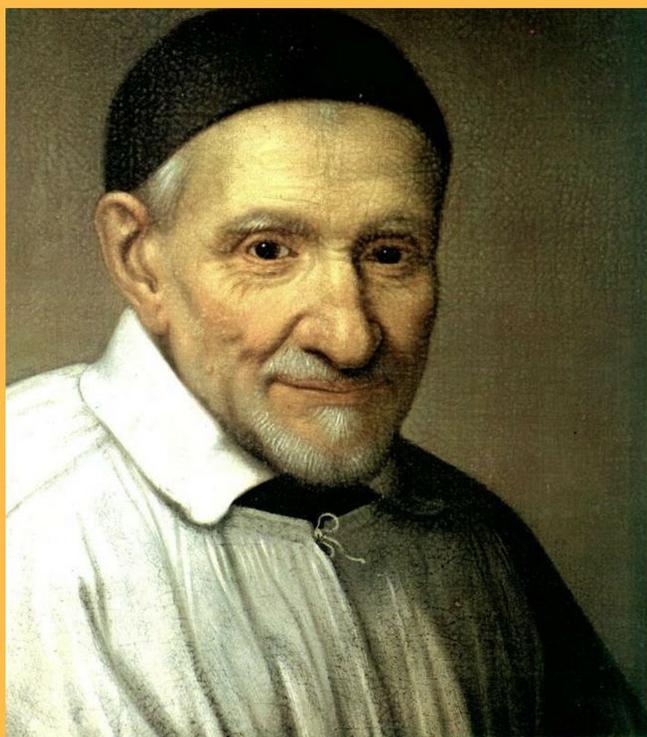


VINGENTIANA

40th year- N° 3:
May/June 1996



FEATURE:
The Missions ad gentes

February 20, 1996

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

Last June I wrote to you describing the meeting we had in Paris of those responsible for the four principal branches of our Vincentian Family. The goal of that meeting was "to look for means by which, while preserving the particular identity of each branch, we might cooperate more effectively with each other throughout the world in serving the poor better." Since that time I have received many enthusiastic comments from members of our family. It is quite striking to see how much collaboration among the various branches already exists and how eager our members are to network further in the service of the poor.

Since last June's meeting a small booklet has been printed in Spanish, French, and English providing information about the Vincentians, Daughters of Charity, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and the International Association of Charity. Each group is making it available to its members through its own usual organ of communication. At present the booklet is being translated into many other languages.

On February 2 - 3, 1996, we met again, this time in Rome. Present were the Mother General of the Daughters of Charity, Sr. Juana Elizondo; the President of the International Association of Charity, Mrs. Patricia Palacios de Nava; the International President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Mr. César Nunes Viana; and I. Also taking part were: representing the Vincentians, Fr. Emeric Amyot d'Inville, Secretary General; for the Daughters of Charity, their Assistant General, Sr. Therezinha Remonato; for the A.I.C., Mrs. Mauricette Borloo, Vice-President; and for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Mr. Gerry Martin, International Vice-President, and Mr. Francesco de Barberis, Coordinator for Europe Group 3. The gathering was a wonderful occasion, with lots of sharing, mutual encouragement and planning for the future.

The acts of the meeting are lengthy. Below I offer just a few of the main points we touched on.

1. After much exchange of information, we judged that the level of cooperation among the branches of our family is, in general, quite high. The instances where there are tensions are few; these usually occur where someone fails to respect the autonomy of a particular group. We decided to do a formal evaluation, to be presented at our next meeting, about the level of cooperation

that exists in the countries where we labor, with a view toward fostering further common service of the poor.

2. Since the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups are a growing and vibrant branch of our family, we are asking them to send two delegates to our next meeting.
3. We decided to prepare five common projects, one on each continent, for the year 2000. Each branch will come to the next meeting with detailed proposals about where these projects might be undertaken and what they might involve. We hope that such projects will be helpful as models for stimulating further collaboration within our family in all countries where we serve.
4. We discussed formation at length. Each of the groups has its own formation program. The members of the AIC and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul expressed much gratitude to the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity for the help that they offer in formation. I want to take this occasion to encourage all of you, my brothers, to continue to respond generously to appeals for help in such formation programs. This is clearly one of the ways in which our Constitutions envision that we fulfill the purpose of the Congregation: "The purpose of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ the Evangelizer of the Poor. This purpose is achieved when, faithful to St. Vincent, the members individually and collectively: ... 3_ help the clergy and laity in their formation and lead them to a fuller participation in the evangelization of the poor" (C 1). Moreover, with the support of the presidents of the two lay branches, I ask Vincentians and Daughters of Charity not to hesitate to call upon the members of the AIC and the Vincent de Paul Society to join with them in collaborative ministries, as is already happening in many countries (e.g., in giving popular missions, in serving the sick poor, in working with refugees, etc.).
5. We agreed that each branch will strive to be well-informed about the other branches, disseminate information about them, and promote vocations to them.
6. We spoke about inculturation of the Vincentian charism in various countries. This is a question that will need further discussion, in greater depth, on a future agenda.
7. We agreed to join, on September 27, 1996, in a common day of prayer. I will write to you at a later date with further details about organizing this day.

On the second day of our meeting we had a private audience with Pope John Paul II. The Pope greeted us very warmly and we chatted, quite informally, about the activities of the various branches of the Vincentian Family. He reminded us that he had been a member of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul as a college student!

One evening we responded to an invitation from the Community of Sant'Egidio to visit the soup kitchen where it offers a full Italian meal to about 1500 street people. We then joined the Community for evening prayer and a supper at which much mutual information was exchanged about the service of the poor in various countries.

Since our meeting occurred just after the announcement of the date for the canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre, we talked often about that event, with much enthusiasm. Delegations from the four branches will be taking part in the canonization. The Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, moreover, have just informed me that they are changing the site and date for their European Meeting so that it will coincide with the canonization.

I want to express publicly how happy I am at the renewed impetus toward collaboration that is growing within our Vincentian Family. The needs of the poor are enormous. The Lord calls us to respond to them together. St. Vincent was deeply conscious of the communal dimension of gospel service. He knew that by channeling our energies we can be a more vibrant sign of the Church as communion and a more effective instrument in meeting the concrete needs of the poor. "To this end," he wrote to Hugues Perraud on October 15, 1651, "we should help and support one another and strive for peace and union among ourselves. This is the wine that cheers and strengthens travelers along this narrow path of Jesus Christ. I recommend this to you with all the tenderness of my heart" (SV IV, 262).

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

1995 ANNUAL STATISTICS - CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

MINISTRIES

Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is counted only once, considered under his principal ministry.

MINISTRY	PRIESTS	PERMANENT DEACONS	BROTHERS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful	139		3
2. Missionary parishes or districts	179	1	1
3. Parishes	892		17
4. Pilgrimage sanctuaries	56		8
5. Seminaries and clerical formation	187	1	3
6. Formation of our own exclusively	196		12
7. Missions Ad Gentes	211	4	7
8. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)	144		
9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)	253		19
10. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)	31		
11. Special studies	80		1
12. Chaplains: military, immigrants, hospital, associations	179		5
13. Chaplains: Vincentians Lay Groups	35		2
14. Direct Service of the Poor	17		2
15. Manual work	8		58
16. Administration	127	1	13
17. Retired, ill, convalescing	306		33
18. Absence from the Congregation	65		3
19. Other	115	3	5
TOTAL	3220	10	192

HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS by PROVINCE - 1995								ADMITTED MEMBERS by PROVINCE - 1995													
PROVINCE	Houses	B	P*	PD*	Br.	Students with Vows	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS								
								P*	PD*	CP	CB	TOTAL	Voc.Grps.		Minor Sem.		Prep. Yr.		TOTAL		
													TP	TB	TP	TB	TP	TB			
Curia General	5		7				7														
AFRICA																					
Ethiopia	4	1	25		1	2	29								30			7			37
Madagascar	8	1	63		4	5	73			27	4	31						12			12
Mozambique	6	1	15				16						10	3							13
St. Justin de Jacobis	6		27		1		28			10		10	4		51						55
Zaire	6		30		1	6	37			20		20	15					7	2		24
NORTH AMERICA																					
Eastern (USA)	26		200		10	2	212			7	2	9	29		9			3			41
Midwest (USA)	18		145		19	1	165			2		2						2			2
New England (USA)	8		35		5		40	2				2									
Southern (USA)	6		33		1	1	35											1			1
West (USA)	9		52	2	3	1	58		1	4		5			1			2			3
LATIN AMERICA																					
Argentina	9		43	1	1	1	46			8		8						5	1		6
Curitiba	9	3	69		3	21	96			7		7			12			6			18
Fortaleza	3		32			3	35			7		7						1			1
Rio de Janeiro	10	4	84		10	1	99			19		19			37			5			42
Central America	11	4	38		3	4	49			16	7	23	13	3	4	3					23
Chile	6		22			4	26			3	1	4	13	1				4			18
Colombia	23	2	115		13	8	138			27	1	28	140		65						205
Costa Rica	5		19		2		21				1	1	5	2							7
Cuba	4		10				10			1	1	2						4	1		5
Ecuador	5		23			5	28			18	1	19						6			6
Mexico	20	1	78		3	4	86			1		1			30						30
Peru	12	1	53		1		55			3	1	4									
Puerto Rico	13		56		2		58			6	1	7	40		20			9			69
Venezuela	16		60		1	4	65			5		5	10	5	5	5					25
ASIA																					
China	5		32				32														
India	14	1	102		6	2	111			16		16			61						61
Indonesia	9		68				68			57		57			4			3			7

HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS by PROVINCE - 1995								ADMITTED MEMBERS & ASPIRANTS by PROVINCE - 1995											
PROVINCE	Houses	B	P*	PD*	Br.	Students with Vowx	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS				ASPIRANTS							
												Voc. Grps.	Minor Sem.	Prep. Yr.	TOT				
Orient	8	Pat	40		5	2	48			4		4			15		5	1	21
Philippines	12	1	66		5	5	77			22	1	23					18		18
EUROPE																			
Austria	4		18		4		22			5		5						1	1
Belgium	2		11				11												
Paris	21		123	4*	12	4	143			1		1					2	2	4
Toulouse	16		81		8	5	94			2	1	3							
Germany	5		13		2	1	16			3		3							
Hungary	6		13		2	4	19	1		4	2	7							
Ireland	23		125		1		126			36	1	37							
Naples	14	1	57		6	5	69			3		3							
Rome	9	1	62	1	3		67			5		5							
Turin	14		97	1	8		106	1		2		3		2					2
Netherlands	6	1	71		4		76												
Poland	30	3	262		5	14	284												
Portugal	11	1	51		3		55	1		6	1	8	60		16		2	1	79
Slovakia	7		28		1	3	32			22		22					6	1	7
Slovenia	9		49		5	1	55			5		5	2						2
Barcelona	10	1	51		1	3	56			1	1	2	9						9
Madrid	19		151		21	1	173			3		3		88					88
Salamanca	22		104		12	2	118						3						3
Saragossa	22		127	1	4	1	133			5	1	6		8					8
OCEANIA																			
Australia	12		59		5		64			10	1	11							

The 4 deacons in Vietnam are not permanent deacons but are awaiting governmental authorization for ordination.

B= Bishops; P* = Priests; PD* = Permanent Deacons; Br = Brothers; CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CBr = Candidates to the Brotherhood * *Priests or permanent deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute.*

AP = Aspirants to the Priesthood; ABr = Aspirants to the Brotherhood

**THE 1995 CM STATISTICS,
ASSESSMENT OF A CRISIS
AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE**

Emeric Amyot d'Inville, C.M.

I would like to present the 1995 statistics and propose a reflection on the numbers. I will do this on three successive levels: 1) incorporated members, 2) the young men in formation, and 3) the aspirants. I will look at the relationship among the different levels and use the statistics of past years as a basis for understanding the tendencies that have swept the Congregation of the Mission from the 60's to the present, on the one hand and, on the other hand, for looking at the perspectives for the future.

I. Incorporated members

a. First of all, I will present the global figures for the year 1995 (up to 31 December) comparing them to those for the years 1966 (when the C.M. attained its highest number), 1980 et 1990 (on 31 December), in order to see the tendencies which can be drawn from them:

	1966	1980	1990	1995
Bishops:	24	32	31	29
priests:	4510	3612	3280	3195
permanent deacons:			4	10
brothers:	556	340	252	207
incorp. students:	766	110	131	126
TOTAL:	5856	4094	3698	3567

If we add **the admitted members only**, which, in 1995, numbered **438** (these are those who have entered the Internal Seminary, but have not made vows; they can be students of philosophy or theology), we arrive thus at **a global figure of 4005 members in the Congregation of the Mission for the year 1995**. (For the record year 1966, there were 497 "admitted" members, which gave a total figure of 6353 members.)

b. **Evolution of our "adult" enrollment from 1966 to 1995**. In order to compare things which are comparable, I eliminated the students with vows because, in the figures for 1966, are included those who made triennial vows (these disappeared in 1969), which were usually pronounced at the beginning of formation. This explains the large number. Moreover, since 1980, the number of incorporated students is rather stable. The comparison will be made on the "adult" members; that is, on the bishops, priests, deacons, and brothers.

	1966_1980		1980_1990		1990_1995		1966_1995	
	number	by year						
Bishops	+8		-1		-2		+5	
Priests	-898	-64	-332	-33	-85	-17	-1315	-45
Deacons			+4		+6		+10	
Brothers	-216	-15	-88	-8,8	-45	-9	-349	-12
TOTAL	-1106	-79	-417	-42	-126	-25	-1649	-56

c. Evolution of the decrease of "adults" since 1966.

The numbers which essentially interest us are those of the priests and brothers who are the two principal components of the C.M. (the bishops represent a very small number of confreres, as do the deacons, four of which are from Vietnam awaiting government permission to be ordained priests). Let us look at the decline in percentage:

	Priests		Brothers		"Adult" members	
	% for the period	% by year	% for the period	% by year	% for the period	% by year
1966_1980	-19,9 %	-1,4 %	-38,8 %	-2,8 %	-21,7 %	-1,5 %
1980_1990	-9,19 %	-0,9 %	-25,8 %	-2,6 %	-10,6 %	-1 %
1990_1995	-2,6 %	-0,52 %	-17,8 %	-3,5 %	-3,5 %	-0,7 %
1966_1995	-24,5 %	-0,84 %	-62,7 %	-2,16 %	-32,4 %	-1,11 %

One can make three observations on this table:

1) The C.M. has decreased by almost one-third of its "adult" members since 1966, its peak. The numbers would be much higher if we took into account the students with vows.

2) The decrease in the number of priests has been slowing as the years pass. Their numbers were reduced by almost a quarter in 29 years.

3) The number of brothers has, on the one hand, declined proportionally much more than the priests since they have lost more than half their number. On the other hand, their decline has also increased proportionally in the course of the last 5 years. This phenomenon is explained essentially by the fact that there are very few vocations to the brothers presently and their numbers are not being replaced.

d. Analysis of the decrease in incorporated members from 1980 to 1995

We have had a decrease of 527 incorporated members in 15 years, a decrease which, as we have seen, tends to lessen over the course of the years. From where does it come?

