

VINGENTIANA

**39th year-N°2:
March/April 1995**



FEATURE:

**The C.M. in the former
Communist Countries of
Europe**

Holy See

Nominations

The Holy Father has named members of the Pontifical Council COR UNUM:

- **Sister Fara González**, Visitatrix of the Daughters of Charity of Cuba
- **César Nunes Viana**, *President of the General Council of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul.*

(Osservatore Romano, 15 March 1995)

Decree

On 6 April, in the presence of the Holy Father, the following Decree was promulgated:

"A miracle, attributed to the intercession of Blessed JOHN GABRIEL PERBOYRE, priest of the Congregation of the Mission of Saint Vincent de Paul, born on 6 January 1802 at Puech (France), and killed out of hatred for the Faith on 11 September 1840 at Wu Ehang (China)."

(Osservatore Romano, 7 April 1995, p. 1)

April 20, 1995

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

On April 6, while I was visiting the Province of Chile, I received news that Pope John Paul II had just promulgated a decree approving a miracle attributed to the intercession of John Gabriel Perboyre. This was the final step on the road toward his formally being declared a saint. With the entire Vincentian family, I rejoice in this event. I thank God especially for those missionaries, men and women, who have lived and died in China. In these days I have been thinking especially of our brothers and sisters who continue to witness to the gospels heroically there, in the face of suffering. I have delayed in writing to all of you since I hoped to be able to give you the date for the canonization. The date has not yet been announced, however, by the Holy See, though I suspect that the ceremony will take place toward the end of this year.

I will write to you again when I have further information about the canonization. For the moment, however, I think it important that we begin to make remote preparations for this very significant event. Today we discussed the matter in our General Council and came to the following conclusions.

1. We would like to use this occasion, in all the provinces, to call young people to the Vincentian missionary vocation of evangelization and formation. I would ask each of the provinces to organize concrete pastoral projects, with this as their objective (for example, through popular missions, through our parishes, our schools and universities, in our foreign missions).

2. I would ask that in every province there be an appropriate liturgical celebration, involving all the members of the various branches of the Vincentian family, around the time of the canonization.

3. I ask too that, in all of the provinces, we make this an occasion to focus once more on our mission in China: recalling the sacrifices of those who labored there in the past, expressing gratitude for the fidelity of those who continue to live there and witness to Christ, and looking forward to a future work of evangelization in China.

4. We will be naming a small committee to organize the canonization. The committee will be responsible for: a) matters pertaining to the canonization itself (the liturgy, the music, etc.), b) other celebrations that might take place in Rome during those days (usually a small program is organized with other liturgical celebrations and

conferences on the person being canonized), c) press releases, d) providing information about possibilities of lodging for the many people who will be coming to Rome for the canonization.

5. I am asking the editors of our major Vincentian periodicals to prepare a special issue on John Gabriel Perboyre (I recognize, in doing so, that the time is short). It would be very helpful if this issue could be ready by the end of October or the beginning of November.

The saints make holiness real for us. They give it flesh. I want to encourage all of the members of our Vincentian family to meditate often on the life of this wonderful man during the months ahead. When we recall Perboyre, most of us think spontaneously of his heroic death. But he was also heroic in his life, both in France where he labored in formation work for 12 years and in China where he experienced abandonment and suffering.

Today I pray with all of you that John Gabriel Perboyre, our brother, will spur us on to live our missionary vocation more generously. I hope too that he will be an inspiration to young people to follow Christ's call to "Go! Go into the whole world and preach the good news to every creature" (Mk 16:15).

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

April 21, 1995

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

As you will recall, the Meeting of Visitors is scheduled for June 3 - 15, 1996 in Salamanca, Spain. At this time, I am writing to consult you about topics and the methodology for that meeting. We have a great deal of flexibility as we plan our gathering in Salamanca since it is not a General Assembly, whose structure is governed by the Constitutions and Statutes, as well as a detailed Directory. Rather, this is a meeting freely convoked by the Superior General as a service to the Visitors, and through them, to all the confreres of the Congregation; there are no formal norms regulating it.

As in the past, two of the goals of this meeting are:

1. to assist you, as Visitors, in animating the life and ministry of the Congregation in your province;
2. to foster mutual communication between the Visitors and the General Curia, and among the Visitors themselves.

I would also like, at the meeting in Salamanca, to add a third goal; namely, to begin preparation for the General Assembly of 1998 by seeking your advice in regard to the theme for the Assembly, the Directory of the Assembly, and the members of the Preparatory Commission.

Over the past year, reviewing the concerns expressed in reports and letters from the Visitors, we have noted, here in the General Curia, a number of themes that emerge repeatedly:

- a. Vocations in the Congregation of the Mission
- b. On-going formation of young confreres
- c. Congregation of the Mission parishes
- d. Popular missions
- e. The work of the formation of the clergy
- f. Our collaboration with the Vincentian laity
- g. Community life
- h. Collaboration, as a help to the small provinces

Our particular interest right now, however, is to know what themes, among those above or others, are of special interest to *you*.

Could you please send me, therefore, so that your response arrives here in Rome before June 10, 1995, the following:

1. any points about which you, as Visitor, are concerned and which you would suggest should be studied during our meeting;
2. any suggestions you might have in regard to the methodology to be used during the meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you. In the meantime, I assure you of my prayers during this Easter time. May you experience much peace and joy in the Risen Lord.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

**Appointments and confirmations
by the Superior General**

DATE	NAME	OFFICE	PROVINCE
13/03/95	André SIMON	Director DC (2nd term)	Lille
12/04/95	Jan ERMERS	Provincial 1/3	Ethiopia

OUR CAUSES FOR BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION (II)

Giuseppe Guerra CM

II SERVANTS OF GOD

We call those whose diocesan process (now called diocesan enquiry) has begun *Servants of God*.

1. Fr Marcantonio Durando CM, born in Mondovì in 1801, died in Turin in 1880, co-founder of the Sisters of Jesus of Nazareth. (The cause of the foundress of these Sisters, Luisa Borgiotti, 1803-1877, is also in the hands of our Postulator). The additional work asked for in 1979 at the meeting of cardinals (the final step on the path to "heroicity of virtues") has been completed, and we expect to have soon the decision on this work, for an early *Decree on the heroicity of virtues*. This would also allow us to get an early decision on one of the two miracles which we have submitted to the Congregation for the Saints. We will choose the best documented, of which the process was held in Turin in 1936: the cure of very serious eclampsia of childbirth, of Maria Stella INGIANNI in VOTTERO, (born in Genoa 8/6/1903, she is still alive), which took place in Turin in 1932. And we will be close to beatification.

2. Sister Giuseppina Nicòli DC, born in Casatisma (Pavia) in 1863, died in Cagliari 31/12/1924.

The summary of evidence, and the documentation, (one of the two parts of the *Positio super virtutibus*) has been printed, and we are awaiting the other part (the *Informatio* on the virtues).

We also have two miracles attributed to her, the processes for which were held in Milan (1936) and Turin (1942).

3. Fr Giovanbattista Manzella CM, born in Soncino (Cremona) in 1855, died in Sassari in 1937.

We have been given reason to hope for the removal of the Holy Office's blocking of the *Nihil obstat*.

4. The Venerable Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853), principal founder of the Society of St Vincent de Paul.

The Pope published the decree on the heroicity of virtues on 6 July 1993 (from then on the Servant of God is called Venerable).

We immediately began work on documenting a miracle from 1923. (The cure of malignant diphtheria in the child Fernando Benedicto OTTONI, in Nova Friburgo on 3 February 1926).

Ferdinando Luigi Benedetto OTTONI was born on 20/7/1924 and was only 18 months old when, on 2/2/1926 he was stricken with malignant diphtheria in Nova Friburgo (Rio di Janeiro) and was on the point of death. Dr Alberto Braune explained to his mother that the situation was extremely serious; at that time, without antibiotics, mortality was very high --62% of cases -- and cure was rare, or very gradual.

The child's father, Pio Benedetto Ottoni, a lawyer, was in Niterói (180 km from Nova Friburgo) for an urgent case of a poor client. His wife told him by telegram that their son was getting worse, and to come home. Before leaving he went to his father, the boy's grandfather, Cristiani Ottoni, General Secretary of the St Vincent de Paul Society conference in Rio di Janeiro, who had great devotion to Ozanam. He went down on his knees and prayed to the Servant of God, whose cause had only just opened in Paris, and then turned to his son, reassuring him: "Rest easy, son; Fernando will be alright". When he got home he found his wife thrilled with the unexpected cure of the child, who had begun to drink milk without difficulty; it was the precise moment at which Cristiani Ottoni had spoken after praying.

Dr Alberto Braune, who had come to the house that morning to sign the death certificate, and his son Silvio, also a doctor, were amazed, but had to accept the cure.

The Ordinary Process in Paris (1925-1928) dealt with the miracle. Cf *Positio super introductione causae* (1953), n. XVI of the *Summarium*. An opinion of a Roman doctor, the pediatrician Dr Filippo Vercellio, who was questioned about the case, concludes in two reports (November 1933 and December 1935) that the child's cure was *instantaneous, total and permanent, outside the laws of pathology, and should therefore be entirely attributed to a miraculous, supernatural and divine intervention*.

In spite of the correspondence passing between Paris, Rio di Janeiro and the General Postulator in Rome (at that time a Sulpician Father), the Process already recommended in Rio di Janeiro (Cf Allocution to the General Assembly of the Society) was not begun. As the years passed the point was forgotten, until it was brought to the attention again of a recent meeting of the Theological Consultors (18/12/1992, *Relatio*, p. 36), meeting to decide on the heroicity of virtues.

The Process opened in Rio in May 1994. The following were able to give evidence: the miraculously cured person himself, now 70 years old and in excellent health; his two sisters, Leonzia who was then 11, and Maria who was about 10; and the younger brothers who remembered the story as handed down in the family.

His mother, who died in 1951 at 67, left a letter ("to be read after my death") of which her husband, who died in 1969 at 79 years of age, had copies made, giving to each of his children the parts addressed to them.

The printed *Positio*, which brings together the synthesis of the Process and the Report of the Medical Experts, has been handed in to the Medical Commission, and we expect that, once it has been accepted, Ozanam can be quickly beatified, even by the end of 1995.

5. Sister Rosalie Rendu DC (1786-1856), who helped and directed Ozanam in his charitable work.

The *Positio super virtutibus* was ready by the end of 1992. We are at the stage of waiting for the Meeting of Theologians. Meanwhile it has received an important unanimous positive decision from the Historical Consultants on 31 May 1994.

6. Fr Salvatore Micalizzi CM, born in Naples in 1856, and died there in 1937.

We have finished the printing of the Summary of Evidence and the Documentation (one of the two parts of the *Positio super virtutibus*), while awaiting the drawing up of the other part (the *Informatio* on the virtues).

7. Our Martyrs of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939).

In Teruel

- 1) Fr Fortunato Velasco Tobar
- 2) Fr Leoncio Pérez Nebreda
- 3) Fr Luis Aguirre Bilbao

In Sigüenza-Guadalajara

- 4) Fr Ireneo Rodríguez-González
- 5) Fr Gregorio Ceremeno Barcelo
- 6) Fr Vicente Vilumbrales Fuente
- 7) Br Pascual Narciso Pascual

in Oviedo

- 8) Fr Pelayo-José Granado Prieto
- 9) Fr Amado García Sánchez
- 10) Fr Ricardo Atanes Castro
- 11) Fr Andrés-Avelino Gutiérrez Moral
- 12) Fr Tomás Pallarés Ibañez
- 13) Fr Vicente Pastor Vicente
- 14) Br Salustiano González Crespo

in Urgel

15) Fr Antonio Carmaniu Y Mercader

We have finished the printing of the Summary of Evidence and the Documentation (one of the two parts of the *Positio super martyrio*); the *Informatio* will soon be ready.

The Daughters of Charity have also asked for, and obtained, the start of the diocesan process for their martyrs (Sr Josefa Martinez Pérez and 12 companions) and the first session took place in Valencia on 25 November 1994.

8. John Francis Gnidovec CM (1873-1939), bishop of Skopje in ex-Yugoslavia.

We have completed the printing of the Summary of Evidence and the Documentation (one of the two parts of the *Positio super virtutibus*); the *Informatio* will soon be completed.

9. Antonio Ferreira Viçoso CM (1844-1875), bishop of Mariana, Brazil.

Work is in progress in drafting the *Positio super virtutibus*.

10. Mother Justa Dominguez De Vidaurreta, born in Tafalla, Navarra, Spain on 2 November 1875, died in Madrid on 18 December 1958.

The Process, begun in Madrid on 12 November 1991, closed in 1992, and was brought to Rome in January 1993. We are preparing the *Positio*. Meanwhile, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, the process opened on a miraculous cure of Sr Prudencia Zuazo DC, which took place in 1972.

Processes which should be begun

1. Mgr Emilio Francisco Lisson Chaves CM (1872-1961), archbishop of Lima 1918-1931; his remains were solemnly brought back from Valencia, Spain, where he died, to the cathedral in Lima on 24 July 1991; cf *Vincentiana* 33 (1991) pp 261-265.

The archbishop of Lima, the designated *Attore*, has asked us to undertake the postulation; but the cause seems likely to be a demanding one, given the many historical aspects to be investigated and clarified.

2. Sr Anna Cantalupo DC, born in Naples 3 September 1888, died in Catania 17 March 1983.

The "reputation for holiness" is current, especially in Catania where the Neapolitan Daughter of Charity always lived, becoming the reference point for all her charitable work. The Diocesan Enquiry should begin soon.

3. Fr William Slattery CM, born in Baltimore 7 May 1895, died in Philadelphia 10 August 1982. He was superior general of the CM from 1947 to 1968.

Unfortunately Fr Joseph Dirvin, who was working on a biography, has died. We hope that this work will be resumed and that the "reputation for holiness", a pre-condition for beginning a canonization cause, will grow and involve the supporters of the cause.

4. Sr Clemencia (Francisca Benicia) Oliveira DC, born in Redençao on 23 August 1896, died in Baturité on 2 July 1966.

The Daughters of Charity of the Province of Fortaleza (Brazil) have been appointed *Attrici* and will very soon be asking the cardinal archbishop to open the Diocesan Enquiry.

AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE WALLS

Msgr. Franc RODE, C.M.

In 1927 Sigmund Freud published a work called *The Future of an Illusion*. The illusion in question was obviously religion, this "*collective neurosis of humanity*". His predictions mirrored the solid optimism of a non-believer: religious illusion would disappear as soon as humanity freed itself from its anxieties and its frustrations and found out the truth about itself.

In 1995 the French historian François Furet published a book with the evocative title *The Past of an Illusion*, where he outlines the reasons for the collapse of communist regimes in central and eastern Europe and for the death of marxist ideology among intellectuals in the Western world.

Enormous differences exist between the thought of Freud and that of Marx. However one fundamental point unites them: both considered religion as an illusion, a false refuge, sought, according to Freud, to cover up inhibitions of a sexual kind, and, according to Marx, to console oneself for social injustices. For one as for the other, religion is an alienation which will disappear as soon as social injustices are abolished and the true causes of human frustration are revealed.

Let us leave Freudianism aside. It is enough to say that it did not have the success that some foretold. As far as Marxism is concerned, it suffered a sharp defeat in every domain: political, economic, social and above all spiritual. In this regard we can indeed talk of the "*past of an illusion*".

Communism first experienced a political defeat. It had presented itself as a liberation movement for the socially oppressed and exploited classes. In fact it created one of the most merciless dictatorships known to history, establishing a totalitarian and tyrannical regime everywhere.

