If two imperfect human beings survived death in a qualified sense, why should we doubt that Mary, who was always full of grace, was assumed both body and soul into heaven.

Mary as Mother of the Church and mediatrix of all grace

Because of her pre-eminent role as the only person who was “full of grace” (Lk 1:28) and the mother of God made man, Mary is seen as the

Queen of heaven and both the model and mother of the Church. Ever since our baptism, Christ has come to live within each of us by the working of the Holy Spirit. As a result, we become members of Christ's mystical body on earth. Mary is the mother of the Church. That role was intimated in Jn 19:25-27 when Jesus said from the cross,

"Woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother."

From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. As St Paul VI said in his *Credo of the People of God*,

The Blessed Mother of God, the New Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven her maternal role with regard to Christ's members, cooperating with the birth and growth of divine life in the souls of the redeemed.

In 2018, Pope Francis decreed that the Memorial of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, be inserted into the Roman Calendar on the Monday after Pentecost and be celebrated every year, outranking even obligatory memorials.

Mary as our gracious advocate

It is worth recalling that in 1815, when St Catherine Labouré was nine, her mother died. It is said that after her mother's funeral, Catherine picked up a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary and kissed it saying, "Now you will be my mother." As our heavenly mother, Mary intercedes for all of us. Speaking about this St Maximillian wrote,

When we reflect on these two truths: that all graces come from the Father by the Son and the Holy Spirit; and that our Holy Mother Mary is, so to speak, one with the Holy Spirit, we are driven to the conclusion that this Most Holy Mother is indeed the intermediary by whom all graces come to us.

If Mary is not only the mother of the Church and mediatrix of all grace (cf. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* pars. 969-970), it follows that she is our advocate. The roots of her intercessory role are to be found in the Old Testament. At one time in Israel the king could have many wives. In order to avoid rivalries and disputes, the queen mother was the first lady in the land. The ordinary people could approach her with their requests, and she would present them to her son, the king. She was their intercessor, who pleaded on their behalf.

There is an example of what was involved in 1 Kings 2:19-20. It describes the relationship that existed between King Solomon and his

mother Bathsheba. In the text we are told:

And the king rose to meet her, and bowed down to her; and he sat on his throne, and had a seat brought for the king's mother, and she sat on his right. Then she said, “I have one small request to make of you, do not refuse me.” And the king said to her, “Make your request, my mother, for I will not refuse you”.

On another occasion we are told that Esther, a Jewish woman, was “*lovely and beautiful*” (Esth 2:3). She was married to King Ahasuerus. At one stage the queen heard that Haman, one of her husband's advisers, had hatched a vindictive plot to kill all her fellow Jews in the kingdom. As a result, she interceded with the king.

“If it pleases the king,” she said, “and if he regards me with favour and thinks it the right thing to do, and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?” He said: “Now write another decree in the king's name in behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring – for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked” (Esther 8:3-8).

You will notice here, how having interceded with her husband, Esther's request was granted and furthermore the king handed his authority over to her – she was delegated to write a letter which protected the Jews from attack. On the king's behalf Esther could stamp it with his signet ring. As a result, no harm came to Esther's fellow Jews.

In the story of the marriage feast of Cana we have an outstanding New Testament example of the spiritual relationship between the mother and the king. We are told in Jn 2:3-5:

When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” And Jesus said to her, “O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not come yet.” His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you”.

Although at first Jesus thought that the time for his miracle working had not yet come, he recognized that his beloved mother's spontaneous impulse of loving concern was inspired by the Spirit and therefore an expression of the Father's will. Just as she had given birth to Jesus as a

result of her obedient faith at the Annunciation, so now she was giving birth to his public ministry, as a result of her compassionate intercession.

Apparitions to St. Catherine Labouré

In 1830 Our Lady appeared to St Catherine Labouré on a number of occasions in the Rue du Bac in Paris. During the apparitions Our Lady announced her Immaculate Conception. Catherine was instructed to have a medal made which was called at first: “the medal of Mary, the Immaculate Conception.” Our Lady displayed herself inside an oval frame, standing upon a globe. She was surrounded by the following prayer:

“O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to Thee.”