1. Its components. It comes in part from the fact that **there are more confreres who die** (1162 from 31 December 1980 to 31 December 1995, or an average of 77,4 each year) **than confreres who are incorporated by vows** (1006 from 31 December 1980 to 31 December 1995, or an average of 67 each year). This makes for a deficit of 156 confreres for the period under consideration. But **the greatest deficit comes from the departures from the C.M.** Actually, a certain number of members leave the Congregation each year (371 from 1980 to 1995, or an average of 24,7 each year): having obtained a dispensation from Vows (often to serve in a diocese), having returned to the lay state, having been dismissed (in most cases, it is an ipso facto dismissal because of civil marriage), or having left illegally. We can thus summarize the situation:

Entrances and departures from the C.M. from 31 December 1980 to 31 December 1995

newly incorporated: 1006, or 67 each year
 deaths: 1162, or 77,4 each year (= a deficit of 156)
 departures: 371, or 24,7 each year
 Total deficit: 527, or 35,1 each year

2. The places where the C.M. is decreasing. If the decrease in numbers of the Congregation varies from year to year and is tending to slow, it also varies according to the provinces. There are, on the contrary, **19 provinces or vice-provinces which have increased in number during the last 15 years:** the 5 provinces of Asia (+ 31,3 %), the 5 (vice)provinces of Africa (+35,3 %) (Mozambique, which had decreased considerably because of the war, has progressed because the Superior General has sent reinforcement), 7 of the 14 (vice)provinces of Latin America (including Cuba, which, after having decreased considerably has increased thanks to the reinforcements sent by the Superior General) and 2 provinces of Eastern Europe (Poland and Slovakia). **The provinces which have decreased the most** are those of Western Europe (-23 %), although some have not changed much (Saragossa - 2,9 % in particular), the provinces of the United States (-31,8 %), as well as those of Brazil (-18;7 %) and Venezuela (-30,2 %) for Latin America which overall has decreased by 4 %.

3. Decrease by provinces grouped regionally since 1980:

	1980	1995	difference	%
United States	739	504	-235	-31,8 %
Western Europe	1635	1258	-377	-23 %
Oceania	77	62	-15	-19,5 %
Latin America	855	812	-30	-5 %
Eastern Europe	383	383	0	0 %
Asia	262	344	+82	+31,3 %
Africa	136	184	+48	+35,3 %
TOTAL (+Gen. Curia)	4094	3567	-527	-12,87 %

e. The recent crisis situated in the history of the C.M.

You will find in an annex a graphic representing the actual crisis, situated in the history of the Congregation. The numbers of our members are well known since 1853, at which time the Catalogue began. For the preceding periods, we only have a few sporadic facts, but they are nonetheless suggestive. I have grouped these together by dotted lines which show that it is a reconstruction using the facts which are themselves indicated by the small squares. We can make the following observations:

a) This crisis, which dates back 30 years, can be seen all the better on the graphic since it suddenly interrupted a regular increase of our numbers from the beginning of the 19th century. We also note the present tendency to stabilization.

b) There were crises in the history of the Congregation in the 17th and 18th centuries, from which it picked itself up. This allows us to relativize that which we are experiencing and hope for the future. We must point out, however, that the crises that have marked the history of the Congregation are not all of the same nature. Certain were due to external factors, such as that at the end of the 18th century, due to the French Revolution. The present one is due to much more internal reasons, personal crises in the context of the profound changes in society and in the Church. I leave it to historians to make the analysis.

c) We can note that the brothers who, for almost three hundred years always composed about one-third of the Congregation, accompanying the variation in the figures for priests, attained their summit in 1900 with 805 members. They then began to stagnate, even to diminish, while the priests increased rapidly in number. Their decrease has been rather regular since 1940 and especially since the 60's.

II. The young men in formation by province.

a. Figures for 1995. I changed some points of the statistics forms in order to have more precise information, in particular with regard to the young men in formation. So we now have numbers by levels of formation (Internal Seminary, philosophy, and theology), whether they are "admitted" or not. Here are the figures for 1995:

	Candidates priests	Candidates brothers	TOTAL
Internal Seminary	163	15	178
Philosophy	436		436
Theology	355		355
Brothers in formation		42	42
TOTAL	954	57	1011

Let us make three remarks: 1) The global figure for the young men in formation is rather satisfying. 2) One notices, however, that the candidates to the brothers are few. 3) These globally positive figures cover very varied realities according to the provinces or countries.

b. You will find in an annex **a graphic representing the young men in formation by province.** It is rather different from that of last year which only indicated the "scholastici admissi" (those admitted to the Internal Seminary) and "incorporati." This year I considered all the young men in formation, regardless of their level (Internal Seminary, philosophy and theology). There are provinces which have the Internal Seminary after the philosophy. All these non-"admitted" philosophy students were, until last year, excluded from the figures, whereas this year they are included. This explains why Colombia and the Philippines, which have their Internal Seminary after philosophy, move ahead of Indonesia and Poland, which begin formation with the Internal Seminary.

c. Evolution of the number of young men in formation. It is difficult to compare figures which do not represent exactly the same thing, in particular because the Internal Seminary, which makes them "admissi," took place at different moments of the formation according to the years. Actually, there is a tendency to delay it. However, we can give the following indications:

- 1956: 1597 (historical peak of the young men in formation)
- 1966: 1263 (historical peak of incorporated members)
- 1981: 478 ("trough of the wave" of the young men in formation)
- 1989: 724 (progressive rise since 1981)
- 1995: 1029 (figure which includes all the young men in formation)

III. A point of method: statistics by province or by country?

We have seen that the situation is very different according to the provinces or regions of the world. Actually certain regions have had many vocations for a good number of years already and are increasing in number, while others have had few vocations for quite some time and are aging and decreasing in number. However, if we keep to the raw figures by province, as we have up until now, we get a vision of the reality which is a bit false due to the fact that a province may have missions or regions in the various parts of the world. Consider, as an example, the Paris Province, where French vocations are few. It has, however, confreres in parts of the world where vocations are numerous (notably in Vietnam and the Cameroon). This tends to give radically higher figures for the young men in formation for this province (63! which puts it in 4th place of the provinces having the most young men), when there are only 8 coming from France, but 36 from Vietnam, 18 from the Cameroon, and 1 from Algeria. We witness the same phenomenon for the Province of Ireland with Nigeria and the Eastern Province of the United States with Panama.

This year, in addition to the figures by province, I considered the figures by country or by world region. That allows us to see how the Congregation is really represented on each continent, counting the regions like Nigeria and the Cameroon with Africa, Vietnam with Asia, Panama with Latin America, etc. That also allows for a much more exact vision of the places where the Congregation is recruiting and thus the world regions where there is the greatest potential of strength for the future.

Let us specify that the Congregation, which has 45 provinces and 3 vice-provinces, is spread out over 80 countries in the world: 13 in Africa, 2 in North America (not including Mexico), 22 in Latin America, 12 in Asia, 17 in Western Europe, 11 in Eastern Europe, and 3 in Oceania. Many provinces are thus present in several countries and even on several continents.

IV. The ratio between the young men in formation and the incorporated "adult" members

The ratio between the number of incorporated members in a part of the world and the number of young men in formation is interesting because it reveals the dynamism of the region and its chances for the future. **The contrast among the parts of the world is striking.**

We notice that there are provinces or countries which even have more young men in formation than incorporated confreres, as is the case for the Philippines and Vietnam, while there are others which have absolutely no one in formation. More important still, there is a very strong contrast among different parts of the world: some have an excellent ratio between the incorporated members/young men in formation and others have one which is not good; that is, there are very few young men in formation in comparison to the number of incorporated members and so the future cannot be assured. Let us briefly look at the figures by world region:

- **Western Europe**, which has 1192 incorporated members, or 33,4 % of the C.M., has proportionally few young men in formation (78), or 7,7 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. It has, however, a rather great variety of situations with, on the one hand, countries which maintain a certain number of students like Spain (27) and Italy (20) and, on the other hand, countries like the Netherlands and Belgium which have none, with all the others in between.

- **Eastern Europe** (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Slovenia, etc.), which has 354 members, or 9,9 % of the C.M., and a proportionally satisfactory number of young men in formation (101), or 10 % of the young men of the C.M. Nevertheless, it should be noted that almost all the young men in formation belong to the Provinces of Poland (61) and Slovakia (25), while Slovenia (8) has proportionally few young men in formation.

- **North America** (I am only counting the United States and Canada and not Mexico which I put with Latin America), which has 509 members, or 14,3 % of the C.M.,

has few young men in formation (10), all in the United States, or 1 % of the young men of the C.M.

- **Latin America** which, from Mexico to Chile, counts 886 members, or 24,8 %, has a good future before it with 362 young men in formation, or 35,8 % of the young men of the C.M. There is, however, a great diversity of situations: Colombia is in a very good position with 85 young men in formation, while Argentina has only 8.

- **Africa**, which still has a small number of confreres with 235 members, or 6,6 % of the C.M., has a very large number of young men in formation, with 192 young, or 19 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. There is a great dynamism almost everywhere. Only Mozambique, which is picking itself up after a long war, still has reduced numbers.

- **Asia**, which counts 323 members, or 9 % of the C.M., has proportionally a very large number of young men in formation with 255, or 25,2 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. However, Lebanon shows a bit of a crisis with 9 young men in formation and Taiwan has none.

- **Oceania**, which counts only 68 members, or 1,9 % of the C.M., counts 13 young men in formation, of which 9 are in the Fiji Islands, or 1,3 % of the young men in formation in the C.M. Australia itself has only 4 young men.

The ratio between incorporated members and the young men in formation is as follows:

- North America : 1,96 %
- Western Europe: 6,54 %
- Oceania: 19,11 %
- Eastern Europe: 28,53 %
- Latin America: 40,85 %
- Asia: 78,94 %
- Africa: 81,70 %
- The average ratio for the C.M. is 28,34 %

The figures are very eloquent! The Congregation of the Mission which was born and developed largely in the northern hemisphere (Europe and the United States) will logically continue to diminish in these parts of the world and, on the contrary, know **an important development in the southern hemisphere**. We might notice even that it is **the countries which are most developed on the economic level** (United States, those of Western Europe, Australia, Taiwan) which **experience the strongest vocation crisis** and, thus, where the future of the C.M. is most uncertain. These statistics, moreover, corroborate with the general tendencies which we see in the Church.

V. Aspirants.

Using these figures as a base, we can say that we are not lacking in reserves because, behind these students, there is a good number of aspirants (**953 counted**).

We have some information on the "channels" which these aspirants follow (minor seminaries, vocation groups, preparatory year). The global figures give this:

	Candidates priests	candidates brothers	TOTAL
Vocation groups	353	13	367
minor seminaries	466	8	466
preparatory year	110	10	120
TOTAL	921	32	953

We can note that, overwhelmingly, the young aspirants are attracted by the priesthood and that very few declare themselves attracted by the life of a brother.

We also observe that the number of those who are in minor seminaries remains more important than those who are in vocation groups.

The preparatory year has not developed everywhere and probably does not always cover the same reality.

The figures, of course, vary a great deal from one part of the world to another. They are significant for certain countries of the world, but not for others, because some provinces (like those of Eastern Europe, for example), who have many young men in formation each year, did not indicate the figures for aspirants, which is, evidently, inexact. We cannot then get an idea of the whole situation in the C.M.

Let us take a quick glance at the principal results. The figures for Asia with only 105 aspirants are certainly also below the reality (Vietnam, for example, did not indicate any, which is inexact). The region of the world which indicated the most aspirants is Latin America which counts 490, of which 205 are for Colombia. Then, Western Europe with 187 aspirants, of which 104 are in Spain and 79 in Portugal. Finally, Africa totals 146 aspirants, of which 55 are for Ethiopia and 37 for Eritrea. Let us hope that next year we will have more exact figures which will permit us to have a more precise idea of the situation with regard to these "aspirants."

VI. Summary table by country grouped regionally for the year 1995

	INCORPORATED ADULTS		YOUNG MEN IN FORMATION	
	Number	% / C.M.	Number	% / C.M.
Western Europe	1192	33,4 %	78	7,7 %
Eastern Europe	354	9,9 %	101	10 %
North America	509	14,3 %	10	1 %

Latin America	886	24,8 %	362	35,8 %
Africa	235	6,6 %	192	19 %
Asia	323	9 %	255	25,2 %
Oceania	68	1,9 %	13	1,3 %
TOTAL	3567	100%	1011	100%

To conclude.

1. The major tendencies which are clear in the C.M.:
 - a. From a global point of view, after the great crisis of the 60's and 70's, which saw our numbers diminish considerably, the decline clearly tends to slow over the course of the years, except for the brothers who continue decrease in a worrying manner.
 - b. We witness, moreover, an appreciable increase in the young men in formation. If this tendency continues, we can hope for a stabilization then, perhaps, an increase in our global numbers in a few years.
 - c. However, the reality is very variable according to the regions of the world. Some have many vocations and are increasing in number. Others having few vocations and continue to diminish. If these tendencies continue in the coming years, we will witness a move of the Congregation from the North and West toward the South and East.

2. If we belong to a part of the world where the Lord gives us the grace of having numerous vocations, and they are to be received with humble thanksgiving, we must know how to pay the price of good formation by being ready to free formation personnel as well as provide the necessary material means for formation. On these two levels, the Superior General unceasingly invites us to interprovincial cooperation.

3. If we belong to a part of the world where vocations are less numerous, far from becoming discouraged, these statistics stimulate us to two things: on the one hand, to reflect on the reasons why we do not have vocations or they do not persevere and to have a vocation pastoral which is active and, on the other hand, to have a missionary activity adapted to the needs of the people and aimed at building fervent and dynamic Christian communities which will be favorable grounds for the blossoming and maturing of vocations.

4. The reality of the world and the Church is changing. We must not shout victory because we have many vocations in some parts of the world, nor be upset because we do not have them in others. Actually, we saw countries which, up until a few years ago, had many vocations, like certain regions of France, the Netherlands, and Ireland and where they dried up in a few years. Conversely, we see some countries of Africa or Latin America, which had very few vocations for many years, getting started all of a sudden. The situation in a country can change quickly, positively or negatively. Thus, we must be vigilant.

5. The decrease in our number, we have seen, comes in large part from the confreres who leave the Congregation (dispensation from vows, return to the lay state by the Holy See, dismissal, or illegal departure). It would be wrong to think that this phenomenon touches only or principally the young confreres or the young provinces. In reality this touches all continents and all ages with, it seems, a worsening among confreres from 40 to 50 years of age. It is, therefore, important to reflect on the reasons for the departures in order to find solutions, because it is useless to have young men who come if some of them will leave after a few years of ministry. So, I leave this point too to your reflection.

**Appointments and confirmations
by the Superior General**

DATE	NAME	OFFICE	PROVINCE
12/03/96	Homero Elías	Superior El Alto 1/3	(General Curia)
13/03/96	Chacko Panathara	Superior Tanzanie 1/3	(General Curia)
16/03/96	Gonzalo Martínez	Visitor 1/6	Equator
20/03/96	Hugh O'Donnell	Visitor 2/3	China
21/03/96	Francisco Xavier da Silva	Director D.C. (2nd mandate)	Fortaleza
22/03/96	Joseph L. Levesque	Visitor 2/3	USA Eastern
22/03/96	J. Hypólito Cassiano Pena	Director D.C. 1/6	Rio de Janeiro
30/03/96	Santo Graná	Nat. Chaplain. Marian Assoc	Italy
05/04/96	William Hartenbach	Visitor 1/6	USA Midwest
05/04/96	John S. Sledziona	Visitor 1/6	USA New England
13/04/96	Raymond de Barreau	Director D.C. (+2 years)	Toulouse
26/04/96	Christian Sens	Visitor 2/3	Toulouse

REFLECTIONS ON MISSIONS “AD GENTES” IN THE LIGHT OF ST. VINCENT

Antonino Orcajo, C.M.

Ever since the announcement of the coming canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre, a renewed concern for the missions “ad gentes” has stirred the hearts of many missionaries. About these missions the Constitutions of the C.M., echoing the thought of St. Vincent, say, “... they occupy an eminent place among the apostolic works of the Congregation” (CC.16). The exhortations of our Founder on this theme have rushed into my memory as I re-read the letters of Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M., Superior General, in which he reported on his visits to China and Africa, and at the same time issued a call to all the members of the Congregation to respond generously by volunteering to participate in the international missions supported by the Congregation. Is it because in the present circumstances the whole Congregation will have to give clearer proofs, or make greater sacrifices in personnel and resources to show that, in fact, the missions do occupy an “eminent place” among its works? Should there not also be a reactivating of the missionary spirit through a more generalized self-giving to the missions in those countries in which exists poverty at once most shameful and needful of help? Today and always the real dedication to the missions revitalizes the spirit of a Congregation which was born precisely to bring the gospel to any part of the world.