Social failure. Communism promised to eliminate social divisions between opposed classes, abolishing social inequalities. In fact it produced a "*new class*", a red "*nomenclature*", with all the privileges of the dominant classes, identified with the State and dominating society.

Bitter defeat in the economic field. It had given itself the goal of destroying the roots of exploitation of man by man, by suppressing private property and nationalizing the means of production, assuming an unheard-of jump forward. In fact, it resulted in a productivity that remained always frail and deficient, in weak money and in endemic lack of the most elementary of consumer goods.

But the failure of communism shows itself most in the spiritual domain. Marxism-Leninism presented itself as a new *Weltanschauung* which was to change the world, as well as history and mankind. To arrive at this it was to liberate mankind from its alienations, and in first place from God who keeps mankind in slavery. It thus saw itself in radical antagonism with Christianity. A huge struggle developed between communism and Christianity, a struggle that was not mainly political or economic, but spiritual and religious. It produced an incalculable number of martyrs and ended with the spiritual defeat of communism. This failed in

its most ambitious project: the creation of a new world, of a new society, of a new mankind under the sign of an atheistic humanism. Not only did it not create a new world and a new mankind; it succeeded only in producing a world where human dignity was mocked, a world against man, an inhuman world.

What remains after communism? What spiritual landscape has it left behind? And what pastoral action is required after its collapse?

1. In the post-communist societies there are first of all faithful believers who, in spite of discrimination and humiliations of all kinds, remained attached to the Church and supported it with their offerings. They were for the most part simple people who did not let themselves be intimidated by the hostility of public opinion and who showed their faith publicly, sending their children to catechism. How many are they? Without any doubt the majority in Poland and in Slovakia, a little less in Croatia, at most half in Hungary and Slovenia. The Catholics of Ukraine and of Rumania, forced in practice to live in secret, especially those of the oriental rite, constitute a special case.

With the exception of the Catholics in Poland, all were forced to live their faith as a "private affair", within the family or in little groupings of fervent Christians. They were rarely involved in the pastoral work of the Church as lay collaborators, and hence the whole weight of mission rested on the shoulders of the clergy.

The results of this semi-secret existence last even today. In fact it is difficult for the clergy to find collaborators willing to involve themselves in the activities of the Church, to organize them into apostolic movements, or to promote youth organizations. Besides, the ravages produced by marxist schooling are still evident, even among believers: a lack of sense of responsibility and of a sense of work, a tendency to duplicity, the use of "influence" on many levels. Nevertheless, it is by depending on such groups of the faithful that the Church has to build the future.

2. As opposed to faithful believers, one finds the group of the ex-communists. The number of members of the communist party varied between 10 and 15%. In the higher ranks it included men and women who had done higher studies and occupied practically all the positions of responsibility in the State and in society. Side by side with them the ordinary communist had more modest responsibilities in the factory, in the city hall or on the collective farm, with a quite precise task: to be the eye and ear of the party among one's work companions. Because the party had to be aware of everything.

How did they live the falling apart of communism? Without major crisis. Because for a long time they had no longer believed in the salvific character of marxist ideology. Besides, they quickly realized that the "velvet revolutions" did not really threaten their material interests or their position in political and social life. Forgetting with astonishing ease what they were still proclaiming yesterday about private property as the source of all evils, they have quietly bought up, often for derisory figures, what they themselves nationalized 45 years before. Thus, the last

communists are becoming the first capitalists of the societies emerging from communism.

They have operated the same right about turn in the political domain, changing the name of the communist party to socialist party, social-democratic or other titles. In this way or else belonging to parties of newer formation they can influence the politics of the State in the direction of their projects for the future.

Their attitude towards the Church has not changed substantially. If, yesterday, they fought it in the name of marxist-leninist ideology, today they struggle against its influence in the name of freedom of opinion, of expression and of ethical choices which the Church threatens. Moreover they engage in violent campaigns to limit its presence in the schools, the media, cultural institutions etc. It is the politics of the Western parties of the left and of the extreme left, but with more money.

3. The third group of the population is made up of the great mass of those who swing or hesitate between the true God and Mammon. Practising occasionally, they participate in the life of the Church for the big feasts: Christmas, Easter, national pilgrimages, first masses, etc. Their private life is often marked by materialism and hedonism. At a distance of six years after the fall of communism, we could put it thus: it is in this section of the population that the long totalitarian period has produced its most serious damage: loss of christian values, trivialization of sexuality and of love, with as a result a weakening of family links, superficial living, absolutizing the "*hic et nunc*" with a frenetic search for money and pleasure. The Czech theologian Joseph Zverina has spoken, in this respect, of a "Chernobyl of souls".

To this one must add, after the fall of the walls, the increasing influence of the West, especially of the more unbelieving and secularized West, whose ideology was immediately taken over by the ex-communists who thus became its chorus leaders. Moreover a wave of secularism spreads without difficulty in our countries, affecting mostly the masses of the uncertain. With a mania of blind imitation, they accept all that comes from the West, with its aura of the prestige of modernity and progress. Ah, how people had hoped to find, behind the fallen barriers, a solid Christianity, rooted in the faith and in values that had made Christianity great. Alas, that is not the case, and the example of the West is more damaging for us than a source of inspiration for the life of faith.

A hopeless situation? Far from it. Besides there are no hopeless situations for the Church. Never.

A basic fact, and one I believe to be irreversible, is that we can ground our christian optimism on the freedom which the Church now enjoys. With the coming of democracy, the Church has full liberty to proclaim the Gospel "*in season and out of season*", with freedom to create lay movements and youth organizations. Certainly she cannot depend on much space in the media, especially on television, but she can commit herself to seek to expand this and to create her own media. She has huge possibilities in the world of the press, the only limit being a lack of financial means and of competent journalists. Indeed one of the priorities must be

the formation of journalists and of television presenters of high professional standards.

At the same time, the Church could reinforce her presence in the political domain, forming a class of competent christian politicians, in ways inconceivable under the old regime.

Another positive fact that gives much hope for the future lies in the priestly and religious vocations in our countries. Without being over abundant, they are nonetheless sufficient, and they are tending to increase. In this respect we are far from the tragic crisis known in some western countries.

Another trait of our countries is that the Church is a unified community, without internal conflicts. This is due no doubt to fifty years of persecution, when the faithful closed ranks around their pastors, but also to the fact that the innovations of the Second Vatican Council arrived in our world gradually and without being dressed up in questionable ways by the Western media. This unity is still a reality. While in Western countries there is often a passionate opposition between progressives and conservatives, between traditionalists and "conciliarists" which remind one of a kind of class struggle within the Church, in our countries the priests and the faithful accept in a spirit of faith the orientations of the Pope and the bishops. We thus avoid wasting our energies in struggles and tensions that are not very evangelical, in order to direct them towards the construction of the Church and the reinforcing of her presence in society. If there is tension and competition in the Church, this should show itself in the field of sanctity, and not elsewhere. It matters little whether one is of the right or of the left, what matters is to direct oneself towards sanctity with all one's soul.

Gaudium er Spes, luctus et angor - all this exists in our Churches, and, I believe, there is more joy and hope than sadness and anxiety.

The Congregation of the Mission is called to accomplish its task in these conditions. It need change nothing concerning its double aim. It is only a matter of adapting and expanding it, according to the needs of the actual situation of our societies.

Evangelization of the poor, certainly, provided one does not have too narrow an idea of this and thus exclude the real poor of today. And among these one must count the intellectuals who struggle with doubt and scepticism and who diffuse largely materialism and hedonism. It is these who, in the last analysis, shape the decisive directions of a society. Or, as Cardinal Newman used to say, "*it is more important to struggle against basic deviations of thought than to make a few conversions*". This is obvious, but it is important to admit it, in spite of our traditional anti-intellectualism.

Then there are the good christian people that our missionaries have continued to evangelize through popular missions, wherever that has been possible. While continuing this work which keeps all its importance, one must now foster lay associations, such as the conferences of St Vincent de Paul, or others, which concern themselves with handicapped, drug addicts, refugees, etc. A vast effort of mobilization is called for which would call laity

out of their state of lethargy into which they were plunged by communism, and thus restore to them the taste of freedom and of christian creativity.

The other aspect of our mission - the formation of clergy - is equally important in this moment of the life of the Church. Traditionally, our provinces have not had the direction of major seminaries, except in Poland, but many confreres have contributed to the formation of the clergy through retreats and spiritual direction. It is a demanding work which for love of the Church we must continue. Because the ideal of the priest for St Vincent and the French school, and which prevailed in the Church for three centuries, is still relevant and responds perfectly to the needs of the world and of the Church today.

Tested by Fire

Brief History of the Provinces of Poland, Hungary and Slovakia.

Jan Dukala CM

A bird's-eye view.

The article written for *Vincentiana*, forming part of a report on the Congregation of the Mission in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, gives only an overall view. We can regard it as a catalogue of events, a listing of the houses and dates, as well as of some names and indications of the confreres' ministry. A chronological and statistical account of the Vincentians' presence in the countries indicated allows bringing together essential information, without running the risk of making an evaluation, something only the Lord of History can do.

I. Poland

The Vincentians arrived in Warsaw in September 1651, in response to the invitation of Marie-Louise de Gonzague, Queen of Poland, a former Lady of Charity at the Hotel-Dieu. St Vincent himself kept a close eye on the confreres' beginnings in Poland. In the last years of his life he wrote 242 letters in connection with the Polish mission. There are 450 of the saint's original letters, addressed to confreres in Poland, in the archives in Krakow. The history of the Congregation of the Mission in Poland may be divided into three stages.

1. From 1651 to 1792

From 1651 to 1792 there was a Province. Its centre was in Warsaw, next door to Holy Cross church. The confreres' main work was preaching missions to the country people. In the 17th and 18th centuries mission in Poland lasted from two to six weeks. As well as preaching the word of God, preparing for general confession and death, the confreres also taught catechism to children and adults, taught chant, and established the Confraternity of Charity. The oldest mission book contains a description of 169 missions given by the confreres of the Warsaw house in the years 1654-1740. Missions were given mainly in central Poland, but also in the east and north. The following confreres were noted missionaries: Guillaume Desdames, Nicolas Duperroy, Paul Godquin; among Polish confreres were Jozef Bojanowski, Jozef Rostkowski, and the future bishop of Poznan, Bartlomiej Tarlo. From the beginning of the 18th century onwards the names of

Polish confreres appear more frequently in the mission book. In the years 1682-1782 the confreres of the Krakow house gave 459 missions, mainly in the south but also in the east and in Silesia. From 1685 Vilnius was the third centre of missionary activity. The *Liber Missionum Domus Vilnensis* tells us that in the years 1686-1763 the confreres gave 240 missions in Lithuania and Bielorrussia.

The second stream of the confreres' work was the formation of the diocesan clergy. In 1676 the Congregation of the Mission was in charge of about 31 seminaries in Western Europe. Among them was the papal seminary in Rome. In France alone the confreres had 13 diocesan seminaries. In 17th century Poland, a country destroyed by wars and epidemics, there was a great need, in poor and abandoned parishes, for a missionary model of a pastor of souls. During visits to Rome or France Polish bishops heard of such priestly formation. Towards the end of the 17th century there were 20 diocesan seminaries in Poland, four of them being run by the confreres. In 1730 the confreres took charge of six seminaries. In 1770 when there were 37 diocesan seminaries in the whole of Poland, the confreres had charge of 19. It should be noted that these were the seminaries of the big dioceses: Warsaw, Plock, Wloclawek, Gniezno, Vilnius, Krakow, Lublin, Przemysl, Lwow. But they were also in the smaller ones: Kraslaw, Brzozow, Krasnystaw, Sambor...

2. From 1792 to 1918

The years 1792-1918 cover the period of the partition of Poland between Prussia, Russia and Austria. At the start there were two Provinces of the Congregation of the Mission, those of Warsaw and Lithuania. There were 17 houses in the Warsaw Province. In 1864 Russia suppressed this Province, revealing in this way its ruthlessness after the national uprising. The province of Lithuania, with its central house in Vilnius, was erected in 1794, with 16 houses. It was suppressed by the Russians in 1842. In 1865 the third Province of the Congregation was founded, with its provincial house in Krakow. In 1918 it included the houses in Poland, four in the United States in Northern America, and seven in Brazil.

In the second period, in spite of limitations imposed by the oppressors, the confreres continued their missionary activity. The most rigid limitations were imposed by the Russian government. The confreres under Austrian domination enjoyed more freedom. Towards the end of the 19th century the confreres took on pastoral ministry among seasonal (April to October) migrant workers in Prussia, Denmark and Holland. Later they began pastoral ministry in a more permanent fashion among immigrants in Brazil, and also in the Eastern States of North America. Towards the end of the 19th century Fr Kazimierz Siemaszko and a group of confreres began teaching religion to neglected children and orphans in

Krakow, and this developed into permanent education for 400 children in three boarding schools.

In the period of national slavery the confreres continued to work (for longer or shorter periods) in the 20 diocesan seminaries, and also in the 7 seminaries of the Congregation. 12 of these seminaries were in the territories of present-day Lithuania, Latvia, Bielorussia and Ukraine. From about the end of the 18th century up to the middle of the 19th, mainly in the areas mentioned, the confreres were in charge of 15 parish and regional schools. In the years 1821-1842, however, they ran 27 parish schools in Russia (even as far over as Saratov). They also had three apostolic schools (Zaslaw, Smilowicze, Krakow), and later two more (Vilnius and Bydgoszcz), schools which were a great source of vocations. Boys from poor families were also educated in these.

3. From 1918 to 1964

In the re-born fatherland the Polish Province, with its headquarters in Krakow, had 18 houses in Poland, 4 in the United States, 7 in Brazil, 3 in France, and one in Romania; these are 1939 figures. The province was made up of 250 priests and brothers, with 130 students, and 28 seminarists in Vilnius. The confreres had kept up the giving of missions and parish retreats. (A retreat is a four to six day series of sermons, especially during Advent and Lent, aimed at deepening faith and preparing for confession). But during this period the emphasis was on the missions *ad gentes* in China, as well as on ministry to emigrants. The apostolic school in Krakow was enlarged, and the care of children from poor families and orphans was expanded. Confreres had taken on pastoral ministry in hospitals and prisons. They also continued ministry to the Daughters of Charity in the three Provinces in Poland: Warsaw, Krakow and Chelmno, as Directors, chaplains and confessors. Confreres were animators of conferences of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and of the Ladies of Charity. In that period the confreres were in charge of only one diocesan seminary, in Katowice, but were spiritual directors in two others. From 1918 to 1939 the confreres were in charge of the hostel for student priests in Warsaw. In 1910 the Congregation's major seminary was changed into the Institute of Philosophy and Theology, in which the students of five to nine other religious communities received their intellectual formation.

At the beginning of the 20th century the spiritual needs of the poor in working-class areas led the confreres to accept the pastoral care of such parishes and to the building of churches: Lwow, Tarnow, Pabianice, Bydgoszcz. 1945 brought the shifting of the Polish border further west. There was a significant exodus of people from eastern territories taken over by the Soviet Union. The confreres wished to help these people who moved from the east to the west, to areas abandoned by the Germans. In these circumstances, responding also to the call from the Polish hierarchy, pastoral ministry in parishes involved about half the confreres of the

Polish Province. The others continued giving missions and retreats, as well as ministering in the two diocesan seminaries and the Theological Institute in Krakow. They also kept up giving retreats in diocesan seminaries and ministering as hospital chaplains. They had always collaborated with the Daughters of Charity all over the country. But it must be recognised that most of the confreres of the province were involved in parish ministry, especially teaching religion to children and young people, both in secondary schools and at university level.

