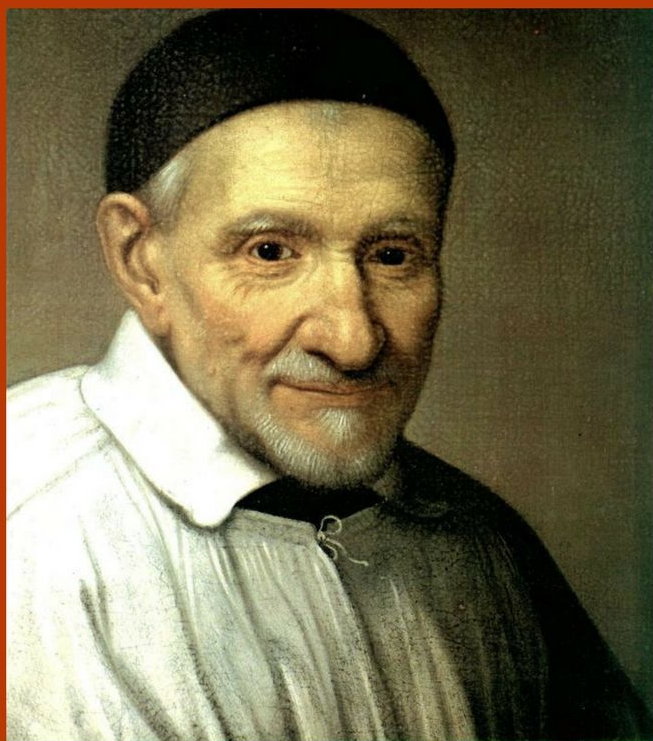


VINGENTIANA

**39th year- N° 6:
November/December
1995**



FEATURE:

**Serving the poor
Spiritually and Corporally**

Holy See

Decrees of the Apostolic Penitenziaria

At the request of our Procurer to the Holy See, Fr. Modesto López, the Apostolic Penitenziaria has renewed in perpetuity the decrees granting, under certain conditions, a plenary indulgence to nine Vincentian associations. The previous decrees, granted ten years ago, had expired.

The text of each of these decrees is identical, with the exception of §2 which specifies the dates of the liturgical celebrations, proper to each association, on which one can obtain the indulgence. We will, therefore, produce the complete text of the decree only once and we will add for each association the §2 which corresponds to it, with the number of its decree.

* * * * *

APOSTOLIC PENITENZIARIA

Prot. N. 116/95/I

The APOSTOLIC PENITENZIARIA willingly granting the request presented by the Very Rev. Robert P. Maloney, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and Spiritual Moderator of the Association of the *Novena of Prayer in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal* (1), whose seat is in this venerable city, by mandate of the Roman pontiff renews **in perpetuity** Rescript N_ 12/85/I, of March 4, 1985, by which it conceded to the members of the aforementioned Association the gift of a plenary indulgence, obtained under the usual conditions (sacramental confession, Holy Communion, and prayer for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff) in rejecting affection for all sort of sin, provided that they express or renew, at least interiorly, the intention of observing their own statutes:

1. On the day of the enrollment in the Association;
2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal, of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Catherine Labouré, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Association.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, at the seat of the Penitenziaria, October 27, 1995.

* * * * *

The same Decrees were made the same day for the associations which follow. We will limit ourselves, then, to giving the N_ of the Decree, the name of the association and the text of §2 which is proper to each:

Prot. N. 117/95/I

The Association of the Daughters of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate (2)

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal, of the Mother of God Virgin Queen, of Saint Catherine Labouré, of Saint Vincent de Paul and of the commemoration of his patronage and of Saint Louise de Marillac, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Association.

Prot. N. 118/95/I

The Association of the Sons of the Blessed Virgin Mary Immaculate (2)

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal, of the Mother of God Virgin Queen, of Saint Vincent de Paul and of the commemoration of his patronage, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Association.

Prot. N. 119/95/I

The Association of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal, of the Mother of God Virgin Queen, of Saint Catherine Labouré, of Saint Vincent de Paul, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Association.

Prot. N. 120/95/I

The Archconfraternity of the Agony of Our Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Commemoration of the Prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Garden, of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, of

the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of Saint Vincent de Paul, of Saint Camillus de Lellis and of the anniversary of the erection of the Archconfraternity.

Prot. N. 121/95/I

The Archconfraternity of the Most Holy Trinity

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Most Holy Trinity, of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Manifestation of the Mother of God, the Virgin of the Holy Medal and of Saint Vincent de Paul, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Archconfraternity.

Prot. N. 122/95/I

The Association of the Ladies of Charity

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal, of Saint Vincent de Paul and of the commemoration of his patronage, of Saint Louise de Marillac and of Saint Catherine Labouré, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Association.

Prot. N. 123/95/I

The Association of Priestly Reparation

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, of the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal and of Saint Vincent de Paul, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Association.

Prot. N. 124/95/I

The Missionary Confraternity of Saint Vincent de Paul

2. On the days of the liturgical celebration of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of the Manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Medal, of Saint Vincent de Paul, of Saint John of Avila, of Saint Leonard of Port Maurice, on the day when they received the Mission Crucifix, as well as on the anniversary of the institution of the Confraternity.