Already in St. Vincent’s time the missionaries grew in their vocations in the face of the need to go to “far off” countries in which the gospel had not yet been preached or the church not yet established. The call to the missions was a vocational “wake up call” which the Founder used in his oral and written communications.¹ The same can be said of the missions taken on by other Superiors General, the successors of St. Vincent, which generated and reaffirmed very valuable vocations to the Congregation of the Mission. The example of John Gabriel Perboyre confirms this. His dedication to preaching the gospel message, first in the seminaries of San Floro and in the novitiate in Paris, and later in China, a dedication marked by a love for Christ and the church, has produced incalculable benefits in the whole Christian world and above all in that small part which is the Vincentian family.

The passion for following Jesus, the Evangelizer of the poor

¹ The theme of the missions “ad gentes” in relation to St. Vincent has been amply treated by different authors. Here we give a brief extract of their writings, cf. Redondo, J., *Misionología de San Vicente*, Mexico 1960; Van Winsen, *Saint Vincent et les missions étrangères*, Vincentiana (1978), pp.158-182; Esparza, C., *San Vicente de Paúl y la misión “ad gentes”*, Caminos de Misión (1992), no. 50, pp. 21-26; no 51, pp. 23-25; Orcajo, A., *La visión misionera de San Vicente*, San Vicente y la misión “ad gentes”, CEME, Salamanca 1995, pp.169-199.

The devotion to the missions springs from a passionate love for Jesus, sent by the Father to evangelize the poor, according to the Vincentian experience. Jesus is the first and most excellent model for all missionaries. Incarnated in our nature and anointed by the Spirit to announce the good news of salvation, Jesus of Nazareth teaches in the synagogues, cures the sick, pardons sinners and calls everyone to conversion. In his person the Scriptural texts about the Messiah are fulfilled (cf. Luke 4:21), that he went about doing good in the towns and villages of Palestine, and that he would have gone beyond their borders *“if his eternal wisdom had deemed it necessary to go and preach conversion to the poor nations. For that he sent his apostles and he sends us, like them, to carry his flame everywhere.”* (SVP, XI, 387)². Here indeed is the missionary to the poor, full of compassionate love and mercy who gives rise to the vocation of Vincent de Paul and the Mission he put in motion, starting in 1617, on the occasion of the mission in Gannes-Folleville.

Vincent’s references to Jesus as missionary are constant in any place in which he makes known his spiritual, community and apostolic teachings. One witness assures us that *“when Vincent speaks deeply...about compassion for the afflicted, taking care of the poor, zeal for the salvation of souls...he does so in deed and word.”* (SVP, XI,835-836). We can affirm with complete assurance that the contagion Vincent communicated to his companions was due to his professed love for Jesus, the Savior of the world. As a result, all were impressed by his conduct and his words and were willing, in general, to go to the ends of the earth to *“make God known to the poor, announce Jesus Christ to them, tell them the reign of God is near, and that that kingdom is for the poor.”* (SVP, XI, 387). Many times he was heard to say his greatest ideal on this earth was to serve the Gospel to every creature, no matter how far away, and that he envied the luck of the missionaries *“sent to the four corners of the world”* (cf.SVP, III, 260; XI, 28). In conclusion we may say the desire to imitate Jesus, evangelizer of the poor was not overridden, in any way, by exclusively sociological motives.

Who does not hear in these words the resonance they produced in former generations? There is no one among us who does not know, at least in theory, that the vocation to follow Jesus the evangelizer of the poor bears within itself a profound disposition to go to any part of the world. If there exists any clue for discerning the missionary vocation it has to be feeling, like St. Paul, the urgency of the charity of Christ to bring to everyone the knowledge of God and his messenger Jesus Christ. (John 17:3). If such is not the case, one has made a mistake in entering a Company *“brought up with such a disposition that, leaving everything, when His Holiness chooses to send it, it would go happily”* (SVP, II, 214). This is what our Founder wrote to B. Codoing on May 25, 1642 expressing to him the great consolation he felt when Mons. Ingoli, first

² We are citing San Vicente de Paúl, Obras Completas, in the Spanish Sígueme edition., in italic print followed by the volume and page number.

secretary of the Propagation of the Faith, asked him on various occasions to take charge of some missions. Such a feeling was not due to any fleeting emotion, but rather to the deepest conviction of faith and love for Jesus Christ as is shown by any number of communications previous to this date. He was convinced it was in the mission countries where the greatest poverty and the fewest laborers prevailed, and the harvest was most abundant (cf, SVP X, 379). Despite the three centuries that have passed, this situation remains the same; there is no sadder desolation in the world than that seen in underdeveloped countries, as innumerable witnesses attest, not only members of the hierarchy and superiors of missionary congregations, but also any observer attentive to the evolution of peoples.

Proven Love for the Church

Jesus' mission to the world and his sending of the apostles with the mandate to preach the gospel to all peoples invigorate St. Vincent's catechesis to his disciples. After many explanations about the missionary vocation, he concludes with great understanding of the etymological and conceptual sense of the term "missionary" as being equivalent to "apostle": "What does "missionary" mean? It means 'sent, sent by God'. The Lord has said to you: 'Go out to the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.' " (SVP, XI, 342). Indeed, the Twelve, obedient to the Lord's command, disperse throughout the world giving testimony by word and work about the life of Jesus incarnated, put to death and risen for the salvation/ liberation of all mankind. As proof of their love for Jesus, they faced persecutions, imprisonment, threats and death itself; and nothing and no one could detain their steps or silence their voice. Above all the apostle Paul, the vessel of election, is the indefatigable model of labor and love for the Christian communities which spring up in one or another place, according to the impulse of the Holy Spirit who leads Paul along different paths.

The Founder of the Congregation cannot read the Acts of the Apostles without feeling aroused by the same Spirit which impelled Paul of Tarsus to announce to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ. After reading, Vincent transmitted to his companions the fire which consumed him interiorly. The hardships of evangelization did not terrify him, as they did not the Apostles, not even the deaths within the Company as a result of the missions. On the contrary, he would say, "Let not the difficulties make cowards of you. This is a matter of the glory of the Father and the efficacy of the word and of the passion of his Son. The salvation of the nations and our own salvation are such a great good they merit any effort, whatever price they may cost. It does not matter if we die first as long as we die with our arms in our hands...For every missionary who gives his life for love, God will raise up many others who will accomplish the good the first (missionary) may have left undone." (SVP, XI, 290).

History has confirmed this prophecy which had already been made by Tertulian in his Apologetic: “The blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians.” Can there be any doubt that the blood of our martyrs, like John Gabriel Perboyre and Francis Regis Clet, to cite just two examples, have been the seed of abundant missionary vocations? The work of the domestic and foreign missions admits no comparison with the other ministries of the Congregation. They possess an educative force the other ministries do not offer. They are the admirable models of self-giving to the evangelization of the faith which have forged authentic vocations to the Congregation and have given most saints to the community. If this is the case, and there can be doubt of it, should the missionary charism be weakened, the company would be undermined in its essential vocation and would have little to offer to those who presented themselves to be continuers of the principal work of Jesus, who came from heaven to earth to fulfill the mission given to him by the Father.

The passionate love for Jesus is lived conjointly with a love for the church, evangelizer of and evangelized by those very people to whom she consecrates her labor. This has been the testimony of all the servants of the gospel. The church as Kingdom of God, sheepfold and Body of Christ suggests to St. Vincent interesting missionary consequences, expressions of his baptismal and priestly experience. As the Kingdom of God the church shows, by means of the missions, that the Holy Spirit guides her (SVP, XI, 730). As sheepfold or flock the church needs zealous shepherds who pasture the sheep, search for those who are lost, bind the wounds and attract all to the one stable of salvation (cf. Luke 15: 4-7; Mat. 18:12 s-14). As the Body of Christ the church is composed of many members intimately linked among themselves; and the missionaries are the most solicitous and compassionate for the suffering members of that Body (SVP, XI, 560-561). In these and other images of the church, such as the harvest that requires workers (SVP, XI, 734), or the Spouse who needs to be purified (cf.,SVP, II,377), what stands out is the goodness of God who “*who has chosen the missionaries as instruments of his immense and fatherly love which seeks to reign and grow in souls.*” (SVP, XI, 533).

The fear that the church would disappear in Europe because of the wars of religion and the depravity of the customs spurred St. Vincent’s zeal. In 1647 he discovers the same concern in J. Dehorgny: “*I may tell you this is a sentiment which has been reproaching my soul for a long time...But, even though God did not have this plan, should we not then contribute to the extension of the church?*” (SVP, III, 143). The fact of the matter is Vincent spent his greatest efforts in the dedication to the missions and the formation of the clergy as a proof of his love for the church.

The fire of charity

Clearly the aforementioned images of the church may be applied to individual and collective persons, although not all may have received the same

charism of missionary charity. It was charity that moved the Son of God to become man like us and “*to establish among us, by his example and his word, charity towards the neighbor.*” (SVP, XI, 555). If we analyze carefully the origins of the Mission, we will see it was “zeal for the salvation of souls” that gave birth to it. Therefore, it labors always urged on by love and even remains “*in a state of charity*” (Cf. SVP, XI, 564).

The outstanding effect of charity is apostolic zeal, zeal for the glory of God on earth, zeal to carry the gospel to all nations. It is the missionary’s most characteristic virtue, and the one in which the Founder of the Mission most insisted under distinct aspects. We have all heard any number of times that reflection of his, inspired surely by a similar one in St. Francis de Sales on devotion: “*Zeal consists of a pure desire to become pleasing to God and useful to the neighbor. Zeal to extend the Reign of God, zeal to procure the salvation of the neighbor. Is there anything more perfect in the world? If love is a fire, zeal is its flame; if love is a sun, zeal is its ray. Zeal is the purest thing there is in love for God*” (SVP, XI, 590). Now one can better understand why the missionaries are models of charity: because they follow Jesus, “*who came to bring fire to the earth to inflame it with his love. What else must we do except let it burn and consume all?*”(SVP, XI, 555).

The missionary shows he is inflamed by theological charity if he feels the need to bear this same charity to needy peoples even though his weakness makes it impossible for him. In this case, the fervor of his interior charity will produce invisible but real effects in the whole Body of Christ. Many, as a consequence of the communion of saints, will feel without knowing how, that a force impels them to give their lives for their brothers. Popes Paul VI and John Paul II have placed this in relief in their encyclicals and missionary allocutions while referring to zeal, the product of charity, in the common endeavor of the evangelization of peoples. The absence of zeal, on the other hand, would translate into effects contrary to charity which is, by nature, outgoing and contagious: pusillanimity, cowardice, insensitivity, laziness and comfort seeking, vices which St. Vincent denounces severely as enemies of the Mission. It is enough to make one laugh to imagine the Founder of the Congregation ridiculing with heavy irony those who are lazy and lacking in evangelical zeal, while he arouses admiration and enthusiasm when he extols the valiant apostles of the Gospel. A similar enthusiasm broke out in him when he witnessed the interior life many missionaries cultivated, anxious to go to the missions despite their advanced age and sickness; but most of all when he gave witness to the fact that some companions gave their lives engaged in the principal work of the church and the Company.

These he considered happy and blessed. St. Paul, St. Vincent Ferrer and St. Francis Xaver--these he saw as authentic witnesses of Jesus for having carried the Reign of God to the nations. For this reason St. Vincent encouraged the desire for the missions, which “*is the highest, most useful and sanctifying work*

there is in the Church...The apostles and the greatest saints have considered themselves happy to be consumed by this” (SVP, IV, 348). On one occasion while speaking of the missionary vocation he pointed out the reason for so much happiness: “How happy the condition of the missionary who has no other limits in his missions except the habitable world itself! Why then restrict ourselves to one point and limit ourselves to one parish if the whole circumference of the circle is ours?” (SVP, XI, 828-829).

Enviably Disponability

Zeal or inflamed charity demands an attitude of disponability without which the great work of the missions is impossible. In the time of the Founder, disponability was the requisite and proof of a vocation to the Mission. In fact *“our vocation consists in going, not to one parish or just one diocese, but rather to the whole earth.”* (SVP, XI, 533). The contrary would be equivalent to denying the designs of God for this Company which must make itself present wherever there is the greatest need for evangelical workers. There will be no missions if disponible missionaries are lacking, free from every enslaving tie: places, ministries, idolatrous inclinations. Disponability knows no limits of language, color, culture or customs. The hardships which the missions present are of no importance to the missionary freed from himself and of the goods the Evil One promises. What counts for him is the following of Jesus, who had no fixed place to lay his head.

Is the disponability of the old communities of the Congregation in crisis today? Do they not tend to close in on themselves as the snail in its shell? Are they not more concerned about their own subsistence than for wider universal horizons? Judging from the aforementioned letters of the present Superior General signs of missionary enthusiasm are noted everywhere. Nevertheless, he insists in issuing new calls to the disponability of all the members of the Congregation. Although the numerical decrease in vocations in the West and the aging of the personnel in the older provinces are irrefutable facts, they do not seem to be evidence of a lack of spirit for the missions “ad gentes”. While it may be true that the total number of defections and deaths is greater today than the number of priestly ordinations, it is evident, on the other hand, that the missionary ardor remains incandescent in many confreres who work in the young churches with great vocational futures. While a certain individualism may be detected in the carrying out of some functions, made clear in the documents of recent Assemblies, at the same time we can count on international collaboration in missionary projects. Arguments for and against color the (supposed) disponible behavior of today’s missionaries, which probably demonstrate “selective memory” about the (supposed) generalized conduct of the missionaries of the past with regard to the calls for aid received from Major Superiors.

Some old communities still have great openness to the ministry of “popular missions”. If, as John Paul II teaches, “the home mission is a credible sign and stimulus for the foreign mission, and viceversa”, disponability for the first helps to verify the universal spirit required for the second, and viceversa; active participation - the more the better - in foreign missions reinforces the ideal of home missions. This affirmation is also verified by the history of the Church and that of our own community. In the Congregation of the Mission, the missions “ad gentes” sprang from the impulse of the missions to the communities of old Christianity. Thus St. Vincent understood and explained it: “*We must maintain fervently here the possessions of the Church and the interests of Jesus Christ, and meanwhile work unceasingly to effect new conquests and bring it about that the most distant peoples come to know Him*” (SVP, XI, 245). And he said this, in the language of his time, while counting on reduced numbers and foreseen and unforeseen adversities.

Conclusion

Nothing and no one can impede that the missionary spirit, open to any disposition of Providence, live with hope for the future. Every missionary, even the sick and the old, is called, each in his own way, to seek and to establish the Reign of God. The physically incapable help to sustain the missionary fervor of those who work in the midst of strong opposition. With regard to this it is helpful to recall St. Vincent’s phrase: “*Jesus Christ and the saints did more by suffering than by laboring*” (SVP, II, 9). With their eyes fixed on Jesus crucified, who died for the salvation of all peoples in obedience to the Father and for love of mankind, the missionaries reduced to silence and suffering complete the redemptive passion of Christ by uniting themselves sincerely to the suffering and evangelizing body of the Church.

