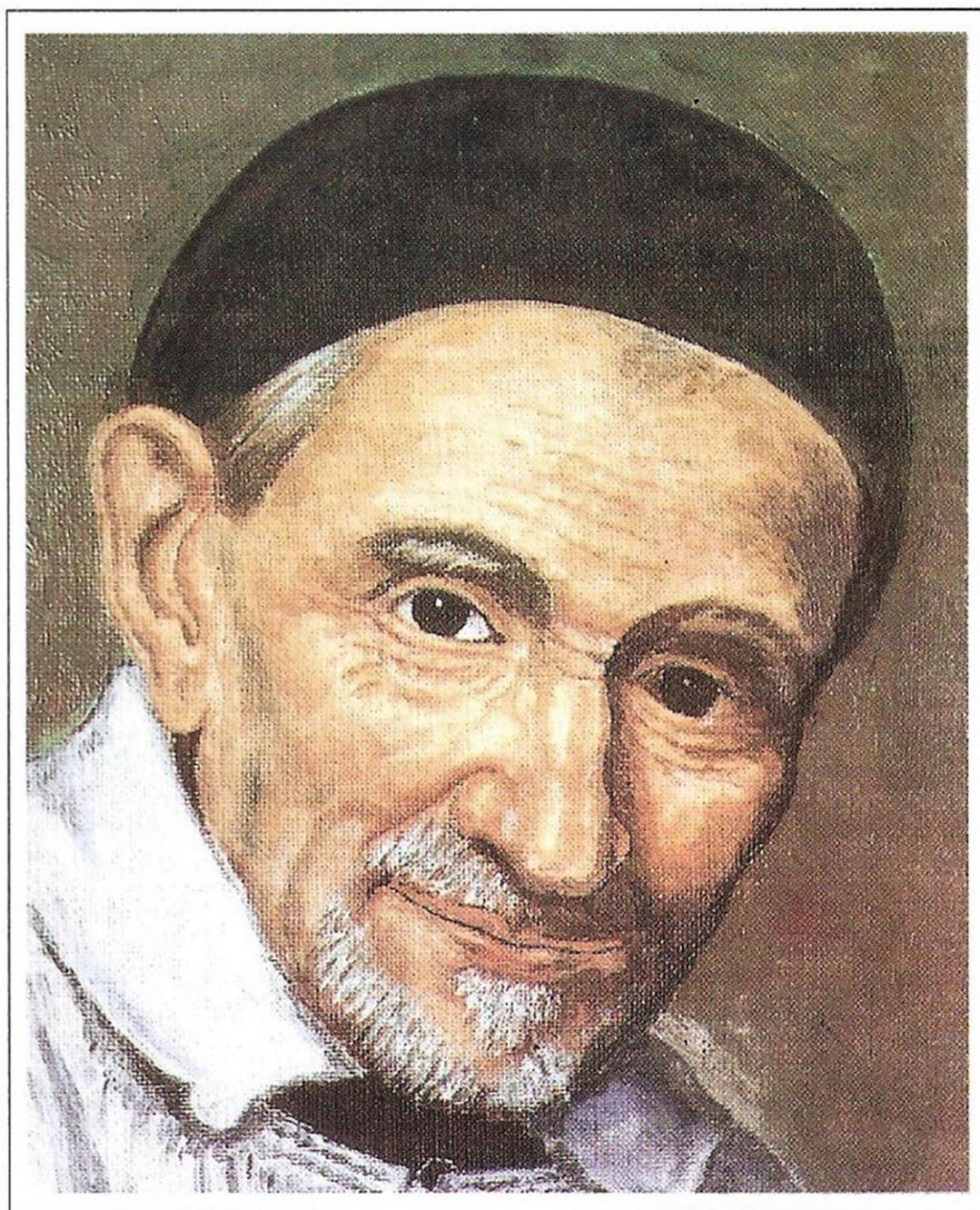


# VINCENTIANA

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*The C.M. in the United States*

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION  
GENERAL CURIA

## **The Congregation of the Mission in the United States: An Historical Survey**

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### **1. Roman Mission, 1815-1835**

The Congregation of the Mission in the United States began with the arrival of four Italian Vincentians from the Province of Rome. They came to America in 1815 at the invitation of Bishop Louis William Dubourg to staff a seminary for the then Diocese of Louisiana. Dubourg, a Sulpician, had accepted the enormous diocese, comprising the entire Louisiana Purchase, but only as its administrator. He made his definitive acceptance of the episcopacy contingent on securing the help of priests to staff a seminary. While lodging with the Vincentians at the house of Montecitorio in Rome, he chanced to meet Felix De Andreis (1778-1820). De Andreis was a Vincentian missionary priest whose responsibility extended also to providing spiritual support to other clergy in Rome. Dubourg heard De Andreis addressing a group of clergy and, impressed by his abilities, determined to enlist him and other Vincentians for his diocese. The Roman Province at first refused the sacrifice of one of its most important members but, with the insistence and approval of Pius VII, it relented. Dubourg and the provincial drew up a contract confirming this mission to Louisiana of members of the Province of Rome. The first Vincentians were Felix De Andreis, the superior; Joseph Rosati (1789-1843), John Baptist Acquaroni, and Brother Martin Blanka. The first three were Italians, and Brother Blanka was born in the Czech Republic, but was a member of the Province of Turin, assigned to Piacenza. Other diocesan priests seminarians and postulant brothers joined them, all intending to become Vincentians in America. The Vincentian apostolate was to assure the formation of priests for Louisiana and to preach missions.

The missionaries, thirteen in number, assembled gradually in Bordeaux, France, and then during the night of 12/13 June 1816, they departed for Baltimore, Maryland, where they landed on 26 July. They made their way overland through Pennsylvania to Pittsburgh, and then down the Ohio River to Louisville. Benedict Joseph Flaget, the kindly Bishop of Bardstown, Kentucky, accepted them in his seminary at St. Thomas, close to his see city. The majority remained there almost two years, learning English, completing their seminary studies, and in general preparing themselves for the American mission west of the Mississippi River.

De Andreis left Bardstown the following October 1817, in company with Bishop Flaget, Brother Blanka, and Joseph Rosati. Rosati was later to succeed De Andreis as superior of the American mission and Dubourg as Bishop of

Louisiana. Their purpose was to prepare the way for Bishop Dubourg. He followed the same route as the others from Baltimore to Bardstown, and shortly left there for his diocese. He arrived in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri, on New Year's Eve, and reached St. Louis on 6 January 1818. For the next several months, the bishop oversaw the preparation of land and cabins to accommodate his traveling seminary at the Barrens Settlement. The seminarians, led by Rosati, reached the Barrens, now incorporated into Perryville, Missouri, in the following October. Rosati arrived on 2 October, and the rest a day or so later. The American Vincentians regard the founding of their first house, St. Mary's of the Barrens, on that date.

From the beginning, there were two foundations under one superior. The first was the seminary at the Barrens, which slowly grew in numbers. The Vincentian candidates were to make their internal seminary in St. Louis, the second foundation. Since Bishop Dubourg had insisted that De Andreis remain by his side in the city as his vicar general, he was to divide his time between parish and missionary responsibilities. The first American internal seminary began on 3 December 1818.

De Andreis's frail health suffered from deprivation and depression, and he finally succumbed on 15 October 1820 to the combined effects of fever and being dosed with mercury. He was buried in the pioneer church at the Barrens, and his remains were moved to the present church in 1837. Generations of Vincentians have prayed at his tomb for his canonization.

Rosati then moved the internal seminary from St. Louis to the Barrens and continued the work of the (external) seminary, which accepted both Vincentians and diocesan candidates. Bishop Dubourg felt himself forced to resign his see especially because of a scandal involving one of the priests he had ordained, to whom he entrusted important diocesan business in Europe. The bishop had already ordained Rosati as his auxiliary and successor, 25 March 1824. The new bishop had to travel widely to visit the scattered Catholic communities along the Mississippi River, as well as to handle the affairs of the Vincentians, whose superior he remained. Gradually, St. Mary's Seminary produced lay graduates as well as clergy and Rosati looked back with some satisfaction at the pioneering work of the first American house.

## **2. One Province, 1835-1888**

Rosati relinquished his duties as superior in 1831 and then focused his efforts on the diocese of St. Louis, whose first bishop he had become in 1829. The new superiors at the Barrens began to station the Vincentians elsewhere, in the state of Louisiana in particular. The increasing numbers of Vincentians arriving in the United States from Europe, as well as the newly ordained, led to

the founding of an American province, independent of the Province of Rome. This took place under Fr. Jean-Baptiste Nozo on 2 September 1835, following the General Assembly. The new province became the first one established outside of Europe since the founding of the Congregation of the Mission in 1625.

The first provincial was John Timon (1797-1867), a native of Pennsylvania, who while a seminarian had known De Andreis. Timon guided the province into traditional Vincentian works, seminaries and missions. He overextended the members of the province, such that by the time he became Bishop of Buffalo (1847), American Vincentians conducted seminaries in the states of Missouri, Louisiana, New York, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and Ohio — too many for the small province. The province's commitment to missions took the form of founding mission parishes. Astonishing numbers of these were either founded or served in the states of Missouri, Illinois, Maryland, Louisiana and Pennsylvania. Another important work was the care of Texas, committed by the Holy See to the Congregation in 1840. Timon oversaw the work but needed someone else to reside there, and so he chose his fellow seminarian John Mary Odin (1800-1870). Odin became a bishop in 1842 and governed the Texas mission until he transferred to New Orleans as archbishop in 1861.

One issue that troubled the Vincentians was the practice of slavery, particularly slave-holding by the province. The four founding confreres agreed that they would resist slavery when they reached America, but they came to understand that slavery was a part of the American social structure that they could not resist. De Andreis himself quoted the legal expression *Necessitas non habet legem* ["necessity knows no law"] to justify this. Slave numbers grew, through gift and purchase, until the time of John Timon. From then on, numbers declined until the abolition of slavery in the 1860s.

An interesting outcome of the Vincentian presence in the United States was the union in 1850 of the majority of the Sisters of Charity (founded by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton) to the Daughters of Charity. The Sulpician directors of the Sisters of Charity, feeling close to the charism of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, promoted the union. Vincentians were then appointed their directors, and the two Congregations, the Double Family, have continued to work together, particularly in recent decades.

The source of vocations to the Congregation was, at the beginning, mainly immigration. At first the confreres were Italians, then Irish and Spanish with some French, Germans and others. By the end of the American civil war (1865), almost 90% of the vocations were either Irish immigrants or others born in the United States. It because of the Irish that the name "Vincentians" gradually supplanted "Lazarists" in the United States around 1900.

Another issue confronting the American Vincentians in the period before 1888 was the large number of confreres who became bishops, and so were lost to the Congregation. Joseph Rosati, the superior following De Andreis, was ordained bishop in 1823. Leo De Neckere succeeded Dubourg as Bishop of New Orleans in 1830. John Mary Odin, mentioned above, became Apostolic Vicar of Texas in 1841. John Timon, the first provincial, became the founding Bishop of Buffalo, New York, 1847. Thaddeus Amat, an energetic Catalan, became Bishop of Monterey, California, 1854. Michel Domenec, another Catalan, was Bishop of Pittsburgh, 1860. In the same year, John Lynch, born in Ireland, became Bishop of Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Stephen Vincent Ryan, Canadian-born and provincial for eleven years, succeeded Timon at Buffalo in 1868. One, Mariano Maller, who served with distinction as provincial in America (and later in Spain), fled to Brazil to avoid being named a bishop.

### **3. Two Provinces, 1888-1975**

With the growth of Vincentian vocations, it became clear that it would be necessary to divide the sprawling province into two. This was accomplished on 4 September 1888, under Fr. Antoine Fiat. The Eastern Province, headquartered at Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, assumed, in general, the states east of the Mississippi, while the Western Province, headquartered in Perryville, Missouri, had the western states. In reality, in 1888 the only Western Province foundation outside the Mississippi Valley (with Chicago, Illinois) was in Los Angeles, California.

The newly-independent Western Province continued the earlier Vincentian works of seminary education and missions (with parishes). At the same time, the confreres branched out into other works that grew from the peculiar demands of the American Church — a Church mainly composed of poor immigrants. Some seminaries had residential high schools attached, and these developed into independent institutions. In Los Angeles, the original idea — developing priestly vocations coming from St. Vincent's College — never worked out as envisioned. The College continued, however, until the Jesuits assumed it in 1911. St. Vincent's College, Chicago, Illinois, had similar hopes. The Vincentians opened a high school on Chicago's north side in 1898. It gradually developed into De Paul University, now the largest Catholic university in the United States. Much less successful was the University of Dallas, Texas, opening as Holy Trinity College in 1907. It was dogged by administrative and financial problems until the diocese bought it for a girls' orphanage in 1930. In the Eastern Province, the foundations at Brooklyn, New York (later St. John's University), and at Niagara, New York, (Niagara University) had a similar origin and enjoy great success.

The work of rural parish missions, so dear to the heart of Vincent de Paul, continued in the United States but was only gradually distinguished from the founding of parishes in mission territory. With the repeated encouragement of the superiors general in Paris, their American confreres organized a formal mission apostolate beginning in the 1870s. After initial successes, it declined somewhat in the Western Province, especially because of a concentration on seminary and lay education, and the need to staff established parishes. Further, the growth of devotion to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal led to the institution of missions with a special Marian flavor. These normally took the form of solemn novenas with a mission flavor. This work began in the Eastern Province in the early decades of the 1900s and spread west. These Marian works have resulted in two branches of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, with the Central shrine at Germantown (1915), and the National shrine at Perryville (1917).

One distinctive development from the missions was the work called the Motor Missions. Originally a work of rural evangelization based at Kenrick Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, it grew to have a more permanent base in the province. Confreres involved seminarians, both diocesan and Vincentian, in itinerant missions given in rural Missouri. From 1934 to 1965, teams of missionaries witnessed to the Church in public squares or on the main streets of small towns. They traveled in small trailers (caravans) to preach and also to celebrate the sacraments for scattered Catholics.

Confreres from the Eastern Province carried on similar works of evangelization through their commitment to the Church in the state of Alabama. Beginning in 1910, Vincentians founded mission parishes and served many scattered communities of Catholics. With the growth in numbers of Spanish-speaking Catholics in Alabama, the focus of these parishes has changed somewhat.

The Eastern Province agreed at about the same time to enter the Panama Canal Zone, a part of the United States. Their apostolate would be to give missions to English-speaking workers building the canal, many of whom were of African descent. This mission started slowly, but began officially in 1913. The focus was principally American parishes, but it eventually broadened to include Spanish-speakers both in the Zone and elsewhere. The Vincentian missionaries gradually developed native Panamanian vocations and, together with confreres from the Central American Province, continue to serve the Church in Panama.

On a mission from the Holy See, the first Vincentians entered China in 1699, although not in large numbers. As the Church in China grew, so did the need for missionaries. Confreres of the Eastern Province began their work in Kiangsi [Jiangxi] province in 1920, and the Holy See requested that the Western

Province also take up a China mission. After much hesitation because of severe financial and personnel problems, the Western Province, in 1929, assumed the control of another mission district in Kiangsi. Four confreres became bishops there (John O'Shea, 1928; Edward Sheehan, 1929; Paul Misner, 1935; Charles Quinn, 1940.) American Vincentians remained in Kiangsi until expelled by the Communist government. For about 30 years, they had suffered from nearly constant wars and unrest: nationalist insurgents, the Japanese during the second World War, and then the Communist revolution. In 1952, almost immediately after their expulsion, two priests with missionary experience went to Taiwan where they began to minister to mainland Chinese Catholics who had fled there. This mission grew, and by 1987, the American missionaries, together with their Chinese and Dutch confreres, joined to form a new Province of China.