In 1954 the Polish Province had 16 houses in Poland, one in Bielorussia and one in France. In the meantime two Vice-Provinces had been founded, in Brazil and in the United States. There were 203 confreres in Poland, and 110 outside the country. There were 78 students and 43 seminarists in Krakow. 2,100 confreres were buried in Poland, from the middle of the 17th century onwards. After Stalin's death Communist totalitarianism developed a Polish look. Parallel with this, under the protection of Providence, the confreres were able to develop many activities. A paradox and drama of both Polish history and the Polish Province of the Congregation were continuing.

II. Hungary

Towards the end of the 19th century there was a religious renaissance in Hungary. It was inspired by the changes in the Church inspired by Pope Leo XIII. The favourable situation from the political point of view, and also the healthy state of the Church in Hungary, made it possible to carry out papal initiatives: the development of institutions, public education, and pastoral ministry. There was a re-organization of parishes, something which had been neglected for 150 years. Publishing, negligible up till then, began to flourish. Religious and priestly vocations increased. Examples of up to date pastoral ministry were introduced, people became active in public and cultural life. The life of faith and religious practice flourished. Hungarian Catholicism was re-born, intellectually deepened.

The confreres of St Vincent de Paul had their place in this renewal of religious life. Their insertion into the Hungarian Church and society was rather slow. In 1853 the Austrian Province of the Congregation of the Mission was established, in Graz. Hungarians, as citizens of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, entered the internal seminary in Graz. As members of the Austrian Province confreres of Hungarian origin worked either within the Empire or beyond its frontiers, for example in France or even in China.

The first house of the Congregation in Hungary was founded in 1898 in Piliscsaba, in the diocese of Székes-Fehérvár. It was an ex voto foundation of Archduke Jozef Habsburg. According to the wish of the founder the house became a centre for missionary work all over the region north of Lake Balaton. The new community comprised four priests and three brothers. In just the first year of its

existence confreres of the house preached 18 parish missions and 13 parish retreats; eleven priests and a bishop made a retreat in the house. In the first five years the confreres of Piliscsaba gave missions and retreats in all the parishes of Transylvania. This work, together with retreats for priests and ministry to Daughters of Charity, was continued by the confreres right up to the first world war in 1914.

The missionary work of the confreres in Piliscsaba, as well as their influence on the diocesan clergy, led to the foundation of the second house in Hungary. Michal Bundale was responsible for building the new house and church in Gatutca, Budapest. The confreres took up residence there in 1903. Michal Bundale was well thought of as spiritual director of the general seminary in Budapest. At the start three confreres from this house gave parish missions and retreats, then five and by 1911 eight. The house was also open for priests' retreats

In 1904 the Hungarian Province of the Daughters of Charity was founded. Fr Ferdynand Medits was appointed Director. He felt the need for having more confreres in Budapest, as chaplains to the Sisters. He also saw the need for another house, and one was built in 1909 in Nagyboldogaszony-utca. Four priests and four brothers lived there. In 1913 a church beside the house was consecrated. As well as ministry to the Daughters of Charity the confreres gave missions and retreats. Before the first world war an apostolic school for aspirants to the Congregation was built near this house and church. This school also catered for boys from poor families, even though they had no intention of joining the Congregation. For the first seventy years Hungarian confreres had received their spiritual and intellectual formation in Graz. For the most part they came from the diocesan clergy.

During the first world war the Vincentians worked either as military chaplains or as nurses in hospitals. In view of the destruction and impoverishment of the population all over the country the confreres organized Conferences of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Ladies of Charity. By the time of the second world war Vincentian societies in Hungary numbered more than a thousand members.

Shortly after the first world war there was an important development in the history of the Vincentians in Hungary. From October 1918 till August 1919 the confreres lived through the communist revolution of Beli Kuhna, and in April 1919 the confiscation of the Congregation's houses. The communist dictatorship did not last long, but contact between the confreres and the central house in Graz was not easy. In 1919 the Vice-Province of Hungary was established, and Fr Francesco Aronfy was appointed Vice-Provincial. He himself, along with his deputy Giorgio Tutz, had been at the Provincial Assembly in Graz in September 1919.

In 1919 the confreres gave missions in all the parishes in Budapest. Two years later they had given 43 missions and 57 retreats in Hungary. In June 1923 the Superior General, François Verdier, made a visitation of the confreres and the Daughters of Charity in Hungary. Three years later, on 19 March 1926, the Hungarian Province of the Vincentians was erected. Fr Francesco Aronfy was appointed Provincial. The new Province consisted of three houses, 27 confreres (priests and brothers), 6 students and 20 seminarists. The apostolic school in Budapest was attended by aspirants to the Congregation as well as poor boys. Development of the Province was slow, but without crisis. In 1934 the confreres in four houses were able to expand every work. By this time the student house was outside Budapest, at Szob near the Czechoslovak border. There were 15 students in it. By 1939 the Hungarian Province had 5 houses, 67 confreres, 26 students and 7 seminarists.

Providence and historical circumstances spared the Hungarian confreres during the second world war. The period after the war was seen as a time of development for the Province. Two new houses had been opened in Transylvania (Oradea in 1940 and Cluj in 1941), a large house had been opened in Csepel near Budapest, mercy ministry and a parish in a working-class area. In the south of the country a new house was opened in Szeged (1946). By 1949 the Province comprised 76 confreres living in 7 houses. But there were only 5 students and 5 seminarists. The confreres continued to develop their ministry in line with the purpose of the Congregation, including clerical formation in seminaries.

By the time the communist authorities in Hungary dealt a mortal blow to religious communities the Hungarian Province had seen a time of great development. There were three periods of internment, imprisonment and scattering of members of religious communities: in December 1949, in mid-June 1950 and mid-July of the same year. 1,000 members of male and 2,500 members of female religious communities were interned in labour camps. This was "Holy Thursday" also for the Hungarian Province of the Congregation. Confreres had to go underground. Some of them found shelter in parishes, taking on jobs as organists, cantors, sacristans, gardeners... Others took on physical or intellectual work in State agencies. The confreres were kept under surveillance by secret agents and were not able to meet each other very often. We do not know how many kept up hope that the Province would rise again, something some of them always had in their heart.

The resurrection took place in 1991. At that time there were 24 priests and 6 brothers, with an average age of 75. The province has once again begun a slow journey towards the future.

III. Slovakia

During a few weeks in the autumn of 1918 the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which since 1526 had included Slovakia, broke up. On 30 October 1918 the National Slovak Council decided on independence and union with the Czechs. In accordance with the Pittsburg Convention Slovakia, inside the state of Czechoslovakia, was supposed to enjoy full autonomy and its own parliament. However, the demand for autonomy was not honoured. This meant the negating of the most important national aspiration and putting the Slovaks in political opposition against the centralist power in Prague. The history of opposition is the main ideological current of historical events after the first world war. It is linked also in a special way to the most recent history of the Catholic Church in Slovakia.

Right then, after the first world war, the Congregation of the Mission was inserted into the history of the people and Church of Slovakia. In 1918 there were 32 houses of the Daughters of Charity in Czechoslovakia which had previously belonged to the Province of Hungary. 298 sisters worked in 7 hospitals, 14 schools and 11 houses of Vincentian charitable work. In 1922 a province of the Daughters of Charity was established in Czechoslovakia, with its provincial house in Trnava. Fr Giuseppe Danielik was appointed Director. This priest had received his spiritual and intellectual formation in Budapest and Graz. He knew well the background of the Austrian and Hungarian confreres. The bishop of the diocese of Trnava had asked for Fr Danielik so that in addition to his ministry to the sisters he would take on the job of spiritual director in the diocesan seminary. The work in the seminary and good contacts with the diocesan clergy provided a good opening for the giving of missions by our confreres. In 1923, responding to a request from Fr Danielik, Fr Giuseppe Haring arrived in Trnava and took on a chaplaincy to the sisters. Both confreres gave the occasional parish mission and retreat. In 1924 the provincial house of the sisters was transferred to Ladce in the north-eastern part of Slovakia. At the same time two confreres arrived in the town. In 1929 an apostolic school was opened in Banska Bystrica. The pupils attended classes in the neighbouring secondary school and received their formation in the hostel, which was under the care of the third confrere Francesco Kuchar, who had come from Austria. That's how the opening was provided for establishing the Vincentian house in Ladce. In 1933 the first pupils of the apostolic school took their school-leaving examination and were accepted into the internal seminary in Graz. By 1935 there were already six confreres in Slovakia. Meanwhile the second house of the Congregation was established in Banska Bystrica. The apostolic school was transferred to Ladce. In the year of Fr Danielik's death (1938) there were ten confreres in Slovakia, including four brothers, and five students studying in the Theology Faculty in Bratislava. As well as their ministry to the Daughters of Charity the confreres ran the apostolic school and gave parish missions and retreats. In 1935 the confreres became involved in the direction of students in the Svoradov Institute, at that time

the largest student house in Bratislava. The students of the Congregation also lodged there.

In 1941 the Vicar General, Edouard Robert, asked the Hungarian Provincial to make a visitation of the Vincentian family in Slovakia. After this visitation the autonomous Vice-Province of Slovakia was erected. During the second world war the Slovak confreres, under the guidance of Fr G Tiso, enjoyed relative peace. At that time the number of confreres increased. The fourth house of the Congregation was erected in 1947, in Belluska Slatina in the north-east. The Vice-Province had its own internal seminary in Ladce. The confreres, as well as ministry to the Daughters of Charity, gave parish missions and retreats, ran the apostolic school and had youth ministry to the students in Bratislava. In 1949, during the first communist crackdown, the confreres were obliged to leave Bratislava.

In February 1949 came the first wave of persecution against the Church. In July of the same year the chargé d'affaires of the Vatican, Genaro Verolino, received an order to leave Czechoslovakia as soon as possible. During the night of 5 April 1950 police raided every house of religious communities of men and the residents were transported to forced labour camps. At that time there were about 1,000 male religious. 11,000 sisters shared the same fate within a short while. Our confreres were among the imprisoned and interned. At that time the Vice-Province had 16 priests and 7 brothers.

In the subsequent period some confreres got out of Slovakia and went for example to Austria where they founded the Salzburg house of the Slovak Vice-Province. Others who fled took on pastoral ministry for their countrymen in France and England. The Vice-Provincial Jan Hutýra spent many years in prison. Others, after being released from internment camps or prison, went underground and continued in pastoral ministry, though in a limited way. They kept in touch with one another as far as possible. However, St Vincent's spirit was always shining. Some, as tourists, made contact with confreres in Poland. From 1972 onwards contacts with Krakow by young Slovak students, who already spiritually belonged to the Congregation of the Mission, were fairly systematic. Through Salzburg and Krakow Slovak confreres made contact with the Superior General, the centre of the Congregation. Letters and documents of General Assemblies passed along this route. When the renewed Slovak Province emerged in 1989 it had 4 houses in Slovakia and one in Salzburg. It had 29 priests, 4 brothers and 12 students. The average age was 51. That is how the second youth of the Congregation of the Mission began in Slovakia.

"Evangelize the poor...". "Go and preach to all people..."

The history of the presence of the Congregation of the Mission in Poland from the mid-17th century, in Hungary and Slovakia from the mid-19th century, is the response to the call of Christ quoted above. The confreres have to respond at a time of simple work, but also in the difficult period of trials and persecutions. This response in the countries mentioned included heroism, but also weakness of individuals or groups. The confreres' mission is obviously included in the overall tempest-filled mission of the Church in East-central Europe. At the same time it brought into this activity the patrimony of St Vincent de Paul.

(Thomas Davitt CM, translator)

THE MISSION IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA - POST-COMMUNIST AND AT WAR

by Anton Stres, C.M.

Among post-communist countries, those of the former Yugoslavia have had, for the past three years, the unfortunate privilege of attracting world attention to themselves because of the war that rages on their soil. What a war it is! It has been marked by extreme violence which continually transgresses the most fundamental human rights. The consequences, both material and spiritual, will be terrible. And yet, very few people know what it is all about. Even major political leaders do not really understand the roots and the causes of this war.

The historical background to the war

Yugoslavia was founded immediately after the First World War in 1919. It was made up of two parts. One, the South, corresponded to the Kingdom of Serbia, augmented by territory won during the Balkan wars of 1912-13. All this part of the Balkans had been occupied by the Turks for five hundred years, since the 14th century. That period left deep marks on the mentality and the culture of the region.

The second part, the North, belonged until the "*Great War*" to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Slovenia and Croatia had belonged to that empire for centuries, and Bosnia, formerly part of the Turkish Empire, had been a protectorate of Austria-Hungary since 1870. Bosnia was, however, claimed by Serbia at that time. This led to the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Ferdinand and his wife by a member of the "*Young Serbia*" movement in 1914. The assassination resulted in the First World War. The problems of the region, then, are not recent ones.

The peoples of Slovenia and Croatia had freely opted to become part of the "*Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes*," which was the country's original title. Their hope was that their ethnic and cultural identity would be more secure in a state consisting of all the Southern Slavs. But this was not how the Serbs saw the new state, in which they formed a relative majority. They considered the Slovenes and the Croats as their recompense for supporting the Allies, that is, the French and the English, during the war. The outcome was that the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was very quickly transformed into a totalitarian state, with King Alexander I suppressing the constitution and declaring a dictatorship in 1920. Shortly afterwards, the new name "*Yugoslavia*" was given to the country so as to express more clearly its unitary character under Serbian dominance. With some slight changes, things remained like this until 1941.

When the Nazi army invaded the country, it met no resistance. The non-Serbian sections of the population had no wish to fight for it. When Tito, after the Second World War, reconstructed a new Communist Yugoslavia, he (a non-

Serb) understood one thing: Yugoslavia would be strong if Serbia was weak. The dictum is attributed to him, but in any case it was he who made Yugoslavia into a federation with a high degree of autonomy for the six republics and the two autonomous regions. What had been considered between the two wars as Serb territory was divided into three republics and two autonomous regions. The effect was to limit Serbia both geographically and politically, and significantly to lessen Serbian influence. Not surprisingly, this left the Serbs with a sense of deep frustration.

The death of Tito in 1980 provided the Serbs with the opportunity they had been waiting for. Six years later, the Academy of Arts and Sciences of Serbia published a memorandum on the state of the Serbian nation which stated that "*Serbia is wherever Serbs live.*" In that same year, Slobodan Milosevic came to power in Serbia and began putting this programme into effect. First Serbia suppressed the autonomous regions, which raised the Albanian question. Then it set about having the constitution modified with a view to the centralisation of the country and the suppression of the republics' autonomy. In this way Serbia laid the groundwork for the Yugoslav crisis. The other countries reacted, and took the view that complete independence was the only guarantee of their identity and their future existence. The present war is simply the Serbs' attempt to realise their dream: Greater Serbia. It would unite in a single state all the Serbs in the Balkan Peninsula, even in places where they only form a very small minority. In the territories of Croatia and Bosnia, these minorities have existed for three hundred years. They came into existence when Serbs fled from their own country where the occupying Turks were persecuting the Christian population. The Austrian authorities installed them in border areas so as to defend the Empire, thus producing Serb communities in the middle of Croatia and in western Bosnia.

Our Congregation has not been immediately affected by the war which the Serbs are waging in pursuit of their expansionist dream of Greater Serbia. But our confreres in the house of Zagreb are concerned about the consequences of the "*ethnic cleansing*" which the Serbs practise in the territories they occupy. In the district of Zagreb where the Confreres live, almost every family has welcomed relatives forced to flee from the affected regions. For the most part, these are families which are already poor and they have need of help and support in order to survive. The parishes of our confreres have become important centers for the distribution of supplies. This aid would not be possible without the Vincentian solidarity of the Confreres and Sisters in Austria, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Ireland and other places.