She wore many rings set with gems that shone rays of light over the globe. At that same moment St. Catherine heard a voice saying,

“These rays are a symbol of the graces that I pour out on those who ask them of me.”

As a result of the interrelated truths we have looked at, we can have confidence in turning to our mother Mary in all of our troubles. As one of our lovely Marian prayers says:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me. Amen.

Speaking of Mary’s intercessory role, some Irish person said, half joking, wholly in earnest,

“Mary because you are God’s mother you can’t say you can’t; because you are my mother, you won’t say you won’t, so you will, won’t you!”

Prayer to Mary Immaculate by St Maxamillian Kolbe

Wearing the Miraculous Medal and giving it to others were an integral part of Maximilian’s promotion of Marian devotion. He called the medal “a ‘bullet’ with which the faithful soldier hits the enemy, that is evil and

thus rescues souls." He wrote this lovely prayer of consecration to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.

O Immaculata, Queen of Heaven and earth, refuge of sinners and our most loving Mother, God has willed to entrust the entire order of mercy to you. I, (name), a repentant sinner, cast myself at your feet, humbly imploring you to take me with all that I am and have, wholly to yourself as your possession and property. Please make of me, of all my powers of soul and body, of my whole life, death and eternity, whatever most pleases you.

If it pleases you, use all that I am and have without reserve, wholly to accomplish what was said of you: "She will crush your head," and "You alone have destroyed all heresies in the whole world." Let me be a fit instrument in your immaculate and merciful hands for introducing and increasing your glory to the maximum in all the many strayed and indifferent souls and thus help extend as far as possible the blessed kingdom of the most Sacred Heart of Jesus. For wherever you enter you obtain the grace of conversion and growth in holiness, since it is through your hands that all graces come to us from the most Sacred Heart of Jesus.

℣. Allow me to praise you, O Sacred Virgin

℟. Give me strength against your enemies. Amen.

Creating Missionary Parishes

Pat Collins CM

Introduction

- In recent years the corpus of papal teaching on the new evangelisation has not only been first class, it is highly relevant today. For a summary see appendix two “New Evangelisation in Church Teaching: A Summary” in Pat Collins CM, *Reflections on the Life and Spirituality of St Vincent de Paul* (Maynooth: St Paul, 2022), 211-226.
- In this presentation I am going to presume that most of you are acquainted with the main gist of that teaching. What I want to do in this input is to focus on an important and distinctive contribution which has been made by Pope Francis.
- It has to do with the central role of parishes in the new evangelisation. It was first proposed in his Apostolic Declaration *The Joy of the Gospel*. Since then, his teaching has been amplified in a document entitled, “The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church.” It was issued by the Congregation for the Clergy in 2020.

Parish conversion

When I first read the *Joy of the Gospel*, the section that struck me most were pars 25-33 on conversion. I would have assumed that the word conversion would have been understood primarily as a willingness by individuals to turn away from sin in order to put Jesus number one in their lives. While Pope Francis would heartily endorse such an understanding of conversion, he focused on the need for structural conversion in parishes. He made a number of points about them.

Firstly, in par 28 Pope Francis said, “The parish is not an outdated institution; precisely because it possesses great flexibility, it can assume quite different contours depending on the openness and missionary creativity of the pastor and the community.”

Secondly, parishes need to move from maintenance to mission. In par 27, Pope Francis wrote, “I dream of a ‘missionary option’, that is, a missionary impulse capable of transforming everything, so that the Church’s customs, ways of doing things, times and schedules, language and structures can be suitably channelled for the evangelisation of today’s world rather than for her *self-preservation*. The renewal of structures demanded by pastoral conversion can only be understood in this light: as

part of an effort to make them more mission-oriented.”

Parishes devoted to maintenance devote most of their energies and resources to meeting the needs of the diminishing number of mainly elderly people who still come to church. If an inventory was made, it would indicate that very little of their energies or resources are devoted to reaching out in order to evangelise the large majority who no longer come to church and know very little about its teachings.

A questionnaire

Here is a short checklist of questions which could be used to gauge how missionary a parish actually is.

Has the parish a mission statement, one that includes a clear and explicit commitment to the new evangelisation?