(Joseph V. Cummins, C.M., Translator)

The Dialogue in the Evangelization of Tribal Cultures of South East Asia

experiences, methodology, difficulties; how to promote this dialogue

Victor Bieler, C.M., Assistant Général

Introduction

It is difficult to know how far dialogue in the evangelization of tribal cultures of South East Asia has progressed. As a member of the Congregation of the Mission I can speak only about the tribes where our Confreres work. The provinces of our Congregation in South East Asia work in the Philippines and Indonesia. As far as I know we do not have confreres working with tribes in the Philippines. The Indonesian province of our congregation has members in West Kalimantan, working with the Dayaks, and I myself - before being called to Rome in 1990, worked with tribespeople in Irian Jaya, East Indonesia. I can speak only about my experience with some of the tribes in Irian Jaya, the Indonesian part of the island, that formerly was called Netherlands New Guinea. I went to Irian Jaya for the first time in 1976 to teach in the interdiocesan major seminary. During my last years I was rector of that interdiocesan seminary, in Abepura.

Experiences

The tribes are undergoing a lot of **change** in many respects. Perhaps one of the greatest changes that has come is the introduction of money. Through this, the whole way of thinking and living has changed, and is still changing. More and more things are being measured in money, and according to the market economy.

In such a situation of extremely rapid and fundamental change it is difficult to know where we stand, and how to dialogue. There are so many things that should be thought over simultaneously, but for which time is lacking. Instant decisions have to be made, with the great risk of taking the wrong decisions.

Sometimes I think that we really **succeeded** in the formation of Christians among tribes, but at other times I doubt it very much. On the other hand, considering the behaviour of Christians in Europe, one may ask if, after almost 2000 years, the people here have really become Christians, and this is a great consolation to me with regard to our people living in regions where Christianity has not existed for more than a hundred years yet. This leads me to the thought that as missionaries we need a lot of patience. But again, there are so many things that cannot wait.

There is great **rivalry** among the tribes. One of the difficult things for a missionary is not to be, or become, partial. As there are many different tribes it is easy to be inclined to prefer the people of one tribe to those of another. There are qualities in certain tribes that are repellant and others that are attractive. It is best not to talk about the pleasant or unpleasant characteristics of the people of one tribe to those of another.

Because of the long years of isolation and separation between the tribes, due to geographic conditions like steep mountains, wild streams and swamps, there is a great distrust with regard to others that do not belong to the same tribe. And even among villages there is sometimes great enmity. When one deals with people of more than one tribe, one should therefore be open to anyone of any tribe, and show that the Lord has come for everybody, from any tribe and nation. Needless to say, this is not easy.

In talking with the people I got the impression that the **Old Testament** is quite easy for them to understand. It is different with the New Testament and its new scale of values like love for one's fellowmen, meekness, humility, etc. It is extremely difficult to talk about forgiveness, about loving others who do not belong to your own tribe, about having only one wife, about eternal life, about celibacy, etc.

One will be **accepted** easily by the tribespeople, if one comes, not as a teacher who knows best, but as a person who is interested in them, and eager to learn from them about their ways of living and thinking. Only when one has been accepted, is it possible to go further and bring the Good Message. But it requires much trying and trying again to make things understandable for them, as they are living in such a different world that, in a certain sense, has been isolated from the rest of the world.

There are many tribes in Irian Jaya, belonging to the Melanesian culture; I do not know all its tribes or cultures. I had contact only with those tribes that had a student in the seminary. But only a few tribes have one, or some. This is, amongst other things, due to the fact that the North of Irian Jaya is mostly Protestant or missioned by Christian non-Catholic denominations, while the South is mostly Catholic.

I could tell about my experience at the **Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Filsafat Teologi**, where we prepare young men and women for evangelization.

The school receives its students from the 4 dioceses in Irian Jaya. We have a *numerus clausus* for the students, 100 to 110. The reason for this is that with the number of teachers we are not able to handle more students, and also because if there were more who finished their studies, their number could become a burden for the dioceses which would have to provide for them. Of

course, it is different with the candidates of the religious congregations that also send their candidates to this school.

The school is meant for those who want to become pastors: priests or lay persons. All have to go through the same studies. The emphasis is placed on Sacred Scripture.

As there are many tribes in Irian Jaya, it is necessary to have a profound knowledge of the anthropology of Irian Jaya, which takes up a major part of the curriculum.

Methodology:

As far as I know, the methodology applied by the first missionaries was that they came to a village, alone or together with a catechist from another tribe or culture, who knew the language of this tribe, settled themselves and starting teaching religion, opening a school for the children. After some time they baptized the people. Of course, perhaps it was not, and is not, religion that attracted the people in the first place, but other things like medicines, material things, and later on education as a means for progress in the wider world. Therefore, the missionary had to start with a study of the customs and culture of a tribe,

Then it was a matter of trying to find meeting points with the Gospel, trying to translate Scripture, that is to find images that speak to the people. The missionary had to find ways of inculturation.

Perhaps the methodology now has changed. Perhaps missionaries now begin with upgrading the environment, building better houses, teaching the people to prepare better food, to till the soil, clothing.

Difficulties:

In general there are difficulties coming from the government, which wants to solve the problem of tribes. Tribes do not have a national consciousness; in the eyes of the government they are backward, not civilized, a way of living to be ashamed of. On the other hand they could attract tourists, which means money. They have land, which could be used by the nation, or by certain privileged persons. Their lands are covered with forests, which could be sold. In the eyes of the government their land is not used by them, and it is not their land but the land of the nation.

The problem of **transmigration**.

People from other islands, especially Java and some parts of Sulawesi, migrate to Kalimantan and Irian Jaya, where the population is still sparse and there are still many forests. The tribes in Kalimantan and Irian Jaya consider the land, even if it is not actually being used, as theirs, and they need it, being

hunters and gatherers. The Central Government does not, or/and does not want to, understand this. The preparation of the migrants leaves much to be desired, and so does the preparation of the tribes who have to allow them to move onto their land. This creates tensions. It is said that the bush and forest fires in Kalimantan last year, which had their impact on air traffic even in Singapore, were due to these. The autochthonous people of Kalimantan preferred to set fire to the forest rather than allow the trees and land be used by intruders from other islands.

There are many newcomers in Irian Jaya and Kalimantan, who are also Catholic: Javanese, Florinese, and others, all of whom want to impose their own form of Catholicism.

Islamization of the islands outside Java

For people who do not confess to be Musulman it is almost impossible to migrate to other islands. The tribes are generally not attracted by Islam, but prefer a Christian religion if they have to make a choice. But gradually the influence of Islam in Irian Jaya and Kalimantan is growing. One of the tactics practised in Flores is importing attractive young women for brothels and as salesgirls. Marriages which result from these contacts are contracted in the mosque.

Language

To really understand the people and to be able to help them, it is necessary to master the language. This is extremely difficult where there are no grammars or dictionaries. On the other hand, as the national language is the Indonesian language, we must use this language. - Perhaps it is interesting to know that of the 180 million inhabitants of Indonesia, 80 million people speak Javanese, which is not, and never will become, the national language. So why should we take pains in promoting some local languages spoken by, at most, 100.000 people ?

But, of course, language is only one of the many things one should know to make an approach possible. There are still so many secrets, initiation rites, ceremonies, not accessible to the missionary. And superstition is still strong.

In Melanesian culture the tendency towards the cargo-cult is very strong. It is a kind of messianism. Should we use this for our eschatological views or rather should we ban it to avoid any misunderstanding about our Messiah ?

A great scandal is the **rivalry among the Christian religions** and sects. If everybody claims to be preaching the Good News, why should there be so many different churches, and why should they even go as far as to attack each other ?

There are many **newcomers** on the island: Javanese, Florinese, others, all of whom want to impose their own form of Catholicism. Instilling respect for other cultures and forms of practising religion is necessary.

Of course, each people has its different scale of values. What are we going to do about that? Do we have to conserve the old values as in a museum, or do we help the people adapt themselves to the new era and let them lose their identity? Of course we all know that the truth lies somewhere in between these two extremes. But in real life it is not easy to find one's way.

Exploitation of the country, mining, deforestation, fishery. All this is being done to the advantage of the central government, but the local population does not, or hardly at all, benefit from it. It is not always possible for the leaders of the Church to defend the local people. They will be easily accused of guerrilla activities and of instigating the people against the government.

Promoting dialogue

How to promote dialogue?

Much can be done to promote dialogue.

The most important thing is the willingness in word and deed to **respect** any human being as such, even if he or she is not clothed in the way we are, even if he has a way of behaving different from our ways. We should keep in mind that the way the members of a tribe dress must have some practical reason, about which we cannot always judge rightly. It is so easy to consider oneself as not belonging to their group, and unconsciously consider them as being inferior to us, speaking about them as an object, they do this they do that, their customs are so different from ours, they are not that far yet.. It looks as if it is just impossible not to speak in that way.

There should be more **understanding**, greater awareness that we do not really know the culture yet. There are perhaps many more beautiful things in their customs and culture, but which we do not understand as such. And we do not have the time to study them. Of course, we could prepare young men and women for doing that, as has already been done and is still being done. But through the formation we give them they get transformed or misformed, or, anyhow, they change; will they then still be able to know what is good and what is not in their culture?

It would be more helpful if we could interest **influential people** in the plight of the tribes, make them aware that, even if they want the best for their country, they should keep in mind that the tribespeople of their country are their countrymen and therefore should have the same rights as all others.

Influential people are usually those in power. The question arises whether we should seek their help. Does this not mean siding with them, against the oppressed and exploited tribes ?

In a country like Indonesia it is not that easy. In places far from the Central Government, local authorities are often almighty. Many officials are of the opinion that what is good for the greater part of the nation is good for all. The tribes are only a small minority. The Government claims that only 600,000 people can be reckoned as belonging to the tribes.

And as many officials in the interior or on far away islands often do not receive their salary in time, a salary which is often not sufficient to support their family, they have to find other ways, and the easiest way is by taking the rights of tribal people. Evangelization must then become a liberation from evil structures.

I would like to end my remarks with the prayer:

Lord, give me the courage to change the things I can
give me the serenity to accept the things I cannot
and the wisdom to know the difference.

Thank you.

Victor Bieler, C.M.

A Hundred Years of Vincentian Presence in Madagascar (1896 - 1996)

by Gonzague Danjou, C.M.

The precursors sent by St Vincent

Since the beginning of its history the Congregation of the Mission has kept a privileged relationship with Madagascar.... It is to the Great Island of the Indian Ocean that St Vincent sent his best missionaries in 1648 and in the course of the last years of his life our Founder frequently turned his heart and his thoughts towards his far distant missionary sons who lived in perilous conditions and from whom he no longer received any news.

In spite of the closure of the mission decided by Fr Alméras in 1671 the Congregation of the Mission did not despair of establishing itself again in Madagascar. All through the Eighteenth Century fruitless attempts were made and it was with their eyes fixed on Madagascar that Missionaries set themselves to serve the first inhabitants of Réunion (Ile Bourbon) and Mauritius (Ile de France).

The return of the Vincentians in 1896

At the end of the Nineteenth Century when the French landed on Madagascar and placed it under their power the Congregation of the Mission was called upon to bring the Gospel once again. Mgr. Jacques Crouzet, a missionary in Ethiopia, was appointed Vicar Apostolic of Southern Madagascar; and with a small group of French and Ethiopian Missionaries landed at Fort Dauphin in April 1896. Shortly afterwards in 1897 our Sisters, the Daughters of Charity also landed and took an essential part according to their charism in announcing Christ and his message.

The beginnings were difficult: climatic conditions, lack of communication infrastructures (roads, bridges, telephone...), insecurity, scarcity of materials: all this made apostolic activity difficult. Besides, in a context of colonization, the announcement of the Gospel remained linked in the mentality of the population to the occupying political power. Although the confreres for the most part wished to remain free from the colonial administration which was often marked by the French anticlericalism of the period, the missionaries were categorised as strangers, as "vazahas". So, becoming a Catholic Christian appeared like passing over to the colonial power; to become a Catholic was to become French...

Erection and development of the Province.

In 1911 the Province of Madagascar was constituted a juridic entity and its first Visitor was the Vicar Apostolic, Mgr. Jacques Crouzet; the Madagascar Province took on the apostolate of the entire Vicariate, that is the territory situated below the second South parallel.

In 1923 the first Malagasy confrere was admitted to the Congregation, he who would become Fr. Thomas Zafimasina; in 1928 Brother Norbert Botomary entered the Congregation becoming a priest only in 1960. Then we have to wait until 1977 for the reception into the Province of Fr Germain Tata who is now the "doyen" of our Malagasy confreres.

In 1932 Mgr. Crouzet while remaining Vicar Apostolic was freed from his responsibility over the Congregation and Fr John Baptist Gratia was appointed Visitor. For this immense territory equalling about one third the size of France the number of missionaries was always insufficient. The confreres lived in very isolated postings and met one another only at their annual retreats. As well as that, because of the two world wars (1914-1918 and 1939-1945) a certain number of Missionaries were obliged to return to Europe. In 1939 the Province numbered 34 confreres. Even when reinforcements were sent to Madagascar after the second world war there were never more than 40 missionaries active in the Apostolic Vicariate of Fort-Dauphin.

In 1947 Madagascar experienced its first nationalist uprising against the colonial power in what was euphemistically called "the events of 1947". This independence movement was wrongly construed by many missionaries, but certain confreres courageously tried to avoid the excesses of the repression and to calm people's spirits. The key figure in this action was Fr Louis Deguise. At Mankara, in a region particularly affected by the insurrection, this confrere carried out peace-making efforts which contributed to bringing about calm (Cf. J. TRONCHON: "L'insurrection malagache de 1947", pub. Maspero).

Following the visit of Mgr. Lefèvre who was then Apostolic Delegate to French-speaking Africa in 1951 the territory entrusted to the Vincentians was reduced, becoming limited to the present-day dioceses of Fort-Dauphin, Farafangana and Ihosy, that is about 100,000 square kilometers. The rest was confided to the Assumptionist Missionaries (Tulear) and to the Missionaries of the Holy Family (Morombe).

In spite of this reduction of the territory confided to the apostolic responsibility of the Congregation of the Mission, in spite of the opening up of some vocations to the diocesan priesthood (Frs Michel Ramilison, Raphaël Robson, Antoine Mihamitsy, Ernest Boje, Maximin Médard), in spite of the arrival of some groups of Vincentians, the number of apostolic workers remained dramatically insufficient. The French provinces had run out of steam and were incapable of keeping up a supply of workers while entire sectors of the dioceses of the South-East (Fort-Dauphin, 1956; Farafangana, 1957; Ihosy, 1967) were untouched by the proclamation of the Gospel.

After 1958, with General de Gaulle's arrival in France, Madagascar gradually progressed towards the Independence which was peacefully proclaimed on 26 June 1960. This was a new opportunity for Evangelisation. Missionary and Gospel no

longer appeared as the coloniser's baggage and a means of conquering. At the same time, in an independent country, the field of the apostolate became more open to other non-French missionaries and the Church was showing its universality more clearly.

In 1961 there opened at last the Junior Seminary of Farafangana welcoming priesthood candidates from the South-East of the Island; but for many years it bore no fruit.

Fr. Clement Cassan, a former Chinese missionary, arrived as Visitor of the Province of Madagascar in 1953. Faced with the critical situation of evangelisation in the South he started looking for confreres from other Provinces to give our Province the new blood and the dynamism it needed. With the help of the Superior General of the time, Fr William Slattery, Fr Cassan's efforts brought about the arrival and installation of confreres from Turin (1968), Spanish confreres (1965), Slovenian confreres (1968) and Polish confreres (1970). These different groups of missionaries were, at the start, allocated their own special areas.

Towards indigenisation of the Province

From about 1970 throughout the entire Church of Madagascar the number of priestly and religious vocations experienced a gradual increase and the formation of the clergy became one of the major preoccupations of the Church. At the request of the bishops a confrere took his place on the formation team, first at the Regional Major Seminary of Ambatoroka-Antannarivo, then at the interdiocesan Major Seminary of Vohitsoa-Fianarantsoa.