(1) Commonly called "*Miraculous Medal.*" The original Latin text reads "*a Sacro Numismate.*"

(2) The Association is now coed and the name varies according to the country (*Marian Association, Children of Mary, etc.*)

Appointments and Confirmations by the Superior General

| DATE | NAME | OFFICE | PROVINCE |
|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| 21/11/95 | Leo Conlon | Director D.C. 1/6 | Australia |
| 01/12/95 | Manuel T. Quintal Nóbrega | Visitor 1/6 | Portugal |
| 01/12/95 | Carlo Braga | Director D.C. (2nd mandate) | Rome |
| 16/12/95 | George Weber | Visitor 2/3 | USA South |
| 19/12/95 | Bernard J. Quinn | Visitor 1/3 | USA West |
| 19/12/95 | José Mulet | Director D.C. 1/6 | Barcelona |

IN THE SERVICE OF THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

by Gerard van Winsen, C.M.

In the preface to the English translation of the biography of Monsieur Vincent by Abelly, Stafford Poole, despite some reservations, says that this work is for us fundamental, unique and indispensable, the one important source.(1) It is especially through Abelly that we know what Monsieur Vincent did for the mentally handicapped and what he said about work in their service.

Abelly, in passing, makes some comments in his text in which we see what people of his time thought about the mentally handicapped; "These people are not capable of recognising the good that people do for them, are normally dirty, embarrassing and sometimes even dangerous.(2) Everyone scorns them and no one wants to be burdened with them."(3) Abelly also writes; "these people, mentally disturbed, are a burden to their parents and a shame to their families."(4)

These quotes give the impression that seventeenth century society had little esteem for these people. We are especially struck by the words; "they are a shame to their families." It is in this context, which conveys an attitude of mind, that we must judge the attitude and words of M. Vincent.

1. THE MENTALLY DISTURBED AT ST. LAZARE

In 1632 there were three or four mentally handicapped people at St. Lazare,(5) whom the Augustinians had kept in their house. M. Vincent continued the care and treatment of these poor men. According to Pierre Coste, in 1659 there were between 50 and 60 'held' at St. Lazare, but one cannot be exact about how many of these were mentally handicapped.(6) Up to the French Revolution the Congregation took care of these people. A priest was in charge of the work, another took care of their spiritual needs, while the brothers watched over them and took charge of other necessary services. The families of the sick paid board and lodging.(7)

Monsieur Vincent thought that it was Divine Providence which had given this work of serving the insane to the Company.(8) He had not looked for this work, but had taken it from the Augustinians, when they had left St. Lazare;

"We are not going to look for them, they will be led to us; and how do we know that, if His Providence has ordered it so, He does not wish to use us to improve the condition of these poor people?"

M. Vincent, as he himself admits, loved these poor people;

"At that time, we had a case, whereby we would either be driven from or remain in the house of St. Lazare; and I remember asking myself: "If

you must now leave this house what affects, and will affect, you most? And what will cause you the greatest sadness and regrets? And it seemed to me, at that time, that it would be never again to see these poor people and to leave their care and service."(9)

When the brothers gave the residents meat and wine left over from the day before, M. Vincent railed against this abuse for two reasons;

- 1) it was an injustice because the families were paying for good treatment;
- 2) the sick were not able to defend themselves against such conduct.

The brothers must confess their faults!(10)

At the end of his life, M. Vincent was very preoccupied with keeping and transmitting his charism to the Company. We see this worry in the conference of 6 December 1658 on the the End of the Congregation of the Mission;

"But, Sir, another will say to me, is it our rule to receive at St. Lazare the mad and these deplorable souls who are such little demons? I will say to him that Our Lord wished to be surrounded by lunatics, demoniacs, the insane and the possessed."(11)

2. THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY AND THEIR CARE OF THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

The Daughters of Charity were installed, in the second half of 1655, in the 'Petites Maisons' ('Little Houses'), to take care of 400 people afflicted by madness, shameful illnesses or illegitimacy.

M. Vincent knew the situation of this institution . Even before the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission he preached a mission there.(12) What he tells us about the situation in the 'Petites Maisons' is terrible;

"These are people who, for the most part, have led disordered lives, who have never made their confession as they should and who are about to appear at the Judgment of God.(13) These are all people who are mad and disturbed, extremely weak-minded, who live entirely with a bad grace. There are constant fights. Oh, there is nothing at all like it. I cannot tell you about it. There is so little ability to mix with one another that they cannot even live two together and must constantly be separated. Each makes his own way."(14)

It wasn't easy to find a place for a sick person in this institution. When Sr. Marguerite Chetif requested M. Vincent's help in getting a place there for a handicapped person he had to answer;

"I do not have enough standing there to have this good man, distracted in his mind, of whom you write, taken in at the Petites Maisons, because there is never a vacant space, being reserved, as they are, by others a long time before they come free. Please let his children know that I am

very put out not to be able to get this consolation for them, and that they would do well to send him."(15)

When the Sisters began their work in the Petites Maisons Mlle. LeGras asked M. Vincent to explain to the Sisters what good they would be able to do there and in what way.(16) M. Vincent did this in passing in the conference of 18 October 1655.(17)

Sr. Anne Hardemont was named Superior but, due to difficulties, was replaced by Sr. Cecile-Agnes Angiboust.(18)

3. THE MOTIVES FOR TAKING CARE OF THE MENTALLY HANDICAPPED

From the time of his experience at Gannes and Folleville, M. Vincent was always thinking about the salvation of souls. He wanted to help men and women to live in the fellowship of God. The means for this was the mission. It is perhaps the reason why he had even preached a mission at the Petites Maisons; "I have never seen more beautiful missions than those given at the hospital of the Petites Maisons in this town."(19)