Ecumenism the Vincentian way

Providence has wished our Congregation and that of the Daughters of Charity to experience the tortured history of the Balkans from close at hand. The French Vincentians of the former Province of Constantinople were the pioneers of the Balkan apostolate. After the First World War the young Province of Yugoslavia continued their work. The Sisters went into the Serb territories where the Confreres followed. The Vincentian presence increased when a member of the Congregation,

Mgr. Janez F.Gnidovec, was made Bishop of Skopje in 1924 His cause for beatification has already been introduced. Since that time we have had two parishes for Catholics living in the Orthodox diaspora, one in Belgrade and one in Bitola. The Confreres worked with their confrere Bishop in a mainly Albanian diocese which had no priests and whose people, especially because they were Catholics, were at risk from the machinations of the Serb authorities. At that time, ecumenism was still unknown. When the central government in Belgrade concluded a concordat between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Holy See in 1939, the Serbian Orthodox Church organised street protests and demonstrations to such effect that the concordat was never ratified.

The period after the Second World War saw ecumenical developments which were due precisely to the Vincentian presence. For this purpose, Providence chose means which were initially painful.

The Communist revolution affected the two Vincentian families in Slovenia in a particular way. At that time all the Confreres were Slovenes. They were expropriated and the great majority were put in prison from where they went into exile: to Argentina, and to other countries of the Americas including Canada. The only house which the Confreres retained was that of Belgrade. Thus it came about that for thirty years the Internal Seminary of the province was situated in an entirely Orthodox country. As a result all the young confreres were open to the ecumenical dimension from their earliest moments in the Congregation. At the same time the Vincentian family was increased by the entry into the Congregation of Croatian and Macedonian confreres of the Oriental Rite.

Nevertheless it was the Sisters who were the main workers for ecumenism. In 1948 there were more than a thousand of them, working in hospitals and other establishments in Slovenia. On March 8th of that year, the country dominated by the new Communist ideology celebrated Women's Day, and all the Sisters were ejected from their houses. They had nowhere to go. So they set out for the Orthodox South. There they were received with open arms, not because they were Sisters or Catholics, but because of their professional qualifications which were much needed in those less developed areas. That Orthodox world was full of prejudices against Catholics, and found in the Sisters another image of Catholicism of which it had never heard. If the period between 1950 and 1990 was a period full of ecumenical promise, the credit goes largely to the Slovenian Daughters of Charity, in distant exile from their own country. Unfortunately, that already belongs to past history. Still, although the Catholic Church in Serbia is now reduced to a quarter of its size ten years ago, it continues to be present and the two families of St.Vincent are part of that presence.

The post-Communist moral desert

The Congregation of the Mission was founded in Slovenia in 1852. It was the first foundation of the Congregation in what was then the Austrian Empire. The principal work of the missionaries was that of popular missions and retreats of different kinds, to such an extent that the Confreres were called simply "*the*

missionaries." This work of the missions has lost none of its relevance in this post Communist period. On the contrary, it is more important than ever.

One of the characteristics of the spiritual situation in the former Communist countries which are now undergoing what is called "*the transition period*" is the discovery of a great cultural and spiritual desert. The results at the level of people's mentality of a half-century of Communism are more serious and more negative than had been thought. The Communist school system educated people in a total absence of moral and religious values. Family life was ruined because the totalitarian system was not favourable to the family: women had to become "*workers*" in order to have social status in socialist society. The state was content to undertake the complete education of children so as to inculcate into them from their earliest years the official ideology and to withdraw them from what was considered the dangerous influence of tradition and especially of religion. Christian culture, to which these countries in general have owed the maintenance of their identity and their spiritual development down the centuries, is almost non-existent and religious ignorance is astonishing. What is not astonishing in the circumstances is the flourishing state of the sects. Moreover, anti-religious propaganda was centred on the systematic denigration of the Church. This has created a mass of prejudices against the Catholic Church and deep mistrust of the clergy. On the more secular level, a disturbing lack of political and social culture can be seen. The people formed by Communism are in general passive, without personal initiative, and expect the state to provide everything. Among the many definitions of Communism, the one which states that it is at once both a prison and a children's playground is very appropriate. Where the Party knows everything and does everything, human beings do not have to be responsible. This lack of initiative and of a sense of responsibility is one of the consequences of every totalitarian system and so Bolshevik totalitarianism has produced negative results not only at the level of personal moral development but also at the level of economic, social and political behaviour.

Moral renewal

Confronted with this situation, the Church in Slovenia feels itself called and challenged to undertake a new evangelization which should take the form of general moral and spiritual renewal. The Congregation shares this concern and its recent efforts form part of the pastoral orientation of the whole Church.

Apart from traditional methods, the Province of Slovenia intends to contribute to this renewal by the formation of different small groups of Christians who are ready to commit themselves, but who often lack spiritual, moral and professional preparation. For this reason we have opened our houses to provide centers of formation for lay-people. The house at Miren has for two decades been a house for retreats and other meetings for different groups of priests and lay-people. Recently, the two houses of Celje and Ljubljana, which the state took over in 1946-48, have been given back to us by the state. The Celje house, which needs to be completely restored, can become an important regional centre for formation. The former Provincial House of Ljubljana has already been transformed into a centre for Catholic students. The centre not only provides accommodation for some seventy

students but also offers the possibility of taking part in meetings, conferences and other different activities (for example, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul) which are based at the centre and are open to the residents. As well as this, we have decided not only to make our premises available for different functions organized by others, but also to set up our own formation programmes so as to give them a Vincentian slant. None of this work could even be envisaged without the very fraternal support of the provinces of Toulouse, Paris, Belgium, Germany and Saragossa, and of the General Curia at Rome.

A test of patience and confidence

The period of post-Communism is for the Church and for the Congregation established in these countries a time of great frustration. What has happened is that on the one hand every possibility for pastoral work had been reopened. There are no more of the legal and administrative obstacles which for four decades prevented or obstructed Vincentian missionary activity from being carried out in all its vigour. But on the other hand, because during that period all the material, organizational and personal infrastructure needed for full and many-sided pastoral activity has been gradually destroyed, men and women of the Church in general and of the Vincentian family in particular feel themselves powerless to respond in an adequate way to the demands being made on us by all sectors of the population. This poverty of our human, material, professional and spiritual resources, especially in comparison to the immensity of the task, is for us at the present time the greatest interior trial of our patience and our confidence. It is for this reason that all the many signs of our Vincentian solidarity which we have received are a source of great comfort for us and inspire us with the deepest gratitude.

translation: Myles Rearden, cm

MISSIONS IN EASTERN EUROPE

by Stanisław Wypych, C.M.

The first purpose of this article is to describe the pastoral effort of the ConfReres working in three countries which have recently gained independence as a consequence of the collapse of the former Soviet Empire. These are Belorussia, The Ukraine and Lithuania. The selection has been determined by a desire to concentrate on countries in which the congregation originally began its labours in the 17th or 18th century. In the concluding section consideration will also be given to the enormous scope for pastoral opportunity currently developing in Russia.

I BELORUSSIA

1. An historical background:

Five confreres from the Polish province are currently working in Belorussia, however it is good to remember that the community's presence remained uninterrupted even during the Second World War. Fr. Michael WORONIECKI and his brother Ludovico who died only a few years ago remained all this time working in Belorussia.

Father Michael Woroniecki was born in Wilejka Mala near Vilnius in 1908. He entered the congregation in 1927 and was ordained in 1935. He ministered briefly for two years in central Poland before returning East. He first worked in Lwow(Lvov) in the Ukraine from 1937 to 1945. After the War he moved to Lyskow in Belorussia until 1949 when he was arrested and sentenced to prison for 25 years. His sentence included several years forced labour in a frozen metal ore mine in Siberia. Upon his release he returned to the faithful of Belorussia ministering in Rozana until 1990 in which year he was appointed spiritual director of the seminary at Grodno.

Belorussia which became independent in August 1991, is 207,600 square kilometers with a population of 10.2 million inhabitants, with significant numbers, from a variety of ethnic groups including a large number of Russians, 430,000 Poles, 245,000 Ukrainians and 143,000 Jews. By far the largest part of the population is either Russian Orthodox or non-believers. According to the civil statistics there are 2,000,000 Catholics, however the Church's own estimate is 1,200,000 living in three dioceses, Minsk Pinsk and Grodno.

2. The seminary at Grodno

St. Vincent was convinced that the renewal and future of the Church depended largely on the formation of the clergy. For the same reason Bishop Tadeusz Kondrusiewicz, Archbishop and Administrator of Moscow in 1990 opened a seminary at Grodno. The civil authorities would only approve as members of the

seminary staff, priests who had previously worked in Belorussia. The Bishop therefore appointed Father Michael Woroniecki as spiritual director. This confrere not withstanding his considerable age was in good health and had the ability of relating well with the young. Apart from fulfilling his role as spiritual director he also taught Spiritual Theology, Salvation History, and Greek. He was in addition head of the Diocesan tribunal.

Two years later Bishop Aleksander Kaszkiewicz requested the services of a second confrere to teach Fundamental and Dogmatic theology and Fr. Taddeusz Wyszynski was appointed. While Father Taddeusz was young his family had spent six years in Siberia, during this sojourn he learnt Russian which was most useful for his teaching. He also knows German, French and Italian. His linguistic talents have been of significant service to Bishop A. Kaszkiewicz either for translating letters, or acting as an interpreter for visitors from the West and to the Apostolic Nunciature. Fr. Taddeusz not only teaches theology but also sacred music.

The Grodno seminary has over 100 students mostly from Belorussia. Bishop Alexander is truly appreciative of the contribution to the seminary of the two Vincentians. It is likely that he will ask the Community for a second spiritual director and possibly another lecturer. Divine providence seems to be giving us strong and positive signs for the future of the congregation at Grodno.

3. Two missionary regions:

After independence the Belorussian regime granted permission for 50 foreign priests to enter the country. Among these were two confreres who are now working in the diocese of Pinsk where they are officially recognised as parish priests (pastors). The Polish province has thus acquired a pastoral opportunity in two adjacent regions.

The first of these is comprised of the parishes of Prozana, Kosow and Podorosk. In this region two churches managed to remain open (one served by Fr. M Woroniecki mentioned above) another church has been built at Podorsk since independence. Not far from Prozana are the remains of the church at Lyskow so dear to the confreres of our Province. From 1990-94 Fr. Jerzy Tumas was the pastor for this area he has recently been succeeded by Father Janusz Pulit assisted by a younger confrere Dariuz Blaszczyk. Their primary work is evangelisation of three differing groups. The older generation have preserved the treasure of the faith in their hearts, for them the confreres seek to reawaken or deepen this faith. The hearts of both children and young people is proving a fertile soil for the seed of the Gospel. However it has not proved easy to awaken interest in the Gospel in the hearts and minds of the middle aged section of the population who grew up in and remain deeply affected by atheistic and Marxist ideology.

About 45 kilometers from Rozana is Pruzana, with Szereszow a further 18 kilometers away. These two parishes comprise the second area entrusted to the pastoral care of the confreres. A brief comment on the historical background to these two parishes will be useful.

Szereszow has about 3,000 inhabitants, two thirds of whom are orthodox the remainder being catholic. The Parish Church was built in the 16th century. In 1948 the then Pastor was arrested and the Church closed as a place of worship. The Civil Authorities used it as a warehouse for salt, oil and alcohol. The interior was completely destroyed and the sacred vestments and vessels removed. However from 1948 until 1988 every Sunday and Holy Day the faithful gathered at 9.00 in the morning to pray before the closed doors. Their prayer was heard. In July 1988 the Civil Authorities relented and returned the keys and Fr. M. Woroniecki was able to celebrate Mass in the Church. In 1990 Fr. Tadeusz Wojtonis was appointed to serve this Church and was officially recognised as its Pastor. For health reasons he was replaced by Fr. Edward Lojek in August 1991 who is currently the Parish Priest. The Church has now been restored. The Civil Authorities have also returned possession of an extremely dilapidated parish house in which Fr. Edward now lives.

Pruzana is a larger town of about 25,000 inhabitants the majority of whom are either orthodox or non-believers. There is no accurate data at this time on the precise number of Catholics but at the first Mass celebrated since the return, about 300 faithful took part. The Parish Church of Pruzana dates back to the 16th century it was here that Kazimierz Swiatek ministered (he was in fact a Cardinal). It was here too that he was arrested and deported to Siberia where he served in the labour camps for 10 years. In 1948 the Church was designated a cultural centre and adapted to its new purpose. A stage was built in the Sanctuary, pillars were removed, the building was divided into two floors. The original flooring and the facade were totally destroyed and the sacred vestments and vessels removed. The change was so total only the external walls of the original Church remain.

In December 1991 the authorities gave permission for a Mass to be celebrated on Sunday mornings in what had become by then the ballroom. From that date until February 1993 a Confrere would celebrate Mass in the hall in the morning while in the afternoon it was used by the young people for their dances. In February 1993 the building was officially returned to the Catholic community. Now it needs complete restoration. The local community of faithful is however small and in disarray and for the most part the people are very poor. This poses an obvious problem for any projected restoration of the Church! The Civil Authorities have also granted a plot of land for the building of a parish house (the original parish house is still occupied by the family to whom it was granted). This new house could become a community house for the Confreres who work in both of these areas. In 1993 Archbishop K. Swiatek gave his permission for the opening of a house of the Congregation at Pruzana and allocating the parishes of Rozana, Kosow Szereszow and Pruzana to the care of the confreres.

At this point it must be noted that to date the Belorussian authorities have not granted recognition to either Institutes of the Consecrated Life or Societies of the Apostolic life (with the single exception of the Nazareth Sisters who are registered as a quasi parochial and religious society). The Confreres are recognised by the Civil Authorities only as Pastors of their respected parishes but the Congregation does not enjoy any juridical status as such. It is also worth noting that the Belorussian authorities more familiar with the life and customs of the Orthodox

church see no need for two or three priests in the same place. The only model with which they are familiar is of one orthodox priest who together with his family serves a single parish community.

4. Comments

1. The most urgent need is not the restoration of church buildings but the renewal of religious and spiritual life in the hearts of the faithful destroyed by years of communist indoctrination. As already mentioned the elderly tend to have preserved their faith; children and the youth are ripe for evangelisation; the middle aged remain deeply under the influence of a communist ideology and are proving very difficult to approach or evangelise.

2. Because the greater part of Catholics in this Country are of Polish origin and background, Catholicism is inevitably associated with the Polish language. The orthodox church on the other hand is associated with Russian. Language therefore poses a pastoral problem. The older people have great difficulty in accepting Belorussian as the language of the liturgy, on the other hand the younger generations don't know Polish. The introduction and use of Belorussian in the liturgy is necessary both for young and for the proper inculturation of the universal Church, a process which is going to require a change of attitude on the part of the older generation and this certainly will not happen overnight.

3. The arrival of more than 50 Polish priests is seen by some, especially the Civil Authorities, as attempted Polonisation of the Church in Belorussia. The allegation, for the most part unfounded, is often made. In response, Cardinal Swiatek has frequently expressed a wish for priests of other nationalities to come and thus defuse the arguments of those making the above allegations. This would also present a better image of the truly universal nature of the Church.

4. Cardinal Swiatek hopes in the near future to open a major Seminary at Pinsk. For some time now he has been saying that he would ask our Congregation to assume administration of this Seminary. Can we refuse such a request?