For many years, the principal work of the American Vincentians in the two provinces was seminary formation. Both offered formation programs for their own candidates, beginning in several minor seminarians. To form diocesan seminarians, they also served seminaries that they owned (Denver, Colorado; Niagara and Albany, New York; Boynton Beach, Florida) or simply staffed (St. Louis, Missouri; Los Angeles, California; San Antonio and Houston, Texas). Some were minor seminaries but the majority were major seminaries.

Out of these seminaries came a certain elite in both provinces: future superiors, provincials, and even four superiors general (French-born Charles Souvay, William Slattery, James Richardson, and Robert Maloney). In addition, many confreres devoted themselves to their craft of teaching and to scholarship, particularly in the theological sciences. It must be admitted, however, that those confreres assigned to parishes and other pastoral works (such as chaplaincies for hospitals and the armed forces, or mission bands) were often regarded as of less importance in the provinces. The many brothers in the two provinces were, as well, subject to some discrimination and marginalization. The attention given to surviving two world wars and to the great economic depression of the 1930s reinforced the status quo.

#### **4. Five Provinces, 1975 —**

The American Vincentian experience paralleled that of the general Catholic experience in the United States: rapid growth and an increased prosperity particularly beginning in the 1950s. Pressures to ease the work expected of its provincial superiors led to the creation of two filial vice-provinces, New Orleans and Los Angeles, in 1958. Western Vincentians were free to work in any of these areas, including the so-called "mother province," now headquartered in St. Louis. By 1975, after the Second Vatican Council and the major revision of basic Vincentian law, the three areas became three independent provinces: Midwest, South and West. Together with the Eastern

Province and the independent New England Province, American Vincentians now had five provinces in the United States, the largest number for any country in the Congregation.

The three provinces gradually diverged into their own works and styles. The Midwest Vincentians, with their members mainly devoted to works of education (seminaries and university) and parishes, began slowly to review all their commitments. They did so because of the general encouragement coming from their revised Constitutions of 1984. In the spirit of the Council, Vincentians undertook to examine all their works in the light of the original inspiration coming from St. Vincent de Paul. This was summed up in the important phrase in the first article of the Constitutions: “to follow Christ, the evangelizer of the poor.” Henceforth, all Vincentian works would have, in some way, to be explicitly faithful to this perspective. For this reason, the Midwest Province has gradually withdrawn from some works while beginning others. The decline in the number of members of the province, too, has forced the issue.

The new works were elaborated because of long-range planning, undertaken over several years. Among those works are renewed emphasis on parish missions, the growth of Vincentian works in Kenya, help for priest-poor dioceses (such as Pueblo and Colorado Springs, Colorado), and an increasing number of individual works done in a Vincentian context: lay formation for ministry, prison chaplaincy, seminary commitments, direct organizational work with the materially poor.

The members of the Province of the West followed the same system involving a thorough revision of works and common life. They pioneered a mission in Burundi in 1979. The missionaries joined the Daughters of Charity, already working there, but political conditions turned so serious and dangerous that the province withdrew its members in 1985. Since then, Burundi has gone through catastrophic civil wars and massacres, but confreres from Colombia have recently been able to resume the apostolate there.

The Southern Province, too, revised its works, emphasizing ministry among the rural poor, at first in the state of Arkansas. They had a mission for some years in rural Guatemala, beginning in 1980. With the increasing presence of Spanish-speaking Catholics, confreres have shifted somewhat into more direct work with Hispanics throughout the territory of the province. One important development has been a ministry to native Americans, the Indians so central to the plans of Felix De Andreis and the earliest Italian Vincentian missionaries. In this, they have been joined by members of the Province of the West, working in the Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico, the poorest in the United States.

The Eastern Province, like the others, experienced a decline in the number of its members. Together with the new approaches taken by the Constitutions of the Congregation, the confreres engaged in a thorough revision of its ministries through long-range planning. As seminaries and other works closed, many confreres became available for other ministries. Some devoted themselves to university work in a new way (emphasis on their specifically Vincentian charism), to ministry among Hispanics, and to the international missions of the Congregation.

The New England Province has not been mentioned in this overview since its members followed a different historical path. St. Vincent himself had sent missionaries to Poland, and both Polish and foreign confreres labored there with great fruit. The disastrous partitions of Poland in the 18th century reduced the work tremendously, but the province was able to begin again in 1866. Large waves of immigration from Poland to the United States led to calls for missions among them. Polish Vincentians arrived in 1903 and gradually opened mission houses and parishes for Polish immigrants. Educational works of various sorts (a high school, Erie, Pennsylvania; publications; parish schools) also characterized their apostolate and led, in 1920, to the erection of the American mission into a vice-province. By 1975, the vice-province had developed sufficiently to be erected into an independent province. Its members continue the traditional works, but have branched out into American parishes without a Polish majority.

In addition to the American provinces, confreres from several other provinces have worked in the United States, principally to help Catholic immigrants from their home countries. Several confreres from different provinces of Spain (Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza) and Italy (Naples, Turin, Rome), and from Portugal and Mexico founded houses and works, principally after 1900. In addition, the fortunes of wars and revolutions have brought other confreres to the United States. Although they joined the established provinces, temporarily or permanently, many of them have had a special outreach to Catholics from their native countries. Confreres from China, Slovenia and Vietnam could be mentioned, along with others.

All five provinces have, even before 1975, developed closer links with each other. Confreres from the three provinces formerly making up the Western Province have continued to work in all three areas. Some confreres have worked, even temporarily, in the educational works of other provinces. The provincials meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual importance, such as common formation. Another of these works is the Vincentian Studies Institute, a work now sponsored as well by the five provinces of the Daughters of Charity. Its purpose is to further the Vincentian heritage, particularly through research, publication, and conferences.

All five provinces also are developing ways to be in stronger relationships of prayer, work and friendship with the many others, lay, religious and clergy, who form part of the larger Vincentian Family. First among these has been, and continues to be, the Daughters of Charity. In addition, American Vincentians are forging new links with members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Ladies of Charity, and other congregations of women religious, particularly those who share the charism of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. The founding of lay volunteer organizations has also begun.

Bibliography: *The American Vincentians. A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States. 1815-1987.* Edited by John E. Rybolt, C.M. Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1988.

# **The Vincentian Higher Education Apostolate in the United States**

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In an audience held on 29 January 2001, Pope John Paul II observed that “education is a central element of the Church’s ‘Option for the Poor.’” The Eastern (Philadelphia) and Midwestern (St. Louis) Provinces of the United States believe this wholeheartedly and have made a significant investment in this apostolate for almost 200 years. Today, in the United States, a college degree is the single most effective way to lift a person out of poverty.

## **Breaking the Cycle of Poverty in the United States<sup>1</sup>**

Poverty is classified in the U.S. by a government measure known as “the federal poverty index.” In 1999, households of four persons earning less than \$17,029 were described as living “below the federal poverty index.” This index is controversial, for many families earning more than this figure still live in desperate situations. For that reason, the Vincentians of the Eastern Province classify households earning less than \$31,878 to be among the “marginally poor,” (i.e., 75% of median household income) and focus their work among this larger group.

Many of these poorer residents are first-generation immigrants and their families, or members of minority groups traditionally denied equal opportunity because of racism or other forms of prejudice and injustice. Both groups have dreams of better futures for themselves and their children. Traditionally, these populations were able to move out of poverty by two routes: 1) well-paid jobs as skilled or unskilled labor or 2) by completing a college degree and thereby becoming eligible for better-paying professional jobs. Currently, the first route is disappearing in the United States as our economy shifts its industrial and manufacturing jobs to third-world nations, thereby separating the economy at home increasingly into two unlinked sectors: knowledge-based industries and a lower-paying service economy. The dawn of the Information Age has also introduced new forms of poverty that have created the oft-discussed “digital divide.”

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<sup>1</sup>Money Income in the United States, 1999, U.S. Department of Commerce, Table B-2; Poverty Thresholds, 1999, U.S. Census Bureau; Poverty in the United States, 1999, U.S. Census Bureau.

This fundamental and permanent economic shift makes a college education all the more important as a systemic method of escaping poverty. In 1999, men having college degrees earned 63% more on the average than those having only high school degrees. Women with college degrees earned 84% more.

**1999 Average Earnings by Educational Attainment,  
25-34 year olds**

	<b>High School Degree</b>	<b>Bachelor's Degree</b>
<b>Men</b>	\$29,162	\$47,515
<b>Women</b>	\$17,373	\$31,916

This striking differential in earnings, as a reflection of an unjust differential in opportunity, gets at the heart of the reason for Vincentian higher education.

**Access to U.S. Higher Education for the Poor<sup>2</sup>**

In the United States, 83% of high school graduates from wealthy families (earning more than \$75,000) go to college, whereas only 53% of those from less affluent families (earning less than \$25,000) attempt college. At four-year colleges, the gap is worse. The poor attend four-year colleges at only half the rate of their higher-income peers. Out of financial necessity, many disadvantaged students attend public, two-year community colleges. These two-year colleges do not generally offer the quality of education, or the eventual earning power, of four-year colleges.

Largely because of unequal educational opportunities at the primary and secondary levels, even those disadvantaged youths who do begin a higher education are seven times less likely to graduate than their wealthier peers. Only 6% of those from the lowest economic quartile complete a four-year degree, compared to 41% from the highest income quartile. Of those from “marginally poor households,” (\$30,000 or less), only 14% receive a private education. The rest attend larger, less-expensive public institutions. And even the public institutions are becoming less affordable. Government scholarship aid given to support needy students in college covered 84% of the cost of attending public colleges in 1975-76. It now covers only 39% of the cost in the 1999-2000 academic year.

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<sup>2</sup>“Access Denied: Restoring the Nation’s Commitment to Equal Educational Opportunity,” U.S. Department of Education, as excerpted in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 2, 2001.

Persons who are poor then, are half as likely to go to college as those who are wealthy. Those who do go are seven times less likely to graduate, seven times less likely to receive a private education, and are increasingly unable even to afford a public education. Less than six 6 percent of the marginally poor receive a four-year degree in the United States. The statistics for increasingly important graduate education are even more dismal. Trends show these educational disparities broadening each year. The access of underserved youths and adults to higher education — the best and increasingly primary route out of poverty — is slipping away from them.

### **Foundation and Evolution of Vincentian Colleges in the U.S.**

The Vincentian universities of the United States were not founded as such to raise the poor out of poverty. Rather, a small band of Italian Vincentian priests, brothers and seminarians came to the United States in 1816 to accept Bishop Louis DuBourg's invitation to evangelize the settlers in the upper-Louisiana Territories and to found a seminary there. Felix de Andreis, Joseph Rosati and the first band of missionaries naively assumed that they would be able to recreate the traditional apostolates and lifestyles that they were leaving behind in Europe. This assumption proved incorrect from the moment that the group landed at the inner harbor of Baltimore in October 1816. The needs of the nascent Church in the United States, and indeed the democratic nature of the raw new republic itself, resulted in the rapid "Americanization" of Vincentian ministry. They discovered in America that other religious congregations had opened college preparatory programs to serve both local lay students and clerical prospects. This model suited the missionaries' purpose, for a college could serve as a base for rural missionary outreach and the lay students' tuition supported the cost of seminary education.<sup>3</sup>

The intention of the first missionaries to found a seminary in Bishop Louis DuBourg's new Diocese of Louisiana was realized in October 1818 with the foundation of St. Mary's of the Barrens College in Perryville, Missouri. Because of the absence of any other opportunities for lay students to be educated, St. Mary's and later St. Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri (1838) had alternating and at times simultaneous existences as seminaries and lay colleges for the rest of the 19th century before emerging exclusively as seminaries.

In 1856, John Lynch, C.M., at the invitation of his confrere, Bishop John Timon, established Our Lady of the Angels Seminary in Buffalo, New York. Soon this institution moved to neighboring Niagara Falls, New York, where a parallel lay college opened. This college evolved into Niagara University.

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<sup>3</sup>Power, Edward J., *A History of Catholic Higher Education in the United States*, (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1958) 36; Gleason, Philip, *Contending With Modernity: Catholic Higher Education in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 4.

At the request of John Loughlin, the first Bishop of Brooklyn, New York, the College of Saint John the Baptist opened its doors in September of 1870. This urban institution evolved into the present-day St. John's University in Jamaica, New York. The bishop had requested the establishment of a Catholic college for his diocese "where the youth of the city might find the advantages of a solid education and where their minds might receive the moral training necessary to maintain the credit of Catholicity."<sup>4</sup> Almost simultaneously, across the vast expanse of the country, another early urban Vincentian lay college, St. Vincent's, began its existence in Los Angeles, California.

The year 1888 saw the division of the United States Province into two provinces: East and West. The Western Province, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri, became heavily involved in both seminary and lay higher education. In addition to the college in Los Angeles, the province founded St. Vincent's College in Chicago, Illinois in 1898 and Holy Trinity College in Dallas, Texas in 1907. This, together with its many seminary and other apostolic commitments represented a disastrous over-extension of finances and personnel. These and other factors led to the traumatic closings of St. Vincent's College in Los Angeles in 1911, and the renamed University of Dallas in 1927. This left the province with only the struggling St. Vincent's College in Chicago, which in 1907 became DePaul University. In 1911, DePaul became the first Catholic college or university in the United States to become co-educational.

From 1927 to the present, the Vincentian higher educational apostolate in the United States has been represented by Niagara University, St. John's University and DePaul University. For the first half of the century each of these institutions sought to provide young, largely Catholic men and then women, often first generation college students, with the opportunity to receive a higher education that became the acknowledged key to accessing the proverbial "American dream." Following the predominant American higher educational model each of these institutions grew in stages from colleges to multi-faceted universities with undergraduate, graduate, doctoral and professional programs.

### **Reshaping the Mission of the Vincentian Universities**

As American Catholic higher education became more mainstream in the second half of the 20th century, so did Vincentian higher education. In addition, as a result of the great revisioning occasioned by the Second Vatican Council, the international Congregation, especially in its General Assemblies of 1968 and 1974, grappled with the key questions of Vincentian apostolic identity and mission within the contemporary Church and the post-modern world. During this difficult process of questioning many confreres wondered, or even doubted,

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted by Stafford Poole, C.M. in "The Educational Apostolate: Colleges, Universities, and Secondary Schools," *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States*, John E. Rybolt, C.M., ed., (New York: New City Press, 1988) 315.

how the university apostolate could be justified in light of the new Constitutions of 1981 and their call for the Congregation to judge all that it did in light of following "Jesus Christ the Evangelizer of the Poor." Within the last 20 years, however, all three of the U.S. Vincentian universities have reshaped the mission of these institutions putting higher education at the service of the poor.

These universities are now charged to become fully "Vincentian" universities by:

- § Educating the poor and their children, thereby breaking the vicious cycle of poverty within family units;
- § Educating first-generation college students, thereby enabling new immigrant groups and traditionally marginalized populations to enter the mainstream in the United States;
- § Presenting the Roman Catholic tradition as an interpretive framework and spiritual support for students= professional and personal lives, while respecting and being enriched by the great religious diversity represented in the university communities;
- § Instilling in all students an affective and effective love for those in need;
- § Researching poverty in society and looking for creative ways to moderate this social evil;<sup>5</sup>
- § Offering the universities= considerable resources (e.g., knowledgeable experts, volunteers, meeting space, financial support, contacts) to other local, national and international agencies and community groups with complementary goals.