1. Does the parish have a yearly plan that states what and how each parish group will do to evangelise the un-churched in the area?
2. What does the parish do to evangelise young adults between the ages of 18 and 35? Is there a trained, salaried youth leader?
3. Does the parish council have an evangelisation committee that plans evangelistic courses of a kerygmatic kind such as Alpha or Life in the Spirit Seminars?
4. Is there a Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) group in the parish?
5. Is there an evangelisation team that does house-to-house visitation, such as the Legion of Mary, or a parish visitation team?
6. Does the parish provide any training for parishioners who want to learn how to evangelise effectively, e.g., by means of person to person contact or in groups?
7. Does the parish newsletter contain regular pieces to do with the nature of evangelisation, the motives parishioners have for engaging in it, and practical means of doing so?
8. Are there any groups in the parish, such as the housebound or an intercessory prayer group, who are praying in an intentional way for parish renewal and effective evangelisation in the area?
9. If parishioners come to have a personal relationship with Jesus as a result of a conversion experience, is there any provision for ongoing faith formation in discipleship such as *Lectio Divina*, Parish Cell Groups, A Catechism Class, a Prayer Group etc?

If a parish cannot answer yes to at least six of these questions, it probably means that it is too inward looking.

Three essential things that are needed

Although many changes will be needed in order to create the missionary parishes of the future, we will look at three essential ones that priests and their parishioners need to focus on

1. Creating a mission statement that highlights the importance of evangelisation
2. The central role of baptism in the Spirit.
3. The formation of communities of missionary disciples

1. Creating a mission statement

Every parish needs a mission statement, one which prioritises its missionary purpose. Mission oriented parishes are places where the parish priest with the help of as many parishioners as possible, leads a process of prayerful discernment which seeks to answer questions such as the following:

- What is your vision for the future of your parish over the next five to ten years?
- In the light of that vision, what are you attempting to do?
- What are the main ways in which you will achieve your goals?

The discernment process should lead to the production of a concise, inspiring, but realistic mission statement, one which focuses on evangelisation. It acts as the spiritual sat-nav for those responsible for leadership and planning in the parish. It guides their decisions, actions and use of resources. As Pope Francis has observed in par 33 of the *Joy of the Gospel*, “Pastoral ministry in a missionary key seeks to abandon the complacent attitude that says: “We have always done it this way”. I invite everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation in their respective communities. A proposal of goals without an adequate communal search for the means of achieving them will inevitably prove illusory.” Having formulated and promulgated the mission statement, the parish needs to plan a year ahead. Besides having such things as pastoral, liturgical and financial goals, it has to give primacy to the missionary aim:

- What will be done to reach out to the unchurched?
- Who will do it?
- When and how will they do it?
- How will their efforts be resourced in terms of personnel, training and money?
- When and how will the evangelisation goals be assessed?

There has been a good deal of helpful writing in this regard such as White & Corcoran’s *Rebuilt*, and Mallon’s *Divine Renovation*. Such books have helped some progressive bishops and priests in Ireland and

Britain to create missionary parishes. Here is a maxim I think you can rely on. Instead of being like a rudderless ship, a parish with a mission statement knows what its guiding priority really is. But in the future the parish that focuses its attention on the alleviation of urgent pastoral needs to the exclusion of evangelical priorities will contribute by default to its own decline.

2. The central importance of baptism in the Spirit

Nowadays, there is a widespread recognition that, although many Catholics have been sacramentalised and catechised, to one degree or another, many of them have not been fully evangelised. They may know about the person of Jesus without knowing him in person. In the words of St John Paul II, many of them have not yet crossed the threshold of faith to “total adherence to Jesus Christ.” It has two predictable effects.

Firstly, our catechesis is often ineffective because it is built on sand insofar as the parishioners are not fully evangelised.

Secondly, St Paul VI said, in par 24 of *Evangelisation in the Modern World*, “the person who has been evangelised goes on to evangelise others. Here lies the test of truth, the touchstone of evangelisation: it is unthinkable that a person should accept the Word and give himself to the kingdom without becoming a person who bears witness to it and proclaims it in his turn.” The fact that so many Catholics, fail to evangelise anyone, indicates that they have not been fully evangelised themselves.