In other areas the Vincentians who served in the dioceses worked with renewed energy at promoting priestly vocations to the secular clergy. Then there were opened the Junior Seminaries of Fort-Dauphin and Ihosy whose first Directors were confreres. After the death of the Vincentian Bishops of Farafangana (Mgr. Camille Chilouet) and Ihosy (Mgr. Luigi Dusio) in 1970 these dioceses were given Malagasy Bishops. Today in the territory where the majority of our confreres work only the diocese of Fort-Dauphin, with Mgr. Pierre Zevaco, is headed by a European Bishop.

But, at the same time that the number of future secular priests for Madagascar was increasing, several young men showed a desire to involve themselves "following Christ the Evangeliser of the poor" in the Congregation of the Mission. They wished to find in the Congregation a community which would enable them better to live out the grace of priesthood. Our Province has thus gradually set in place structures aimed at welcoming and forming young men whom the Spirit of the Lord is directing towards the Vincentian family. In 1983 there was the opening of the Foyer Thomas Zaphimasina at Antannarivo for our major seminarists following courses at Ambatoroka. Then in 1986 the opening of the permanent Internal Seminary in the Marillac Provincial House. Finally in 1990 the opening of our St Vincent's Scolasticate at Fianarantsoa for our students in Fundamental Theology and Philosophy who are following courses at the interdiocesan Major Seminary of the Southern Province at Vohitsoa.

With regard to our Sisters, the consistent improvement in their numbers enabled them to open several houses and to bear witness to the Vincentian charism through their new foundations in the South east.

Our Vincentian formation

The confreres however were not content to welcome native vocations. Right from the Provincial Assembly of 1982-1983 they manifested an explicit desire to set up an authentically Malagasy Province. First, by bringing about a true internationalisation of the Province: national divisions had to be surpassed in order to create truly international communities within the unity of the Madagascar Province, and then by gradually confiding community responsibilities to Malagasy confreres.

The last Provincial Assemblies gave time to reflection on problems concerning formation. We have thus been able to lay down the principal axes of this formation and to bring into focus a certain number of practical directives:

- Stage One: an effort in discernment so that the candidates might recognise God's will for them, while at the same time allowing them to clarify, purify and accept their vocation.
- Next, formation properly so called aimed at helping the young man to become adult in the faith by taking responsibility for his personal formation and his apostolic life in community. We have, for the moment, made the choice of limiting the number of those we receive each year in order to be sure of this personalised formation.
- At the end of their foundational studies the young priests are sent on mission and after a few years of ministry, they receive additional formation through the acquisition of diplomas or through systematic renewal courses.
- For Brothers: the aim is clarification of their specific vocation, technical formation and their insertion into communities.

The Province of Madagascar is then today assuming a Malagasy identity and our young confreres, in accordance with the present-day orientation of the Church and the Congregation in Africa, continues to reflect on inculturation in order to promote greater unity in the Christian, priestly and Vincentian vocation within their native cultural identity. At the present moment (1 October 1995) the Malagasy confreres of the Province are listed as follows:

- Priests: 11
- Brothers: 2
- Students incorporated: 5
- Students admitted: 31
- Bothers admitted: 3

Today's inculturation of the Vincentian charism.

In the Church of Madagascar at the present day the number of secular priests is increasing regularly. It is only to be expected that they should more and more take responsibility for parishes and ministries of which we had been called to take charge at the beginning of the mission when we were the only ones capable of assuming the ordinary pastoral care of the dioceses. In agreement with the bishops and as far as is locally possible we see ourselves as moving out of central parishes in order to devote ourselves to the specific works of the Congregation.

In the realm of apostolic activities we are at present trying to set up a team to specialise in Popular Missions. We have already begun to organise systematically Popular Missions each year, but the confreres involved in these are not totally given over to this work. During the rest of the year they take on other apostolic works. In the Provincial Plan we propose to set up at least one permanent team of confreres entirely dedicated to this work of Popular Missions.

Another avenue to be followed by our Province is that of aid to the clergy, especially through the work of Formation. For several years now a confrere has been attached full-time to a formation team of priests at the Major Seminary. To this must be added the participation of several confreres in regular courses or particular sessions in the various major seminaries of the Island. Formation of the clergy is one of the priorities established by the bishops for the Church of Madagascar at this stage of its history. In keeping with our charism we also wish to form confreres capable of becoming educators at the service of the clergy.

Finally a third avenue which we have chosen is that of "Mission ad Gentes". For the moment, because of our small number and the increased number of "bush stations" we are principally involved with pastoral work amongst Christians, and our activity amongst those who have not yet been touched by the gospel and are isolated in cut-off areas is rather limited. According as we become freed from traditional pastoral ministry we wish to direct ourselves towards these poor people who are still far from the faith.

To these fundamental orientations for the future works of our Province there must be added the Spiritual Animation of Vincentian-inspired Movements: A.I.C., St Vincent de Paul Society, Marian Youth... as well as deep commitment to charitable and social works for the promotion of the poor to which confreres were led by the Spirit of Christ.

The above are the orientations taken by the Province, and they are the field of action for the Congregation of the Mission in the years to come.

Such a future of course does not belong to us: it remains in the Lord's hands... But we know that the Vincentian charism lived by the confreres, the Daughters of Charity, the lay Vincentian associations... has now taken root in the soil of Madagascar. The tiny grain, buried in the sacrifice of the first missionaries sent by St Vincent, emergent from the earth in 1896, and today watered by the work of all those

who went before us, is gently becoming a tree which has its roots in Malagasy soil....
It is up to us now to make it bear fruit!

(Stanislaus Brindley C.M., translator)

Algeria: 1646-1996

by Jean Landousies, C.M

This year, 1996, as the small Vincentian Community in Algeria commemorates the 350th anniversary of St. Vincent's sending of the first missionaries to Algeria, the land of Algeria itself has been torn apart by violence which in the space of four years has seen thousands killed, including eleven male and eleven female religious.

The central Maghreb in the seventeenth century witnessed the golden age of "the race," that "little war" which permitted the Mediterranean Powers to flourish not only by trade in merchandise, but also the slave trade. The fate of the slaves was an unenviable one on both sides of "Mare Nostrum." King Louis XIII had asked Vincent to send priests to Barbary for the corporal and spiritual relief of the Christian slaves. The Duchess of Aiguillon also wanted to be part of this good work, and on 25th January 1643 the contract was signed establishing a house at Marseilles which would serve as a base for Vincentians, and would also link up with the missionaries in N. Africa. The wording of the contract stated that the Founder of the Mission would send, when he judged it suitable to do so, priests of his Congregation "to console and instruct the poor Christian captives... in faith, love, and the fear of God, and to give missions, and the catechetical instructions and encouragement they were used to preaching."

However, the undertaking wasn't straightforward because it was felt that the Turks would only allow priests who were themselves slaves to have contact with the slaves. Vincent got round the problem: the French Consuls were authorised to have a chaplain in their houses. Accordingly, the first Vincentian arrived as chaplain to the Consul in Tunis on 22nd November 1645. Fr. Julien Guerin was accompanied by Br. Francis Francillon.

In 1646 the Duchess of Aiguillon bought the Tunisian and Algerian Consulates and made a present of them to Vincent who accepted them without enthusiasm, but in the realisation that this would allow for good relations between the Consul and the priest in charge of the slaves. Furthermore, in order to highlight the pastoral priority of his work, Vincent strove to appoint as Consul lawyers who desired to enter the Congregation, thereby freeing the priests for their pastoral ministry. As a result, the first Consul in Algeria was a former lawyer in Parliament, Br. Barreau. He arrived in 1646 with Fr. Nouelly and was recalled to France as a result of various difficulties. Another brother, Dubourdiou, succeeded him in 1661. Later a priest, Jean Le Vacher, followed, arriving in Algeria in 1668 from Tunis.

At first the priests of the Mission in the Maghreb had the powers of apostolic missionaries throughout the region. In 1650 the Pope conferred the title of Vicar Apostolic (without episcopal form) on Philip Le Vacher and his successors. Being at once Consuls and Vicars Apostolic, the Sons of St. Vincent attained a certain prestige with the Turks.

It is also interesting to read again the orders Vincent gave to the missionaries (cf., for example, Coste XIII, 306-307). The first goal of the mission was the corporal and spiritual relief of the slaves, with particular attention to the priests and religious among them. Other groups of Christians in the region, such as merchants, were not for gotten either. From

today's point of view however, the attitude required of the missionary toward the authorities and indeed all Muslims, is worth noting. Even making allowances for the time, Vincent imbued respect for the Muslims, aware that polemics produced no results. The missionary should not seek a martyrdom based on "an explicit and forthright" preaching of the gospel. Nowadays we would say that proselytising is not in fashion.

In general, relations between the priests and the Turks were good. Naturally there were tensions in matters of finance and politics, sometimes quite dramatic. On 29th July, 1683, for example, the priest Consul of France, Jean Le Vacher was put to death at the end of a canon in retaliation for the bombardment of Algiers by the French fleet under Duquesne who refused to accede to the priest's calls for moderation and treated him as "a Moor."

The arrival of Fr. Philip Le Vacher as first Vicar Apostolic in 1650 saw the beginning of the organisation of the Church. While evangelisation of the Muslims was forbidden, Christians were allowed to practise their faith. This was organised not only from the Consulate Church but also the other Churches that existed in the penal colonies of Algeria, or from the hospital attached to one of them. Priest slaves were allowed to exercise some ministry and even though it remained peripheral, Vincentians managed to buy the freedom of several hundred slaves.

The Consulates had more or less been imposed on Vincent who had always insisted that he would only look after "ecclesiastical matters or those things which included the religious state and that of the poor" (writing to Grimal 13th February 1644). By 1655 Vincent was weary of the role being forced on him and wanted an end to it. He realised that the French Government was more concerned with commercial interests than the condition of the slaves. The Duchess of Aiguillon blocked Vincent's plan and he did not succeed in it during his lifetime. The work of the Congregation for the slaves and Christians in the Algerian territory continued until the start of the nineteenth century thanks to the presence of a small community (in 1789 for example there were four priests and two brothers). At the start of the nineteenth century the outlook for French religious was bleak due to setbacks caused by revolutionary events in France. Disease also took its toll on health. In spite of that, the Vincentian presence in Algeria continued uninterrupted from 1646 to 1811 (when Fr. Jousouy died after thirty years service of the slaves, and having been struck by plague three times); then again from 1824-1827. French colonisation in 1830 opened a new chapter for the Congregation in Algeria. In 1842 confreres returned and the Community has remained there continuously until the present. The first phase of colonisation was dominated by the person of Fr. Joseph Girard, known as "the eternal Father," who promoted the spread of the Congregation in N. Africa. In this period, parishes, new foundations, and the first seminary in Algeria at Kouba were set up. Fr. Girard's role, along with Cardinal Lavigerie, in the foundation of the White Fathers is also well documented. The Congregation of the Mission expanded rapidly and became a Province during the period leading up to Independence when the European population was also increasing rapidly. The three large Algerian seminaries and the seminary in Tunisia were all entrusted to the Congregation. In a word, the Congregation of the Mission has had a special place in the witness of the Church in Algeria up to the present day.

After Algerian Independence the Congregation of the Mission evolved with the Church in Algeria. While the majority of Europeans left Algeria, a small Church remained to bear witness among the Muslims to the Evangelical counsel that the love of God is for all people. Christians desire to live this truth which is central to their faith, without distinction

as to nationality or religion. The confreres who remained continue to serve the Christian community in its theological and cultural formation, and its groups of Christian students coming from Black Africa. They also serve the Algerian people in many ways through teaching young people and adults, or through the work of the Daughters of Charity and the work for the elderly. They desire to serve at the meeting point of the Church of Christ with the followers of Islam, trying to build up relations, respect, mutual brotherhood, especially by sharing their daily life and friendship.

Today, therefore, 350 years after the sending of those first missionaries, the Congregation of the Mission is still present, faithful to St. Vincent's intuition, while at the same time evolving throughout the centuries according to developments in the Church and in the country. Fidelity is borne out in the reality of human life. Today in the midst of the dramatic events taking place in Algeria, the Vincentians, in solidarity with the tiny Christian community remaining there, wish to show God's faithfulness to those who suffer. In times of gladness, as in times of suffering, in times of growth for the country as well as in times of hard ship, the Church remains faithful to those to whom it has been sent. Celebrating 350 years of fidelity to Algeria, 350 years of fidelity to the Church's mission in this country, this anniversary also challenges us in a particular way today, at a time when the Universal Church is more and more conscious of the importance of its links with other religions, and in particular with Islam. This link is a challenge for the future and for world peace. Tolerance between human beings is not enough. The future we wish to build is a future of reconciliation and love for each other. It is true that the road is a long one, but there is no other, it is the road of the Congregation of the Mission... a challenge of the Mission, and of fidelity for the Congregation.

(Eamon Devlin, C.M., translator)

Albania: “The land of the eagles” Prepares to fly again after years of captivity

by Cristoforo Palmieri, C.M.

Albania has a population of three million, about two million of whom are in farming. 50% of the entire population are below the age of 25 years, and one million are below eighteen. It is a country to the east of Italy, fifty miles across the sea from Cape Otranto. It is a country which urgently needs to have Christ brought back to it; it is not easy to say whether this should be “first of all” or “above all”, seeing that it is a Marxist country, the worst among the many which history has known. Christ needs to be brought back to evangelize it, as he did the first time. It tried to eradicate him, in every sense of the word, from people’s hearts and from institutions and structures, but they can recall him to memory.

It is human and Christian to undertake the care of this country which in the past was rich in natural and mineral resources. They were exported to enrich the people in power during fifty years of dictatorship, and this brought the country to such a disastrous situation that it caused their own downfall. Everything now needs to be reconstructed, on the social, economic, structural, and legislative levels. Everything has stayed in the condition quo ante, in spite of the first imperceptible attempts made by the present democratic government, elected in free elections one year after the fall of the old regime in March 1992. The present government, in fact, as may easily be guessed, in view of the extreme poverty of the economic situation, cannot bring this reconstruction to completion with only internal resources.

Agriculture

The farming population, even though they have ownership of their land, in fact have their hands tied because they have no seed, fertilizer or tractors, and the land is cultivated with spades and other implements of more than fifty years ago.

Industry

Industries are also held up and inactive because they do not have the raw materials. They await entrepreneurs from other countries who wish to invest in Albania, who would risk quite a bit before they would reap the advantages. In this matter the government is open minded and available, and at the same time is making notable efforts to obtain political and economic support from foreign countries, especially neighbouring ones such as Italy.

Economy

The standard of living is low, absolutely not comparable with that of Italy. An average family of five or six members needs both spouses to work in order to survive. The average monthly salary is twenty to twenty-five thousand Italian lire (£ 8 to £ 10) for an

industrial or agricultural worker, thirty to thirty-five thousand Italian lire for a professional person, and fifteen thousand for most pensioners. These sums are totally inadequate when two days' wages are necessary to buy a kilo of meat, and a kilo of bread costs three to four hundred Italian lire (about 15 p).

Bread is the most common, and almost the only, food, and although it will not bring the population to death through hunger as in African countries is certainly not a complete diet. Although, in spite of everything, there is order and calm, and even a certain recovery, many young people try to escape, and get into debt to the equivalent of ten years of work if the attempt should fail. They try to get to Greece, to Salonika, in the hope of finding low-paid work, and with an even worse condition: changing their Albanian Moslem name to a Greek Orthodox one.

A remedy is being sought, in a humanitarian and Christian spirit, for this whole situation, with the work of "Operation Pelican," Caritas Italiana, the Sisters of Mother Teresa who is a native of this country, and a huge number of institutions and organizations from various countries.

Religion

Although people today declare themselves Moslem, Orthodox or Catholic, few know the difference, seeing that for fifty years no one spoke about such matters.