While there is much work that remains to be done, these institutions have much of which to be proud. DePaul University and St. John's University are the two largest Catholic universities in the United States, enrolling nearly 21,000 and 18,621 students respectively. Niagara is smaller, with approximately 3200 students. All three educate a significant population of poor and minority students. 1594 students (approximately 18%) of DePaul undergraduate students are from households earning less than \$30,000. 20% of Niagara's students are from households earning under \$30,000. 41% of St. John's students are from households earning less than \$20,000. All three colleges enroll and far exceed

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<sup>5</sup>Fathers and Brothers of the Mission, search out more than ever, with boldness, humility and skill the causes of poverty and encourage short- and long-term solutions; acceptable and effective concrete solutions. By doing so, you will work for the credibility of the gospel and of the Church. @ [Address of John Paul II to the delegates of the General Assembly of 1986. *Osservatore Romano*, English Edition, August 2, 1986, p. 12].

the national average of students from poverty receiving a four-year, private college education. All three provide significant amounts of institutional financial and other aid to help these students pay for their education.

All three institutions encourage their faculty to do research and teach on issues concerning domestic and global poverty and justice. All three institutions encourage the faculty to design “service learning” classes that involve students with a variety of populations suffering the effects of poverty. All three institutions encourage students to volunteer their time and service to the poor. At Niagara, 80% of the students perform volunteer service. At St. John’s nearly 15% volunteer, and another 685 undertake service-learning. The scale of student involvement at DePaul is comparable.

All three attempt to create vibrant institutional cultures in which all members of the university community come to know Vincent de Paul and the Vincentian tradition. While many of the students, faculty and staff are not Catholic, all are encouraged to work together on behalf of the universities’ missions. All sponsor campus-based Vincent de Paul Society councils. During vacation breaks, each sponsors educational and service trips to poverty stricken areas, so that students from more privileged backgrounds can learn firsthand about the harsh realities of poverty.

The personnel commitment of the Eastern and Midwestern Provinces to these institutions is significant. There are 23 CMs and 3 DCs working at St. John’s; 15 CMs and one DC at Niagara; and 14 CMs and one DC at DePaul. But, if we understand the *Congregatio Missionis* as a “gathering of people for the sake of the Mission,” each of the universities are filled with thousands of Vincentian faculty, staff, students, administrators, and trustees who have made the Vincentian higher education mission their own.

Over time, these colleges have graduated hundreds of thousands of alumni, each of whom was educated in Vincentian values. Our alumni work in every sector of the United States, and make strong contributions to the nation’s life.

The Vincentian universities in the United States walk a delicate balance between selectivity and accessibility, between offering an excellent liberal arts education and keeping costs low enough for poor people to attend. These strategic choices bring with them daily tensions and balances, but the Vincentian universities have chosen to live with those tensions in the name of providing an excellent education that is available to those who need it most.

## **Part of a Whole**

Universities do not fully realize the Vincentian mission. Few of the world's peoples have any real opportunity to receive a higher education. Even in the United States, little more than half of the population receives a college degree. The universities represent just a small part of the Vincentian Family's mission to evangelize, feed, clothe, house, train, heal, organize, and enfranchise the world's poor. Those who work in the U.S. Vincentian universities, however, do educate the poor. By doing so, they assist thousands of our brothers and sisters each year to permanently leave poverty behind them. They work together with numerous lay colleagues to study the causes of poverty and advocate for justice. They daily labor to instill a love and respect for people who are poor by all who work or study at the university.

In the past 20 years all three of the United States Vincentian universities have made marked progress in demonstrating how large institutions of higher education can be vibrantly academic, American, Catholic and Vincentian. While continuing to provide educational opportunity to the poor, to the underserved and to very diverse student bodies, our universities have made education for charity, justice, service, and advocacy hallmarks of their institutional identities and the focus of considerable institutional efforts. There is still more work to be done, however, to fully incarnate the Vincentian charism in these institutions, foreseeing the day when, because of the rapid diminishment in the number of confreres in the U.S. provinces, this apostolate will be handed over to lay Vincentian leadership gathered together "for the sake of the mission."

# **The Popular Missions of the CM in the United States: Historical Aspects**

**By Anthony J. Dosen, C.M.**

## ***Introduction***

This historical essay is based primarily on the work of Dr. Douglas Slawson in *American Vincentians*. In this work, Slawson (1988) stated that the popular mission apostolate was the poor stepchild of the American provinces. Perhaps an alternative interpretation might be that the popular missions were a labor that the American Vincentians undertook above and beyond the other works to which they were assigned. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the confreres responded to the urgent requests of bishops to assist in the education of clerics and poor, immigrant youth, as well as assisting in parishes; thus the popular missions took second place to these other works. Slawson judged this state of affairs as ignoring the defining ministry of the Congregation. However, one might argue that the popular missions came to fruition in the United States because individual Vincentians were committed to the popular missions and willing to conduct them, above and beyond their assigned apostolate.

James Smith, C.M., in an article on the early history of the Vincentian Mission, posits that the development of the Vincentian mission in St. Vincent's time was the result of the circumstance of 17<sup>th</sup> century France. Similarly, the Vincentian popular missions in the United States developed within the context of 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. social and religious history. The result was that the popular missions in the United States looked notably different from their counterpart in Europe and certainly different from the missions of St. Vincent's day. There are three key differences between the U.S. and European mission work. First, Vincent developed the missions with the rural poor in mind. His plan for the mission was that it be directed "all but exclusively" toward the country poor.<sup>1</sup> In the United States, the poor were primarily urban, not rural, and immigrants. The other definable group of the poor were the African slaves recently freed after the American Civil War. Thus the American Vincentians gave missions not only in rural areas, but in the cities as well. Secondly, the traditional Vincentian mission was to last over a number of weeks, allowing time for individuals in the parishes to learn and grow in faith. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the few popular missions that were preached lasted for a number of weeks. However, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the Vincentian popular mission lasted on average from one to two weeks. Usually, if the mission lasted for two weeks or more, it was because each week of the mission was devoted to a particular group of individuals (e.g., married men, housewives, single men, single women). Thus the four-week mission,

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<sup>1</sup> John Smith, C.M., "The Vincentian Mission, 1625-1660" in *Vincentian Heritage* IV:2, (1983), 40.

would in actuality be four one-week missions. Finally, St. Vincent was very concerned about the renewal of those already baptized who lacked knowledge of the faith and thus were unable to live a life of faith. Therefore, the missions preached by the community in St. Vincent's day were more catechetical in nature.<sup>2</sup> In the United States, the Vincentian missions struggled to maintain their catechetical nature. The more popular penitential mission was quite popular among religious communities in the United States during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Whether the preaching was primarily catechetical or penitential, the final result was usually the same – large numbers of individuals were brought back to the Sacrament of Penance.

### *The Early Years*

When Bishop William DuBourg sought the assistance of the community for his newly created diocese of the Louisiana Purchase, he was seeking missionaries who would be seminary professors. Reluctantly, the Vincentian superiors in Rome gave their blessing to Rev. Felix DeAndreis, C.M., Rev. Joseph Rosati, C.M., and their companions to undertake this mission. However, one of the stipulations made by the superiors was that the confreres would undertake the work of the popular missions in the United States as soon as feasible. The confreres arrived in the United States during the fall of 1816. Unfamiliar with English, their first task was to learn the language. Aided by the Sulpicians, the confreres made their way across the country. As the band progressed from Bardstown toward Missouri, Fr. Joseph Rosati, C.M. preached the first Vincentian mission in the United States at Vincennes, Indiana in 1817. This was the first, and only, mission that the Vincentians gave in the United States for the next seven years. The work of founding the seminary at Perryville consumed all their time and effort.

In 1824, Bishop Rosati, C.M., the auxiliary bishop of the diocese and later first bishop of St. Louis, asked Fr. John Mary Odin, C.M. and Deacon John Timon, C.M. to preach a mission to the people of Little Rock in the Arkansas territory. As they traveled to Little Rock, the missionaries stopped in New Madrid, Missouri, and gave a mission in that town. The people of New Madrid had minimal contact with clergy and both Catholics and non-Catholics sought out the ministry of these two Vincentians. Many had not had access to the sacraments for over 40 years. The parish church, destroyed by a flood, was symbolic of the disarray the missionaries found among the residents. Two years later, Fr. Odin returned to New Madrid with Fr. Leo DeNeckere to offer an extended mission to the people of this area. The success of these missions was measured in the number of communions and confessions. After several months of work, the missionaries left a renewed Christian community. Odin and Timon returned to

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 43.

New Madrid several times in the following years to provide this community with the consolation of the sacraments.

The young American province, founded in 1835, struggled to staff both its pastoral commitments and the popular missions. This did not keep the confreres from dreaming about the missions and creating plans to make those dreams a reality. Mariano Maller, C.M. (provincial 1848-1851), along with several other confreres, communicated with Fr. Jean-Baptiste Étienne, C.M., Superior General, about their hope for a massive conversion of U.S. citizens to Catholicism. He explained that the missions were the best approach for accomplishing this task and requested that Fr. Étienne send confreres to assist with the missions. While massive conversions of American citizens were unrealistic, it did provide an impetus to move the mission apostolate forward. Maller's successor as provincial, Stephen Vincent Ryan, C.M. (provincial from 1857-1868), wrote Fr. Étienne about the large number of missions that were undertaken during his administration. Ryan preached many of these missions, since other confreres were occupied with their assigned apostolates.

A common problem that confreres faced on the missions was an insufficient number of confessors. The number of individuals seeking the sacrament were so great that the missionaries often heard confessions continuously throughout the day and into the night, as late as 11:00 p.m. In 1870, the mission work had to be suspended so that the work of opening St. John's College in Brooklyn could begin. The missions resumed in October, 1871.

### ***The Popular Missions in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

At the time of the separation of the American Province into two (1888), the apostolate of the popular missions had not yet reached a solid footing. Personnel problems such as lack of due preparation, lack of due propriety, or the severity of a confrere in the confessional caused additional problems for the mission apostolate. The problems of individual missionaries had a negative effect on the apostolate. For example, Henry Cosgrove, Bishop of Davenport, Iowa, when requesting a mission from the confreres was quoted as saying, "Anyone but Fr. Devine!"<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the small number of Vincentians in the United States during this time made it all but impossible to remove individual confreres from the work and still sustain the work.

In the Eastern Province, a renewed commitment to the popular missions took the form of assigning new members to the mission bands. By 1913, the Eastern Province had 22 missionaries, living in five separate houses, preaching

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<sup>3</sup> Slawson, Douglas, "To Bring Glad Tidings to the Poor": Vincentian Parish Missions in the United States" in *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States 1815-1987* (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1988) 184.

over 100 missions per year. The work of these confreres extended from the Canadian border to the Gulf Coast. The Western Province did not have near the success during this time period. Institutional commitments and the urgent requests of bishops stretched the limited numbers of the province. Fr. Fiat, Superior General, continued to recommend and cajole the province to move forward with the work of the mission, but the realities of the province's works and the limited number of confreres continued to give the province little option in making a concerted effort at developing a comprehensive mission program. With the closing of St. Vincent's College in Los Angeles, California, in 1911, some thought that there would be sufficient funds and personnel to develop a sustained mission apostolate on the West Coast. However, the confreres who were stationed at St. Vincent's College were subsequently transferred to DePaul University in Chicago, so that the scholastics who were assigned to sustain the work before their own studies for ordination were completed could go back to complete their studies. The funds that were promised from the sale of St. Vincent's College barely paid the massive debt that the college had incurred. Despite these complications, the confreres of the Western Province preached 108 missions between the years 1911 and 1914, 48 of those missions preached in the year 1914. After this brief period, the work of the missions was suspended yet again in the west from 1915-1923.

As the work of the missions in the Eastern Province continued to grow through the Second World War, the popular missions in the west continued their halting growth. In the east, the success of the mission centers from 1910 through the 1920s, spurred the province to expand its mission presence into Jackson, Michigan with the establishment of Queen of the Miraculous Medal Parish. The parish served as a mission center for the Michigan area, and also provided service to the Daughters of Charity in the area. The confreres at the parish, took on the chaplaincy of Mercy Hospital and care for the Catholic prisoners at the state prison. The confreres inaugurated the prison ministry with a two-week mission for the Catholic prisoners.

In the west, the work of the missions was being examined yet again. Fr. Charles Souvay, C.M., professor of scripture at Kenrick Seminary in St. Louis and later Superior General, wrote Fr. Verdier, the Superior General, expressing his concern about the lack of interest and commitment to the popular missions in the Western Province. As a result of this communication, Fr. Verdier visited the province in the fall of 1922. He convinced Fr. Finney, the provincial (from 1906-1926), that the province needed to get serious about this primary work of the community. The following year, Finney assigned two confreres to the mission band — Francis McCabe, C.M. and Stephen Paul Hueber, C.M. It was a modest beginning that met with difficulties when McCabe had to resign for reasons of health. In 1926, William Barr was appointed provincial. Like his predecessors, he turned his concern to the missions, but found that it was much

easier to offer verbal support, then to send non-existent personnel to the work. Over the course of the next 15 years, on average, the province assigned two individuals to the work of preaching the missions. In 1929, the gifted preacher, Frederick Coupal, C.M. joined the band. His style was dramatic, and his approach to missions was decidedly penitential. Despite his popularity, Coupal did not hold the trust of his superiors. In the end, the missions declined. By the end of the Second World War, the mission apostolate in the west was all but gone, yet again.

In the late 1940s, the Miraculous Medal Novena band replaced the mission band. The primary goal of the novena band was to conduct and preach at solemn novenas throughout the country. The members of the novena band recognized the need for parish missions and adapted their work, so that pastors could request a solemn novena, eight-day mission or three-day retreat. This good work came to an end when the Provincial, James Stakelum, C.M. (provincial from 1950-1962), dissolved the band in 1957 after a conflict with the novena band's director, Preston Murphy, C.M. In the same year, Stakelum invited missionaries from the east to preach in several parishes staffed by confreres of his own province.

### ***The Popular Missions since the Second Vatican Council***

The work of the missions in the east waned during the era of the Second Vatican Council. Two factors affected the work of the missions. With the advent of television in the late 1950s, attendance at missions declined. After the Council, younger priests trained in the theology of the Council, found the style of mission sermons employed by the older confreres unacceptable and as a result refused assignments to the mission band. Thus the mission apostolate in the Eastern Province waned. In 1986, the Eastern Province sent a confrere to Australia in order to study the new methods of Vincentian missions that were in practice there. The Midwest Province did likewise during the same year. In the late 1980s, the Eastern Province had developed two mission teams, one English-speaking and the second Spanish-speaking. The work continues through today.

In 1975, the Western Province was split into three provinces: Midwest, South and West. In contrast to its previous history, each region sought to reinvigorate the work of the missions by assigning several confreres to mission bands. The efforts of the South and the West provided an updated form of parish mission to the rural communities in their provinces. The Southern Province concentrated on bible-based missions, with instruction provided for senior citizens in the morning, business men during the noon hour and an evening service with preaching and Eucharist. In 1984, the South developed a specialized mission team that preached to the Spanish-speaking population of Southern Texas.