Here we can state a first motive of M. Vincent's for working with the mentally handicapped; his zeal for the salvation of souls. He has a clear judgement of the moral situation of a person with mental handicap;

"Certainly, those reduced to this state are greatly worthy of compassion. It is really true that they are, in some way, in a state of sinlessness, not being masters of their own will, and having neither judgement nor liberty. And in this they must be esteemed blessed, if, when they fell into this state, they were in a state of grace; while, on the other hand, they have much to grieve for if this state overcame them in a state of mortal sin."(20)

For M. Vincent a second motive for serving these poor people was the example of Christ Himself. Our Lord was surrounded by the mad and the possessed.(21)

M. Vincent is touched by the words of St. Paul in the first letter to the Corinthians; "But we, we proclaim a crucified Christ, a scandal for Jews and folly to the pagans."(22) M. Vincent deduced from this that Christ was regarded as a mad man. And he says to the Daughters of Charity;

"You must know, Sisters, that the Lord wished to undergo, in His own person, all possible sufferings. The expression in Scripture is that he wished to pass as a scandal for Jews and madness for Gentiles to show you that you can serve him in all poor afflicted people. That is why he wanted to enter into this state, to sanctify it like all others. It is in this belief that you must offer them service and, when you go to see them, you must rejoice and say to yourselves; I am going to these poor people

to honour in them the person of Our Lord; I am going there to see the incarnate wisdom of God, who desired to pass as one of them, though not, in fact, being so."(23)

M. Vincent is also forcefully struck by the verses in Mark 3, 20-21; "He came to the house...and his own people, learning this, set out to take hold of him, for they said; he has lost his mind."

M. Vincent believes that the service of the mentally handicapped is even more meritorious since these people cannot show their thanks for it.

4. IT IS NECESSARY TO WORK FROM THE BASIS OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

For a number of years I have celebrated the Eucharist on Sundays in an institution for the mentally handicapped. How, in pastoral practice, can we apply the Vincentian doctrine on mental problems?

It is a joy for me to work for these people, because it is truly a Vincentian work. In Monsieur Vincent's time there were no medicines for sedating the mentally disturbed. From what M. Vincent says, and especially from the comparison that he makes with Jesus (*in frenesim ductus est*)(24) we can conclude that the mentally disturbed lodging at St. Lazare were occasionally fiery and very difficult. That is perhaps why M. Vincent said that these men were not able to show their thanks. My own experience shows me that one certainly cannot generalise that remark.

But I have to recognise that the idea that I meet Christ in these people is not a living one for me. When one regularly goes amongst them that becomes one's ordinary milieu; what one meets in society outside, one also sees in an institution like this. There are likable people, there are people who want personal contact but there are also difficult or problem people.

I often believe (and I say it with all the necessary reservations) that there are members of staff who work with the idea that these handicapped people are people who, like others, have the right to have a good life. I have a great admiration for the nurses, men and women, who work every day for the insane and I do not understand their perseverance in this work. At the human level, I have seen some beautiful scenes, especially when a patient dies. The more a patient has been in need of the care of the staff, the stronger is the bond which develops between the nurses and the patient. With the death this link is broken and they often wait for a word of consolation from the chaplain.

My conclusion is; from a human basis, it is possible to work with the insane for many years. Or could it be that I am fooling myself about the deepest motives of the staff that I have watched at work for many years?

However, this is my difficulty with the Vincentian doctrine, which is nothing more than that of the Gospel. The mentally handicapped wish to be encountered at a human level, they must be recognised as people. The handicapped person wishes to be helped because each is a human person, with particular gifts and particular faults. I cannot diminish him into an object to help me in my encounter with Christ.

How can I avoid this difficulty? There must be a unity between the human and the faith levels. Through experience I know that, when I become impatient with the handicapped, I must search for the reason within myself; when they are always asking me the same thing, always telling me the same stories, never leaving me a moments recollection before the Eucharist celebration. Therefore I recognise in myself the necessity of meditating on the words of Jesus; "Amen, I say to you, each time you have done this to one of the least of these my brothers, you have done it to me."(25)

But at the Vincentian level, I am convinced that M . Vincent's doctrine on meeting the Christ is completed by his doctrine on mercy. According to him mercy is the fruit of charity;

It is true that you cannot watch another suffer if you do not suffer with them, that you cannot watch another cry, if you do not cry with them. It is an act of love which makes hearts enter into one another and feel what each other feels, far different to those who have no feeling for the pain of the affected or the suffering of the poor.(26)

In my opinion, charity must be completed by its fruit; mercy, in order to really encounter another person both at the human and the faith level.

Personally, I am more moved by M. Vincent's idea that Christ has sanctified this state. For me, it is a far more useful way to meet with and work amongst these people in the spirit of the Gospels.

5. CELEBRATING THE EUCHARIST WITH THE HANDICAPPED

It is a privilege to say Mass for the handicapped . They show you the best way to do it. Once I was telling a secular story as an example in a homily. One of the handicapped cried out aloud; "You must talk about Jesus." It shows what they expect of the celebrant. After that I faithfully followed his advice.

You learn what the liturgy means to these people when you have to give the sacrament of the sick to a dying person. They remember the words that you have said about Jesus; "Jesus is your friend, you are Jesus' friend. Jesus has been good for the sick, now I am going to give you Jesus' medicine for the sick, so that you will be made strong by the strength of Jesus."