Up to 1400 everyone was Catholic. In 1400 came the Orthodox schism. In 1500 came the Turkish invasion and everyone was compelled to become Moslem, just as fifty years ago everyone was obliged to become communist, under pain of repression, confiscation of property, deprivation of all privileges, persecution. But the population was divided along traditional lines: 65% Moslem, 25% Orthodox, 10% Catholic. The government, self-declared atheistic, destroyed mosques and churches, removed the religious leaders, made any practice of faith difficult, bringing the risk of prison, persecution, forced labour; and many faced this.

On the other hand, with the radical political change of the last two years, even the churches are being reborn, re-asserting their presence, in spite of the serious difficulties, and are making contact again with the great and strong Christian tradition witnessed in the life of the nation.

The autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church was welcomed in 1992 as a member of the European Conference of Churches, now has a new archbishop, His Excellency Yannoulatos, appointed by the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, who co-ordinates the different needs of the four dioceses of Tirana, Berati, Gjirocastro and Korce. Because of the re-opening of the seminary in Durazzo eight new priests have been added to the fifteen who survived. Obviously these priests are not sufficient for the estimated 700,000 people and for the size of the territory. In the face of this difficulty there is more and more solidarity with foreign Churches, among which the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy is included.

The Catholic Church has recently been given an Apostolic Nuncio, His Excellency Mgr. Ivan Diaz, who has the task of re-building the Catholic communities which have about 350,000 people, especially in the north of the country. Other organizations share this task, such as the Sant'Egidio Community and Caritas, and religious orders such as the Jesuits,

Orionini, Salesians, the Sisters of Mother Teresa of Calcutta, the Daughters of Charity, and perhaps some others not known.

The launching of the courses in the now re-opened seminary in Scutari is to meet the need of preparing new priests for the re-born communities. Only thirty priests survived. The solidarity of Episcopal Conferences, among them the Italian, is a great support for the work of reconstruction. From Christmas 1992, when the Apostolic Nuncio announced at Midnight Mass in the cathedral in Scutari that John Paul II had appointed four bishops for Albania, the Catholic Church has once again its hierarchy in the persons of four martyrs who survived:

Don Franco Zilia, 74, parish priest of Mildi, sentenced to death in 1968, commuted to twenty-five years of forced labour, archbishop of Scutari.

Don Rrok Mirdita, 53, from Yugoslavian Montenegro, who has worked as parish priest for an Albanian congregation in New York since 1970, archbishop of Durazzo.

Fr. Roberto Ashta O.F.M., a worker in hydroelectric schemes during the persecution, bishop of Pulati.

Mgr. Zev Sirnani, 64, arrested in 1976 and sentenced to fifteen years imprisonment of which he served only twelve because of the fall of the regime, auxiliary bishop of Scutari.

So, there are three dioceses, all in the north, while the Nuncio (representing the Pope in this country since 7 December 1991) has been appointed Apostolic Administrator, for an estimated population of 350,000 Catholics.

All this is coming alive again after the suppression of 1967 when 2169 churches, mosques and communities were suppressed, seven bishops, two hundred priests and two hundred religious were scattered or persecuted.

At present there are only one bishop, thirty priests and thirty religious surviving, carrying the weight of long years of persecution on their shoulders.

Albania and us

The area of Albania is 28,844 sq km. Its population is 3,300,000. It is divided into 25 districts. The Apostolic Nuncio, at first through the Provincial of Naples and then directly through the Superior General, asked the Congregation to take on the care of part of the country. He gave us the district of Mirdite, to be evangelized and re-evangelized in our Congregation's style: affectively and effectively.

Mirdite is a district situated in the north-east of Albania, with an area of 895 sq km; it has a population of 55,000. Because of heavy falls of rain and snow it is rich in water. In winter the temperature ranges from 2° to 8°, rising to 21° in the hotter months. There are 81 villages, with three larger centres: Rreshen (the "county town"), Rubiku and Kurbneshi. It is one of the poorest districts, and lives from agriculture, pasturage, and timber and iron works.

It is difficult to reach the villages, both because of the not inconsiderable distances and the non-existence of suitable roads; only part of the journey can be done by car, and much has to be done on the back of a horse or mule. The people, Catholics in a huge majority, are among those who most resisted communism and were therefore more

persecuted, and therefore should be more open to re-evangelization. In the entire district there is no church other than ours.

Some facts

We are responsible for 82 villages, with nearly 60,000 inhabitants, almost all traditionally Catholic, covering an area of more than 800 sq km. 72 villages are served only in rotation.

Vincentian missionaries: 5 Suore Piccole Missionarie Eucharistiche: 3 Daughters of Charity: 4 Lay helpers: 10 Newly baptised (1994-1995): 1,800, from all age groups.

Lay groups: One group of Caritas (adult and youth). One group of liturgy animators (Children and adolescents). Two groups of singers (Adolescents and young adults). Catechists in formation: 9 Groups in on-going formation: 3 of adolescents; 2 of younger persons; 1 of adults.

Continuing help for the immediate needs of families, groups of the handicapped, the blind, those who had suffered persecution, in the form of clothing, medicine, food.

Social and health services: a dispensary; one Daughter of Charity in the hospital; religious sisters and lay people to help families with problems; help at the prison and hospital.

Social and educational services: one infant school, with thirty pupils; various sorts of help in schools and hostels (rebuilding premises, school furniture, educational material).

Social and cultural-recreational services: a room with a video player; games rooms; Italian language courses; typewriting; cutting, sewing, embroidery; art; organizing youth groups for school camps and work camps; organizing days of recollection and up-dating meetings, etc.

The pastoral outlook for Mirdita

If it is easy to speak of the situation in Mirdita, and in Albania in general, both as regards the past and the present, since by now every thing is known by everybody, it is not the same as regards our presence there and future missionary activity.

It can be said about us that we work on a day-to-day basis, and this will be so for quite a while. We cannot have long-term projects, neither from the pastoral nor community point of view.

We cannot speak even of "diocesanisation," in view of the sparse pastoral guidelines which have been given to us and the lack of confreres, with diocesan priests working in the same pastoral zone whom we run up against. We are, in fact, awaiting a new diocese, that of Mirdita itself.

There are the problems of getting close to the people in order to know and serve them better. They are, for the most part, scattered in about eighty different villages which are far from possible meeting places.

Some of the main problems in forming a common pastoral policy are travel ones. In some places roads are almost non-existent, especially in winter. This also applies to community life; we go and come, we are very tired, we spend a lot of time in the car.

Meanwhile we feel and see the need for a deep and systematic evangelization. We get the impression that faith is only an ethnic label: a person from Mirdita equals a Catholic Christian. Old people keep something of Christian “religiosity,” pre-conciliar, where the line between religion and superstition is very very blurred. Younger people especially, but not only they, tend towards the atheistic paganism of the old regime which, in a frightening way, emptied the human person of his dignity. These people look towards the practical atheism of western consumerism.

Here we could limit ourselves to the evangelization of just some centres, but everyone is asking us: “When are you coming our way?” This second choice, to gather together more or less everybody in a more or less systematic way, seems to be the actual present choice, even if it means our work is going to be less fruitful and more fatiguing.

Everyone is agreed that what is needed is an evangelization in the Vincentian style, “affective and effective,” or as today’s Church puts it, accompanied by concrete charitable work and service. At the moment, that is the only message this world is inclined to heed.

Meanwhile we are getting to know each other better all the time and catering for the immediate needs (with small projects carried out at all levels — education, social health, recreation). We are also, however, doing the work of first evangelization, celebrating the sacraments of Christian initiation, especially baptism.

In the meantime we can single out the “strategic” centres which are being set up (some completed, some under construction), building places where people can meet, at least for the celebration of the liturgy, if we do not want to continue in the great discomfort of being out in the rain, the cold or the heat, beside a so-called cemetery, or under a tree. There is also the rebuilding of churches reduced to rubble by the power of Enver Hoxha. We are looking for places, the simplest possible but effective, for catechesis; perhaps it is going too far to say also for socialization.

We are also looking for a certain amount of decentralization, getting away from the one single centre of our house in Rreshen, with other residences of priests and sisters in some mountain regions in order to have a better presence, a better chance of promoting the faith and of evangelization — a missionaries’ house, a church, sisters, social and health works.

We have also launched at the centre a “shkolla fetare,” a “school of faith.” This means having about twenty young boys, from third class primary upwards, full-time in the house for a more thorough human and Christian formation, as well as their normal schooling. If vocations emerge, they will be fostered.

This may not be much, but at the same time it is not little!

This report has, of necessity, been inadequate, but it gives some idea of the many problems with which we live. Perhaps it might be useful in the meantime to tack on to it an appeal not to forget these Albanian brothers, and to make oneself available not alone by means of one’s personal resources, but also one’s entire self. According to the Latin saying “Divide et impera” (Divide and conquer) it would be easier to proclaim and spread the

kingdom ? God in this, country, called the land of the eagles. But are their wings still too clipped for us to be able to say they have resumed flight?

Whether you like it or not, we have made the appeal and, keep ing to the language of symbols, let us say to anyone who wants to “sprout” that he will not regret it, that he will in this way find a way to renew his youth, just like an eagle.

(Thomas Davitt, C.M., translator)

ON SELLING THE CHALICES

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Recently I received a very touching letter from a priest. He thanked me for writing frequently on the *missionary* nature of the Congregation and encouraged me to keep urging the confreres to renew this spirit among us. But he told me, with great simplicity, that this creates a problem for him personally. To illustrate the problem, he cited an article that I recently wrote.¹ In describing the flexibility needed of a missionary I stated: "This means that the members of the Congregation will be agile, quick to move when needs arise." But what about the elderly? This confrere, who senses his own lessened energies and sees himself as "retiring" little by little from much of what he was formerly able to do (though, actually, he remains quite active!), encouraged me to write something on a "Vincentian spirituality for the aging." Using the data base that he had at his fingertips, he reminded me that 17.1% of the bishops, priests, and brothers of the Congregation are 75 years of age or more.²

I liked this letter very much. It moved me to examine St. Vincent's writings from a very different point of view and to reflect in prayer about those confreres who have given so much for so long and are now experiencing declining energies.

I offer the following thoughts as a response to this generous confrere. I hope that he, with others, might find them helpful.

I. St. Vincent's thoughts on our aging members

1. The aging are to be loved and treasured.

St. Vincent showed great concern that sick and aging members would be treated well. He tells the Daughters of Charity that it would be a great injustice not to do so.³ He urges the aging not to be discouraged when they cannot do everything that the other members are capable of doing. "The Company is a mother," he tells them, "who knows well how to distinguish among those of her children who are sick and those who are well."⁴ Just as a mother treats her sick child with tenderness and compassion, so also should the Company act toward the sick and aging.

¹"On Being a Missionary," *Vincentiana*, XXXVIII (1994) 319.

²About 21% of the Daughters of Charity are also 75 years old or more.

³SV X, 375.

⁴SV X, 375.

The Company should so treasure its aging members that it will be willing to make significant sacrifices in order to care for them lovingly. "I would be delighted," St. Vincent writes to Pierre Du Chesne, "if word were sent to me from somewhere that someone in the Company had sold chalices for that purpose."⁵ He writes that nothing should be spared in order to care for the sick well.⁶ The sick are, in fact, a blessing for the Company.⁷

2. *The elderly owe the young an ongoing, deepening witness to fidelity and holiness, living out the rule of the Company and keeping alive its missionary spirit.*

It is surprising how often St. Vincent returns to this theme, particularly in his later years. He states that old age should not impede us from living out the spirit of the Congregation and from doing zealously what our limited physical energies allow us to do.

St. Vincent felt that the elderly owe it to the Company to live out the main lines of its rule as long as they can. He was particularly insistent that they take part in the spiritual exercises of the community.⁸

He speaks very forcefully to aging sisters who give bad example to the young. He tells them that, because they have been in the Company from the beginning, they are obliged to greater perfection:

*O senior sisters, o senior sisters, what do you do when your actions give the lie to your seniority? What will you say to God when he demands an account of all your thoughts, words and actions, and especially of those that have disedified new-comers? And I, wretched I, what shall I have to say for having given scandal to the younger sisters. You should know that seniority is reckoned not by the number of years but by virtue.*⁹

He repeats this theme very frequently in his conferences both to the sisters and to the members of the Congregation of the Mission.¹⁰

He also encouraged them to keep the fire of zeal burning within them.¹¹ He wanted the elderly, including himself, to stir up the flame of apostolic missionary love within themselves, even to death.

⁵SV I, 531; cf. also the conference of December 5, 1659, "We should sell the church's chalices to take care of them!". SV XII, 410.

⁶SV VI, 372.

⁷SV VII, 179.

⁸SV V, 622.

⁹SV X, 90.

¹⁰Cf. SV VII, 168; X 29, 46-48, 78, 90, 115, 283, 371; XI 80, 207; XIII 729.

¹¹SV XI, 135.

Even in his old age St. Vincent himself was filled with a missionary spirit. In one of his most famous discourses he tells the members of the Congregation:¹²

As for myself, in spite of my age, I say before God that I do not feel exempt from the obligation of laboring for the salvation of those poor people, for what could hinder me from doing so? If I cannot preach every day, all right! I will preach twice a week; if I cannot preach more important sermons, I will strive to preach less important ones; and if the people do not hear me, then what is there to prevent me from speaking in a friendly, homely way to those poor folk, as I am now speaking to you, gathering them around me as you are now?

He hopes that the elderly will arrive at genuine freedom. He tells the members of the Congregation of the Mission, that there are old sick confreres who have asked to be sent to the foreign missions in spite of serious illness. These are people who are truly free, he comments.¹³

Basically, he wants the members of his Company to die in battle rather than in repose. "It does not matter whether we die sooner or later, provided that we die with arms in our hands."¹⁴

I myself, old and infirm as I am, should not cease to be disposed, yes, even to set out for the Indies to win souls to God, even though I were to die on the way, or on board ship. For, what do you think God asks of us? A body? O, not at all. What then? Our good will, a genuinely good will to seize every opportunity to serve him, even at the risk of our lives.¹⁵

3. *The sick and elderly are a "theater of patience."*

The elderly have much to teach us. They invite us, as it were, to a theater of patience¹⁶ where we, the spectators, can see how suffering is to be borne. In them we see the cross lived out. We see faith tried in the fire, as it struggles with the ultimate human mystery, the inevitable reality of death.

He writes to a priest of the Mission:¹⁷

¹²SV XI, 136.

¹³SV XII, 241.

¹⁴SV XI, 413.

¹⁵SV XI, 402.

¹⁶SV XI, 73.

¹⁷SV II, 571.

It is true that illness, far better than health, makes us see what we are, and it is in the midst of sufferings that impatience and melancholy attack even the most resolute. But since they do damage only to the very weak, you have profited from them rather than their doing you any harm, because Our Lord has strengthened you in the practice of His good pleasure, and this strength is apparent in your determination to combat them courageously. I hope also that this will be even more clearly apparent in the victories you will win by suffering henceforth for the love of God, not only with patience but also with joy and cheerfulness.

He tells the Daughters of Charity that, ultimately, patience, tried by suffering, is the virtue of the perfect.¹⁸ In that sense, Vincent states, inevitable illness should be accepted as a "divine state."¹⁹

4. *In sickness and in dying the true depths of the person are revealed.*

It is easy to witness to Christ in joyous times when spirits run high, when apostolic energies are abundant, when prayer is consoling, when the presence of one's brothers and sisters in community is strengthening. But faith, and the depths of the human person, are severely tried when, in sickness and in dying, these consolations are often lacking. Death is the ultimate human mystery. Before it we are stripped naked. It is in the dying process that we must abandon ourselves into the hands of the living God.

No state can be found more suitable for practicing virtue. Faith is exercised marvelously in illness. Hope shines resplendently. Resignation, the love of God, and all virtues find ample matter for their exercise in illness. It is when we are ill that we know what burdens we bear and what we really are. It is the probe by which you may most assuredly test and discover the virtue of any individual, whether he has much or little or none at all. One never sees more clearly what a man really is than when he is in the infirmary. Illness is the surest test for unveiling the most virtuous and the least virtuous.²⁰

II. St. Vincent's own aging process²¹

¹⁸SV X, 181; cf. also, SV XV (Mission et Charité) 109.