The Midwest Province saw a blossoming of the work of the missions. In 1974, two men were appointed to the work of the missions with their headquarters in St. Louis. They continued to reside in St. Louis until 1979 when the headquarters was transferred to the buildings of the recently closed St. Vincent's College, a former minor seminary. The team grew to include three priests and one Daughter of Charity in 1983. Later that year the province opened a formal mission house in Kansas City, Missouri. The house continues to function to this day housing seven missionaries, who preach approximately 60 eight-day missions throughout the United States each year.

### ***Conclusions***

The history of the mission apostolate in the United States has been one of ebb and flow. While the formal work of the popular missions has not always been a top priority in the work of the American Provinces, it certainly has been a part of their heart and history. Individual confreres generously gave of their time to give missions in times when there were insufficient numbers to do those things that the province committed itself to do. After 175 years, the popular missions have taken root in the United States and flourished.

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## The Mission of the Eastern Province in Panama \*

By John Prager, C.M.  
*Province of USA-East*

### Antecedents

The unique geography of the isthmus has marked the history and development of Panama for centuries. In colonial times mules transported people and goods the short fifty miles between the oceans. In the middle of the 19th Century, the first transcontinental railroad replaced the old Spanish road through the jungle. In 1914, the opening of the Panama Canal increased the importance of Panama as a center of trade and transportation.

The first Vincentians to reach the isthmus were Daughters of Charity and members of the Congregation of the Mission who passed through on the way from Emmitsburg to California in the 1850s. The Vincentian presence became more stable in 1875 when Daughters of Charity, exiled from Mexico, opened a school in Panama City. Confreres from the Province of the Pacific (which included all the members of the Congregation of the Mission in Central America and the Pacific coast of South America) visited the sisters from time to time. Finally, in 1880, the Congregation opened a house in Panama City for confreres preaching missions and acting as chaplains to the sisters.

In the last two decades of the 19th Century the French began building a sea level canal. The construction camps attracted workers and traders from all over. Thousands died because of poor conditions in the camps and especially from malaria and yellow fever. Itinerant diocesan priests, many of dubious character, had charge of the pastoral activity in the camps. The confreres preached missions in French and Spanish to the workers and acted as chaplains in the French hospital staffed by the Daughters of Charity.

In 1903, Panama separated itself from Colombia and became an independent nation. The United States quickly negotiated a treaty with the Frenchman Philippe Bunau-Barilla, who was more interested in selling the assets of the French canal company than promoting Panamanian sovereignty. When the Panamanian diplomatic delegation arrived in Washington, they found themselves obliged to accept an agreement granting the United States a zone five miles wide on either side of the proposed canal, effectively cutting the country in half. Faced with the political and economic realities of North American expansionism, the fledgling Panamanian government had little choice but to accept the treaty.

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\*Fuller treatments of the history of Panama Mission can be found in the following works: CONTE, Antonio. *100 Años de Labores en Centroamérica y Panamá*, Guatemala, 1960; SWAIN, Robert, "A History of the American Vincentian Fathers in Panama," in *Vincentian Heritage* 3 (1982), pp. 43-98; UDOVIC, Edward, "Go Out to all the Nations: The Foreign Missionary Apostolate: 1914-1987," in *The American Vincentians* (New York:1988), ed. John Rybolt, pp.347-369.

## **Beginnings of the North American Vincentian Mission**

Thousands of workers from North America and the English-speaking islands of the Caribbean flooded into Panama as the United States resumed the building of the canal. The French and Latin American confreres, who had been working in Panama since the days of the French canal project, continued to organize missions and other pastoral activities among the newly arrived workers. It soon became evident, however, that their lack of fluency in English made efforts at evangelization difficult.

In 1909, Fr. Allot passed through Philadelphia on his way home to France. He invited the Eastern Province to send confreres to preach missions in the work camps. In January 1910, the province sent Fr. Thomas McDonald to Panama to help with missions during the dry season. The province continued to send missionaries every summer for the next few years.

The Vincentian Bishop of Panama, Guillermo Rojas y Arrieta, began to consider the permanent pastoral needs of the Catholics in the new Canal Zone. The work camps were disappearing as the canal neared completion and stable communities of North Americans were being established. He needed priests who were fluent in English and who would understand the customs and cultures of the north. In 1913, he asked the Eastern Province to assume responsibility for the whole area. After some discussion and investigation, Thomas McDonald was sent in 1914 to lay the foundations for the new work.

At first McDonald lived with the confreres from the Province of the Pacific in Empire and Gorgona. Soon the other confreres withdrew and he transferred his residence to Balboa. McDonald used a system that had proved successful during his years as a missionary in Alabama. A central mission house was established near a rail center. The confreres would travel by rail to visit the communities of Catholics living in the Canal Zone. A large rectory and St. Mary's Church were built on the Pacific side of the Zone. In 1915, a confrere was sent to the Atlantic side for the English-speaking Catholics in Colón and Cristobal on the Atlantic coast.

## **Consolidation of the English Apostolate**

Life in the Canal Zone for white North Americans resembled that of communities in Florida. The Canal Company, a department of the United States Government, took pains to provide an attractive and comfortable lifestyle for its North American employees. Consequently the ministry developed by the confreres in the Canal Zone was similar to pastoral practices in the United States. The same parish societies and activities that the confreres had known in the north

were easily transferred to the American colony in Panama. It also made it easy for the province to send men to the mission since little acculturation was necessary and no language studies were required. It became very common to send confreres for two or three years of experience in the Canal Zone and then transfer them back to the United States.

North Americans were not the only English speaking Catholics in the Canal Zone and the adjacent areas. Thousands of African-Antillean workers had come to Panama during the construction of the canal. Some stayed on in the Canal Zone, while others moved into Panama City and Colón. Racial segregation was the institutional policy of the Canal Zone government. Separate and unequal living arrangements, pay scales and benefits existed. The segregationist attitude carried over into the Church. Despite the confreres' efforts to integrate the parishes, friction existed between the races. In 1921, the West Indian Catholics petitioned the bishop for their own, separate parish. He granted the request and asked the confreres to staff the new St. Vincent de Paul Parish for black Catholics. By 1925, the new church was built just across the street from the Canal Zone in Panama City.

On the Atlantic side of the isthmus, the confreres were given charge of St. Joseph's Church in Colón. In 1919, they built a rectory and the Miraculous Medal Church for Canal Zone residents. In 1926, work was begun on a new St. Joseph's Church for West Indian Catholics. More than just creating an infrastructure, the confreres made strong efforts to evangelize. Fr. Peter Burns, who walked the streets of Colón and visited the poor in their homes for 25 years, is still revered there as a saint more than half a century after his death.

In 1917, Bishop Rojas y Arrieta asked the confreres to accept a temporary commitment in Bocas del Toro, a remote, sparsely populated province on the Caribbean coast. A German diocesan priest, sometimes assisted by German Vincentians from Costa Rica, had attended the mission stations in Bocas del Toro for many years. When Panama entered the First World War on the side of the allies, German citizens were interned or expelled. Fr. Robert Schickling was sent as temporary pastor to the Catholics who lived in the banana plantations of the United Fruit Company and the small communities scattered along the Caribbean coast. This temporary commitment became permanent in 1920 and lasted until 1964. By the time the confreres withdrew, they had established residences on the island of Bocas del Toro and on the mainland at Almirante and Changuinola. They visited the banana plantations by rail and the coastal communities by small boat. Schools were opened and churches built. Outreach to the indigenous peoples in the mountains had also begun in the last few years that the confreres were in charge of this enormous area.

## **Beginnings of the Spanish Apostolate**

Shortly after the Second World War, Archbishop Beckmann, C.M., became concerned about evangelization in the western part of Panama in the Province of Chiriquí, along the border with Costa Rica. Puerto Armuelles, the center of the United Fruit Company's Pacific operations, had been without a pastor for several years. Protestant sects had filled the void and were actively proselytizing on the banana plantations. The archbishop asked the Eastern Province to send some confreres to the area. In 1948, Fr. John McNichol arrived to assume responsibility for Parroquia San Antonio in Puerto Armuelles.

The confreres set about evangelizing the new parish entrusted to their care. Frs. James Gleason and William Grass had a tremendous impact on the people of the parish. They organized parish societies and visited people in their homes. A high school was founded for the children and a savings and loan cooperative was begun for the workers on the plantations. A huge church was constructed.

In 1950 Archbishop Beckmann again asked the Eastern Province to send men to a parish in Chiriquí. Fr. Edward Gómez was sent to begin work in the enormous parish of Concepción. The parish extended for almost two thousand square miles and included a few small towns and over a hundred villages in an area with few roads.

Three years after accepting the parish in Concepción, the Eastern Province founded a high school in the city of David, Chiriquí. Parents had petitioned the archbishop for a Catholic high school. Once again, he turned to the North American confreres who quickly responded by sending Fr. John Cusack. He was soon joined by other confreres in the new Colegio San Vicente de Paul. The high school enjoyed a good academic reputation, but always had financial difficulties. In 1968 it was handed over to the diocese.

The expansion into Chiriquí by the North American Vincentians signaled changes for the mission in Panama. First, the number of confreres assigned to Panama doubled to almost 35. This increase of personnel was made possible by large post-war ordination classes and the loss of the Eastern Province's mission in China.

The second change for the mission in these years was the need for Spanish language studies and an understanding of Panamanian culture. Knowledge of Spanish had always been useful, but not necessary, for assignment to Panama. But, since the confreres had been working primarily with English-speaking people in the Canal Zone, and frequently stayed for only two or three years, long-term commitments to the mission were not the norm prior to World War II. The

new works in Chiriquí, which required studies in language and culture, meant that confreres now assigned to the mission had to think in terms of a longer commitment to the mission.

## **Medellín and Its Aftermath**

Shortly after the Second Vatican Council ended, the Latin American bishops met in Medellín, Colombia, to reflect on the implications of the Council for the continent. The bishops began by analyzing the social and ecclesial situation of Latin America. They produced a series of documents designed to respond to that reality. The bishops made a prophetic call for justice and clearly put the Church and its resources on the side of the poor. The Medellín Conference, followed by the meeting at Puebla in 1979, inspired a whole generation of Latin American theologians and pastoral agents. The Theology of Liberation attempted to create a new way of reflecting on the Christian message from the perspective of the poor. Small communities of committed Christians sprang up all over the continent. The socio-political implications of the Gospel provoked any number of practical initiatives.

In Panama, 1968 marked the beginning of 22 years of military rule. The disappearance of Fr. Héctor Gallego in 1971 and the murder of our confrere, Nicholas van Kleef, in 1989 were only two examples of the many of the abuses of human rights during these years. The Church was one of the few institutions capable of questioning the regime and its actions. The pastoral letters of the bishops, as well as the words and works of many pastoral agents, caused frequent tensions between the Church and the military government.

In 1979, after years of negotiations, Panama and the United States ratified the Torrijos-Carter Treaties. These treaties began a gradual return of the Canal Zone to Panama, the removal of all United States military bases and finally, in 1999, the return of the Panama Canal to Panamanian control.

The North American Vincentian Mission in Panama was deeply affected by the political and theological currents present in Latin America. Three areas became the particular concerns of the confreres:

### **1. Promotion of the laity**

Medellín and the subsequent meetings of the Latin American Bishops' Conference called for making the laity active protagonists of the new evangelization. In the Vincentian parishes of Chiriquí this was a particular need because of the extensive territory and the large number of towns and villages served by the confreres. Programs of lay formation were established at Centro Héctor Gallego for Concepción and Centro Oscar Romero for Puerto Armuelles.

Lay ministers prepared in the formation centers took charge of evangelization in each community. This provided more consistent pastoral care and catechesis. In the urban setting of Colón lay ministers participated in the diocesan formation programs.

Pastoral teams were begun in Chiriquí and Colón in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Lay representatives from geographical sectors or pastoral groups in the parishes met with the confreres each month to plan and evaluate the pastoral activities of the area.

## **2. Option for the poor**

The North American Mission had always maintained a concern for the poor. After Medellín, this concern took a different shape. The promotion of the laity, mentioned above, involved the poor more directly in the process of evangelization. A new consciousness of the causes of poverty created a greater sense of the need for involvement in socio-political problems. Efforts were made, especially through basic Christian communities, to help people organize themselves to respond to needs in their communities.

## **3. Indigenization of the mission**

The Mission in Panama started as a service to the English-speaking communities in and around the Canal Zone. For decades all the personnel came from the United States. As a result, the vision of the mission was oriented toward the north. The foundation of houses outside the Canal Zone slowly created a different consciousness. Service in the Republic helped initiate a greater sensitivity and interest in Panamanian concerns and culture. Recognizing the need for further inculturation of the mission became pronounced after Medellín.

In the late 1950s the first Panamanian students were sent to study in the United States. Eventually more than 20 students went to study and six returned as priests. The problems with language and culture, however, caused the mission to look for another way to prepare Panamanians interested in joining the Congregation. In 1977 a small residence for candidates was opened in Concepción. Two years later a house was purchased in Panama City for philosophy students. In 1984 the internal seminary opened in Boquerón, Chiriquí. For awhile students were sent to study theology in Mexico. In 1991 a house of studies was opened near the major seminary in Panama City. Despite the inevitable set backs and difficulties, more than 10 confreres have received all of their formation in Panamá. Half the confreres in the mission are now native Panamanians.

## **Looking Towards the Future**

The mission in Panama can look back on 85 years of service to the poor. But it also has to look to the future. The handing over of the canal to Panama and the exodus of North Americans has made ministry to the English-speaking less of a priority. Ways to strengthen recently established works among the poor in the prisons, the indigenous Ngobe people near Soloy, Chiriquí and the Darién area that borders Colombia are being explored or developed. Perhaps most importantly, the presence of more and more Panamanian confreres and fewer North Americans indicates the need for a new entity. A plan for the eventual establishment of a Panamanian Province of the Congregation is being prepared. Some obstacles still need to be addressed, especially the present economic dependence on the Eastern Province and stabilizing the vocation program. The final plan proposes to offer concrete steps to guide the mission as it begins the new millennium.

## **“Cast Your Nets Boldly” The Mission *Ad Gentes* in Kenya**

*By Barry Moriarty, C.M.  
Province of USA-Midwest*

On 22 March 22 1648, Vincent wrote to Fr. Charles Nacquart in Richelieu, assigning him to open the Mission in Madagascar. “The Company has cast its eyes on you,” he wrote “as the best offering it has, to do homage to our Sovereign Creator and to render this service, together with another good priest of the Company.”<sup>1</sup> This seven-page letter is loving, encouraging, energetic, and humorous. After discussing the geography of Madagascar, the example of St. Francis Xavier, and some of the problems and chief concerns of the new mission, Vincent warns Fr. Nacquart to be careful because “husbands bring their own wives to the Europeans to have children by them. But the unfailing grace of your vocation will protect you from all these dangers.”<sup>2</sup> Every line of the letter reveals Vincent’s excitement and surety about the importance of this mission. If it were at all possible, Vincent laments, he would go himself. Since he cannot, he mandates Nacquart: “Go then, Monsieur, and cast your nets boldly.”<sup>3</sup>

Vincent’s letter about the new mission in Madagascar has a special meaning to the confreres who today are continuing a mission *ad gentes* in Kenya. For in reading Vincent’s words, we share with him the excitement, the challenge and the joy of continuing this work of the Congregation in East Africa. For 20 years the confreres of the Midwest Province have worked in Kenya. In these next few pages, I would like to reflect on those years by describing the initial history of the mission, the present status, and the hopes and challenges of the future.