II

THE UKRAINE

1. The population and religious affiliation.

The Ukraine declared its independence at the beginning of December 1991. It has an area of 603,700 square kilometers with a population of 51,700,000, of these 41,000,000 are Orthodox Christians, 6,000,000 are Greek Catholics and 1,000,000 are Catholics, there are 200,000 Protestants. The Catholic church is spread over three dioceses, Leopoldensis, Zydomerensis and Camenecensis. Until 1945 our confreres ministered especially in Leopoldensis and also the region of Bukowina. From the Second World War no confrere was permitted to remain in the above area. Now however the Polish province is looking again at the Bukowina region where

confreres traditionally worked and where some young confreres (for instance Fr. S. Irisik) were actually born.

Bukowina has a rich and very complex history. The present population is composed of a variety of ethnic groups: Ukrainians, Russians, Romanians, Poles, Jews and Gypsies. Northern Bukowina was originally part of the Ukraine while the south looks to Romania on its border.

2. The confreres in Bukowina:

In 1991 Father Stanislaw Irisik was appointed to Bukowina and for two years he worked alongside the diocesan clergy. In 1993 the Archbishop Leopoli gave permission for the opening of a house of the Congregation at Storozyniec at the same time the Bishop entrusted a vast territory Storozyniec, Banilow Gorny, Czeresz, Cleboka, Davidney Centrum, Davidney Zrab, Piotrowce Dolne, Piotrowce Gorna, Gleboka, Klinowka, Stara Huta, and Wyznica to the pastoral care of the community. The newly established community includes three confreres Frs. Stanislaw Irisik, Franciszek Dragosz, Marek Chociej. The Daughters of Charity from Cracow also opened a foundation in 1994.

These confreres celebrate Mass in 9 different churches and in the course of a week they travel 500 kilometers in fulfilling their pastoral duties. Two churches in the region survived and stayed open in the past and are in a reasonable state of repair. All other churches were either closed, or confiscated for civil use. The church in Piotrowce Gorne, restored in 1993 had previously seen use as a cultural centre, library, and finally a cinema.

All the churches in the region are in need of restoration and the whole territory will certainly require additional churches and chapels. The confreres are initially concentrating their pastoral attention on a renewal of faith among the baptised. They are seeking out the adults to prepare them for the sacraments, and providing catechesis for the younger children (about 300 young are currently attending religious lessons). In 1994 an additional Polish confrere preached a series of Lenten Retreats to prepare people for their Easter duties. In all this work there are many difficulties, among the more serious is that to be effective in this region one needs three languages Ukrainian, Polish and Romanian.

3. The search for " labourers for the harvest":

The situation of the church in Western Ukraine is better than in the East, which for many years was totally under Russian influence. The Bishop of Zytomerensis, Jan Purwinski in a letter to the major superiors in Poland wrote "... in my diocese there are 42 priests (14 of whom are local clergy and 26 from Poland) ...above all these are wetting the appetite. ...I see an urgent need for zealous priests from other countries who will labour until their sacrifice and zeal can produce further labourers for the harvest..the harvest is great but the labourers are few...to find a priest some of the faithful travel the 10's even 100's of kilometers." ... *I (the*

author) am certain also that there is an even greater need for priests in the diocese of Camenecensis.

Confreres from the Slovak province also are working in the Ukraine - I have no access to specific information about their work it would be good if some Slovak confrere were able to provide similar and up to date information about their ministry in the Ukraine.

III LITHUANIA

1. **The history of the congregation in Lithuania**

Lithuania one of the three Baltic nations has 3,000,000 inhabitants of whom 89% are Catholic. It counts also amongst its population an ethnic minority of about 300,000 Poles. The congregation has a long and rich association with Lithuania. The community house in Vilnius first opened (the original foundation in Vilnius dates from 1665). Toward the end of the 17th century the first church was built and dedicated to the Transfiguration of our Lord on the Mount. Subsequently in 1725 the internal **seminar was** opened also in Vilnius. The province of Lithuania flourished from 1786 to 1844. In 1840 there were 87 priests, 20 students and 24 seminarists.

After the First World War the Vincentians were able to return to Vilnius where they ministered until 1941 in which year they were again forced to leave, leaving behind 1 confrere Fr. Adolf Trusewicz.

2. **Fr. Trusewicz a link between the past and the present**

Fr. Adolf Trusewicz was born in 1919 near Vilnius at Stare Troki. He was ordained in Vilnius in 1949 and after his ordination stayed on serving the local Catholic community. He ministered in the community church of the transfiguration at Vilnius until its closure in 1949. After this event and according to the wishes of the local church authorities he served a variety of communities Turmonty (1949-53) Olany (53-56), and from then until the present day at Suderva.

Suderva is a village 15 kilometers from Vilnius. The population of the parish is 1,500 almost all of whom are Polish. Since 1956 Fr. Adolf has ministered faithfully to this community as pastor, in the last two years he has had the assistance of a young confrere Dariusz Gorski.

3. **The hopes for the future:**

The Polish province maintains a special interest in, and hope for, the original church of The Transfiguration which is still closed. It is known that in the church are gathered many items from other churches also closed by the communist regime, these include statues, paintings, furniture, benches etc. The adjoining building, once the internal seminaire is now a hospital. It is however perhaps significant that some rooms near the church have recently been returned to the congregation. The

Archbishop Audrys Jouzas Backis sincerely hopes that some day soon Communities of the Consecrated and Apostolic life will again flourish in Lithuania. Currently there is a grave shortage of priests in the region which renders the pastoral reorganisation and service of all the Christian communities extremely difficult. The Archbishop sees the Congregation as potentially capable of providing Chaplains for hospitals and prisons. Given the current political and social situation the best option for the congregation might be the provision of an international community, directly responsible to the International Curia, which in turn might be a fertile seed bed for a future Lithuanian province.

The Archbishop would also willingly and gratefully welcome the Daughters of Charity to the diocese.

IV RUSSIA

I would also like to emphasise the importance of Russia as a potential mission territory. It helps comprehend the physical size just to realise it takes nine hours to travel from one end to other by air. The Archbishop Kondrusciewicz of Moscow who has responsibility for the European part of Russia has already said he is prepared to entrust a number of parishes to the care of the Congregation. It would seem particularly fitting if the Vincentian family were to present the Russian people with an experience of the church as charity (care and service) precisely because the Orthodox church does not offer such an experience. The work of the Sisters of Mother Theresa is currently a source of deep fascination and wonder. These sisters coming from distant foreign countries, opening houses for disabled children, homes for the elderly; visiting the sick and the isolated in their homes are making the people sit up and ask who are they, and why do they want to come and do such things in Russia? Such an apostolic approach could be extremely effective in preparing the populace for subsequent effective evangelisation.

The Jesuits are already officially recognised and registered by the Russian government. There would seem to be a special opportunity for our Congregation to be recognised and hence registered as a charitable organisation. The spiritual and material needs of Russia are truly numerous and constantly increasing.

Conclusions:

1. Already some institutions of the Consecrated Life (Jesuits, Salesians, Dominicans) have set up Russian Regions directly responsible to their general curiae this procedure facilitates their apostolic ministry.
2. In all the countries under discussion many members of the older generation have kept their faith and religious zeal alive, these people with their faith and zeal can provide a springboard for the process of evangelising of the younger generations.

3. The people in all these countries have a true hunger for religion, however too often they have no valid criteria for assessing the value of the messages that are being proclaimed to them. They tend to accept the message of the first couriers to arrive. For this very reason these countries provide an easy target for the prozelytisation by new movements or religious sects. These countries and their peoples - and of this I am deeply convinced-can also be a fertile territory for evangelization by the Vincentian community.

THE SLOVAK CONFRES STRIDE TOWARD THE EAST

by Fr. Augustín Slaninka, C.M.

Each continent and nation has its own specific history, its particular character, and special disposition. The cordial and hospitable disposition of the Slav nations is well known. The peoples of Russia and the Ukraine are also religious. It comes as no wonder then that the bonds of communism and atheism weighed heavily on these nations. Some priests were prevented from practicing their ministry publicly, many were forced to convert to the Russian Orthodox religion, others were imprisoned or sent to Siberian concentration camps. Churches were closed, altars and organs removed, sacred vessels profaned. The churches were used as museums, agricultural exhibition halls, stores, halls for state ceremonies, etc. If people prayed or sang in front of a closed church on Christmas Day they were persecuted by the secret service and their children were discriminated against in public.

With Gorbachev and his reforms, God re-entered the public forum. Damaged and ruined buildings were returned to the Church, but there was no one there to serve the people. The requests of the ordinary in *Mukatchevo* (Ukraine) came at just the right time for two of our confreres from the Slovak province with the desire to be sent on mission **ad gentes**. The Father General, Richard McCullen, sent them toward the EAST. In 1990 they helped in the entire territory of the Transcarpathian region of western Ukraine.

There are two pastoral zones. In the first zone (near *U_horod*, the capital of Transcarpathia) the settlements are *Peretchin* (capital of the district), *Turja Remeta*, *Huta*, *Onokovce*, *Zabrodie*, *Zimerky*. The second zone, in a larger area around the town of *Mukatchevo*, includes the settlements of *Velkyj Bereznyj* (capital of the district), *Seredne*, *Dolhoe*, *Koltshinovo*, *Klatshanovo*, *Kushnitsa*. Since last year the pastoral ministry in the first zone has been delegated to the Congregation of the Mission by the ordinary of *Mukatchevo*.

Our confreres, Frs. Ignác Matkulík, Ján Sahnian, and Stanislav Zonták labored in these territories for a long time. Our confrere, Fr. Milan Šášik, who is the nuncio's secretary in *Kiev* (the capital of the Ukraine), has helped out too. Lately, he has ministered pastorally around *Kiev* (traveling distances of up to 500 km).

In all of the parishes we see the vestiges of the long-term atheism. Only old people and children go to church; no one from the middle generations and no men. People who do attend the Divine Liturgy, however, are very open to God's word. The parishes in which sisters (Daughters of Charity and others) work, are apparently more successful. The sisters serve the poor in homes and hospitals. They work as catechists. In some cases, they have permission from the ordinary to celebrate the Liturgy of the Word and to bring Holy Communion to the sick.

In November 1993, Msgr. Antonio Franco, Nuncio for the Ukraine and Apostolic Administrator of the Transcarpathian region, told the faithful in *Peretchin*: "You must respect the clerical shepherds coming from outside. They have come to Transcarpathia from neighboring countries. Yes, we now have religious freedom, but without these priests the faithful could not grow in their spiritual life and in their relations with the Church."

What is the situation of local vocations? God is calling them to our Congregation. In August 1992 I gave a spiritual recollection program in *Velkyj Bereznyj* to young men (about 20), who had come from parishes where our confreres serve. Afterwards, I had a discussion with a few of the participants who were interested in seminary studies. I asked them what they would prefer: to study in a diocesan seminary or to join a community of monks. The answer came from one of them, Vitalij Novak: "You came to the Ukraine. You proclaim the gospel here. We are your fruit. We want to join your Congregation of the Mission!"

At this time, two young men from the Ukraine, Michael and Anatolij, have completed one year as candidates in our Internal Seminary, *Koioe*. They are now continuing their studies at our Major Seminary in *Bijacovce*. Four aspirants, George, Leonid, Miroslav, and Vitalij are preparing for their final examinations. They are living temporarily at St. Vincent's House in *Bratislava*. May they grow and mature in wisdom and prudence. When they return to the Ukraine and re-enter the EAST as priests, may they bear good fruit for the Church and our Congregation.

The Hungarian Vincentian Province under Communism and Today

Istvan Toth, C.M., Provincial

On 10 June 1950 the Communist regime in Hungary began the liquidation of religious orders. The State ordered the confiscation and nationalization of religious houses, and a large number of members of religious orders, men and women, were regrouped and interned. On 7 September 1950, following an agreement with the Hungarian bishops, religious orders were officially dissolved by the government. That is also what happened to the Hungarian Province of the Congregation of the Mission.

At the time of the dissolution the statistics of our Province were as follows: 43 priests, 7 theology students and 28 brothers. At that time there were six confreres working outside the country. The Province, therefore, had 84 confreres living in six houses.

During the persecution, when religious orders were forbidden, four confreres were thrown into prison. Of the others, some were able to get involved in diocesan pastoral work or were employed as cantors, organists or sacristans in various parishes. Still others worked in factories or got some sort of jobs as manual labourers in order to earn their daily bread. They were badly paid and badly housed, as well as being exposed to various annoyances. This situation lasted almost forty years.

During all that time the State kept up constant surveillance of the lives of all members of religious orders, often determining where they lived, where they worked, and even where they could go, checking whether they might be engaging in subversive activity against the State.

Each one had a "contact", a political police officer, who "took him in charge", kept an eye on his life and activities, called him in at times for a "friendly" chat, during which he tried to force him to obey, either by a trick or a threat. All modern historians are in agreement in emphasising that of all the satellite countries of the former USSR religious orders in Hungary had the most difficult and most troublesome time, because of the strictest surveillance by the political police, and the most vigilant control by the sinister Bureau of Ecclesiastical Affairs. The nerves of both men and women were subjected to hard trials every day.

In spite of all the nit-picking surveillance the confreres did not sever their brotherly contacts, and on the occasion of each feast day of the Congregation they met for a common liturgy, followed by a simple brotherly meal. The Sisters were always associated with these get-togethers. This allowed mutual affirmation and strengthening of vocation in the purest spirit of perseverance. Obviously it was not possible in such conditions to think of promoting new vocations in any way whatsoever. The State's security services were always watching.

As a result of what happened on the international political scene, and under pressure from public opinion, a certain thaw set in in 1989, and the State authorities finally allowed members of religious orders take up certain activities once more. However, the right of being a "juridical person" was granted only to those religious communities who could prove that they really possessed at least one house.

We were therefore obliged to purchase quickly a small house in Budapest, the capital, for our Province in order to be able to be legally registered. It was only after that that we were in a position legally to re-claim our former houses, previously confiscated by the State.

All this seems clear and well-ordered on paper, in theory, but the reality was always quite different. For the moment, all we can re-claim is our Provincial House of former times. For the other houses there must be a justifying reason, a religious, cultural or charitable use. Even in such a case the process of handing back our property could be spread over ten years.

In 1989, therefore, we submitted our official request for our former Provincial House, Ménesi ut 26, Budapest. The first part of the building was returned to us on the express condition that we gave \$125,000 to the Cooperative which at present owns the property, in the name of, and instead of, the State. Obviously we cannot pay such a sum without help from our foreign confreres. We firmly hope that this sum will be repaid to us, without interest, later this year, by the State, following promises and the legislative arrangements.

In March 1994 we were able to start the renovation of the building, which was in very bad condition. We began the restoration work with the church, used by the former owner, the Cooperative, as a garage. This work is still going on today.

We hope that by June 1995 the restoration of the church and the repair of the first building of our Provincial House will be complete. The roofs, heating, gutters and downpipes have swallowed a huge amount of money, because the State, which used the buildings for forty years, did not spend a single *forint* either on maintenance or repair, and we have been able to count only on our own resources.

Meanwhile, that is in 1993, we opened our secondary school in Szob. Why did we do so? For an obvious reason, defined in the laws regarding the return of ecclesiastical property. We can reclaim and re-possess a religious house only if it is justified by a definite function or purpose. In former times this is where we had our house for formation and theology. It was our most valued house, on the banks of the Danube. The State set up in it an Institute for the re-education of girls. With the help of the mayor of the town we have been able to open, in one of the side buildings, two classes of secondary education, employing lay teaching staff. This was the only way we could get rid of the State Institute for the re-education of girls. We have, in this way, got back all our former house. The State has officially handed it back, and we have at present 112 pupils there, 82 of them boarders. These pupils are divided into four classes.

To sum up: Our Province at present has the following houses:

- Budapest, Ménesi ut 26, the Provincial House, seminaire, and college;
- Budapest, Szolt fejedelem utja: two confreres with ministry to the Sisters;
- Szob, secondary boarding and day school;
- Oradea, Romania, parish.