¹⁹SV I, 144.

²⁰SV XI, 72.

²¹Cf. Dodin, André, *Monsieur Vincent parle à ceux qui souffrent* (Desclée De Brouwer: Paris, 1981); "Vicente de Paúl y los enfermos" in *Vicente de Paúl y los Enfermos* (CEME, Salamanca, 1978) 25-52.

St. Vincent lived 30 years beyond the median age of his contemporaries. Given that fact, one might presume that he had a rather robust constitution, even though we know from his own statements that he suffered from a variety of illnesses.²² Struck by an arrow at the age of 25, he would feel its effects for the rest of his life.²³

He frequently suffered from fevers and a type of malaria, which he called his "little fever,"²⁴ and for which Louise de Marillac tenderly described many remedies.²⁵

As early as 1615, his legs began to give him trouble.²⁶ By 1632, he had to buy a horse in order to travel from St. Lazare into Paris each day.²⁷ In 1633, a horse fell beneath him and then on top of him.²⁸ However, he was tireless and, in an age when transportation was limited, was capable of covering hundreds of miles in very little time. In the first half of 1649, when he was almost 70 years of age, he traveled by horse through 600 km of western France.

But by June of 1649 he could no longer mount the horse, so, with considerable embarrassment, he began to use the carriage that the Duchess of Aiguillon gave him.²⁹ He also had been kicked by a horse in 1631, thrown from one in 1633,³⁰ and fell into the Loire at Durtal in 1649.³¹ That same year, he just missed being assassinated.³² The swelling in his legs reached his knees in 1655, so that he could no longer genuflect³³ and had to take to using a cane.³⁴ He had a serious carriage accident in 1658.³⁵ That same year, the ulcers in his right leg produced a gaping wound on the ankle.³⁶ He also experienced considerable difficulty with one of his eyes.³⁷ From 1659 on, he was not longer able to leave St. Lazare and within a few months he had to remain upstairs and celebrate Mass in the infirmary.³⁸ Soon after that, he could no longer celebrate by himself and had to use crutches to move

²²Likewise, Louise de Marillac lived well beyond the median age of the time, though St. Vincent himself makes it clear that she looked half dead for the last 23 years of her life! Cf. SV III, 256.

²³SV I, 4.

²⁴SV I, 70, 110, 196, 237, etc.

²⁵SV I, 581, 587, 597.

²⁶Abelly, Book I, 247; Collet, P., *La vie de saint Vincent de Paul*, Nancy, 1748, I, 46.

²⁷Abelly, Book I, 247.

²⁸SV I, 198.

²⁹Abelly, Book I, 247; cf. Collet, *op. cit.*, I, 477.

³⁰SV I, 110, 198-9.

³¹Abelly, Book III, 267; Collet, *op. cit.*, I, 474; SV III, 424.

³²Abelly, Book III, 21.

³³SV XI, 207.

³⁴Abelly, Book I, 247.

³⁵SV VII, 58, 60.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷SV VIII, 23.

³⁸*Ibid.*

around.³⁹ Six weeks before his death, these became useless to him and he had to accept assisting at Mass from a chair.⁴⁰

As early as 1644, serious illnesses began their offensive; these succeeded in keeping him in bed for periods of eight to ten days.⁴¹ They repeated their assaults in 1649, 1651, 1652, and 1655.⁴²

To all these maladies were added, in 1659, further problems caused by kidney stones and retention of urine. To move he had to use a rope which had been tied to a joist in his room.

St. Vincent also had the painful experience, in his declining years, of seeing his closest friends die. He was able to be present at the deathbed of Jean-Jacques Olier, who went to the Lord on Easter Sunday in 1657. "The earth possesses his body, the heavens his soul, but his spirit remains with you," St. Vincent told Olier's followers that day.⁴³ On December 31, 1659 Alain de Solminihac, his great friend and fellow reformer of the clergy, also died. The final year of St. Vincent's life, 1660, was marked by the death of three of his closest companions. Monsieur Portail, friend and collaborator for almost 50 years, died on February 14. On the morning of March 15 Louise de Marillac went to the Lord. "You have in heaven a mother who has much influence," he told the Daughters of Charity.⁴⁴ On May 3 Louis de Chandénier, for whom St. Vincent had the greatest admiration and affection, also died. Vincent burst into tears on hearing the news.

All of these deaths touched the saint deeply.⁴⁵ Even as early as January 1659 he began to say goodbye to his friends. In a letter written at that time, after begging pardon for his faults, he told the former General of the Galleys, Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi, that he would pray for him in this world and in the next.⁴⁶

III. Horizon shifts between the time of St. Vincent and ours

1. *We expect to live longer.*

³⁹*Ibid.*, 247-8.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 248.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 245; SV II, 481; Collet, *op. cit.*, I, 406.

⁴²Collet, *ibid.*, I, 477; SV IV, 532; V, 350.

⁴³SV XIII, 166.

⁴⁴SV X, 717.

⁴⁵Cf. Román, José María, *San Vicente de Paúl, I* (Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos: Madrid, 1981) 659-69.

⁴⁶SV VII, 435-436.

The statistics vary from country to country, but at present in St. Vincent's own country, men, on the average, live 23 years longer than they did in his time and women live 27 years longer. The average life-span of religious is, I suspect, even longer. When I receive the death notices of Daughters of Charity I am continually struck by how many die in their 80's and 90's. While most of us in Europe and the United States expect to, and actually do, live to a ripe old age, such long life-expectancy was not at all the case in St. Vincent's time.

In some other parts of the world, however, the median age of those who die is still comparable with that in France in 1660. It is therefore clear that this horizon shift applies only in certain countries.

2. There is a tendency, in contemporary society, to flee the reality of death.

Of course, in the practical order, it is impossible to ignore mortality; we all die. Contemporary health care, however, is often organized in such a way as to imply the rejection of death's inevitable reality. The symptoms are abundantly evident, particularly in the so-called "developed" countries. Because of fear of malpractice suits and other litigation, doctors often keep patients on artificial life-support systems long beyond what is reasonable. Huge resources go into sustaining life in its final moments. In the United States, for example, over the last 15 years, 30% of all Medicaid money has gone to patients with less than a year to live.⁴⁷

This phenomenon too, like increased life expectancy, is limited to certain countries, since it often flows from cultural biases, the existence of significant financial resources, and litigious tendencies within societies.

But death is not the ultimate enemy. While at times we must use abundant resources and human creativity to stave it off, there are other times when we should accept its inevitable advent. The Catholic moral tradition has consistently spoken of the need to use "ordinary means" to combat illness, but it has also, in its long history, recognized that there are times when the use of "extraordinary means" causes disproportionate burdens for patients and those who love them. The artificial prolongation of life is often the painful prolongation of dying.

3. The culture of youth.

Linked with the contemporary tendency to deny the reality of death is a tendency to prolong and glorify youth. There is, of course, a bright side to being and remaining young. The strength and charm of youth, Pope Paul VI said at the end of Vatican II, is "the ability to rejoice with what is beginning, to give oneself

⁴⁷Richard McCormick, "The Catholic Hospital Today: Mission Impossible?" *Origins* 24 (No. 39; March 13, 1995) 651-652.

unreservedly, to renew oneself, and to set out again for new conquests."⁴⁸ But the shadow side of this tendency is a fixation on the body, an overemphasis on physical beauty, and a failure to accept the aging process, with a resultant immaturity. Newspapers, magazines, television and films fill our eyes with the beauty and vitality of youth, and then often attempt to sell us the products that will keep us perennially young!

4. *Medical advances have made sickness and dying, at least at times, less painful.*

In modern times, science has produced remarkable painkillers, from aspirins to total anesthesia. Now, at the end of the twentieth century, physicians can ease pain as never before. New drugs can significantly alleviate the sufferings of the sick and the dying, even if at times they have other notable side-effects, like the dimming of consciousness. At times these side-effects are so potent, that it is hard to distinguish the boundary between easing pain and hastening death.

But it is important not to exaggerate this horizon shift. Pain still looms large in the lives of the sick. Even with all the modern medical advances, in the United States for instance, there are more than 36,000,000 people suffering from arthritic pain, 70,000,000 from wrenching back pain, and 20,000,000 from migraines. In other words, about one-third of the population suffers recurrent chronic pain.⁴⁹ The situation is surely worse in many other countries where fewer medical resources are available.

IV. SOME REFLECTIONS ON AGING TODAY

*To grow old is to possess all life's stages.
To grow old is to see God close up.*⁵⁰

Aging, like every stage of human development, is ambiguous. It can be the occasion for growth or for retrogression. I have heard younger confreres, as spectators in what St. Vincent called the "theater" of the elderly, comment on both phenomena: "That's the way I'd like to grow old," some have whispered with a certain awe; on the other hand, with great sadness, some have lamented: "I hope I never become a bitter old man like that."

We all hope, of course, to grow old gracefully. Once, upon hearing the news of the death of a wonderful missionary who had served in China, suffered imprisonment and exile, and then lived among us cheerfully and peacefully for twenty years, a friend

⁴⁸Closing Message of Vatican II, AAS, 58 (1966) 18.

⁴⁹Richard McCormick, *The Critical Calling* (Georgetown University Press: Washington, DC, 1989) 363-64.

⁵⁰Jean Guittou, in the preface to Renée de Tryon-Montalembert, *L'Autunno È La Mia Primavera* (Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 1990) 7.

of mine turned to me and said: "All I want to do is clap. It's like the end of a masterpiece." In fact, I have had the privilege of knowing a number of wonderful elderly confreres during my life in the community.

In a lovely talk to the elderly sisters of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, Mother Lucie Rogé described the characteristics that she saw in faithful elderly sisters:

- a peaceful serenity,
- deep charity,
- a profound confidence that expresses itself in joy,
- efforts at ongoing conversion that witness to a desire to live God's life deeply,
- constant prayer.⁵¹

I offer the following brief reflections with the hope of encouraging confreres and Daughters of Charity as they work through the aging process. No one is ever too old, as St. Richard of Chichester once wrote, "To know God more clearly, love him more dearly, and follow him more nearly."⁵²

1. *All of us grow old. There is no sense denying it.*

Walt Whitman once wrote:

*Youth, large, lusty, loving --- Youth
full of grace, force, fascination,
Do you know that Old Age may come after you?*⁵³

Today we know that preventive health care is very important. The huge decline in deaths from coronary heart disease over the last 25 years has come largely from improved eating habits (like the reduction in cholesterol) and the decline in cigarette smoking. It is also evident that regular exercise, weight control, and a balanced diet contribute significantly to maintaining our youth!

Nonetheless, we all grow old. Christian realism should move us to face that fact squarely. The Superior General, for example, should recognize that, more than likely, he will be dead 25 years from now, if not sooner.

In a letter written to his friends on November 29, 1366, the great Italian author, Petrarch wrote, "I have grown old. I can no longer hide the fact if I would, and I would not if I could.... And I say to any who may follow me with reluctant steps:

⁵¹Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M., "Potencial humano de las Provincias de las Hijas de la Caridad en España a partir de los 65 años para seguir viviendo ilusionadamente el Carisma Vicenciano" in *La Respuesta Exige Un Exodo* (CEME: Salamanca, 1993) 91.

⁵²Prayer attributed to Richard of Chichester, 1197-1253.

⁵³Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* ("Youth, Day, Old Age and Night") in James E. Miller, ed., *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose by Walt Whitman* (Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1959) 165.

“Come with assurance; fear not.... Age, toward which you draw amid the storms of life, is nothing so dreadful. Those who call it so have found all stages of life unwelcome, thanks to their mishandling of life, not to a particular age. The latter years of a learned, modest man are sheltered and serene. He has appeased the storms within his breast, he has left behind the reefs of strife and labor, he is protected as by a ring of sunny hills from the outer storms. So go securely, do not delay; a harbor opens where you feared a shipwreck.”⁵⁴

2. *The evangelical challenge, as we grow old, is to grow in love.*

Hardly anything could be clearer from the New Testament. Growth in love is the perennial challenge in every age of the human person. Graceful aging, if it is truly to be grace-filled, is growth in the charity of Christ. In community, this means warmth and gentleness towards one's brothers and sisters, whether young or old. "For what is charity," St. Vincent tells us, "but love and gentleness."⁵⁵ In an apostolic context, this means ongoing zeal, even as one's energies are reduced and one's ability to "contribute" is lessened.

Unfortunately, at times our self-esteem is so tied into "works," that we become bitter when our capacity for working is diminished. It is crucial, as we begin to experience this temptation, to redimension our service to the poor and to the community. The elderly have many gifts, though they are not precisely the same gifts as those of youth. It is vital, for those who wish to grow old gracefully, to discover those gifts and to share them generously.⁵⁶

3. *It is important to maintain "a young heart."*

Cicero once wrote:

*I like a young person in whom there is something of the old. So also do I like an old person in whom there is something of the young. Someone who follows this maxim will perhaps be old in body, but he will never be old in mind.*⁵⁷

We often describe the qualities of youth as enthusiasm, imagination, the ability to change. But these characteristics are by no means exclusive to the young. One of the most enthusiastic missionaries I ever met was an 80 year-old confrere with whom I spent several days in Nigeria. Two of the most creative councillors whom I ever met

⁵⁴Petrarch, a letter to his friends, written from Pavia, November 29, 1366 or 1367.

⁵⁵SV IX, 267.

⁵⁶Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M., "Potencial humano de las Provincias de las Hijas de la Caridad en España a partir de los 65 años para seguir viviendo ilusionadamente el Carisma Vicenciano" in *La Respuesta Exige Un Exodo* (CEME: Salamanca, 1993) 81-100.

⁵⁷Cicero, *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*. Translated by W. A. Falconer (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1979) 47.

were wise, experienced men who were well into their seventies, who could envision solutions to problems that few others could formulate. And, in regard to the ability to change, I have seen priests and sisters launch into new careers when they were already "retired," and I have seen them serve even more joyfully and creatively than ever before. Such people pass on a wonderful legacy to those who follow. D. H. Lawrence once wrote:

*When the ripe fruit falls
its sweetness distils and trickles away into the veins of the earth.*

*When fulfilled people die
the essential oil of their experience enters
the veins of living space, and adds a glister
to the atom, to the body of immortal chaos.*

*For space is alive
and it stirs like a swan
whose feathers glister
silky with oil of distilled experience.⁵⁸*

4. Aging is an opportunity to develop the contemplative dimension of the human person.

We can "do" less as our physical energies diminish, but we can surely develop other dimensions of our humanity. Of special importance among these, particularly for those who "give themselves to God in the service of the poor,"⁵⁹ is the contemplative dimension of our existence. While at earlier stages in life we might find ourselves putting the emphasis on the second part of St. Vincent's oft-repeated phrase: To give ourselves to God *in the service of the poor*, in our declining years, the emphasis can very profitably fall more and more on the first part of the phrase: *To give ourselves to God* in the service of the poor.

In every era of our lives, it is important to use time well. Old age is no exception. One of its temptations is to fritter time away in excessive personal concern over one's health. On the other hand, one of the graces of aging is the gift of time in which one might seek the Lord more freely and concentratedly. The challenge for the elderly is to convert heavy hours of loneliness into peaceful moments of solitude with God and contemplation of his goodness. The elderly have time to read and ponder the Scriptures and to listen to the word of God in a new way. They have the opportunity to cry out with the psalmist: "I will sing of the loving kindness of God forever!"⁶⁰ The American poet, Archibald MacLeish once put it this way:

⁵⁸D. H. Lawrence, "When the Ripe Fruit Falls," 1929.