The Republic of Kenya is situated on the equator in eastern Africa and its capital is Nairobi. The city of Mombasa is in the southeast corner facing the Indian Ocean. Directly to the east, Kenya borders Somalia. To the north are Ethiopia and Sudan. On the west lies Uganda and our southern neighbor is Tanzania. The population of the country is 38 million. In 1900 there were 2700 Catholics in Kenya;<sup>4</sup> today there are approximately nine million.

Because of this phenomenal growth, the Catholic Church was in desperate need of missionary assistance and, in particular, the bishops wanted major seminary teachers and formators. In 1979 Bishop Charles Cavallera, the Bishop

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<sup>1</sup>Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences and Documents, Vol. 3. 1992 ed. Letter # 1020, pp. 278-279.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 281.

<sup>3</sup>Idem.

<sup>4</sup>David B. Barrett (ed.) World Christian Encyclopedia, Nairobi (Oxford University Press, 1982) 432.

of the newly created Diocese of Marsabit, contacted Fr. James Richardson pleading with him to send confreres to his new diocese to open a major seminary. The candidates were young men from the pastoral tribes of the Samburu, Rendille, Gabbra and Borana. The language of education in Kenya was English, so he was asking for English-speaking Vincentians who had some expertise in the formation of diocesan priests. Fr. Richardson turned to the Midwest Province of the United States to ask if the confreres from there would answer this call. Three confreres, including Fr. Richardson himself, were sent to Marsabit in 1980 to begin this new mission.

In 1980 Good Shepherd Major Seminary of Marsabit Diocese Kenya was established in the desert town of Maralal. It was not a place to cast nets, but the confreres began their work boldly and with a clear mission. They had come to establish a major seminary that would prepare young Catholic men from the pastoral tribes for the priesthood. Three confreres made up the permanent staff and others came regularly from the States for periodic stays to help with the teaching. The confreres, who were permanently assigned to the work in Maralal, also did pastoral ministry at the various mission stations around the area and assisted the bishop in developing his pastoral plan for Marsabit. In the initial years of the mission, there was no intention of accepting candidates for the Congregation. Although the confreres frequently received requests to join the Congregation, and the new ordinary, Bishop Ambrose Ravasi, continually encouraged the community to begin a Vincentian formation program, that bold thought was not harbored, but suddenly their work took a surprising twist.

In 1990 Good Shepherd Major Seminary of Marsabit Diocese Kenya was closed. There were a variety of reasons for this, but two were quite significant. First, the number of candidates applying and being accepted to Good Shepherd Major Seminary was dwindling. Second, a new major seminary in the neighboring diocese of Nyeri was recently opened and, in time, it would be offering a spiritual year, a two-year philosophy program and a four-year theology curriculum. Bishop Ravasi and his council felt that this program would serve his students and the diocese very well so he intended to send his students to Christ the King Major Seminary in Nyeri. However, he greatly hoped that the confreres would accompany his men to Nyeri and would join the faculty of this new seminary as teachers and spiritual directors. The provincial and his council in St. Louis acceded to Bishop Ravasi's request and a new chapter of the mission in Kenya was about to be written.

Closing Maralal and moving onto this new enterprise in Nyeri was not easy. However, at the time of its closing, 13 men had completed the major seminary program and became the first diocesan priests of Marsabit. The ten years of work had many successes but some sorrows. Fr. Ted Wiesner, one of the early full-time confreres missioned to Maralal, died suddenly of hepatitis in

1987. Fr. Patrick O'Brien, the first rector of Good Shepherd, returned to the States because of health problems. Yet, the mission, through God's grace, accomplished its hope: to prepare young men from the pastoral tribes in Marsabit Diocese to become priests. At the time of the seminary's closing, a presbyterate existed. So, in the midst of some sorrows, there was much joy. And now the confreres moved on to continue their work in Nyeri. But in this second decade of their work, something different was happening.

Because of the work the confreres were now doing at Christ the King Major Seminary in Nyeri, their outlook about the mission in Kenya began to change. One significant aspect of their apostolate now was that they were preparing men for the priesthood from 17 different dioceses in Kenya and from almost every tribe and region of the republic. They were also continuing to work in ongoing formation with the priests from Marsabit Diocese whom they had trained. And, while they were engaged in those ministries, the Bishop of Meru Diocese in central Kenya pleaded with the confreres to work with his men too through periodic programs of ongoing formation similar to what they were doing for the diocesan priests of Marsabit. It was at this time that the confreres began to seriously explore the possibility of opening a formation program in Kenya for eastern Africa.

For the first ten years of the mission, the confreres had no intention of founding a permanent mission in Kenya. However, during their second ten years their work expanded and their awareness deepened with regard to the suitability of the Congregation setting its roots into the soil of Kenya. A change took place. What started as a temporary commitment now began to look and feel differently. Between 1990 and 2000 new questions were being asked and new challenges began to arise. Conversations led to plans, plans led to proposals, proposals eventually led to the construction of DePaul Centre in Nairobi which today is the center for Vincentian formation in eastern Africa. Fr. Robert Maloney, C.M. dedicated the compound on 25 January 2000. At the close of the second decade of the work in Kenya the original, singly-focused mission of the Congregation in Kenya had evolved, grown and become multifaceted.

The apostolate of helping to form Kenyan candidates for the diocesan priesthood at Christ the King Major Seminary in the Archdiocese of Nyeri still continues. However, with the opening of DePaul Centre in Nairobi, the confreres' horizons have widened and their works have expanded. Four men are assigned to the Vincentian formation program. Presently there are 18 Vincentian candidates residing at DePaul Centre. They are doing their studies at either the Consolata Institute of Philosophy or they are enrolled in the theology program at Tangaza College. The confreres at DePaul Centre are also involved in teaching at those two institutions as well as at St. Thomas Aquinas, the national diocesan theologate of the Kenya Episcopal Conference.

Apostolates involved with the formation of diocesan priests are increasing. The ongoing formation programs for Meru and Marsabit Dioceses are continuing in conjunction with DePaul Centre. At the close of last year, a week of renewal was offered at DePaul Centre for the alumni of Christ the King Major Seminary. The seminary now has 25 priest alumni and 15 of these newly ordained men from all the various dioceses of Kenya arrived at DePaul Centre for a week's workshop. The confreres continue to accompany these young priests as they begin their ministry throughout Kenya. But the work of the Congregation in Kenya is also involved with the poor.

The confreres came to Kenya thinking they were alone in this Vincentian mission but, in time, everywhere they turned they discovered their brothers and sisters of the Vincentian Family accompanying the poor and they have invited the confreres to join in this mission. The Vincentian Family had been working for the poor for decades in eastern Africa and today the Congregation in Kenya is trying to collaborate with the different members of the Vincentian Family in this mission. The St. Vincent de Paul Society is well established in Kenya and Uganda and it has welcomed the confreres and Vincentian students to join them in their works for the poor. Weekly the seminarians serve the poor with members from a variety of different conferences in Nairobi. The confreres and the students have also helped to establish two new conferences in the archdiocese. "The Vincentian Response to the Issue of Poverty in Eastern Africa" was the topic of a workshop that DePaul Centre hosted in the spring of 2000 for the members of the Vincentian Family in Kenya. Over the past two years, different St. Vincent DePaul Conferences have come to DePaul Centre for prayer days that have helped them to reflect on their Vincentian vocation and to share about the challenges and consolations they have experienced in working with the poor. Vincentians from Kenya and Uganda gathered at DePaul Centre in December 2000 to attend a workshop for new members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. During their long break from school in June and July 2000, four Vincentian seminarians from DePaul Centre were sent to Uganda to work with the many conferences around Kampala.

Collaboration has not been exclusively involved with the lay members of the Vincentian Family, but it is experienced with two groups of our own confreres as well. The first group we work with is the confreres assigned to the international mission of the Congregation in Songea, southwestern Tanzania. Five confreres from the Indian Provinces are working in this remote area. Since the community staffs no parishes in Kenya, the presence of the confreres in Tanzania affords a unique pastoral opportunity for the Congregation's formation program in Kenya. During the long break, some of the Vincentian students are sent to Songea for an eight-week pastoral experience.

The second group of confreres that the mission collaborates with is the Vincentian formators representing the Conference of Visitors of Africa and Madagascar (COVIAM).

In July of 2000, a group of Vincentian formators working in the various provinces and regions of Africa and Madagascar met at DePaul Centre for a workshop on Vincentian formation. This was the first in a series of yearly workshops that will be hosted by DePaul Centre at the request of COVIAM. A great need that all the formation programs in this part of the world experience is men who are trained and experienced in Vincentian formation. These gatherings are reminders that one needs to collaborate not only with those people outside one's community, but very importantly the confreres need to be working very closely with their own.

Here in Kenya we also visit and work with some of the religious communities who are part of the Vincentian Family. The Cottolengo Communities, the Daughters of St. Anne and the Brothers of Mary Mother of Mercy are all affiliated with the Vincentian Family. All have works in Nairobi and all gather annually on the feast of St. Vincent with the community of DePaul Centre to celebrate their common spiritual heritage. The CMM Brothers have been particularly close to the community. At two of their houses, Vincentian candidates have lived with the brothers and worked in their apostolates with the poor while they discerned their calling to join the Congregation. In turn the confreres have given classes, workshops and retreats to the brothers to help them deepen their devotion to St. Vincent, the patron and model of their institute. Twenty-one years have passed since the confreres boldly began their mission in Kenya. Only the Lord knows what the future holds, but we can see a few things on the horizon.

We have been missing an essential part of our family here in eastern Africa. The Daughters of Charity are not with us. Indications are, however, that before too long they will also be serving the mission here in Kenya. At the close of last year, two Daughters came for a short look and see visit. They stayed with the community at DePaul Centre and talked to and visited some of the works the Vincent de Paul Society is sponsoring. This was a quiet, unofficial visit but very promising. Shortly after they departed, however, one of the Kenyan bishops wrote to DePaul Centre. He said he heard a rumor that the Daughters of Charity were visiting Kenya and that they were considering opening a mission here. He asked the confreres to please let them know that he had a convent prepared for them in West Pokot. Describe to them, he pleaded, how desperately poor the area is and how great is its need for the Daughters. He said to tell them that the poor were waiting for them. Before too long we feel certain that Daughters will be here in Kenya.

Over the past 20 years the road of this mission has taken many turns. It has been very challenging. The term *road* is an apt image for the Kenya mission. When DePaul Centre was opened, the confreres were looking for some kind of icon of St. Vincent that could hang in the entrance of the students' residence, Ravasi Hall. A local artist was asked to create an artwork of St. Vincent in Africa for the entry wall. Since the artist was unfamiliar with Vincent's life, the confreres gave him a short biography. Months past and then the man returned with an oval shaped wood carving about five feet high. He called it "Vincent on the Road of the Poor." At the top of the carving is an African hut. From the hut flows a curved road. The first figure walking down the road is a refugee carrying what little he owns on a stick that is slung over his shoulder. He represents the 20 million refugees on the African continent. At the next curve of the road is a prisoner under a tree. This chained man symbolizes all those who are spending their lives in prisons throughout Africa or are in other ways incarcerated. Finally, at the bottom of the road is a sick man sitting on a stool suffering from malaria or Aids or typhoid or malnutrition or some other incurable disease that runs rampant in Africa. Kneeling before the poor man and gently feeding him is Vincent. The artist said, I have Vincent kneeling because he says, "The poor are your masters." Then he said: "This is how I picture Vincent in Africa." And does it not capture what the Vincentian mission and challenge in Africa is about?

## Our Apostolate With Blacks

By Sylvester Perterka, C.M.  
USA Eastern Province

One might suspect that in speaking about our *Apostolate with Blacks* that we begin telling the story about various Vincentian Ministries throughout the United States that have a primary focus today in the Black community. To have such a start would be incomplete and only tell a small part of our Vincentian story. If we want the whole story we need to look at our history and our spirit. Our Vincentian Spirit is such that we cannot and should not attempt to speak of individuals or local houses as our Apostolate with Blacks. As Vincentians in the United States we have had two primary focuses, service to the poor ("to preach the gospel to the poor he has sent me...") and formation of the clergy. It is within these two broad parameters that we should speak of our Apostolate with Blacks. Within these two broad parameters all Vincentians have been called in some sense to our Apostolate with Blacks. It is also from this starting point that we must recognize our past and present failures.

James Weldon Johnson in his song, "*Lift Every Voice and Sing*" tells the story of the Black Experience here in the United States.<sup>1</sup> When talking about our Vincentian Apostolate with Blacks we need to listen with an open heart and mind to these powerful poetic words that tell a story:

**"Stoney the road we trod  
Bitter the chast'ning rod  
Felt in the day when hope  
Unborn had died.... "**

These words could be used not only to describe the Black experience in America, but also to describe the Black experience with the Catholic Church and with our Vincentian Community in particular.

If we are to speak of our Apostolate with Blacks we cannot and should not sugarcoat our historical lack of response. We cannot sugarcoat our historical lack of response to the spiritual needs of Blacks in the United States. We cannot sugarcoat our lack of moral response to issues that Blacks have had to overcome here in the United States. Neither can we gloss over our failure to respond to the unjust physical and human conditions that Blacks have faced throughout the centuries in the United States. Unfortunately today, because of the effects of racism, many of these conditions and situations still persist. Oh, there is no

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<sup>1</sup>"Lift Every Voice and Sing" is considered the African American National Anthem.

doubt when dealing with justice, when dealing with the response of the Church, when dealing with the response of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, African Americans can cry out: "Stoney the Road We Trod." Ouch!

It would be wonderful to speak of all the significant and sometimes heroic individual efforts confreres have made in working within the Black Community. Certainly, individual and collective efforts have been made, but those efforts would just be a small part of the total Vincentian story. In speaking about our "Apostolate with Blacks" we need first to use the "*Sankofa Principle*" which means that one must look back before going forward.<sup>2</sup> Secondly we, the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, need to have our toes stepped on.<sup>3</sup> In other words, we need to recognize our failures both past and present in our Apostolate with Blacks.

If we look back, and we must, we see that our earliest Apostolate with Blacks was as slave owners. In the 1820s we, the Congregation of the Mission, owned slaves in Missouri and later in Louisiana. In fact, Rev. Joseph Rosati, C.M., who would later become Bishop of St. Louis, was one of the Vincentians responsible for acquiring slaves to help run our seminary. Was this the beginning of our Apostolate with Blacks in the United States? Ouch! In the 1840s we began divesting ourselves of slaves, but we did not grant freedom to these faithful servants but instead sold them to "Catholic Slaveholders," as if that made it moral. We continued to own some slaves in Missouri until the beginning of the Civil War. While Blacks worked in our seminaries, parishes and houses doing menial tasks, there is little evidence of our seeking to evangelize Blacks at this time. To baptize Blacks would be to recognize Blacks as fully human and then we would have to grant freedom. So, at this time, despite all the benefits we reaped from the labor of our Black slaves we accepted the twisted racist thinking of the time and did nothing to evangelize Blacks. Ouch!

Shortly after the Civil War, at the Second Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1866, Archbishop Spalding of Baltimore spoke of the four million freed slaves and urged the Catholic Church to respond. He wrote: "It is a golden opportunity for reaping a harvest of souls, which neglected may not return."<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, there was little response by the Catholic Church. Greater efforts were made by

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<sup>2</sup>The Sankofa principle is named after an African American bird that can turn its head around to see where it has been in order to know where it must go. This principle asserts that we must look back at where we've been to have a clear idea of where we are going.