As many Christians know from personal experience, baptism in the Spirit is a prerequisite for effective evangelisation. Nowadays millions of Catholics are receiving this precious gift as a result of attending kerygmatic-type courses such as Alpha and Life in the Spirit Seminars. That is why Pope Francis said to Charismatics gathered in Rome in 2015, “I ask all of you, each of you, that as part of the stream of grace of the Charismatic Renewal to plan to put on Life in the Spirit Seminars, in your parishes, in your seminaries and schools ... share your teaching on the Baptism of the Spirit, because it is produced by the work of the Holy Spirit through a personal encounter with Jesus, which changes lives.” Speaking to charismatics in 2019 Pope Francis said, “What does the Pope expect of you? I expect this movement to share baptism in the Spirit with *everyone* in the Church.”

Like many others I have found that:

- Alpha courses are better suited to the needs of who know little or nothing about Christian faith and unbelievers.
- *Life in the Spirit Seminars* are better suited to the needs of people who go occasionally or often to Church but who are not yet fully evangelised.

- To be truly effective in renewing a parish they need to be run over and over again.

3. *Formation of missionary disciples*

I worked for Alpha Ireland for 25 years. A question we were repeatedly asked was this. What do you do with people who are on fire for the Lord as a result of baptism in the Spirit? Having enjoyed a positive experience of feeling connected, heard and welcomed at an Alpha course, or for that matter a Life in the Spirit Seminar, it is not enough to say go back to the relative anonymity of life in the parish. A number of other things are also needed.

Firstly, evangelised Christians have a need to belong to a smaller group where the members know and care for one another. As Nicky Gumbel, of Alpha says, “People will come to church for many reasons, but they will stay for only one – friendship. People aren’t looking for a friendly church; they’re looking for a church where they can make friends.”

Secondly, Baptism in the Spirit is the beginning of a new beginning. What is needed afterwards is ongoing formation which helps the parishioners to become intentional disciples. Speaking at a talk I attended on Nov 4th 2023, Pope Francis said, “the Seminars need to be followed up by suitable methods of continuing formation that can fan into flame the graces received and encourage ongoing growth in faith and prayer, the moral and sacramental life, the practice of charity and cooperation in the Church’s mission.” Although many parish websites contain a list of groups, it is disappointing to find how few of them focus on faith development and training in the nature and means of engaging in the new evangelisation.

Not surprisingly many parishes, in spite of their good intentions, are resource poor. That is why every diocese needs an Office for Evangelisation, one which can offer parishes the assistance they need, e.g., by conducting formation for evangelisation courses. Charismatic communities, and sympathetic members of religious orders can also assist parishes by running online Life in the Spirit Seminars, conducting training courses on various aspects of evangelisation, and helping to make good catechesis available for those who have been baptised in the Spirit. Currently, for example, The New Springtime Community in Dublin is conducting a three-year-long online course on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and also on Radio Maria, Ireland.

Thirdly, not only should the parish have an evangelistic mission statement, every group in the parish should identify and state how it can respond to the evangelical imperative, i.e., priests and religious, lay persons, parish staff, the choir, lay ministers, parish organisations,

social clubs, parochial schools etc. Otherwise, evangelisation will be viewed as something a few parishioners engage in, rather than a primary reason for the parish's existence and the objective of every ministry in the parish. Speaking about the parish, Pope Francis said in par 28 of *The Joy of the Gospel*, "It is a community of communities, a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a *centre of constant missionary outreach*. We must admit, though, that the call to review and renew our parishes has not yet sufficed to bring them nearer to people, to make them environments of living communion and participation, *and to make them completely mission-oriented*." In other words, there is still a great deal to do yet.

Conclusion

- We can be sure that the call of Pope Francis to create missionary parishes lies at the very heart of God's will for us at this time.
- As a result, we can also be sure that no matter what obstacles we have to overcome, God will empower us to do what he wants. As Paul stated in Phil 2:13, "God is at work within you to will and to do his good pleasure."
- This process of ongoing transformation, will require personal, parochial and diocesan conversion. Not only will this necessitate a willingness to make sacrifices, it will also require great courage and boldness. I would like to conclude this input by making some words the first disciples prayed our own. We, like them, face great difficulties, "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (Acts 4:29-31).