You have the experience that the whole liturgical year is a great catechesis on Jesus Christ; his birth, his passion, death and resurrection, his ascension. You really find yourself in the Vincentian tradition when it is your concern that the handicapped should know something of the great truths of the faith through the mysteries celebrated during the liturgical year. It is very moving when the handicapped come to venerate the cross in a liturgy adapted from that of Good Friday. They do it in their way but with signs which express their faith and their friendship for the suffering Jesus. And when, in a simple ceremony, you light the paschal candle they follow it with their total attention.

Celebrating the liturgy for the handicapped is not always a joy. There are also times when you need great patience, especially in Autumn when the leaves are falling from the trees. The chaplain needs the support of a liturgy team with some nurses, male and female, as members. They are the ones who guide you to resolve the difficulties, in order to adapt the liturgy better to the needs of the handicapped; who let you know what people look for in order to celebrate the sacred mysteries. On the one hand the chaplain learns from experience that he needs lay people in order to be a good celebrant, but on the other, he 'feels' that for the handicapped he really is the representative of the Church. For example, it is to him that they confide their intentions for the Prayers of the Faithful.

ALLOWING YOURSELF TO BE EVANGELISED BY THE HANDICAPPED

When you give a homily to the mentally handicapped, you are obliged to speak very simply. And each time you have the experience that the Gospel is simple. You are required to explain the essence of the Gospel. Jesus preached through images and through examples drawn from daily life. The more you follow the living stories of the Lord, the more you are able to lead the handicapped to Him. You learn that the Gospel is directed at the simple in heart, it is they who listen to the words of Jesus, who seek them, who try to live them out. This is the gift the handicapped give you; you yourself must be small, in order that the words of Jesus may be words of life for you too.

7. CONCLUSION

On 29 May 1654 M. Vincent wrote a letter to Br. Jean Barreau. The original is only signed by him. But as he is very sensitive, M. Vincent adds the following post script in his own hand, which acts as a kind of resume of his doctrine and his attitude to the mentally handicapped;

Your brother the prosecutor has fallen ill with a sickness for which your brother and brother-in-law, on the advice of relations, have asked us to take him into St. Lazare; which we will do. We must honour the Lord and the state in which he was, to which we wish to be joined, saying ; quoniam in frenesim versus est,(27) to venerate this state in those whom His divine Providence places there; be content to conform your will in this to that of Our Lord's, as you do in all things.

FOOTNOTES

1. Louis Abelly; *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God, Vincent de Paul* New City Press, 1993. As far as I know, it is especially the German doctor, Werner Leibbrand, who deals most fully with the subject in *Vincenz de Paul*, 3 Auflage, Heidelberg, 1960. He refers to the following works; Jacques Vie and Laignel-Lavastine; "La Vie Médicale de St. Vincent de Paul" in *Revue des Etudes Historiques*, 96 (1930) which I have not found in the *Catalogue of Publications 1. St. Vincent de Paul* (1988) and also to J-C Martin du Theil; *La Doctrine Hospitalière de Saint Vincent de Paul*, Arnette Louis, Paris, 1939.

2. Abelly, 1891, I, 152

3. Abelly, I, 154

4. Abelly, III, 88

5. Abelly, I, 152

6. Pierre Coste, *Monsieur Vincent*, II, 516, especially note 3.

7. XI, 331

8. XI, 21 ; XII, 88

9. XI, 21-22

10. XI, 331

11. XII, 88

12. Abelly, 1891, II, 29

13. II, 336

14. XIII, 596

15. VII, 184-185, 22 June 1658

16. Spiritual Writings, 473, Letter 428, (1655)

17. X, 125

18. VI, 568-569, 30 October 1657; Writings, 573, 2 November 1657. Nothing is said about the nature of the difficulties.

19. II, 336. Thinking of the description M. Vincent gives about the situation in the hospital, the question naturally arises as to how the mentally ill could benefit from a mission. Abelly recognises this difficulty and says of the mission, preached by the members of the Tuesday Conferences; "They also gave a mission at the hospital of the Petites Maisons, in which, apart from the poor insane people who could not benefit from the mission, there were a number of poor families with whom several residents of the Faubourg took part in the instructions which took place." Abelly, 1891, II, 330

20. XI, 20-21

21. cf. Matthew, IV;24

22. I Cor. II;23

23. X, 125-126

24. Mark III;21

25. Matthew, XXV;40

26. XII, 270

27. Coste adds the following note; "The text reads; quoniam in furoren versus est (Mark III, 21). The saint has changed a word in order to better express his thought."

28. V, 146

Eugene Curran - translator

Centres for Handicapped Children in Madagascar

by Vincent Carme, CM

Beginnings

It was 1968. I was on my rounds in the bush in the Tanala sector, in the jungle. At a certain point the catechist who was with me pointed to a wretched straw hut, not far from the track, saying: "*There is a child there with a curse on her*". I told him rather abruptly that there were no accursed children. He then explained that it was a case of epilepsy, and that in Madagascar that affliction, just like leprosy and lunacy, was considered a punishment from God. "*Let's go and look*", I said.