<sup>3</sup>To "have your toes stepped on" is an idiom used in the Black Church when preaching. It basically means that what is being preached is going to hit home, and the word will convict us.

<sup>4</sup> Davis, Cyprian, *The History of Black Catholics in the United States* (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1991) 116.

religious orders to reach out to the many new European immigrants while ignoring the freed Blacks. So even though we benefited directly from the work and efforts of those Blacks we enslaved, our Community, at this time made no evangelizing efforts at reaping this great harvest of souls. We had other priorities. Ouch!

Any objective study of our Apostolate with Blacks throughout our history in the United States, would find a stifling silence and a cowardly compliance with past racist policies of both Church and State. Yes, it could be argued that there were Vincentians who made heroic efforts, but as provinces and as a Community in the United States we sinned by our silence. Where was the moral outrage at the racism in the cities and towns where we, as Vincentians, lived and served? Where was the moral outcry for justice from our seminaries and universities during the Civil Rights Movement? Where was our positive Vincentian response to Martin Luther King's letter from the Birmingham jail calling on the Church to stand up and speak out against injustice? These unanswered questions are a part of our sad history in our Apostolate with Blacks.

While we speak of this Apostolate, I suggest that we need to question our moral conscience and ask ourselves if we have really been open to an Apostolate with Blacks. If through our long history of Vincentian formation there have been only three African Americans who have joined the ranks of Vincentians as priests or brothers with final vows,<sup>5</sup> does that not speak volumes about our Apostolate with Blacks? Ouch! While there are many factors that we can use to explain these paltry numbers, it still remains a sad commentary on our desire to work with Blacks. While we speak of our Apostolate with Blacks we must also look at our seminaries as institutions and beacons of hope when it comes to the development of theological perspectives. It can be argued very strongly that racism is the greatest sin America faces, yet our Vincentian seminaries and universities have remained coldly silent in regard to a theological response to racism as it ravaged our society.

In our Vincentian seminaries very little theological emphasis was placed on race. We certainly studied issues of justice; but how can we study justice and fail to adequately consider racism? We studied Liberation Theology to help us understand the gospel and justice; but our study was limited to Third World Liberation. It is always easier to deal with justice "out there" when it concerns others, rather than focusing here where it necessarily would involve us. This is not to argue against the great value of understanding Third World Liberation Theology as it forces us to focus on justice; however, we must question our fear of focusing on issues of race and our reluctance in confronting racism as highlighted by Black Liberation theologians. Simply told, we refused, with all

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<sup>5</sup>These three African American Vincentians have become members within the last 30 years.

our expertise in formation of clergy, to deal with racism as a theological issue. If we refused to acknowledge in our seminaries and universities the impact of racism as a critical theological issue and if we refused to seriously discuss Black Liberation Theology how can we seriously talk about our Apostolate with Blacks. Ouch!

All our works: parishes, hospitals, universities, novena and mission bands could be asked what we have done or failed to do historically in these works to alleviate racism and promote our Apostolate with Blacks. It is only when we see the connection in our heart and in our Vincentian spirit that we realize it is not just a confrere or two who has an Apostolate with Blacks, but each Vincentian is called by our charism to reach out and be connected in all our ministries to our Apostolate with Blacks. If we do such soul searching we will no doubt cry out:

**Stoney the road we trod  
Bitter the chast'ning rod**

There is, of course, the other side of our story in dealing with our Apostolate with Blacks. There have been individual confreres who throughout our history have spoken out against slavery and against racism. There have been houses in our provinces that have been blessed by the "faith experience" of Blacks in their ministry and in their community. There have been positive responses by houses and individual confreres to minister with Blacks. In the past, we have been asked to take on parishes that were exclusively Black,<sup>6</sup> and even though we have rarely sought to study and understand the Black culture our response has been genuine and generous. Since the Civil Rights Movement we have taken on a number of new Apostolates in the Black Community. As the demographics of our cities have changed, we have been faithful in staffing parishes that have changed from white to black in a few short years. In these areas our Vincentian Community has genuinely sought to be both responsive to needs and inclusive in our ministries. Our universities could certainly celebrate its "urban plunges" as efforts to sensitize a handful of students to both the plight and effects of urban poverty and racism. This experience also helps those few students to understand better the power of faith and prayer when working with the faith-filled Black community. Our universities could celebrate a new sensitivity to ethnic diversity and the gifts different cultures bring to an academic world.

As Vincentians we could celebrate our missions outside the United States as positive indicators of our desire to be in ministry with Blacks. As United States Vincentians we could celebrate the generous response of many confreres throughout the United States to volunteer to serve in various parts of Africa. As Vincentians from the United States we could celebrate the Midwest Province's

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<sup>6</sup>St. Mary's in Greensboro, North Carolina would be one example.

presence in its Seminary in Kenya. We could celebrate the appointment of an African American Vincentian as the Vocation Director and Head of the Office of African American Ministry in Los Angeles. We could celebrate the Eastern Province's establishment of a committee to study racism within our province. As Vincentians we could celebrate the establishment of a Center for Social Justice at St. John's University. We could also celebrate what every Vincentian house in a predominantly Black neighborhood is doing to promote social justice and racial healing. These are but a few of the many Vincentian efforts we are working on presently. Each house and each confrere should have a story to tell about our efforts in this regard. We certainly, without a doubt, celebrate many glowing examples of good work by individuals or houses in our Apostolate with Blacks.

But, this is one confrere who does not believe our "*Apostolate with Blacks*" is about a particular parish, program, or person. No! Our *Apostolate with Blacks* is about all of us Vincentians past, present and future. Our *Apostolate With Blacks* involves, as every work and ministry should, the charism of St. Vincent. Our *Apostolate With Blacks* involves each and every Vincentian priest and brother in the United States no matter what his ministry. So, hopefully, James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" describes not just the plight and hope of the African American, but it also describes the plight and hope and dreams of every confrere in regard to our *Apostolate With Blacks*. Listen!

***"Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us  
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun  
Let us march on `til victory is won"***

I believe that for us to march on in our "*Apostolate With Blacks*" we must acknowledge our past sins: the owning of slaves, the silent sins of racism throughout our history here in the United States. Only then can we link arm and arm with our Black brothers and sisters, only then can we honestly begin to speak about our *Apostolate with Blacks*. Only then can we hope to "*March on `til victory is won*. Amen, Amen, Amen.

# **The Apostolate with Polish Immigrants in the USA**

## **New England Province**

by Edward P. Gicewicz, C.M.  
*Province of New England*

### **Early Beginnings**

The installation of the Vincentian priest, Fr. George Glogowski, C.M., as pastor of St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr Church, New Haven, Connecticut, took place on New Year's Day, 1 January 1904.

As superior of the group, Fr. Glogowski also organized: St. Michael's Parish, Derby, Connecticut, in 1905; in 1906 he accepted St. Mary's Parish in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania; the Swedesburg, Pennsylvania, Parish of the Sacred Heart; and in 1908, St. Hedwig's Parish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

It was at this time, following the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904, and after the revolution of 1905, that Czar Nicholas II relented and made concessions, at first in the field of education, that gave the Poles a certain amount of religious and cultural freedom. He opened the part of Poland, occupied by Russia, for missionaries to administer to the faithful.

The thought, therefore, of growth in the new land of the United States was abandoned and the Visitor recalled the confreres.

The honeymoon with the Russian government, however, lasted only two years and when the czarist government reneged on its promises, the former iron rule set in. Again, the Russian-occupied borders were sealed off and the missionaries expelled. One by one, they returned to the United States and a previous idea of a school of higher learning for Polish boys rose to the forefront. The Vincentians realized that the proper follow-up of mission work in a parish was a good boarding high school, as also a source for future vocations to the Vincentian Community, and they attempted to do something about it.

### **St. John Kanty Prep – Builder of Boys, Maker of Men**

The notion of a minor seminary was there from the beginning and when Fr. Ignasiak of Erie, Pennsylvania, donated a large tract of land for a school, it was built in 1912 and flourished until its closing in 1980.

In the 68 years of St. John Kanty Preparatory School's existence (1912-1980), of the 1214 graduates who pursued further professional education, there were 164 priests (38 of them Vincentians), 17 monsignors, 3 religious brothers, 34 dentists, 51 medical doctors, 4 osteopath physicians, 23 attorneys, 3 judges, 5 PhD's, and 6 in professional military service.

### **How an Ethnic Parish Was Established**

There were about 60 Polish families in New Haven at the turn of the century and they were not concentrated in any one section but scattered all over the city. Already in 1896, however, they formed a St. Stanislaus Association and registered it legally. They attended the German church on George Street but craved for a Polish church and a Polish priest.

Around the year 1900, the St. Stanislaus Association sent a delegation to the Hartford Bishop with the request for a Polish parish and Bishop Michael Tierney selected Fr. Stanislaus Musial to organize it. The new pastor made a census of the people and collected money to pay for renting of a place of worship.

### **Vincentian Polish Publications**

Fr. Stanislaus Konieczny, C.M., was the editor of *The Family Treasure (Skarb Rodziny)*, but his best known works were: *The Catechism*, *Lives of Saints*, *Tales of a Missionary*, *Story of a Soul*, and the most popular, *The Polish Prayer Book*.

### **Fr. Stanislaus Wlodarczyk, C.M., an Example of an Outstanding Parochial Vicar**

Many parochial vicars assisted in the New Haven parish of St. Stanislaus throughout the years, but Fr. Wlodarczyk, C.M., should be singled out, since he served St. Stan's quietly for 21 years. He never held a high office in the Community, always calling himself the top soldier, however. He avoided all positions of authority, never built any buildings, amortized any debts, but who could count the souls he converted or strengthened through his well-prepared homilies and confessional talks, the innumerable seeds of virtue he planted within the hearts of his students as he taught catechism, the seed he planted which blossomed into the many good citizens and parishioners.

He was not unknown to the diocesan clergy whom he entertained, cajoled, and indirectly instructed at all social events whether after a confirmation or a Forty Hours Devotion.

## **Where the Polish Immigrants Came From**

Between 1851 and 1890 more than 500,000 Polish people fled the religious and political persecutions in Poland. Approximately the same number fled during martial law in the 1980s. Most of the Poles came from the Prussian part of Poland at first, but by the 1890s the Russian Poles began their exodus.

## **How the C.M.s Received the Brooklyn St. Stanislaus Parish**

On the occasion of a mission, Fr. Anthony Mazurkiewicz, C.M., had approached the Vincentian Fathers at St. John's in Brooklyn about contacts to establish a Mission House in the Brooklyn Diocese. Fr. John J. O'Byrne, C.M., a confidant of Bishop Molloy, suggested the Whitestone area and also suggested that the bishop turn the parish over to the Vincentians especially since, at the request of the bishop, they remained administering the parish after the mission and the sudden departure of the pastor. During a canonical visitation by Fr. Casper Slominski, C.M., Visitor of the Polish Vincentian Fathers, Bishop Molloy offered St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish to the Vincentians. At first, Fr. Slominski said he needed the priests elsewhere but when the bishop, in addition, allowed for a Vincentian Mission House to be established in his diocese in Whitestone, the Visitor agreed.

The takeover was to be effective 9 December 1922 and Fr. Mazurkiewicz was appointed as temporary administrator.

## **Vincentian Religious Practices**

Certain religious customs were started, like the daily hearing of confessions from 7 to 8 a.m., as well as from 4 to 5:30 p.m. and 7 to 8 p.m. on Saturdays. Missions were preached with regularity every couple of years, with occasional weeks of retreats for the young people. Gorzkie Zale (Psalms for Lenten Devotions) and the Miraculous Medal Novena were introduced in all the Vincentian parishes.

Forty Hours Devotions were held annually in all the parishes as examples for the diocesan parishes.

## **Paderewski Visits St. Stanislaus Parish in Brooklyn**

On Tuesday, 1 March 1916, at 7 p.m., the Paderewskis visited St. Stan's Parish and the master pianist gave one of his famous concerts. These

were the years of World War I when Poland was involved in another bitter struggle for its independence and Paderewski († 29 June 1941) was seeking support from all groups. Point thirteen of President Wilson's famous Fourteen Points was a direct result of his efforts. This demanded the guarantee of free access to the sea for Poland. General Haller's Army, composed of 28,000 Polish immigrant volunteers, was formed, at least 80 of whom came from the two Polish parishes of Upper Greenpoint and Williamsburg.

### **Encomium to Fr. Studzinski**

After Brooklyn's diocesan pastor left town suddenly, there was a certain resentment from the diocesan clergy that the parish went to order priests, until Fr. Studzinski's time when ties were renewed. He had been able to unite two seemingly disparate characteristics: a gentle disposition, but a stoic firmness in executing his responsibilities. The Polish paper *CZAS* wrote that Fr. Studzinski was a great friend of everything good and beautiful in the life of an individual and in the Greenpoint community. It made a special note of his support of everything that furthered Polish culture. It concluded by saying, "The loss of this quiet, unassuming servant of God is sincerely mourned by all his parishioners and neighbors." The extent of his influence was best measured by the immense number of Masses requested for him and the fond memories of him up until the present time.

### **Future Pope, Cardinal Wojtyla, visits Upper Greenpoint Parish**

Cardinal Karol Wojtyla, Archbishop of Krakow, Poland, was St. Stan's most prominent and distinguished visitor on 29 September 1969, celebrating and preaching at an evening Mass. He was able to spend barely six hours there, including a short rest in the rectory.

### **Domestic Mission Expansion**

Four domestic mission groups, Derby from 1905 to 1922, Erie from 1912 to 1980, Whitestone from 1922 to 1990, and Utica from 1963 to 1996 conducted missions in almost every Polish parish in northeastern United States.

### **A Summary Statement**

Not the least, the Derby, Connecticut, St. Michael Parish (1905), the Ansonia, Connecticut, St. Joseph Parish (1925), and the latest-accepted Brooklyn Parish of Sts. Cyril and Methodius (1996), are mutually happy

working together. For nearly a hundred years, 1904 to 2001, the Vincentians have woven education, pastoral care, and domestic missions into an American fabric.

# **The Hispanic Apostolate in the Eastern Province of the United States**

*By Stephen Grozio, C.M.  
Province of USA-East*

## **Introduction**

Before describing the Hispanic apostolate it is necessary to explain what is meant by the word “Hispanic.” It is a term used in the United States to refer to the people (and their descendants) who have come there from Spanish-speaking places. It attempts to group together Spanish-speaking people from Central America, South America, the Caribbean and Spain; and, while no one is comfortable with that effort, the word does express a complex reality. In this light one understands that the Church’s apostolate to Spanish-speaking people in the United States embraces people from every Spanish-speaking nation. It includes the newly immigrated as well as those whose ancestors came to this country several generations ago. And it can even include descendants of ancestors who lived in the Southwestern states before this nation was formed.

In each of the works described below, the confreres must be sensitive to the language and cultures of all the people they serve. In a given household, you may have traditional grandparents who speak only Spanish and their “Americanized” grandchildren who only speak English. Similarly, in many parishes one must minister to both English- and Spanish-speaking communities. For example, at St. John the Baptist Parish in Brooklyn, New York important days for the African-American Catholic community are highlighted at the English Masses, while the fiestas of *Nuestra Señora de Divina Providencia* (Puerto Rican) in November, *Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (Mexican) in December, and *Nuestra Señora de Altagracia* (Dominican) in January are celebrated at the Spanish Mass.