The personnel of our province at present is: 16 priests, 2 brothers, 3 theology students and 4 novices.

With God's help we hope that our Hungarian Province will bloom again in the spirit of our father St Vincent.

(Thomas Davitt CM, translator)

Echoes of the Mission in Albania

On return from Albania

by Giuseppe Guerra, C.M.

Provincial of Naples

I went to Albania with an Italian's fellow-feeling and sympathy, Albania being so near and yet so distant, and also with those of a priest who sees such a wide field for missionary work opening up before him, and finally with those of a confrere of the priests and Daughters of Charity who constitute our Vincentian presence in those areas.

As often happens in the centre of great tragedies one's attention is unexpectedly focused on small things. For example, among all my impressions and memories what will remain with me is the contradiction between the small houses lacking everything and the television aerials on their roofs. Not even in Italy have I seen so many dish antennae concentrated in so few square yards. I would have liked to interpret this as a yearning for the transcendent and an image of the prayer of a soul stretching upward, but the more realistic interpretation is that they are a paradoxical sign of total poverty dreaming of a bridge over to a world of material well-being, if only it could be reached magically "via satellite."

The priests and Sisters, helped by a band of good volunteers told me that when they read the biblical words "come, take, eat... without payment" (Isaiah) the "obvious" meaning which Christians and non-Christians alike gather from them is a material non-metaphorical one, and I recalled St Vincent's words: "The hungry can't listen."

The missionary and Vincentian task in Albania today is to know how to combine evangelization and human development in a balanced way. The Christian message which we are called to bring, and to re-launch in a country which for 50 years tried to exterminate it, springs back on us with a boomerang effect and urgently challenges us to give authentic evidence of Christian charity to our evangelization. We will be credible by showing, through deeds rather than words, what being Christian, love, and disinterestedness mean, freed from power and money. And to give, in spite of this, or really because of this freedom, balanced human development.

Easter in Albania

by Biagio Falco, C.M.

The two missionary outposts in Albania already form reference points for the Provinces of the confreres and the Daughters of Charity. Relationships of collaboration and support can do nothing but develop from this.

In Rreshen the work of evangelization forges ahead. At its centre is the work of the two confreres and the Daughters of Charity from the Slovene Province and some other Italian Sisters. The Christian community is growing and providing itself with suitable structures. The other three confreres are exploring the peripheral areas of mountainous Mirdite, often difficult to reach. All told there are already a few dozen villages where they are known, and where they work at building Christian communities, and also building churches.

A theology student from Naples was with them for Holy Week and Easter and was fascinated by the experience, and decided to go back in the summer. He was fired by the real Vincentian atmosphere breathed there, and the evangelization plan developing there.

At the same time Fr. B. Falco and another theology student went to Mollas in the traditionally Moslem south. Daughters of Charity have been there for three years now and their presence is beginning to show results, not only in tackling serious problems of a human and social kind, but also in terms of evangelization. On Easter Sunday, in fact, the 23 catechumens who decided last summer to set out on the road of Christian catechesis were baptised. This group included young adults and a whole family of seven persons. In that way the first Christian community came into being, the first promising seed of the Church in an area where hope is learned gradually, but where these few neophytes are anxious to bear witness to the joy of having met Jesus of Nazareth on their streets, of having answered his invitation, and of belonging to him by choosing him as their ideal and the meaning of their lives.

(Thomas Davitt, C.M., translator)

MENTAL PRAYER: YESTERDAY AND TODAY

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE VINCENTIAN TRADITION

I. ST. VINCENT AND MENTAL PRAYER

1. Some Preliminary Considerations

I use the phrase "mental prayer" purposely in this chapter, rather than "meditation." St. Vincent rarely used the verb *méditer*. He ordinarily employed the phrase *faire oraison*.¹ I recognize, however, the limitations of the phrase "mental prayer" too. St. Vincent aimed not at a mental exercise, but at affective prayer and contemplation. The method which he proposed, which involved use of the mind in focusing on a certain subject, was meant merely as a *method*. It aimed at higher things.

Few things were as important as prayer in St. Vincent's mind.² Speaking to the missionaries, he declares:

*Give me a man of prayer and he will be capable of everything. He may say with the apostle, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me." The Congregation will last as long as it faithfully carries out the practice of prayer, which is like an impregnable rampart shielding the missionaries from all manner of attack.*³

It is interesting to note that the word he uses here is *oraison*. He is speaking about the importance of mental prayer. St. Vincent states quite forcefully on a number of occasions, moreover, that the failure to rise early in the morning to join the community in prayer will be the reason why missionaries fail to persevere in their vocation.⁴

To encourage his sons and daughters to pray, he used many of the similes commonly found in the spiritual writers of his day. He tells them that prayer is for the soul what food is for the body.⁵ It is a "fountain of youth" by which we are invigorated.⁶ It is a mirror in which we see all our blotches and begin to adorn

¹Actually he uses *faire oraison* thirty times, while using *méditer* only six times.

²There have been a number of important studies on Saint Vincent's teaching about prayer. I offer here a brief, selected bibliography that may be helpful to the reader. André Dodin, *En Prière avec Monsieur Vincent* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1982); Joseph Leonard, *Saint Vincent de Paul and Mental Prayer* (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1925); Arnaud D'Agnel, *Saint Vincent de Paul, Maître d'Oraison* (Paris: Pierre Téqui, 1929); Jacques Delarue, *L'Idéal Missionnaire du Prêtre d'après Saint Vincent de Paul* (Paris: Missions Lazaristes, 1947); Antonino Oracajo and Miguel Pérez Flores, *San Vicente de Paul II, Espiritualidad y Seleccion de Escritos* (Madrid: BAC, 1981) 120-135. Today, moreover, there are various collections of the prayers of Saint Vincent, in most of the modern languages. These are similar to those found in Dodin in the work cited above.

³SV XI, 83; cf. III, 539; IX, 416; X, 583.

⁴SV III, 538; IX, 29, 416; X, 566, 583.

⁵SV IX, 416.

⁶SV IX, 217.

ourselves in order to be pleasing to God.⁷ It is refreshment in the midst of difficult daily work in the service of the poor.⁸ He tells the missionaries that it is a sermon that we preach to ourselves.⁹ It is a resource book for the preacher in which he can find the eternal truths that he shares with God's people.¹⁰ It is a gentle dew that refreshes the soul every morning, he tells the Daughters of Charity.¹¹

He urged St. Louise to form the young sisters very well in prayer.¹² He himself gave many practical conferences to them on the subject. It is evident from these conferences that many had difficulties in engaging in mental prayer.¹³ He assures them that it is really quite easy! It is like having a conversation for half an hour. He states, with some irony, that people are usually glad to talk with the king. We should be all the more glad to have a chance to talk with God.¹⁴ He gives numerous examples of those who have learned to pray, in all classes of society: peasant girls, servants, soldiers, actors and actresses, lawyers, statesmen, fashionable women and noblemen of the court, judges. In the various conferences that he gave upon the occasion of the death of Daughters of Charity, he often alluded to their prayerfulness. Speaking of Joan Dalmagne on January 15, 1645 he observed: "She walked in the presence of God."¹⁵

He defines *oraison*¹⁶ as "an elevation of the mind to God by which the soul detaches itself, as it were, from itself so as to seek God in himself. It is a conversation with God, an intercourse of the spirit, in which God interiorly teaches it what it should know and do, and in which the soul says to God what he himself teaches it to ask for."

Among the dispositions necessary for prayer he lists principally humility, indifference, and mortification. The humble recognize their absolute dependence on God. They come to prayer filled with gratitude for God's gifts and a recognition of their own limitations and sinfulness.¹⁷ Indifference enables the person to live in a state of detachment and union with the will of God, so that in coming to prayer he or she seeks only to know and to do what God will reveal.¹⁸ St. Vincent often returns to the need for mortification in order to pray well, particularly in getting out of bed

⁷SV IX, 417.

⁸SV IX, 416.

⁹SV XI, 84.

¹⁰SV VII, 156.

¹¹SV IX, 402.

¹²SV IV, 47.

¹³Cf. SV IV, 390; IX, 216.

¹⁴SV IX, 115.

¹⁵SV IX, 180.

¹⁶SV IX, 419.

¹⁷SV X, 128-129.

¹⁸SV XII, 231.

promptly in the morning. He tells the Daughters on August 2, 1640 that our bodies are like jackasses: accustomed to the low road, they will always follow it!¹⁹

The principal subject of prayer, for Vincent, is the life and teaching of Jesus.²⁰ He emphasized that we must focus again and again on the humanity of Jesus.²¹ He meditated on what Jesus did and taught in the scriptures,²² calling special attention, among Jesus' teachings, to the Sermon on the Mount.²³ Most of all, however, he recommended the passion and cross of Jesus²⁴ as the subject of prayer.

St. Vincent did not hesitate to recommend the use of images²⁵ and books of prayer. Among the latter, he was especially fond of the *Imitation of Christ*,²⁶ Francis de Sales' *Introduction to a Devout Life*²⁷ and *Treatise on the Love of God*,²⁸ Busée's meditations,²⁹ and Louis of Granada's³⁰ *The Sinner's Guide, Memorial of the Christian Life*, and his *Catechism*, as well as Jean Souffarand's *L'Année Chrétienne*.³¹ It is evident that the Vincentians and Daughters used other meditation books too, such as those of Saint-Jure³² and Suffrand.³³

2. Affective Prayer and Contemplation

St. Vincent puts great stress on affective prayer, but, in doing so, he is very reserved about working oneself up into a highly emotional state. He recognizes that the feelings aroused by mental prayer (for example, sorrow at Christ's passion) can be quite advantageous, even though, in themselves, they are not the heart of prayer. The "affections" that he focuses on are geared primarily toward acts of the will. "Affective" love should lead to "effective" love. Our affective acts should tend to become simpler and simpler, leading eventually to contemplation.

Contemplation is a gift from God. While we engage in mental prayer and affective prayer by our own choice, we engage in contemplation only when grasped

¹⁹SV IX, 28-29.

²⁰SV XII, 113.

²¹André Dodin, *En prière avec Monsieur Vincent* (Paris, Desclée de Brouwer, 1982), 197.

²²CR I, 1.

²³SV XII, 125-27.

²⁴SV IX, 32, 217; X, 569; cf. also, IV, 139, 590; I, 134; cf. X, 569: "Is it not a good meditation to have the thought of the passion and death of Our Lord always in one's heart?"

²⁵SV IX, 32-33; X, 569.

²⁶SV I, 382; V, 297.

²⁷SV I, 155-56, 398; III, 551; IX, 13, 44, 50; XII, 2; XIII, 81, 435, 822.

²⁸SV I, 86; XIII, 71, 822.

²⁹SV I, 197; III, 283; IV, 105, 620; VII, 66, 274; VIII, 501.

³⁰SV I, 198, 382; cf. III, 282.

³¹SV VI, 632.

³²SV IX, 109.

³³SV VI, 632.

by God.³⁴ In contemplation we "taste and see" that the Lord is good. Such contemplation, while a pure gift from God, is for St. Vincent the normal issue of the spiritual life. It is quite evident from his conferences that he regarded some of the Daughters of Charity as contemplatives. He encouraged them to become other St. Teresas.³⁵ On July 24, 1660 when he spoke about the virtues of Louise de Marillac he rejoiced at a sister's description of Louise: "As soon as she was alone, she was in a state of prayer."³⁶

3. The Method

The method that St. Vincent teaches is basically the same as the one given by St. Francis de Sales.³⁷ He makes only slight modifications. While putting very high value on affective prayer, he insists again and again on the need for practical resolutions. Particularly in his conferences to the Daughters, there is a lovely mingling of spiritual wisdom and common sense. He is more restrained than Francis de Sales when speaking about the use of the imagination. He warns over and over again about regarding prayer as a speculative study. He cautions about its becoming an occasion for vanity or for "beautiful thoughts" that lead nowhere.

St. Vincent suggested, by way of preparation for prayer, reading in the evening some points that will stimulate mental prayer the next morning.³⁸ He also regarded peaceful silence in the house at night and in the morning as the basic atmosphere for prayer.³⁹

The method he proposes can be presented schematically as follows⁴⁰:

a. *Preparation.* First, you place yourself in the presence of God, through one of several ways: by considering yourself present before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, by thinking of God reigning in heaven or within yourself, by reflecting on his omnipresence, by pondering his presence in the souls of the just. Then you ask God's help to pray well; you also petition the help of the Blessed Virgin, your guardian angel, and patron saints. Then you choose a subject for meditation, such as a mystery of religion, a moral or theological virtue, or some maxim of our Lord's.

b. *Body.* You begin to consider the subject (e.g. the passion of Christ). If the subject is a virtue, you reflect on the motives for loving and practicing the virtue. If it is a mystery, you think of the truth contained in the mystery. As you reflect, you

³⁴SV IX, 420.

³⁵SV IX, 424.

³⁶SV X, 728.

³⁷Cf. SV X, 587; cf. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life*, "The Second Part of the Introduction," ch. 1-10; *Treatise on the Love of God* 1.IV, c. 1-15; cf. also A. Dodin, *François de Sales/Vincent de Paul, les deux amis* (Paris: OEIL, 1984) 65-67.

³⁸SV IX, 426; X, 590-91; XII, 64.

³⁹SV IX, 3-7, 120, 219.

⁴⁰Cf. SV IX, 420; X, 573; XI, 406.

seek to arouse acts of the will (e.g., love of Christ who suffered so much for us), by which, under the impulse of grace, you express love of God, sorrow for sin, or desire for perfection. You then make concrete resolutions.

c. *Conclusion.* You thank God for this time of meditation, and for the graces granted during prayer. You place before God the resolutions made. Then, you offer to God the whole prayer that you have made, with a request for help in carrying out the resolutions.

4. Two Related Teachings

a. St. Vincent encouraged the members of his two communities to share their prayer with one another. He recommended that this be done every two or three days.⁴¹ He had learned this practice from others. St. Philip Neri's Oratorians,⁴² for example, were already engaging in repetition of prayer. When St. Vincent recommends it to the Daughters, moreover, he cites the example of Madame Acarie.⁴³ In his conferences to the Daughters, we find wonderful examples of the simplicity with which they shared their thoughts in prayer. He often notes, in addition, how well the brothers⁴⁴ in the Congregation shared their prayer. He tells the missionaries on August 15, 1659 that shared prayer has been a great grace in the Company.⁴⁵

b. Another teaching of St. Vincent, frequently found in his conferences to the Daughters of Charity, is the practice of "leaving God for God."⁴⁶ The poor often arrived unexpectedly and made urgent demands on the Daughters. St. Vincent encouraged them to respond, telling them that they would be leaving God whom they were encountering in prayer in order to find him in the person of the poor. At the same time, St. Vincent urged the Daughters and the Vincentians never to miss prayer.⁴⁷ It is striking that, though he was very firm about the rule of rising early in the morning and never missing prayer, St. Vincent brings his usual common sense to the application of the rule. He tells the Daughters⁴⁸: "You see, charity is above all the rules and it is necessary that everything be related to it. She is a noble woman. You should do what she orders. In such a case it is to leave God for God. God calls you to prayer, and at the same time he calls you to the poor sick person. That is called leaving God for God."

II HORIZON SHIFTS THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN ST. VINCENT'S DAY AND OURS

⁴¹SV IX, 421-422.

⁴²Cf. SV XI, 293-95.

⁴³SV IX, 4.

⁴⁴SV IX, 421-22.

⁴⁵SV XII, 288.

⁴⁶SV IX, 319; X, 95, 226, 541, 542, 595, 693.

⁴⁷SV VIII, 368-39; IX, 426.