The little girl, whom we'll call Baou, was lying on her back, her head propped up against the wall of the hut. Her eyes were closed and she was dressed in rags. She had dribbled all down her neck and chest; she was in the throes of an epileptic fit. You could see the pain in her young face -- she was 15 or 16. I knelt beside her, moved to tears. In a moment she opened her eyes, and when she saw my missionary cross hanging round my neck she grabbed it with both hands and began to pray: "*Jesus, Saviour, have pity on me, have pity on me. And you, Pastor, take me away; I'm in too much pain here*". (Baou was a Protestant and took me for a minister). Her voice, weak at first, became a shout: "*Jesus, Saviour, have pity on me*". I was flabbergasted, and was crying. And then, without really knowing what I was getting involved in, I took her two hands: "*Listen, Baou, I'll do something for you and others like you*". Very much later I was to look on these words as the act of foundation of what are now called the "*Centres for Handicapped Young People*".

Baou died a few months later. I had, however, time to send her a doll and some nice dresses.

Baou was dead, but my promise was still alive. That promise really turned into a call. I had, of course, spoken to both my religious and diocesan superiors. They approved, but made me wait: "*You are the only person in a huge area of bush; wait until another confrere joins you, and then get started*". And the bishop added: "*Unless Providence gives you some sign*".

Two years went by and I was still on my own. Then in 1970 Philip arrived one day. He was an 18 year old boy, severely handicapped physically. His legs were all twisted, and to get around he had to use a stick. He had come 8 km to see me. "*I've had my fill of living in the bush, with people making fun of me, so I've come to stay with you*". Was this the "*sign*" my bishop had spoken of? Through Philip's pain I heard Christ challenge me: "*Well, what are you waiting for?*"

Philip stayed, the first resident of the Centre which did not yet exist. He shared my hut. The next day I went to the bishop again; he thought I was a bit quick to see "signs", but he added: "*Draw up a plan in writing for me. Tell me where you'll accommodate your children, who's going to look after them, where you'll get the money*".

These were unanswerable questions. For accommodation, I had only my wretched little hut. There wasn't anyone to look after the children during my long rounds in the bush. As for money, there was literally nothing in the till. What I'd brought back from my holiday in Europe had gone to help those hit by the terrible cyclone Dany.

When I was thinking about all this a few days later there was a knock on the door; it was the postman. He gave me an unsigned letter saying that 300,000 Malagasy francs were being sent "*to help unfortunate children*". What a relief! It was more than a "sign", it was an answer from Providence, a smile from heaven.

But that was not all; there was another knock on the door. It was a little old woman carrying a little boy of 7 or 8. The child had club feet, completely twisted round. "*Look at this child*", she said, "*He's my grandson. Because of his feet no one loves him. I'm the only one who loves him. Take him as your son and then I can go and join my ancestors*". I took the child in my arms. The old woman died sometime later, at peace.

Once again I headed off to the bishop; he listened to me, and then gave me the green light to make a start.

Getting Organised

The first Centre was born, but everything had still to be done. We needed a house: it was built in five days, 5 by 3 metres in size, roofed with foliage. It had to be enlarged several times later on.

A more serious problem was who was going to be the first house-mother for the Centre. There was no shortage of good Christian women in Andemaka. During my long reflection on the problem I went over them all. Every time I did so it was Kalandy's face which kept cropping up. She was an illiterate mother of nine, but full of kindness and very religious. Everyone in the village loved her. But among her nine children two girls were mentally retarded, and the youngest son, aged three, was physically handicapped and bed-ridden. What was more, her husband was seriously ill and was to die some months later. No, one really couldn't ask her to get involved in the Centre. But I went down the list of Christian women, and Kalandy's name forced itself on me. I had got that far in my search when Kalandy followed me to my house after mass one morning. She went down on her knees, somewhat embarrassed, and said: "*After going to bed last night I was told in a dream: 'Go to*

Communion tomorrow morning, and after mass follow Father into his house and say this to him: You want to ask me something and you are reluctant. Make him tell you what he wants of you and do it; it's my will" That's how Kalandy became the first house-mother of the burgeoning Centre, and her family were none the worse off because of it.

The children arrived. Soon the thirty mark was passed. The older handicapped girls helped the house-mother and took her place when she wasn't there.

At the start the Centre had its difficult moments, with money and rice in short supply at times. At those times we used to go begging for the day's rice in nearby villages. We were usually well received by the people, even though they were poor. We went from door to door, and after each gift thanked God and the people in song and prayer.

One day a Swiss lady came to see me. She introduced herself. *"I'm a Swiss tourist called Karlotta. I'm a kinesitherapist in Europe. When passing through Fort Dauphin I heard from Bishop Zevaco that you were involved in helping handicapped children. Could I stay with you for a couple of days?"* She stayed in the Centre for two months, captivated by what she would later call *"the marvellous initial mess"*. It was she who told me that the majority of the children could be cured: first surgery, then plaster-casts, then rehabilitation. With her the Center went into orbit. She left with regret after her two-month stay, but returned many times afterwards. The Centres owe a lot to her.

Another visit was from the Medical Inspector from Manakara. When I heard he was there I was afraid, because I had heard he was very strict and had closed several unauthorised establishments. However, he was very good to me. Probably noticing some fear in my expression. he said: *"Don't worry, Father; I come as a friend"*. And he went on: *"Before coming to make an inspection I made some enquiries about what you're doing, and what I heard was good"*.

It was he who strongly urged us to open a major Centre, promising his support. Shortly after that he was to become Secretary of State for Health, and then the weight of his support was to be of great help to us. Meanwhile the Jesuits had come to Andemaka and helped us a lot in the building of the future Centre.