## **Some Historical Perspectives**

The province’s Panama Mission, begun in 1914, prepared the way for the its Hispanic apostolates in the United States a half a century later. Initially sent to serve the English-speaking communities in the Panama Canal Zone, the Vincentians soon began to minister to the Panamanian people and extended their mission into the interior of the country. From the perspective of this article, the Panama Mission can be seen as a training ground which not only immersed the confreres in the language and culture of the people, but also helped the province develop the “missionary mindset” which would be important in later ministries to Hispanic immigrant populations in the USA.

The first established Hispanic apostolates in the Eastern Province began to develop with the settlement of Puerto Ricans in St. John the Baptist Parish in Brooklyn, New York in the 1950s and with the establishment of a community of Cuban refugees in St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Miami, Florida in the 1960s. Throughout most of the 1970s these two parishes were the province's only Hispanic apostolates in the USA. This was soon to change. The economic opportunities available in the United States coupled with the civil unrest and poverty in several Latin American countries prompted a vast northward migration of Spanish-speaking peoples that continues to change the face of the Catholic Church in the United States even today.

The Eastern Province's response to this changing reality was the establishment of the Vincentian Migrant Mission in the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Michigan in 1979. It was the first work of the province designed specifically for Spanish-speaking Catholics living in the United States. Frs. Arthur Kolinsky and Thomas Hynes, both experienced Panamanian Missionaries, together with Sr. Rosemary Tierney, SSJ (who had been a missionary in Peru) formed a core team that ministered to migrant farmworkers (mainly of Mexican descent) and Hispanic residents throughout the diocese. The ministry was collaborative (involving clergy, religious and laity), highly mobile and done with a mission mindset. High priority was given to developing lay ministry and the formation of lay leaders in each of the communities and farmworker camps served. A unique aspect of this work was that each winter one or two of the confreres migrated with the farmworkers and continued to minister to them in their villages in Texas, Florida and Mexico. This work continued until 1989 when it was ended due to shortages in personnel.

## **Present Ministries**

In 2001 the Eastern Province currently has six apostolates to Spanish-speaking communities in the United States.

### *Brooklyn, New York*

**St. John the Baptist Parish**, founded in 1868, has served Catholics from many ethnic backgrounds as waves of immigrants passed through this Brooklyn neighborhood. When Puerto Rican families began moving into the parish, the confreres initiated a Spanish Mass in the small parish chapel. Today, about 80% of the parish's members are Hispanic and St. John's is truly bilingual. Masses are celebrated in English and Spanish three Sundays a month. On the fourth Sunday a bilingual Liturgy brings the Sunday community together to celebrate the unity within the diversity of the parish. It is not an easy task since people from 30 different countries regularly assist at the parish liturgy.

At St. John the Baptist a lot of effort goes into planning and implementation. The bilingual pastoral plan contains the goals and objectives of each parish ministry. Of particular importance are the Black Ministry and Hispanic Ministry Committees which guide the parish in its response to the reality and cultures of its people. Two other major parish thrusts are lay formation and social action. The St. Vincent de Paul Pastoral Institute for the Laity has a three-year curriculum in both English and Spanish, which develops strong lay leaders. The parish is a beehive of social and educational programs, addressing the causes of poverty and enabling people to make a better life for themselves and their families.

### *Popular Missions in Spanish*

The **Bilingual Mission Team** was formed in the Fall of 1985 and continues to give month-long missions in parishes throughout the United States and Latin America. Though the general format for the missions remains the same, Frs. Arthur Kolinsky and John Kennedy adapt that structure to the reality of each parish where a mission is given. Wherever they go, Art and John collaborate with the pastor, staff and laity to reach out to Hispanics, especially the poor who feel marginalized or who do not participate in the parish, inviting and welcoming them to the parish family. Generally, each mission is for one month: three weeks are dedicated to visitation and gathering the people to pray in their neighborhoods and the final week is highlighted by a more traditional week of mission preaching in the church. In every case laity from the parish are recruited and trained in mission visitation techniques. When the Bilingual Mission Team moves on, the lay missionaries continue to work in their parish as the core of the Spanish outreach there.

### *Southampton, New York*

**Hispanic Evangelization Ministry** in Southampton, New York evangelizes immigrants from all parts of Latin America who are drawn to this area on the eastern end of Long Island because of job opportunities in construction, lawn care, restaurants, house cleaning and farm work. Several realities are important to understand about the people. For the most part they are recent immigrants. Spanish is their predominant language (for both adults and children) and they have a strong attachment to the customs of their homelands. The summer season demands that the people work long hours; consequently, participation in Church activities drops off during this time, only to pick up again in the fall.

The confreres moved into this ministry in 1997, responding to a need in the diocese which was not able to provide Spanish-speaking priests to the

growing Hispanic immigrant population there. Frs. Gregory Semeniuk and Orlando Cardona (from the Colombian Province) live together in a community house but are constantly on the road visiting the people and traveling to the six towns where Mass in Spanish is celebrated in the local parishes. For the most part the local pastors and parishes are welcoming, but language and cultural differences still keep the English- and Spanish-speaking communities apart. In addition to their sacramental duties Greg and Orlando have put emphasis on lay formation and youth ministry.

### *North Carolina*

Fr. Maurice Roche was the first Eastern Province confrere assigned to Hispanic ministry in North Carolina. He ministered to the Mexican immigrant population in the Diocese of Raleigh from 1990 until the time of his death. Our present work of **Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Charlotte** began in 1995 when Fr. Vincent Finnerty was appointed the Diocesan Director of Hispanic Ministry. The diocese, which covers the entire western half of North Carolina, has seen a dramatic increase in its Hispanic population in the past decade. Figures from the U.S. Census tell the story of the challenge that Vince faced. In 1990 only 76,726 people of Hispanic origin were counted in the entire state. By the year 2000 that number had grown to 378,963, an increase of over 300,000 Hispanics, mainly immigrants, drawn to the area by jobs in the construction and service industries.

The work accomplished there has been phenomenal. Since 1995 the number of Hispanic Catholic communities has grown from 17 to 47; and the number of Sunday Masses in Spanish has increased from 17 to 56 (including our own Vincentian parish in the city of Greensboro). Local pastors now celebrate many of the Spanish Masses, sometimes with lay leaders translating the homily. The diocese now has a coordinator of Hispanic ministry in each of its ten vicariates.

Evangelization Retreats, planned and organized by trained lay leaders, have been a very successful, effective and powerful tool for reaching and evangelizing the Hispanic people in the Diocese of Charlotte. Over 8,000 youth and adults have made these retreats. They are adapted from the traditional *Cursillo* to meet the specific needs of the population. Participants returning from the retreats are asked to give a testimony about their experience at Sunday Mass the following weekend. These testimonies serve to encourage others to make the retreat.

In 1998, Fr. Joseph Elzi, joined Vince in Charlotte and the work continued. In recent years a diocesan-wide, Catholic radio program was initiated,

a diocesan Hispanic youth minister was hired and work has begun on a Hispanic center for evangelization in the city of Charlotte. Four young men now live with the confreres in an ongoing vocation discernment program. They work in outside jobs as they study English and take university courses to prepare themselves for the seminary. Two former discerners have entered the seminary, one for the diocese and one, Jesús Guadarrama, for the Vincentians.

### *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

The **Hispanic Evangelization Team** in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania is a collaborative ministry with the Daughters of Charity. Having three full-time members, Sr. Christine Mura, DC, Fr. Joseph Cummins and Fr. Stephen Grozio, and one part-time member, Fr. Charles Shanley (who is also assistant novice director), the Team ministers to the Hispanic Catholic community in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Bringing years of experience to this work, the Team is presently responsible for Hispanic ministry in three parishes located in some of the poorest neighborhoods of the city and for Hispanic evangelization in the entire Philadelphia North Vicariate through outreach, ministry to women and ministry to young adults.

Some of the highlights of our work are the women's support group and the workshops sponsored by our "Women Are Worthy/*Mujeres Merecen*" program to promote the well-being of Hispanic women who often experience powerlessness in a society in which they bear the heavy burden of working, raising children and keeping the household together. This summer, evangelization outreach programs will be organized in five parishes. Laity will be trained in evangelization techniques and will go out to their Hispanic brothers and sisters in their neighborhoods. The Team also collaborates with the *Instituto Católico*, teaching courses in the lay formation program and co-sponsoring workshops on lay leadership.

### *The Alabama Mission*

The newest apostolate to Hispanics in the province is located in Alabama. In 1995 when the confreres started to implement the apostolic plan for the restructured **Alabama Mission**, they soon became aware of the presence of a growing Mexican population. Drawn by the prospect of work in factories and in the logging industry, the recent arrivals were predominantly Spanish-speaking and many were undocumented. Two confreres, Frs. Martin McGeough and Francis Sacks, began studying the language and were able to read the Mass in Spanish for the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe. This first celebration on 12 December 1997 was well-received, and the people asked them to continue celebrating Mass in Spanish. Slowly but surely the numbers grew; and now Mass

in Spanish is offered each Sunday in the towns of Roanoke, Ashland and Alexander City, and once a month in Opelika. In 1999 Fr. Thomas Hynes was assigned to the Alabama Mission specifically for Hispanic ministry. Tom continues to do outreach to the Hispanic community and has begun *comunidades de base* in the local trailer camps.

### **What does the future hold?**

Census reports and immigration trends project a continued increase in the number of Hispanic Catholics in the United States and today's seminarians are responding to the challenge by learning Spanish and immersing themselves in ministerial experiences with Hispanic people. We are also seeing an increase of interest in the community on the part of Latino men. As the face of the poor continues to change, so too will the face of the province as God's beloved poor are called to ministry in the footsteps of Vincent de Paul.

## **The Works for Vocations in the Province of the West – USA**

*by Jeffery Harvey, C.M.  
Province of the West – USA*

During the Jubilee Year 2000, the Province of the West-USA celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an autonomous province. During the past 25 years, vocation work has been varied. From 1975-1987, the Western Province operated a High School Seminary program; vocation work was focused on eighth-grade recruitment for this seminary program. The vocation director would visit Catholic grade schools and parish religious education programs, focusing on seventh- and eighth-grade adolescents. The visits and talks would culminate in what were called “Vocation Weekends” which took place at the high school seminary where the young boys had the opportunity to spend two days and two nights at the seminary. The “Vocation Weekend” included talks by seminarians of the high school, prayer and other interactive activities such as basketball, volleyball and soccer. The primary concern for the vocation director during these years was the attainment of new students for the high school seminary program. It must also be noted that during these years, the majority of the young students were of European descent.

### **Shifts**

Today vocation work no longer consists of the recruitment of adolescent boys for a high school seminary program. Many of the inquirers today are between the ages of 23 and 45 years, and come from many different ethnic groups, in particular the Asian community. The majority of these men are enrolled in some type of college, university or graduate program; some have completed graduate school and many of them are professionals, working full- or part-time. Many of the young men are engaged in some type of ministry at their local parishes as lectors, eucharistic ministers, cantors, youth/young adult coordinators, and catechists.

The approach to vocation work is not seen only as “recruitment,” but as a discernment process, where the primary concern has shifted from enlistment and recruitment to helping an individual discover the vocation to which God is calling him. This includes assisting the inquirers to look at the many options for community and ministry in the Church and – based on the individual’s own self-understanding, as well as his experience of God, the Church and the world – to choose the option to which he feels called by God.

All of the vocation efforts of the Western Province–USA take place in a culture that seems to sanctify individualism: do your own thing, be your own person. They take place in a consumer society where more is better and money is seen as the determining factor for happiness, and pleasure and power are frequently promoted as the goals to be achieved at almost any cost.

## Cultural Diversity

The western United States is culturally diverse. As I have visited many parishes over the past two years as the vocation director, I have encountered people from many different ethnic groups: African, African American, Mexican, Central and South American, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Filipino and many others. Within many of the (arch) dioceses in California there are numerous events that celebrate the cultural diversity of the local church. It has been my role to participate in these cultural celebrations; namely, Sinbang Gabi and the St. Luis Ruiz Feast Day (Filipino), the Vietnamese Martyrs celebration, the Chinese New Year Celebration, Our Lady of Guadalupe Feast Day/Posadas (Mexican, Central and South American), St. John the Baptist Feast Day (Puerto Rican), Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration/St. Martin de Porres Day (African American), and many others. Through my participation in these celebrations, I not only have the opportunity to share literature about the Congregation of the Mission, but the different groups come to know that the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers of the Province of the West are interested in them; that we as a province are interested in their lives, their concerns, joys and sorrows.

In participating in these cultural events, I strive to demonstrate that the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers will do more than just open their doors to people of different races and cultures. Our commitment is not to have token groups but to truly become multicultural groups.

### Parish Vocation Mission

One of the many activities I wish to highlight is the **Parish Vocation Mission**. I use this title because the activities are parish based, focusing on vocations to the Congregation and conducted in a mission style. These Missions are conducted every year in Vincentian and diocesan parishes throughout the Province of the West. The vocation director and Vincentian seminarians conduct these missions in English and Spanish for five days, including a weekend. The mission includes meeting with the youth/young adults of the parish, preaching at all the weekend Masses, activities within the parish school and religious education program. The Parish Vocation Mission stimulates and challenges the entire parish to pray and encourage vocations.

During the mission, names are gathered from all those who are interested in learning more about the Vincentian Fathers and Brothers. After the mission, contact is made by phone and e-mail. I then invite the inquirers to an “Andrew Dinner” or “Come and See” weekend. This enables the inquirers to come together for prayer, discernment and support. In this setting the inquirers have the opportunity to listen to the vocation stories of the confreres and “what it means to be a Vincentian priest or brother.” Members of the local community have the opportunity to share with the inquirers what life in that particular local community is like, the schedule of the day and the many ways the community spends time together. The inquirers are invited to ask any questions that may have surfaced for them.

## Community Involvement

How does one get the community involved in vocation efforts? This was one of my many questions as I began in vocation ministry. Within the first few months as vocation director, I visited many of our local houses and gathered the members together and I invited them to reflect on a few personal questions:

- 1) How did God communicate to me the invitation to become Vincentian?
- 2) Why have I remained a Vincentian priest/brother?
- 3) To what extent is our “charism” obvious in our mission sites to people with whom we work, especially youth?
- 4) Is the community in which I live open to others who may wish to “come and see”?

I then invited each confrere to share his reflections with the larger community. I encouraged each local community to devise its own activities and to include them in their House Plans. After each gathering with the confreres, it was obvious that in order for us to attract vocations we need to share with others who we are, that we are alive, well and a viable choice for other young men. Vocation work is a Community effort and includes all community members in each house through their prayers, witness, and service.

It is obvious that no audio-visual materials, pamphlets, programs or other “tools” can substitute for personal contact. Vocation efforts in the Province of the West–USA are challenging and also exciting. Let us all continue to pray and work for vocations by sharing our charism and inviting other young men to join us in our efforts for and with the poor. It is our goal to pray, to invite, and to encourage others to share our way of life.

## **Apostolate Among Native Americans**

By Louis Franz, C.M.  
*Province of USA-South*

The Southern Province's apostolate among the Native Americans began when the members of the province adopted a mission statement in 1983 stating that every new apostolate must be clearly missionary and among the poor. Subsequently, it was decided that the poor would most likely be found among the significant minorities within the province; namely, Hispanics, blacks and Native Americans.

The first new apostolate established by the province following these guidelines was the Arkansas mission begun in January 1985. The beginnings of this new mission can be found described in volume 2-3, 1985, of *Vincentiana*.