Developments in Sacred Heart, Mill Hill, 2022-2026

Eugene Curran CM

A brief pictorial record of the demolition of the former community residence and the building of the new. The photos were all taken by the editor, so apologies in advance!

Demolition of the old presbytery, built in 1964

We began in September 2022, though demolition began on 5 January 2023, as it had been delayed by the discovery and removal of asbestos



The house was designed by Matthew Lloyd, Architects, whose proposals for the project can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oAGr1yk7UzE>.

The completed work features on their website; <https://matthewlloyd.co.uk/project/vincentian-presbytery>, which shows many of the interior details, especially of the private rooms.

Build

During this time, thanks to the generosity of the Daughters of Charity, the Community lived in St Vincent's House, on the Ridgeway, Mill Hill.



The floor plan of the main house



The walls of the future dining room, looking into the courtyard



The framework for the walls of the dining room, facing into the courtyard



Don, the works manager, above the interior roof of the community chapel



The stairs and lift well

*The work was undertaken by Buxtons
<https://www.buxtonbuilding.co.uk/>*

Completion

The Parish Office was ready for occupation by September 2023 and the Community moved in to the completed house on Easter Monday, 2024; Frs Eugene Curran, Raymond Armstrong, Ako Akobundu, John Ashu and Getachew Mekkon Robi. By this time, the car park had also been repaved, with new tarmac, and only a few other jobs remained.



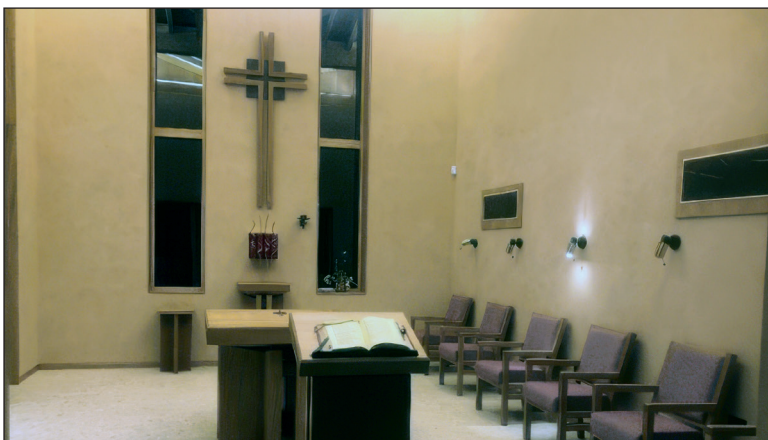
*The back entrance
and kitchens with bedrooms above*



*The seal of the
Congregation on the front wall*



*The work almost completed, showing the long window of the stairwell
along the side and the windows of the Community Room on the ground floor,
to the front of the building*



*The community oratory was furnished by
ICS Church Furniture of Leitrim, Ireland*

*On the walls of the Oratory hang Meditations on the Passion of Christ
by Benedict Tutty OSB (1924-1996)
which were originally in DePaul House, Celbridge.*

*The Tabernacle, below the Crucifix,
came from our former residence in Park View, Dublin*



The completed front façade with Oratory to the left

Official Opening

The house was formally blessed by Vincent Cardinal Nichols of Westminster and our Superior General, Tomaž Mavrič, on Sunday, 29th September 2024.



The oratory during the build, looking into the inner courtyard

The Parish Office

At the time of the build, it was decided, for safeguarding, safety and security reasons, to move the parish office from the house to the church building. This necessitated blocking up some windows in the Atrium (vestibule), which were then replaced by backlit stained glass windows, designed by Sr Aquinata OP, who also designed the windows in the main church. The lights are based on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These windows were unveiled after the Easter Vigil, 2026.



Church Heating and floor

Thanks to a generous legacy, we were also able to install underfloor heating and a new stone floor in the Church, while also reupholstering the kneelers and altar seating. This work took place over the summer and early autumn of 2025.

*Laying the first tile**The completed work*