The Arrival of the Daughters of Charity

From the very start the Daughters of Charity surrounded the handicapped children with love and attention. My Provincial had told me that sooner or later the new Centre would be entrusted to them. It was obvious that they would be very pleased to take it on. So, as soon as the new Centre, big and airy, was built (with the help of Caritas-Suisse) they were contacted. What made them hesitate was that their purses were empty. They said to me: "*At least some money is needed for a start*". I decided, then, to put it to them one last time to take on the Centre, even with empty purses. I wrote this letter on my knees in front of the tabernacle. It reached them in the middle of their Provincial Council meeting, a day or two before St Vincent's Day. The Visitatrix read it out to the others, and then they voted on it. The Centre was accepted, unanimously, and with great enthusiasm, as they told me later. That's how the handicapped children acquired mothers, in St Vincent's Daughters. Two months later I set out for Tanandava, the section of bush newly assigned to me by my superiors. As soon as I was out of Andemaka on my motor-bike I burst into tears: tears of sorrow at leaving these kids whom I loved, but above all, tears of joy because I saw that my job with them was completed. But God decided otherwise.

The Workshop-Centre in Tanjomoha-Vohipeno

Our children, from the start, received treatment at the Rehabilitation Centre in Antsirabe. In that town, more than 900 km from Vohipeno, they underwent surgery and received rehabilitation treatment, before coming back to us. The return of the first children after treatment were scenes of triumph. Parents, children, townsfolk, all came running to see these children walk, children they had been used to seeing crawling on the ground.

But a worry underlay this joy. How were these children, with their orthopedic footwear and other equipment, going to earn their livelihood, since they couldn't go into the rice paddies? The Workshop-Centre was the answer for the handicapped youngsters of Vohipeno. It started in 1986. 70 young boys and girls learn one or more trades there. The following trades are taught: Tailoring, sewing, weaving, basket-work, carpentry, cobbling, tannery, smelting, sculpture, Antaimoro paper, blacksmithing, bookbinding. The staff consists of four Daughters of Charity, two Vincentian brothers and two postulant brothers, several young people trying to determine their vocation, and nineteen salaried staff, and myself.

The young people study for three years at the Workshop-Centre, and then go back to their villages and tribes, provided with the equipment for their trade: sewing machines, boxes of tools, etc. Of 56 young handicapped who have gone home it can be said that 31 are managing well, 17 have run into problems, and we know nothing about the other 8.

In reading the above you will have seen that the aim of the Workshop-Centre is to help these young patients find a place in their social environment. We want to

help them become parents, earning their living, happy at being alive and being witnesses to God's love.

I was nearly forgetting to mention that the buildings, or at least the first ones, were a former domestic economy school which used to be run by the Daughters of Charity but which was abandoned by the pupils because it was too far out of town. The buildings are set in 17 hectares of grounds, partly wooded, which allows us to have several gardens and keep some livestock. Unfortunately the soil is poor.

The St Vincent Centre, Antsirabe

Right from the start of our work with the young handicapped we wanted to be part of the Malagasy state health system. But there is only one rehabilitation centre for the entire island, situated as I've said in Antsirabe. This meant a lot of uncomfortable and dangerous travel. On top of this, in view of the number of young handicapped coming from all over the island, our youngsters had to find lodgings in town while awaiting their turn for surgery; this caused a lot of problems. The management at the Centre advised us to build a hostel near the big State hospital. It was the Daughters of Charity who had the courage to establish this third Centre; it has a lovely name: The St Vincent Centre.

It is a transit Centre where the youngsters receive pre-surgery preparation. After surgery they are brought back to The St Vincent Centre and cared for by our Sisters. The Centre was set up to receive the Andemaka and Tanjomoha children, but it also accepts other children from the four corners of the island, especially the poor who do not know where to go.

As I've said, The St Vincent Centre is a transit centre. That's true, but not limited to the physically handicapped. Many people are drawn there, attracted perhaps by the magnet of charity. They come to seek care for the soul. They find peace there, joy and lots of love.

Postscript

I can't finish without saying a little about myself. I'm led to this by the Workman of these Centres, Jesus.

Any time visitors -- and there are lots of them -- come to the Centres they heap praise and congratulations on me: "*What you've done is marvelous! Congrats!*", etc. This sort of thing annoys me no end, and sometimes gives me shivers up the spine. If I were to accept them I'd be a thief and liar.

These Centres are the work of Jesus, and only Jesus. They are one more proof of his love for the poor. In the old days in Palestine he cured the blind, lepers, the lame, and other sick people. He still does this, that's all. And my role in all this? I was never trained to work with handicapped children. To go into the bush and preach the gospel with my limited talents, yes. That was my work and I was

completely happy at it. Then one day little Baou challenged me, and I obeyed. It's Mt 21:3-32 all over again, where Jesus says: "*Untie that donkey, the Lord needs it*". I obeyed, like the little donkey, without really understanding what he expected of me.

Why did he want to need me, a poor specimen, with so many others who would have done better? I think it was in order to demonstrate that he was the only workman in the Centres.

To end up, I'll add just this: in order to keep strictly within my role as a minor instrument I never did anything, thanks to God's grace, without asking my superiors' permission. By acting in this way I was being obedient to the advice given by one of my former teachers, Fr Contestin, who knew my poor ability and limitations: "*When you are a priest never do anything without your superiors' permission, so as to avoid making a mess of things*". I have tried to follow this advice. Many of my ideas were rejected and permission refused. I never felt the slightest resentment: God had spoken. But the Centres for handicapped youngsters came from permissions which my superiors granted and plans which they backed.

In the final analysis, in the story of these Centres, everything is grace. So, along with our young handicapped brothers and sisters I thank God.