⁴⁸SV X, 595.

Three changes in horizon significantly influence attitudes toward prayer today.

1. The liturgical movement

St. Vincent was very concerned about liturgy. He noted that priests often celebrated Mass badly and that they hardly knew how to hear confessions. As part of the retreats for ordinands, he prescribed that they receive instruction on celebrating the liturgy well. But, within this positive context, he was still very much a man of his time. The emphasis of the era was on the exact observance of rubrics. There was little stress on liturgy as "communal celebration," with the active participation of all the faithful. Much of liturgy was private, as in the daily celebration of individual Masses, perhaps with a server. Liturgical celebrations were often regarded more as part of the priest's "personal piety," rather than of his leadership of a local community in prayer.

The liturgical movement, Vatican II, and the implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy have changed attitudes and practices dramatically. The Constitution on the Liturgy proclaimed liturgy as the summit toward which the action of the Church tends and at the same time the fountain from which all virtue emanates.⁴⁹ Of course, this implies liturgy is not all of prayer. As a "summit" it must rest on a solid foundation. Nonetheless, as is evident from the enormous energy that the Church has invested in liturgical reform over the last 30 years, liturgy plays an extremely important part in the life of the Christian community. Today we speak of a "liturgical piety."

2. Renewed interest in personal prayer

At the very same time, and not just among Christians, enthusiasm for personal prayer is being revived. Courses in seminaries, novitiates, and institutes for spirituality are focusing on some of the classics that teach methods of prayer; for example, *The Cloud of Unknowing*,⁵⁰ *The Introduction to a Devout Life*,⁵¹ *The Way of a Pilgrim*.⁵² There has been renewed research and interest in the prayer of oriental religions and the use of mantras. Thomas Merton called our attention to the rich tradition of the oriental Church in regard to contemplation⁵³ and the "wisdom of the desert." Karl Rahner too focused on the central place of prayer in Christian spirituality.⁵⁴

⁴⁹Sacrosanctum Concilium 10.

⁵⁰Anonymous, *The Cloud of Unknowing* (New York: Doubleday, 1973).

⁵¹Francis de Sales, *Introduction to a Devout Life*, translated and edited by John Ryan (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972).

⁵²Anonymous, *The Way of a Pilgrim* (New York: Doubleday, 1978).

⁵³Thomas Merton, *Contemplative Prayer* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971).

⁵⁴Cf. K. Rahner, *Spiritual Exercises* (New York, Herder and Herder, 1966).

Concrete signs of this renewed interest are evident in prayer groups, the charismatic movement, the rise of new communities, and the updated practices of many already existing religious communities.

3. There has been a shift in emphasis from the personal to the interpersonal to the social.

One of the persistent dangers in Christian spirituality is "intimism," a kind of piety in which the individual becomes absorbed in himself and gradually cut off from interpersonal and social responsibilities. The person remains passive, almost immune from the contagion of the world.

St. Vincent certainly avoided that temptation! But some of his contemporaries did not. Various forms of quietism were condemned in his day.⁵⁵ Quietists stressed the exclusive efficacy of grace in a corrupt world and advocated total abandonment to God's action, with the individual remaining passive.

Much of the piety of St. Vincent's day, even when it took forms healthier than quietism, tended to be rather individualistic. In the 20th century we have experienced greater emphasis on the interpersonal. Personalist philosophy has had profound influence on contemporary thought and practice. Martin Buber⁵⁶ made the "I-Thou" a part of our vocabulary today.

Beyond that, we have seen an increasing emphasis on the social and societal, with a growing consciousness of the interrelatedness⁵⁷ of all persons and of all human reality. The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World⁵⁸ proclaims that the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anguish of contemporary men and women, especially the poor and those suffering affliction, are the joys and hopes, the sorrows and anguish of Christ's disciples too. The social encyclicals over the last century have more and more emphasized Christians' responsibility for justice in the world.⁵⁹ The Church's preferential option for the poor is stressed again and again.⁶⁰ Christians are encouraged to develop a global worldview and to play their part in working for the "transformation of the world."⁶¹

These three horizon shifts, of course, in no way negate the importance of mental prayer. Rather, they set the context for it. If liturgy is the "source and

⁵⁵For an interesting treatment, cf. L. Dupré, "Jansenism and Quietism," *Christian Spirituality III, Post-Reformation and Modern* (New York: Crossroad, 1989) 130-141.

⁵⁶Cf. M. Buber, *The Way of Man According to the Teaching of Hasidism* (Secaucus, NJ: Citadel, 1966).

⁵⁷Cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 26.

⁵⁸*Gaudium et Spes*, 1.

⁵⁹Synod of Bishops, 1971, *Justice in the World* in AAS LXIII (1971) 924.

⁶⁰Cf. *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 42.

⁶¹AAS LXIII (1971) 924.

summit" of the Church's prayerful action, then reflection on the mystery of Christ, the gospels, and the human condition is one of its foundation stones. If contemporary men and women, especially the young, are showing renewed interest in various prayer forms, then mental prayer, or "meditation," is finding a significant place among these. If there is a sharp tendency to criticize "intimism" in spirituality and a movement toward emphasis on the interpersonal and the social, then these are ways of broadening the horizons of mental prayer, as well as sharpening its focus.

III MENTAL PRAYER TODAY

Karl Rahner puts the matter utterly clearly: "Personal experience of God is the heart of all spirituality."⁶² St. Vincent knew this, so he encouraged the confreres and the Daughters of Charity again and again to pray.

The Common Rule which he wrote for the Congregation of the Mission called for an hour of mental prayer each day.⁶³ The Vincentian Constitutions of 1984 have modified this, speaking of an hour of personal prayer daily according to the tradition of St. Vincent.⁶⁴ While this prescription is clearly broader than that of the Common Rule, it surely involves a significant period of mental prayer.⁶⁵ The original Rule of the Daughters of Charity demanded two half-hour periods;⁶⁶ their present Constitutions⁶⁷ call for one hour of *oraison* daily.

Today, especially in light of the second horizon shift mentioned above, a rich variety of methods might be proposed as a help in mental prayer. Let me group these schematically under four headings.

PRAYER OF THE MIND	PRAYER OF THE IMAGINATION	PRAYER OF THE HEART	LECTIO DIVINA
1. Nature - What is humility? - search the scriptures - search the writings of	1. Activate the imagination by focusing on a gospel scene. 2. Take the part	1. At the beginning of prayer, take a minute or two to quiet down and then move in faith to God	1. <i>Lectio</i> - What is the text actually saying?

⁶²K. Rahner, "The Spirituality of the Church of the Future," in *Theological Investigations* XX, 150.

⁶³CR X, 7; cf. also, SV I, 563; VIII, 368.

⁶⁴C 47. For a clear presentation of the history and an explanation of the context of Article 47, cf. Miguel Pérez Flores, "Oración personal diaria, en privado o en común, durante una hora," *Anales* 95 (#3; March 1987) 162-168.

⁶⁵*Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission* 19; henceforth, S.

⁶⁶*Rules of the Daughters of Charity*, IX, 1-2.

⁶⁷*Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity* 2.14; cf. also, SV IX, 29.

<p>St. Vincent - search some classical or contemporary writer</p> <p>2. Motives - Why should I be humble? - search the scriptures - search the writings of St. Vincent - search some classical or contemporary writer</p> <p>3. Means - How can I grow in humility? - doing humble things - allowing myself to be evangelized by the poor - focusing on the good in others rather than their faults - developing a servant's attitude</p>	<p>of one of the persons in the scene.</p> <p>3. Ask questions. What? Who? Why? How?</p> <p>4. "Be there" in your imagination, returning to the scene as a bystander.</p> <p>5. If the meditation is on a teaching, read the text three times but in varied ways.</p>	<p>dwelling within you.</p> <p>2. After resting a bit in the center of faith-full love, take up a simple word or phrase that expresses your response and begin to let it repeat itself within you.</p> <p>3. Whenever in the course of prayer you become aware of anything else, gently return to the prayer word.</p> <p>4. At the end of prayer, take several minutes to come out, praying the Our Father.</p>	<p>2. <i>Meditatio</i> - What does it say <i>to me</i>?</p> <p>3. <i>Oratio</i> - Speaking with God, using the text as a starting point.</p> <p>4. <i>Contemplatio</i> - Becoming absorbed in the person of Jesus.</p>
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Let me illustrate each of these methods briefly.

1. *Prayer of the mind*. This is basically the method that St. Vincent proposes. A Vincentian using this method to meditate on humility would proceed as follows:

a. Nature - What is humility?

He would search the scriptures for sections that speak of humility. He might reflect, for example, on Lk 1:46, the Magnificat, and Mary's gratitude for God's many gifts. Or he might turn to Phil 2:5, in which Jesus takes on the form of a servant, humbling himself and becoming obedient even to death. Or he might focus on Mk 9:33, where Jesus speaks about the humility required of leaders. He asks: what is this humility that the gospels recommend? What does it consist of? Little by little, he may come to formulate personal convictions, such as: Humility is a recognition of my creatureliness, that I am totally dependent upon God. It is a recognition of my redeemedness, that I sin often and need God's help to be converted. I am slow to get excited about gospel values. I speak too lightly about others' negative points. I comply too easily with unjust social structures. But I also trust that the Lord forgives me eagerly, and I have great confidence in his power to heal me. Humility is also gratitude for God's many gifts. The humble person, like Mary, cries out that "He who is mighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name."⁶⁸ It involves a servant's attitude. We are called, like Jesus, "not to be served but to serve."⁶⁹ Humility also entails allowing myself to be evangelized by the poor, "our Lords and Masters," as St. Vincent liked to call them. It involves listening well and learning.

Another approach would be for him to search the writings of St. Vincent, or the Vincentian tradition, concerning humility. He might look at the Common Rules II, 6-7 or X, 13-14, and ponder the steps St. Vincent describes for acquiring humility. He could also look into what classical or contemporary writers say on the subject.

The starting-point for this method is thinking, reasoning. This is very important at some stage in the spiritual life, since a person must think through, in a reasonable way, his personal values and what they mean in the concrete; otherwise he might wind up with a fuzzy view of the gospels. It is important that a member of the community be able to articulate, in a way that is coherent both for himself and for others, what his values are.

b. Motives - Why should I be humble?

The same sources mentioned above provide ample motives. Mt 18:4 says that the humble are of the greatest importance in the kingdom of God. Phil 2:9 says that it is precisely because of this attitude, which is found in Christ Jesus, that God highly exalted him. St. Vincent states that humility is the core of evangelical perfection and the heart of the spiritual life.⁷⁰ He also states that it engenders charity.⁷¹

⁶⁸Lk 1:49.

⁶⁹Mt 20:28.

⁷⁰CR II, 7.

⁷¹SV X, 530.

Contemporary writers emphasize the need for us to recognize our utter dependence on God, and to sing out our praise and gratitude for his gifts.

Once again here the emphasis is on thinking and reasoning, but these are geared toward acts of the will; e.g., trust in the Lord, love, gratitude, submission to his will.

c. Means - How can I grow in humility?

The missionary who is meditating might come up with a number of means:

- pans
1. doing humble things, like cleaning the house or emptying the bed-pan of the sick
 2. allowing myself to be evangelized by the poor
 3. focusing on the good in others rather than their faults
 4. developing a servant's attitude, rather than a master's.

In all of this it is important to recognize that the goal is not merely reflection, mental exercise, or a sharpening of one's reasoning or verbal skills. The immediate goal is affective prayer, letting one's heart go and entering into conversation with the Lord. This conversation should result in concrete resolutions and change of life. It will, if we are faithful, become simpler, less verbal, and will lead to contemplation, where more and more God seizes the heart.

Prayer of the mind is very important at various stages in a person's life. At the time of initial formation, especially, it is imperative that a young man or woman come to grips with the *meaning* of gospel values. Unless the person can articulate those values in a way that makes sense both to himself and to others, the gospels will eventually seem irrelevant. There is a whole series of topics that a Vincentian or Daughter of Charity might very profitably ponder. In fact, St. Vincent led his Communities through similar topics by asking them to engage in mental prayer and then joining with them in conferences and repetitions of prayer. At different stages in our initial and ongoing formation we might gain much by using prayer of the mind on the following themes:

- Jesus' deep human love
- his relationship with God as Father
- the kingdom he preached
- his community with the apostles
- his prayer
- sin
- Jesus' eagerness to forgive/his healing power
- his attitude as a servant
- his love of truth/simplicity
- his humility
- his thirst for justice

- his longing for peace
- his struggle with temptation
- the cross
- the resurrection
- Jesus' obedience to the Father's will
- Jesus' gentleness/meekness
- mortification
- apostolic zeal
- poverty
- celibacy
- obedience
- Jesus' joy and thanksgiving.

2. *Prayer of the imagination.* This is basically the Ignatian method. A Daughter of Charity using this method to meditate on the passion narratives, for example, might proceed as follows:

- a. Activate the imagination.

She goes, in her imagination, to the scene. She looks at the local setting, Jerusalem, teeming with people who have come to celebrate the Pasch. She tries to hear the sounds of the crowd, to feel the heat of the day, to sense the smells, to taste what the participants might have tasted. She looks around the scene to see who is there: the faces of excited pilgrims, the pharisees, the scribes, the Romans, Jesus and his followers. She listens to what they are saying. She feels what they are feeling. She notes their personal characteristics.

- b. Take the part of one of the persons in the scene.

Taking the part of Jesus, she imagines, even in the smallest details, what he is thinking, feeling, doing. She loves with him. She grieves with him. She has compassion with him. She aches with him. She is abandoned with him.

- c. Ask questions.

She puts a number of questions to herself. Which person am I in the scene? Why? What is it about Jesus here that captivates me, that draws me to love him? Is there some way he would like me to live out what he is doing in this scene? Who? What? Why? When? How? For whom? Does it all make a difference?

- d. "Be there" in your imagination.

The meditator returns to the scene, but this time as a bystander. She simply watches, listens, and lets the scene work upon her. She stands by the cross beside Mary and John. She takes her place with the spectators in the crowd. She is near Peter or the penitent thief.

e. If the meditation is on a *teaching* (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount) she reads the text three times, pausing after each reading: "Happy are the poor in spirit; the reign of God is theirs."⁷²

The first time she asks: What did Jesus *say*? Was I concentrating? She might examine some commentary too to find the precise meaning of his words. Who are the "poor in spirit"? What is the "reign of God" promised to them?

The second time she tries to listen more attentively. What does Jesus *mean*? What does he mean *for me*? Often the poor do not seem happy to me. Why does Jesus say that they are? Am I among the poor in spirit? Am I really happy?

The third time she speaks directly with Jesus or with his Father about the text. She may even visualize the conversation, sitting with Jesus and his followers by a fire at the lakeside in the evening, feeling some awe, but at the same time deep love. She says to him: "Lord, help me to understand what this is all about. I really want to be poor in spirit, to rely completely on you. I know you love me. Help me, please."

3. *Prayer of the heart*. Today this is commonly called centering prayer. Its classical expression is found in works like the *Cloud of Unknowing* or *The Way of a Pilgrim*. One of its well known contemporary proponents is Basil Pennington.⁷³ It can be summarized in four rules.

Rule 1 - *At the beginning of prayer, take a minute or two to quiet down and then move on in faith to God dwelling within you.*

A lay person or member of a community engaging in this type of prayer would seek first to find a quiet place. She then assumes a relaxed position. She might try to breath deeply and regularly in order to calm down and then begin to focus on God. As a help, she might direct her attention to the words of Gal 2:20: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me. Of course, I still live my human life, but it is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Rule 2 - *After resting a bit at the center in faith-full love, take up a simple single word or phrase that expresses your response and begin to let it repeat itself within you.*

She tries to do this simply, with no strain. She chooses a word or phrase that expresses what is deepest in her heart: God, love, the Jesus prayer. She repeats it slowly, gently: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Or perhaps: "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."⁷⁴ Or: "I love you, Lord; thank

⁷²Mt 5:3.