⁵⁹Cf. SV I, 185; II, 64; III, 149; IV, 15, 67, 117, 126, 138, 156, 233, 280, 361, 577, 596; V 83, 107, 233, 326, 425, 584, 634; VII 13, 38, 369; IX 13, 26, 29, 221; *Entretiens* (1960) 37, 471, 550, 562, 569, 571, 583, 586, 742, 743, 775, 776, 811, 825, 831, 835, 888, 916, 944.

⁶⁰Ps 88:2.

*Now at sixty what I see,
Although the world is worse by far,
Stops my heart in ecstasy.
God, the wonders that there are!*⁶¹

5. *Old age is a time for reconciliation with the past.*

We all bear our scars and sins into the present. We need healing. Old age is a wonderful opportunity for reconciliation. It is a time when memories can be healed, even bitter ones: of flawed relationships with our parents, of failures in the course of our lives, of rejection, of personal sin. In dying, all of these must be placed in the hands of a loving, merciful God. It is surely helpful if this process begins long before the proximate approach of death. The sacrament of reconciliation and conversation with a genuine "soul friend" can provide wonderful opportunities for healing the sins and open wounds of the past. Likewise, the sacrament of the anointing of the sick, celebrated with faith, in company with one's brothers and sisters, can lead to the integral healing and peace that is the goal of on-going conversion.

6. *Loneliness is one of the particular challenges of aging.*

As the existentialists remind us, loneliness is part of the ongoing challenge of human existence. From the time of our sudden separation from the warmth of the womb to the time of our final separation from the family of the living, young and old, single and married experience it. It has its special twists in adolescence, in mid-life, and in the declining years. Widows and widowers experience it painfully. Celibates too taste its bitterness in their own special way.

The aging will inevitably feel deeply, as St. Vincent did, the death of their friends. It stings terribly and adds poignantly to feelings of loneliness.

Our own dying is the ultimate experience of loneliness. We face separation from all those whom we have known and loved and who have given us their affection and company throughout the years. We are called, in faith, to rest in the arms of the living God. Death is the ultimate act of faith. In it, Jesus calls us to say with him: "Father into your hands I commend my spirit."⁶²

7. *We do not die alone.*

⁶¹Archibald MacLeish, "With Age Wisdom," 1952.

⁶²Lk 23:46.

From the time of baptism we profess this brief, clear article of faith: "We believe...in the communion of saints." Hopefully we experience, in our aging and in the dying process, that we are surrounded by those who love us within the Community. It helps to know also that many of those who have "gone before us with the sign of faith" await us in the heavenly banquet.

I remember, a number of years ago, walking around our major seminary property with Brother Laurence Masterson. He wanted to speak that night about what heaven was like. I recall vividly how much we talked about the "banquet" image in the New Testament. We envisioned being there rejoicing in the Lord, and laughing, eating, and drinking with many of the friends whom we had known and loved in life. Shortly after that, Brother Laurence died unexpectedly. I have always thought of him since then, smiling at the banquet table, holding a seat in waiting for us, his friends.

8. *Fundamentally we respond to death from within the Paschal Mystery of Jesus.*

Jesus' death provides the model for his followers, it is the source of strength for entering into the dying process as he did. St. Vincent was very well aware of this. "Remember Father," he writes to Monsieur Portail, "that we live in Jesus Christ by the death of Jesus Christ and that we are to die in Jesus Christ by the life of Jesus Christ and that our life ought to be hidden in Jesus Christ and full of Jesus Christ and that in order to die like Jesus Christ it is necessary to live like Jesus Christ."⁶³ The gospel narratives of Jesus' dying call his followers to entrust themselves to the power and providence of God, to forgive those who have injured them, to place their loved ones in the hands of others, to believe that God can raise the dead to life.

In sickness and old age, a renewed, deepened understanding of our Eucharistic participation in the death and resurrection of the Lord can lead us to a deeper immersion in the Paschal Mystery, as we grow in gratitude for God's faithful love and as we enter into the dying of the Lord as the source of his risen life.

I hope that these reflections are helpful to my aging brothers and sisters, who have contributed so much to my own life and to that of the poor. In an era that at times overemphasizes the need to stay young, I am reminded of Harriet Beecher Stowe's lovely description of Rachel Halliday, written more than a century ago:

Her face was round and rosy, with a healthful downy softness, suggestive of a ripe peach. Her hair, partially silvered by age, was parted smoothly back from a high placid forehead, on which time had written no inscription, except peace on earth, good will to men, and beneath shone a large pair of clear, honest, loving brown eyes; you only needed to look straight into them, to feel that you saw to the bottom of a

⁶³SV I, 295.

*heart as good and true as ever throbbed in woman's bosom. So much has been said and sung of beautiful young girls, why don't somebody wake up to the beauty of old women?*⁶⁴

⁶⁴Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852 (E. F. Dutton & Co.: New York, 1955) 138-139.

Two Hundred Years Ago

Pierre René Rogue

(Simple statement of witness by a Compatriot)

Jean Landousies, C.M.

On March 3rd 1796, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Pierre René Rogue, Priest of the Congregation of the Mission, gave the ultimate witness to the One, whom he had desired to follow right to the end. This took place at Vannes in Brittany in the marketplace, right beside the Rue de la Monnaie, where he had been born on June 11th 1758. He was aged 38.

Formerly a Diocesan Priest of the Diocese of Vannes, he had been accepted into the Congregation of the Mission on 25th October 1786; from then on, throughout the brief period of his ministry, he was to give himself with great generosity to the formation of Priests in his native town in the Seminary, while also providing a faithful Pastoral service in the Parish of Le Mené, attached to the seminary; which was a situation according to the wish of St. Vincent in regard to those of his missionaries called to the Formation of the Clergy.

Pierre René had taken on these offices in the midst of the troubled conditions of the French Revolution, and especially in the context of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which the Revolutionary power was about to impose on the French Church. In entitling his biography of the Blessed Martyr "*a martyr to loyalty*", Fr. John Gonthier had the right idea. If fidelity is a Breton virtue, it is without doubt there also that we find the source of the Witness bequeathed to us by this Vincentian from Vannes, who, even today, still remains very near to us.

Reading the various biographies, one might be tempted to consider him a "*very ordinary Vincentian*". He was that "*little Priest*" _ as his compatriots called him with affection _ who quite simply wanted to live in the footsteps of St. Vincent, following the example of his Professors, now become his confreres whom he had known while in the Seminary at Vannes. As regards fidelity however, he had already begun his apprenticeship to that virtue, under the aegis of that lady of strong character, his mother, Mme. Rogue. He was an only son, and having lost his father at an early age, he was to find in her a real instructress. With great generosity she was to work at her son's religious vocation, without any thought of benefit to herself. Right to the end, she would support him in every trial, a woman who would indeed suffer as a result, but would do nothing to hinder her son's apostolic intent.

We can see the character of Pierre René being moulded decisively throughout his time of formation, and especially in the course of the events, which were to lead the non-jurors – that is those Priests who would not accept the Civil Constitution – to take the path of exile. Amongst these, were to be numbered his Vincentian colleagues. It is in this connection that *his loyalty to the Church* showed itself most clearly. In that Diocese of Vannes this ecclesial loyalty is like the air they breathe. Many were the Priests who would choose the road of exile or the Scaffold in order to uphold it in its entirety. As a Professor in the Seminary, as Theologian, he could see what was at stake under the apparently mild externals of the new Law. During Diocesan-Clergy reunions, he was to clarify and guide their thinking. He would point out to his colleagues, the subterfuges by which the Civil Law was casting doubt on the Laws of the Church, and even more so on its Constitution. "*The State has not the right to change the Constitution of the Church. If we accept this Law of 12th July, the French Church will find itself in the same situation as that of England; the Pope will no longer be our Head; it is the King who will rule the Church, and our Church will no longer be Catholic but National. So we must follow the Church, and never accept being separated from her.*" The above statement was found in a report of one of the meetings of the Vannes Clergy. It was not a movement of blind fidelity, but a carefully reasoned position, which led the others to weigh-up what was at stake, and what were the dangers involved at that juncture. This Witness given by Pierre René has its own importance for us. As a member of the Team of Formation, he says, the Priest of the Mission owes it to himself to guide his brethren in the truth of the Faith. He is called to do so, however, with full intelligence and fortified by his personal contact with God, on the basis of his own enlightened experience of loyalty to the Church. The Witness of one's life speaks louder than words.

He allowed his confreres to go into exile, in fact even advised them to do so; as to himself, he was to remain in Vannes, in this way, living out while in hiding, his fidelity to his people and to the Clergy of his Diocese.

He proved himself a man of Faith, as can be seen after his arrest on the evening of Christmas 1795. He was neither dull-witted nor an airy dreamer, even though, while in prison, he poured out his deepest feelings in moving poetry. He retained his calmness, his good humour, having regard to his companions rather than for himself. He was to remain close to his confrere-Priests, his fellow-captives, comforting them and helping them to discern the Evangelical signs of their situation. From his prison cell, he continued to encourage those on the outside who were enduring the trauma of persecution. His faithfulness to those whom it was his mission to support in their troubles, and to train in virtue, was available to all, even those who took the oath of loyalty to the Civil Constitution and who had thus become schismatics. His spirituality was that of the present moment. He offered up his life in the exact conditions of the moment. A true son of St. Vincent, he did not seek to "*tread on the heels of Providence*"; that is the Vincentian spirituality of the Mission, to give oneself completely for others, in the place to which one was sent. It is there that he united himself with Christ's sacrifice. He was judged in that Chapel of "*The Women's Retreat*", where he had

for four years preached, heard Confessions and celebrated the Eucharist of the Lord. It was in this same place that he celebrated his own "*Eucharist*", in which he also was to offer the gift of his own life, so that the Church of Christ might live.

So, therefore, though the undercover work of Pierre René in the service of the Christian Community, was shared by many other Priests, who were also to pay with their lives for that devotion, he can be said to have lived his life to the point of heroism in that generous and freely-given abandonment of himself to those committed to him. The action which best illustrates this, is his attitude to Le Muet, who had betrayed him. No trace of disdain or hatred can be detected in regard to him. He had been pardoned at the very moment of his betrayal. At the moment of execution, Pierre René was to hand over to him his own watch saying "*My son, I have nothing only this watch, here it is for you*". This gesture was highly significant. Pierre René was a Missioner right to the end; he shows by this gesture who it is, that he had the vocation of proclaiming to the "*least and to the poorest*". Le Muet was one of those. This was no spur-of-the-moment decision; he wanted it to be a gesture that would live on. He asked his mother to continue to help that man's family, as she had done long before the betrayal.

Pierre René, a martyr to faithfulness, proves now more than ever before, that Mission has no limits. Engagement in Mission is engagement in martyrdom, that is "*Witness by one's life*" in the fullest sense. A few years before him, two other Vincentians had given this same Witness to Christ, Louis Joseph François and John Henry Gruyer, in their case also, for having refused the oath of acceptance of the Civil Constitution. That was in 1792. After Pierre René, the Congregation was to experience the martyrdom of several other members, Francis Regis Clet (1820), John Gabriel Perboyre (1840), both in China; Ghebre Michael (1855) in Ethiopia. How many more sons of St. Vincent, known or unknown, have given their lives to announce the Good News? It was the same Missionary flame which animated them. It continues today as well, in many countries where the preaching of the Gospel entails risks. Is not every confrere expected to find addressed to him _ each in his particular sphere _ the Call of St. Vincent in his Repetition of Prayer, on 12th November 1656, "*May it please God, gentlemen and my dear brothers, that each one, who joins the Company comes there with the sentiment of martyrdom, with the desire of suffering martyrdom and consecrating himself totally to the service of God, either in far-off lands or this one, wherever it may please God to make use of this poor little Company*".

Pierre René was surely aware of this quotation. He took it literally as a "*simple Priest of the Mission*", willing to complete his mission to the full. He never doubted that it was the normal outcome of the decision he had made when entering St. Lazare on October 25th 1786, to achieve the object of the Congregation by "*clothing himself in the Spirit of Jesus Christ*".

(Andrew Spelman CM, translator)

Bibliography

In these months preceding the canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre, several small books or brochures, presenting the biography of our future saint and sometimes elements of his spirituality, have been published. Here are the references of those that have come to the General Curia:

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- *Gerard van Winsen, C.M., Jean-Gabriël Perboyre C.M. (1802-1840) Missionaris en martelaar in China*, published by the Provincial House of the Netherlands - 1996 (40 pages).
- *André Sylvestre, Ján Gabriel Perboyre*, translated from French into Slovak and published by the Province of Slovakia in Nitra - 1996 (60 pages).
- *Thomas Davitt, C.M., Johannes Gabriel Perboyre CM Vinzentiner Märtyrer in China*, translated from English into German and published by: Vinzentiner - 54591 Prüm-Niederprüm - Germany - 1996 (47 pages).
- *Fenelon Castillo, C.M., La croce nel celeste impero, Giovanni Gabriele Perboyre, Missionario vicenziano, Martire di Cristo*, translated from Spanish into Italian and published by CLV Edizioni Vincenziane - Roma - 1996 (32 pages).

MICHEL LEVINE

Vincent de Paul parmi nous

Bayard Editions, Paris 1996 (163 pages)

In choosing to write a fictional autobiography of Vincent de Paul, Michel Levine leads the reader into the depths of Monsieur Vincent and permits the reader to follow from the inside Vincent's surprising itinerary, from the sheep enclosures of the Landes to the great charitable works under the Gondis, passing through the episode of the galleys and his presence on the council of the queen. Better than a detailed biography, this historical narrative provides us with a change of scenery in order to make us sense better the eternal relevance of this figure of charity, whose was life consumed by his passion for the poor ever more quickly, ever more intensely.

KATHRYN B. LAFLEUR, S.P.

*Louise de Marillac
A Light in the Darkness
A Woman of Yesteryear, A Saint and Model for Today*

New City Press, 1996 (254 pages)

This book presents a study of the spirituality of St. Louise de Marillac and her faith journey which, rooted in the historical and spiritual context, influenced every aspect of her life. The object of this work is to communicate the spirituality of Louise to Christians today and to illustrate her contribution to contemporary Christian spirituality by showing that she is truly a model for all Christians in their spiritual journey. As wife, mother, widow, and foundress, Louise de Marillac has a particular message of faith, hope, and love for women of today.

LUIGI CHIEROTTI, C.M.

*I 150 anni della Società
di S. Vincenzo de Paolo a Genova - 1846-1996*

*Published by Cooperazione Vincenziana, Via Fassolo 29, 16126 Genova,
Italy,
1996 (118 pages)*

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Genoa, the author retraces the history of the Society at the service of the poor, in this city and in the Liguria, from its origins up to its most recent developments. He gives an entire series of documents in the appendix.

LUIGI CHIEROTTI, C.M.

*P. Alfonso Ratisbonne (1814-1884)
L'ebreo convertito da Maria*

*Published by Cooperazione Vincenziana, Via Fassolo 29, 16126 Genova, Italy,
1996 (44 pages)*

The author presents the story of this Jew from Strasbourg who was converted by the apparition of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal in a church in Rome in 1842 and who, because of this, is so close to the Vincentian Family.

VINCENT HOLZER, C.M.

Le Dieu Trinité dans l'histoire.
Le différend théologique Balthasar-Rahner

Editions du Cerf, coll. Cogitatio Fidei, n_ 190, Paris, 1995 (476 pages)

This book, prefaced by Bernard Sesboué, S.J., is the publication of the noteworthy doctoral thesis presented by V. Holzer at the Gregorian University in Rome. The author shows brilliantly the contrast which marks these two theologians who have two different starting points. Rahner places himself on the side of man in his openness to God and Balthasar embarks from the unique figure that God assumes in Christ. The author does not content himself with putting the theologians face to face. He also applies himself to untying the knot of their divergence, granting, in a certain way, the point of view of the other, even though Holzer has a leaning toward Balthasar.