(Thomas Davitt CM, translator).

Community in Dialogue:

"To love someone means to tell him: you shall not die."

by Matteo Tagliaferri, C.M.

Trivigliano, June 21, 1991- *"A few months ago we began our human experience - an experience of hospitality and love. Hospitality and love for all of us who need it, and especially need it without being aware of the need. After all everybody has his wounds, and each one is wounded there where he is not loved."* These words began a letter that I wrote to the first young members of the Community in Dialogue, who asked me what convictions animated our journey.

The Story: It all began on a cold February day in 1991. I found myself in a small parish in the mountains of central Italy, near Aquila, at an altitude of 1400 meters. In the midst of so much snow, a desperate father approached me on behalf of his son - a drug addict: *"he needs to enter a Community for social services, otherwise the judge will sentence him to prison "*. The father had been wounded in one arm, the son had lived without his mother from early years. At a National Congress for Marian Youth, for whom I was then Assistant, I had met Father Pierino Gelmini, founder of the *"Community Encounter"*; it seemed natural to turn to him. However, I knew that Danilo - the young man's name - had been in his Community, so he could not readmit him. The time granted by the judge was brief. I was able to persuade the judge to allow me to keep him with me at Casamaina - the village covered by snow. In the meantime I would search out a Community for the young man. To compound things, that same week two other young drug addicts left two different Roman hospitals; they had no one, they were also seropositive.

The Community today: Now four years since the beginning of our journey, the young people of the Community in Dialogue number more than 150. They themselves are the protagonists of their own human redemption and the rediscovery of their proper human dignity. Around thirty are women; there are also family groups.

The Community is divided into ten groups or Centers. Five live in a large building which the Bishop of Anagni has placed at their disposition in Trivigliano. The other five Centers are in different buildings, two also in the territory of Trivigliano, the other three in the Communes of Ardena, Selva di Paliano, Castelliri. In addition to these, there is a Center where they are first received in the commune of Frosinone.

Just a month ago the journey concluded for another twelve youngsters. On this occasion, young Rita expressed her feelings in these words: *"I, a woman rich*

with love in the depths of my being, will be a fountain from which life will gush forth ". "In the beginning there is always a struggle for each individual and for everyone against the little confidence in the powers we have within us to conquer confusion and egoism. But precisely those who have already suffered very much are met and rediscovered, always in a better way on the road of life. They always learn to participate more in a life-giving climate, they always become more responsible and capable of loving. Thus learning to dialogue, to support one another day by day, reanimates the person in each one of us. Weariness and sacrifice don't matter, because a person's will to live in the profoundest dimensions, in sentiments and affections, in the reality of one's own future - believed in once again as possible and newly reflected on - such a will is stronger than every fear and sacrifice: this is what it means to be a human being! " (From the letter to the first youngsters).

Some Principles: The youngsters themselves are the motor that drives the Community. Little by little, they assume all the responsibilities - even the most important - for people, for administration, for technical and juridical details. Paul keeps the accounts for the whole Community; he also completed secondary school while in the Community. These are the miracles of the love that expresses itself with *"the sweat of one's brow and the strength of one's arm"*. The responsibility in Community is assumed and lived by each one as a possibility for participation and growth. Each one can give rather than receive, can rediscover one's proper human dignity and a positive self-image. One conviction - the foundation of the life of the Community - is the constant belief in the possibilities of the redemption of persons from every form of emarginization and solitude. One principle which directs behavior in Community, e.g. says: *"Always believe in the possibilities of your neighbor, as others believed in yours, when you yourself didn't believe in them."* Therefore the journey in Community stimulates better self-knowledge by means of dialogue. From moments of reflection and confrontation comes suitable behavior, always more adequate in the face of the problems of life. Accepting the suffering that such a force brings with it shows itself in the courage not to weaken when facing more difficult relations. Moreover it favors rediscovery of the joy of living in moderation day by day, making values one's own, chosen always with greater freedom. And thus there awakens wonder and a hymn to the Creator and Father who seems to repeat continually: *"I have created life and I do not will death!"* In other words, *"I am happy and I want you to live, my son!"*

Together for others: A new Center for youth, purchased by the Confreres of the Roman Province, opened just a month ago. This better enables us to give a hand to family groups which we have in Community. We named this latest Center *"Harmony of Life"*, to underline the need for harmony within the person, between history and nature, between the individual and society, between conscience and wisdom. Harmony is born within one who above all *"knows"* what love is through experience, within a society and a culture often distracted

and broken, because it overlooks precisely the most precious good, which is love. Animated therefore by such love, many groups and Centers for listening are the first help, the first welcome and orientation for many youngsters who are found in Community. I would like to recall the determining collaboration with the Daughters of Charity in Rome, who placed at our disposition a part of their building for women at Ardena. Other collaborators were found in the center for listening of the Vincentian parish at Tor Sapienza, and in other Vincentian groups. They are present and attentive to the human spirit, something often overlooked by public institutions. Much work is carried out in families of the young people who have suffered such experiences. They are among those most tried families in our society. But, thanks to solidarity, they show to all, that, together with courage, they can meet and resolve problems. From the beginning of such an experience, a phrase that one repeats in Community is this: To love someone means to say to him: you shall not die; to love him in Christ means to give him a complete resurrection.

Father Antonio Felli, a confrere, also worked with me for a year with great love and dedication, directing the spiritual formation of the groups. I surely do not know what I would have done without the help of my brother, Fr George Tagliaferri, a diocesan priest, especially for the administration.