⁷³Cf. M. Basil Pennington, *Call to the Center* (New York: Doubleday, 1990) 199-201; "Centering Prayer: Refining the Rules," *Review for Religious* 46:3 (May-June 1986) 386-93.

⁷⁴1 Sam 3:9.

you for your love." There are many possible mantric phrases: "There is nothing I shall want."⁷⁵ "A pure heart create for me."⁷⁶ "Give me the joy of your help."⁷⁷ "Live through love in his presence."⁷⁸ "Your love is better than life."⁷⁹ "You are precious in my eyes."⁸⁰ "I came that they may have life."⁸¹ "Be still! Know that I am God."⁸²

Rule 3 - *Whenever in the course of prayer you become aware of anything else, gently return to the prayer word.*

Other thoughts and images always intrude. The pray-er, for example, might find herself examining the prayer word for its meaning, but this should be avoided. She simply repeats the word and lets her heart go to God.

Rule 4 - *At the end of prayer, take several minutes to come out, praying the Our Father.*

This type of prayer moves deeply into interiority. It is not good to be jarred out of it (this can be like waking up startled from a deep sleep). Rather, the pray-er should relax, be silent for a few minutes, say the Lord's Prayer, recalling God's presence, and then conclude.

4. *Lectio Divina.* A fourth method of prayer, one commonly used in the Church's long monastic tradition, is *lectio divina*. Classical expressions of this method can be found in the writings of the great monastic founders.

The scriptures are the primary, though by no means exclusive, source of *lectio divina*. Sacred scripture is central in the life of the Church. The Constitution on the Liturgy tells us that "in the sacred books the Father who is in heaven meets his children with great love and speaks with them; and the force in the Word of God is so great that it remains the support and energy of the Church, the strength of faith for her children, the food of the soul, the pure and perennial source of spiritual life."⁸³ The bible is, for all believers, the water that gives life to the aridity of human existence,⁸⁴ the food that is sweeter than honey,⁸⁵ the hammer that shatters hardened indifference,⁸⁶ and the two-edged sword that pierces obstinate refusal.⁸⁷

⁷⁵Ps 23.

⁷⁶Ps 51.

⁷⁷Ps 51.

⁷⁸Eph 1:3-12.

⁷⁹Ps 63.

⁸⁰Is 43:1-5.

⁸¹Jn 10:1-10.

⁸²Ps 46:10.

⁸³Dei Verbum, 21

⁸⁴Is 55:10-11.

⁸⁵Ps 19:11.

⁸⁶Jer 23:29.

St. Vincent's prayer and spirituality were deeply rooted in the scriptures. Abelly, his first biographer, said of him: "He seemed to suck meaning from passages of the scriptures as a baby sucks milk from its mother. And he extracted the core and substance from the scriptures so as to be strengthened and have his soul nourished by them...and he did this in such a way that in all his words and actions he appeared to be filled with Jesus Christ."⁸⁸ He also often recommended the use of other books to aid in praying.

Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, the Archbishop of Milan, frequently proposes the use of *lectio divina* in his talks to young people.⁸⁹ He describes its methodology as follows:

a. *Lectio*. A young person should read the biblical text again and again, trying to understand it in its immediate context and within the context of the scriptures as a whole. The focus here is on the question: What is the *text* actually saying? Martini suggests to young people that they use a pen to underline significant nouns or verbs or adjectives or adverbs and that they make marginal notes. The text is read slowly so that the reader lets the bible speak to him. It will often reveal different things at different times in the reader's life.

b. *Meditatio*. If the emphasis in *lectio* is on what the text itself says, then the accent in *meditatio* is on a further question: What does it say *to me*? What are the values, the dispositions, the changes in my life, that it is demanding? What is it saying *today*, in the here and now, as the living Word of God, as the voice of the Spirit?

c. *Oratio*. Here the focus is on praying. The biblical message arouses a response. It may be fear of the Lord because I am so far from living out what the word of God is actually asking of me. Or it may be adoration of the living God who reveals himself so graciously to me in his word. It may be a cry for help to put the word of God into practice better. In all cases *oratio* consists of speaking with God, using the text and its message as a starting point. The focus of *oratio* is: What does the word of God *move me to say*?

d. *Contemplatio*. Prayer becomes *contemplatio* when it goes beyond a particular passage and becomes absorbed in the person of Jesus who is present behind and in every page of the scriptures. At this point prayer is no longer an exercise of the mind but is praise and silence before the one who is being revealed, who speaks to me, who listens to me, who is present to me as a friend, as a healer, as a Savior. In *contemplatio*, the pray-er tastes the word of God and experiences God's life within himself or herself.

⁸⁷Heb 4:12.

⁸⁸Abelly, Book III, 72-73.

⁸⁹C. Martini, "Educati dalla Parola, Meditazione del Cardinale Arcivescovo Carlo Maria Martini," *Annali della Missione* 100 (# 3; Luglio-Settembre 1993) 203-217.

Cardinal Martini adds that those who enter into *lectio divina* will inevitably, as the fathers of the Church often pointed out, experience four movements in the process. Actually, these terms, or similar ones, are commonly used to describe what goes on as one employs other methods too; e.g., Ignatian prayer.

a. *Consolatio*. Here one tastes God's goodness, the grandeur of the world he created, his redeeming presence. The pray-er rejoices in the mystery of Christ, in God's love, in the beatitudes. Consolation is the joy of the Holy Spirit that fills the heart as we contemplate the mystery of Christ revealed in the scriptures.

b. *Discretio*. Consolation gives rise to spiritual discernment, the capacity to evaluate the various inner movements that I sense in my heart, to distinguish the good from the bad, to recognize my conflicting motives. It is the ability to identify, within my present situation (personal, ecclesial, social, civil), those things that resonate with the gospel message and those things that are discordant with it. It is the capacity to grasp the better, the more, the spirit of the beatitudes. It is the ability to think more and more as Christ did.

c. *Deliberatio*. Discernment leads to decision-making, life-choices, or a commitment to act according to the word of God. It is in the phase of *deliberatio* that *lectio divina* gives birth to concrete judgments based on the gospel.

d. *Actio*. This step is the fruit of one's prayer. The pray-er performs works of justice, charitable service, attentive listening, labor, sacrifice, forgiveness.

IV SOME PRACTICAL RULES FOR PRAYING

I offer these "rules" for the use of those who seek to pray daily. They are not abstract principles; nor are they conclusions which are provable by some deductive method. They are simply a group of practical rules that experience teaches are helpful for those who want to pray. While I take responsibility for their formulation, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to others who have taught them to me.

1. Faithful prayer requires discipline. St. Vincent alluded to this when he spoke of mortification as a prerequisite for prayer. It is important to fix a prayer time and to have a prayer place. Likewise, it is most helpful to go to bed at a reasonable hour if one is to rise early to pray. Today, when there are many diversions that can easily distract us from prayer time (e.g., television, radio, films, etc.), one must often renounce some good, interesting alternatives in order to be a faithful pray-er.

2. Mental prayer demands quiet. Naturally, an apostolic community cannot be completely cut off from its contacts with the poor, as is evident in St. Vincent's conferences to the Daughters of Charity. Nonetheless, one should choose a prayer

time when noise and interruptions are unlikely, when telephones and doorbells will not be ringing. That is one of the reasons why communities have traditionally chosen to pray early in the morning before the busy pace of the day's activities begins. Dietrich Bonhoeffer states: "Silence is nothing else but waiting for God's Word."⁹⁰

3. It is important to be acquainted with various methods, by having, so to speak, a "prayer repertory."⁹¹ The four types of prayer described earlier in this article may be useful in this regard. Different methods will be appropriate at different times in life. We may find ourselves, at later stages in life, returning to methods we used earlier.

4. The pray-er needs to be nourished. Some of the principal elements in the diet are the reading of sacred scripture, good spiritual reading, and, especially in an apostolic spirituality, live, reflective contact with Christ in the person of the poor.

5. Prayer should result in renewed self-definition.⁹² Through it, our values should become redefined and take on an increasingly evangelical character. Prayer should lead to continued conversion. It should result in acts of charity and justice. This is why St. Vincent insisted on "practical resolutions."

6. The pray-er should not focus too much on what *he* or *she* says. What God is communicating is more important. In the long run, prayer is a relationship. While words have a privileged place in a relationship, nonetheless communication goes far beyond words. Some of its deepest forms are non-verbal. Those who are deeply in love can often spend significant periods of time together while saying very little. "Mere" presence is a sign of fidelity. Jesus, in fact, warns us against the multiplication of words in prayer.⁹³

7. Since we are needy, our prayer will often be one of petition, but it is very important that our prayer also take on the other biblical "moods": praise, thanksgiving, wonder, confidence, anguish, abandonment, resignation. Typically Christian prayer is filled with thanksgiving.

8. As Jesus recommends,⁹⁴ we should often pray to do or accept God's will, however it might manifest itself in our lives. This is what St. Vincent meant when he recommended indifference as a predisposition for prayer. This is especially important in times of discernment.

⁹⁰D. Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: SCM, 1954).

⁹¹Wilkie Au, *By Way of the Heart, Toward a Holistic Christian Spirituality* (New Jersey: Paulists, 1989) 92.

⁹²Margaret Miles, *Practicing Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1988) 142.

⁹³Mt 6:7; cf. SV XII, 328, where, in the context of praying the office, Saint Vincent, following Chrysostom, compares mindless rattling of words to the barking of dogs!

⁹⁴Mt 6:10.

9. Since we are human, and therefore embodied, physical and environmental conditions can help or inhibit prayer. Images, candles, incense, the beauty of the setting, a tabernacle, lighting, music --- all can be aids to our praying.

10. Distractions are inevitable, since the mind is incapable of focusing on a single object over long periods of time. When distractions are persistent, it is often best to focus on them rather than flee from them, and to make them a topic of our conversation with the Lord.

11. Sharing prayer can be very useful. Each of us has limited insights. We can profit very much from those of others. The faith-witness of others can deepen our own faith. This is surely one of the reasons why St. Vincent encouraged frequent repetition of prayer. Though that practice became over-stylized in the course of the years, it can find many more flexible forms today.

12. Faithful praying demands perseverance. The search for God is a long journey, in which the pray-er climbs mountains, descends into valleys, and sometimes gets stuck on ledges. St. Vincent encourages the Daughters of Charity by telling them that St. Teresa spent 20 years without being able to meditate even though she took part faithfully in prayer.⁹⁵ Sometimes we may feel that we are "wasting time"⁹⁶ in prayer, or we may experience long- lasting "dryness,"⁹⁷ and be tempted to quit. We should resist the temptation. The journey will bring great rewards.

13. The ultimate criterion of prayer is always *life*: "By their fruits you shall know them."⁹⁸ Unfortunately, experience demonstrates that some of those who pray quite regularly may be very difficult to live with. One might, charitably, say that they would perhaps be even worse if they did not pray! But at the same time one might legitimately ask if their prayer has any real connection with life. Ultimately, one cannot judge, in an individual case, what is really going on between God and a person in the depths of his or her being. But one can surely conclude, in general, that there is something very much wrong with prayer that does not result in change of life.

"Let us give ourselves to God," St. Vincent says repeatedly to the Vincentians, as well as to the Daughters of Charity.⁹⁹ He has deep confidence in God, whom he sees both as father and mother,¹⁰⁰ into whose hands he can place himself and his works. The journal written by Jean Gicquel recounts how St. Vincent told Frs.

⁹⁵SV IX, 424.

⁹⁶SV IX, 50.

⁹⁷SV IX, 634.

⁹⁸Mt 7:20, 12:33; Lk 6:44.

⁹⁹For a striking statement of Saint Vincent's attitude before God, cf. SV XII, 133-134, 146-147.

¹⁰⁰SV V, 534; VI, 444; VIII, 55, 256; X, 503.

Almeras, Berthe, and Gicquel, on June 7, 1660, just four months before his death: "To be consumed for God, to have no goods nor power except for the purpose of consuming them for God. That is what our Savior did himself, who was consumed for love of his Father."¹⁰¹

This great man of action was also a contemplative, caught up in God and consumed by his love. His contemplation of God's love overflowed into practical love for the poor. He encourages his sons and daughters:

*Let us all give ourselves completely to the practice of prayer since it is by it that all good things come to us. If we persevere in our vocation, it is thanks to prayer. If we succeed in our employments, it is thanks to prayer. If we do not fall into sin, it is thanks to prayer. If we remain in charity and if we are saved, all that happens thanks to God and thanks to prayer. Just as God refuses nothing to prayer, so also he grants almost nothing without prayer.*¹⁰²

¹⁰¹SV XIII, 179.

¹⁰²SV XI, 407.

Bibliography

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

He Hears the Cry of the Poor

Published by New City Press

I offer this small book to all those who are seeking to give their lives to God in the service of the poor.

St. Vincent's are filled with good humor, wisdom, spiritual insight, and sound practical advice. His talks to the Daughters of Charity have warmth and charm. His conferences to the missionaries vibrate with Christ-centeredness and missionary zeal.

But it is not enough to study him. St. Vincent holds out an alternative world to us and he asks us to enter into it. It is a world where the poor are the masters and where we are their servants. His is a particular interpretation, and today an especially appealing one, of the world to which Jesus invites us in the gospel. It is a world where the key attitudes are simplicity, humility, and charity, and where the cross is the "royal road." It is a world where the last are first and the first are last. It is a world which, in some ways, is upside down.

May I invite you to enter into St. Vincent's world?

Frances Ryan, D.C. and John Rybolt, C.M.

Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, Rules, Conferences, and Writings

in the collection *Classics of Western Spirituality* # 84 (Paulist Press)

Here is a worthy contribution to the *Classics of Western Spirituality* series that focuses on Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. It presents the main lines of the spiritual teaching of these two Vincentian founders who left an indelible mark on the Church of France in the 1600's and beyond to the present. The introduction situates Vincent and Louise within the framework of the spirituality of seventeenth century France and provides solid background information on them, as well as a true use of their spirituality and their influence on us today.

Msgr. Franc Rodé, C.M.

Memory and Conscience; Church plans in Slovenia. (in Slovene)

After a rather personal presentation of the Christian past in Slovenia, from the 8th century to our own day, the author expounds the key ideas from which arise the Catholic awareness and the sense of belonging to the Church. The book closes with a lengthy reflection on the tasks of Christians in a country only just freed from communism, and in the midst of a people who have just gained their independence. Our confrere's work undoubtedly meets a fairly general expectation, hence its immediate success. A second edition is being prepared.

Jaime Corera CM

El signo de estos tiempos. Contribucion a una teologia vicentiana de la liberacion.

Editorial La Milagrosa, Garcia de Paredes, 45, 28010 Madrid

This book is not on liberation theology, but an aid to reflecting on certain ideas and practices of St Vincent de Paul from the special perspective of liberation theology.

Jaime Corera gives us a preliminary sketch of Vincentian liberation theology in ten clarification theses:

1. The personal basis: the (preferential) option for the poor.
2. The mystical basis: Jesus Christ, a model of following the option for the poor.
3. The historical basis: seeking the kingdom of God and his justice.
4. The theological basis: the need for thought-out action.
5. Methodology: see, judge, act.
6. Liberation of the poor, a sign for all times.
7. Beneficial action, political action.
8. Liberation of the poor and "architecture" of the Church.
9. The liberation of those who are not poor.
10. The universal sense of liberation theology.

(Translator Thomas Davitt CM)