As the end of the province's nine-year commitment to the Arkansas mission was approaching, efforts were begun to plan for another new apostolate, this one among Native Americans within the area of the province.

This initiative was begun by Fr. Louis Franz, C.M. toward the end of August 1990, when he contacted Msgr. Paul Lenz, director of the Catholic Office of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., to ask his advice as to where the confreres might best serve.

Msgr. Lenz suggested the confreres serve in the diocese of Gallup, New Mexico, because it was a missionary diocese, the poorest in the USA, in need of priests, and had just gotten a new ordinary, Bishop Donald E. Pelotte, SSS, himself a Native American, who we would find most welcoming.

Fr. Franz met with Bishop Pelotte in mid-August and the bishop enthusiastically welcomed the prospect of help from the Vincentians. He said he had just recently become ordinary and was in the process of working on a strategic plan for the diocese and establishing goals in consultation with the people of the diocese. The bishop felt the Vincentians would be most helpful in implementing these goals in the areas assigned to them.

It was made clear to the bishop that the province was just in the early stages of planning this new apostolate but in due time would be back in contact with him.

In February, 1992, Fr. George Weber, C.M. was elected Visitor and, after settling in, asked Fr. Miles Heinen, C.M., to visit the diocese of Gallup in December 1992, to gather information about the diocese's needs and how the

province might be able to help meet them. Fr. Miles provided a history of the diocese, a copy of the six goals that had been decided on and some knowledge about the culture and needs of the Native Americans.

On the basis of this information Fr. Weber formally announced on 15 March 1993 that the province would begin an apostolate among the Native Americans in the Diocese of Gallup, New Mexico, and that Frs. Lou Franz and Mark Ford would be the first members of the mission team.

Fr. Weber and his council set the goals of the new apostolate as 1) truly missionary, 2) work with the abandoned poor and, 3) specifically, with Native Americans, the goals the province had adopted for new apostolates in its 1993 mission statement.

With these goals in mind Fr. Franz again visited Bishop Pelotte on 6 May 1993 to ask where the bishop felt the confreres could best serve in his diocese. Fr. Franz indicated that the Southern Province had now made a decision about beginning the new apostolate by early 1994 and he had been appointed director of the apostolate to work out its practical details.

In order to do this more effectively, Fr. Franz moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, on 30 May 1993, just after leaving Arkansas. One of the first things he did was extend invitations to the Daughters of the West Central and Western Provinces to be full members of the mission team. The Western Province responded by sending Sr. Cecilia Van Zandt, a councillor, to serve as their contact person with the Vincentians.

A working group, made up of Sr. Cecilia and Frs. Weber, Franz and Ford, met at the provincial offices in Dallas during the summer to draw up a detailed proposal as to what would be involved in this new mission. This proposal, dated 25 August 1993, was submitted to Sr. Joyce Weller, Visitatrix of the Western Province, and to Fr. Weber and his council for review and approval.

Both the Daughters and confreres found the new goals of the Diocese of Gallup completely consistent with our own Vincentian goals; namely, evangelization, especially of the Native Americans, cultural sensitivity, social justice and outreach to the poor, involvement of the laity in leadership positions, adult spiritual formation, and adult religious education.

As it turned out the Daughters were not in a position to join the mission team initially. However, Bishop Pelotte and Fr. Weber signed an agreement, dated 22 December 1993, for five years. The bishop's hope was that the Vincentians and Daughters would accept the northern half of the Navajo deanery centered around the parishes in Page, Tuba City, Keams Canyon and Kayenta as an area in which they would work together in the spirit of Vincent and Louise to

bring the good news of Jesus Christ to the poor, especially the more abandoned, with special concern for the Navajos and Hopis in the area.

The response to this challenge began on 1 March 1994, when Fr. Franz became co-pastor at Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Page. Fr. Ford came to join him after his assignment at Holy Trinity in Dallas ended. Together they served as pastors of the parishes in Page and Tuba City, Arizona.

In late January 1995, Fr. Italo Zedde, C.M., as Assistant to the Superior General, came for a visitation of the Southern Province and spent three days with the confreres in Page and Tuba City, meeting the native people and seeing first hand the sad conditions in which they lived on the reservation. He left convinced that this was truly a Vincentian mission deserving of support.

Shortly thereafter Bishop Pelotte wrote Fr. Maloney expressing his gratitude for the confreres and asking the Superior General if he might support the mission by asking the Visitors and Visitatrixes of the USA to send personnel so that the mission might have the interprovincial support of the Double Family. Fr. Maloney responded positively to this request.

As a result, the number of confreres and Daughters has steadily increased.

On 1 November 1995, Fr. J. Godden Menard, C.M. of the Southern Province was assigned to the mission. In July 1996, Fr. Clayton Kilburn, C.M. of the Western Province was assigned as pastor of St. Joseph's Parish in Keams Canyon, Arizona, to minister to the Hopis. With his assignment the mission became an interprovincial project. On 1 August 1996, five Daughters of Charity were assigned to the mission, three to work at St. Jude's Parish in Tuba City and two to work in Gallup as Diocesan Directors of Charity for the diocese. Later on two more Daughters were assigned to minister at St. Joseph's Parish in Keams Canyon. On 15 September 1997, Father Jerome Herff, C.M., former Visitor of the Western Province, was assigned as pastor of the parish in Kayenta, Arizona. Finally, a Daughter living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was assigned to a newly established house of the Daughters of Charity in Gallup.

At this writing then, there are five Vincentians and seven Daughters assigned to the Native American mission making it an interprovincial mission of the confreres and a joint effort of the Double Family.

In the Jubilee Year 2000, the Daughters and Vincentians met to form themselves into an evangelization team focused primarily on the northern half of the Navajo deanery as Bishop Pelotte had originally planned. The goals of the team are to share information about what is going on in their various assignments, pray and study together about evangelization and ways to

accomplish it in the area, and plan for smooth transitions when members are reassigned.

The challenges of the team are many: primarily, learning about the cultures of the Navajos and Hopis. They are deeply religious people and open to learning about the Catholic Faith which complements their own natural beliefs. They welcome the outreach programs of the Daughters and confreres in addressing their many needs, especially dealing with alcoholism and its many attendant ills. They are also open to accepting leadership positions if invited and properly prepared.

Another challenge the mission team has accepted is implementing a diocesan program entitled "Strengthening of Ministries" The purpose of this program is to invite the laity to become fully involved in their local faith communities as their right and responsibility by baptism and confirmation. In the short-term this will become increasingly important because of a shortage of priests and in the long-term it is crucially important for the full vitality of each faith community. The Vincentians and Daughters have committed themselves to implementing this important diocesan program in all the parishes entrusted to them, a commitment the Bishop greatly appreciates.

Further, a unique opportunity for the confreres and Daughters assigned to Keams Canyon has presented itself; namely, trying to bring healing to long-held hurts of the Hopis toward the Catholic Church. Especially during the Jubilee Year the bishop has worked very closely with the Double Family to bring about true healing and reconciliation.

Finally, the Daughters and confreres have found the Bishop as welcoming as Msgr. Lenz said he would be, especially by inviting them to become involved at the diocesan as well as the local levels. The Daughters have the opportunity as Directors of Catholic Charities to give leadership to outreach efforts across the entire diocese. They are also active on a number of diocesan committees. The confreres have been invited to serve as consultors, deans, members of the presbyterial council and coordinators of such diocesan programs as "disciples in mission," an evangelization effort recently approved by the Bishop.

In summary, the apostolate among the Native Americans in the diocese of Gallup, New Mexico, is off to a good start. It is a uniquely Vincentian challenge and the Daughters and confreres are responding to it enthusiastically. It is interesting to recall that such a mission was the goal of the confreres when they first came to the USA in 1818. Then, they found the Jesuits already meeting this need, so they turned to others. Now we, their successors, are meeting the need the Franciscans, who served here for over a hundred years, are having to withdraw from for lack of personnel.

## Vincentian Ministry at the United Nations

By Richard Devine, C.M.  
*Province of USA-East*

### The C.M. at the UN

In his address to the General Assembly in July of 1998, the Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney, indicated that the Congregation had begun the process of seeking "recognition at the United Nations as an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) so that we might participate on the many committees at the UN that treat questions that interest us as Vincentians." As examples of such issues, Fr. Maloney cited "poverty, famine, war and peace, health care, education and human rights."

On 21 May 1998, the Congregation submitted its formal application for recognition by the UN as an NGO associated with the UN's Department of Public Information (DPI). The application described for the UN basic information about the Congregation — its international structure, its objectives, its means of communication, its international officers and an overview of its planned activities for 1998. From the UN's point of view, NGOs associated with DPI are useful precisely as instruments for disseminating information about the UN and its programs and activities as broadly as possible.

On 2 December, the Committee on NGOs of the UN Department of Public Information met and approved the Congregation's application for association with the DPI. This approval entitled the Congregation to designate two individuals as official representatives of the Congregation to the DPI. Two confreres with full-time ministries in the Eastern Province were selected. Fr. Richard Devine is a professor of theology at St. John's University in New York and Fr. Joseph Foley is a member of the Hispanic Ministry team in St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. As official representatives of the Congregation, these two confreres have full access to all open meetings of UN bodies, which they can attend as observers. In addition, they are invited to attend the regular Thursday NGO briefings organized by DPI, which feature UN officials, delegates and other experts. They also receive monthly mailings announcing UN conferences, seminars, briefings and other events.

From the standpoint of the Congregation, official recognition of NGO status offers the possibility of our involving ourselves with issues which resonate with our mission. Thus we can involve ourselves with issues such as economic and social development, peace-making and human rights. As Fr. Maloney pointed out in the official application, "our main interest is to work with the DPI

in raising consciousness about the poor in various nations and in helping to implement programs that will work toward eradicating poverty.” The Congregation's representatives will now have to learn how best to draw upon the resources of the UN to achieve this goal.

### **How is this then a ministry?**

Many confreres — and others — may find it difficult to view this work at the United Nations as a ministry. To some the United Nations is simply a bloated bureaucracy. To others, it may be an impotent colossus that is clearly a tool for the major powers to work their will on the rest of the world.

How, then, is this a ministry? Begin with some of the objectives of the most prominent UN programs: to eradicate poverty, to end discrimination based on race, religion, age or gender, to promote social and economic development for all peoples, to cherish and protect the environment, to end the arms race and find peaceful means to settle conflicts between peoples — certainly these resonate well with Vincent’s charisma!

Some criticize the "glacial" pace that often characterizes the implementation of the UN's goals. Clearly the size of this international body and the many-layered levels of responsibility and authority make it unwieldy at times. How often its best intentions are frustrated by the self-concerns of member states! Frequently, too, its programs never see full implementation due to the failure of the UN to secure adequate financial support from the very members who pledged to fund its many projects. But if the UN were to be dissolved, what other voice could speak to all the nations of the world about wiping out poverty, about the freedom and equality of all peoples, about the obligation to promote the social development of all men, women and children, about peace for all people?

The UN is a very imperfect human institution. For the most part, however, its values and its goals are clearly in harmony with those of the Gospel. Surely they echo the concerns of St. Vincent de Paul for the poorest, the most abandoned, the most rejected. If the Vincentian presence in its midst can in any way promote its work on behalf of the poor, surely there is a ministry for Vincentians there!

### **How the United Nations works**

Well, imperfect or not, how does the UN work? Unless they have been exposed to UN activities or events, most people have no idea! While the UN is a huge bureaucracy, its basic procedures are quite simple. Since a large number of issues are presented to this world body every year, most substantive questions

submitted to the General Assembly are routinely referred to one of its six committees. Individuals from the various national delegations serve on these committees.

Thus questions regarding disarmament, the proliferation of weapons and weapons systems and international security in general are placed before the First Committee. Understandably, international conventions regarding weapons and verification procedures fall to the responsibility of this Committee as well.

The Second Committee focuses on economic and financial issues. In addition, environmental questions are part of this Committee's responsibility. It goes without saying, then, that it always has its "plate overflowing." Issues such as the eradication of poverty, the promotion of development and technical and economic cooperation between nations — especially developing countries — are among its most sensitive concerns. Economic issues such as corrupt financial practices, illegal fund transfers and the complex question of world debt defy any easy or quick solution on the part of this Committee.

The Third Committee wrestles with questions involving humanitarian, cultural and social issues. This is the Committee which must respond to charges of human rights violations. Current examples include countries such as Rwanda, Myanmar, Kosovo, Iraq and seven or eight other nations. Related questions such as torture, inhuman punishment, racism, the right to self-determination, refugees and displaced persons also claim its attention. Of special concern to it are the rights of women and children, especially the girl child. Finally the Committee tackles such international questions such as drugs, crime and corruption, and discrimination through its ability to organize cooperation among nations.

The Fourth Committee considers political questions (not dealt with by the First Committee) and the issue of decolonization. It is the responsibility of this Committee to oversee the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. This explains its concern for a number of newly independent countries in the Caribbean and South Pacific areas. It was through the Fourth Committee that the UN intervened — among others — in the recent dispute regarding the independence of the people of East Timor from Indonesia. Issues such as international law and the establishment of an International Criminal Court are other questions which lie within the responsibility of this Committee.

The Fifth Committee concerns itself entirely with the administrative and budgetary matters which are internal to the UN itself. Thus it prepares the world body's annual budget and supervises the assessed contributions requested from member states. The Fifth Committee is also responsible for the financial support

of UN peace-keeping activities in areas such as Kosovo, East Timor and Sierra Leone.

Finally, the Sixth Committee concerns itself with international legal matters. Thus it shares responsibility with the Fourth Committee on issues of international law and the International Criminal Court. It has jurisdiction as well for the UN's program against international terrorism, for the UN's relations with its host country (USA), and for questions concerning the UN charter.

### **A Developing Ministry**

For the present, then, the Congregation's representatives have been busy putting into place a system for sharing an understanding of the UN and its works with confreres around the world. As a first step, they have set up an NGO information site on the Internet. In connection with the website of the Congregation, members of the various provinces can inform themselves of what is happening within this world organization and how its projects are faring around the world at [www.famvin.org/cmngo](http://www.famvin.org/cmngo).

The future is open to many possibilities. For example, as opportunities develop for influencing the direction being taken by UN bodies through involvement in their decision-making process, this will surely be attempted. The possibility of actively advocating on behalf of the poor is also a long-term goal. It may not happen today or tomorrow but there is no doubt that it can be done. Others are doing it. Why should not we? For example, a Dominican NGO received word from their mission in Pakistan that Christian villages had been destroyed, apparently by fundamentalist extremists. Because of the firsthand information from their confreres in the field, the representatives of the Dominican NGO knew how many churches were destroyed, how many homes laid waste, how many schools reduced to rubble. A vigorous protest to the Pakistani delegation at the UN — who had not yet even heard of the event — resulted in profuse apologies. Meanwhile a high-level representative of the Pakistani leadership arrived at the villages to organize official assistance in rebuilding the devastated villages. Another example — while the UN was reviewing its programs on behalf of children, Caritas International, another NGO, distributed to the assembled diplomats its position paper setting forth its Christian understanding of family and children.

As the Congregation's representatives at the UN gradually familiarize themselves with the way "business is done," they invite confreres around the world to contact them at the CMNGO website with suggestions for their work at the world body, indicating how the UN might be helpful to confreres in their work and beneficial for the people they serve. They can also be directly contacted via the Internet at [deviner@stjohns.edu](mailto:deviner@stjohns.edu) and [jpfc@netscape.net](mailto:jpfc@netscape.net)