What does this experience teach us: The interest which the community raised in the territory and with public institutions, has convinced me even more how much persons who struggle against their misery and their human poverty can become "*masters*" of life, can say things that count, and be critical consciences in the face of that social mentality which in them has become a motive of such great mistakes and suffering. In fact, being a support for the solution of social and family problems can be very influential in helping persons who laboriously fight and reclaim their dignity. And these are not only words, but strong messages, cried out by those rescued, with the force and the concreteness of their flesh which has suffered.

In a society which capitalizes money and new undertakings, where the most important problems seem to be economic, these youngsters shout that the true problems are those which we carry within ourselves - they are our human poverty, often hidden behind the cloak of self-interest. In the Community one capitalizes - one learns to capitalize gestures of love, deeds of love, concrete love, composed of struggle and sacrifice. New roads open in places where there seemed to be only chaos and solitude. This journey of liberation always has its beginning with small gestures of human fraternity: the first pieces of wood offered on the cold, icy days by a "*drunkard*" of Casamaina, the pasta and oil offered by the old woman to the first three youths of the Community, the parents who furnished them with the first tools for work, the workshop outfitted for working in aluminum by the Vincentian volunteers of Rome, the large building in Trivigliano placed at their disposition by the bishop of Anagni, that

of Castelliri made available to them by the bishop of Sora, Msgr Brandolini, a confrere.

Such solidarity is beautiful and great, because it conquers fear which makes us so egotistical and indifferent; it is like gestures of light amidst such darkness. The same light, the same warmth, spreads through so many youth who relive in Community - light and warmth which they themselves continue to enkindle like a fire that is nourished by their own forces, by their own courage. This happens in the generosity of the person who rises at night to stand alongside the latest arrival from the streets; or in telling the truth to one who because of excessive fear, has always hidden from himself; or in the courage of him who continues to struggle despite difficulties which appear insurmountable.

We still wish - and not just for ourselves - that other hearths of solidarity might be enkindled in our society, so that we can all be warmed and illumined by such a fire - especially whoever suffers most from the greatest egoism.

Father Matthew Tagliaferri

Meetings for Formation and Evaluation of the Journey

MONDAY: Determining objectives together; drawing up work plans.

TUESDAY: 30 Minutes of Meditation (before supper), free evening and TV.

WEDNESDAY: Formator: meeting to face the question - who is ready and willing to grow.

THURSDAY: An evening together - Community songfest.

FRIDAY: Getting to know oneself to become free: formative meeting (after supper)

SATURDAY: To be yourself in the joy of putting it all together: written accounts

SUNDAY: The joy of finding oneself in values that are experienced together (various initiatives).

Principles

1. Respect others with love.
2. Be attentive and wise today in what you do, tomorrow it could even be to your advantage.
3. Learn to deal moderately with all that daily life offers and you will have what is necessary for tomorrow.
4. When darkness is within you and around you, ask for help; trust yourself confidently to the one who is journeying with you.
5. Put your heart in your responsibilities, carry them out well, if you are interested in growing.
6. Freedom means getting to know the motives which inspire your behavior, therefore accept confrontation with others serenely.
7. Always believe in the possibilities of your neighbor, as others believed in yours, when you yourself didn't believe in them.

8. When faced with weighty and difficult situations and you no longer know what to say or do, remember that you can "*choose to love*".
9. You truly grow and mature when you feel able to give rather than receive, understand rather than be understood.
10. Without honesty and sincerity you can not achieve all this and be born again as a person.

(William W. Sheldon, translator)

THE SERVICE OF THE VINCENTIANS TO THE ABYSSINIAN CLERGY

by A. Zerachristos Yosief, C.M.

For a better understanding of our service to the Abyssinian clergy in our concrete historical existence, two periods need to be distinguished. The first would be the period which goes from the entrance of St. Justin De Jacobis in Eritrea/Ethiopia until the Second World War (1839/1945) and the second period from 1947/48 until our own times.

Saint Justin De Jacobis and the Clergy of the Local Church.

There is much which is already known by everyone about Christianity in Eritrea/Ethiopia and which needs no further discussion here. We all know that St. Justin was not the first or the only person to have come as a missionary and spoken of Catholicism, much less of Christianity. We learn from history that there have been various attempts to introduce Catholicism into this land with its long history of Christianity. (I refer to that part of the territory where our saint lived and worked and which in general is called Abyssinia. It comprises Eritrea and North Ethiopia). However, it remains a fact: if today there is strong Catholicism in Eritrea and in the north of Ethiopia, it is due to him. This Catholicism has also one characteristic - in both countries: there is a unified rite and liturgy. People pray in the same way and with the same words and this was possible thanks to the open Christian vision of our Father, who understood at a deep level from the very beginning that it made no sense to push "*Latinism*", as much as through the desire to be distinguished from the local church.

So we ask ourselves what distinguished St. Justin from the other missionaries who came before and after him? It seems to me that what distinguished St. Justin was his conception of the church and the local clergy as much as his formation and his personal rapport with the same clergy. Certainly, it is an exaggeration when people say of him that "*He participated in the rough life of the Abyssinians in everything except sin.*" (1) Nevertheless, one cannot deny that he participated in the difficult life lived in our parts, especially at that time. However, he lived it as a weak man and a sinner, not as a divine man. Thus, we must say that he participated in everything and to the depths of things, as he himself says in a letter to the Father General of the time, Father Etienne, whom he was asking to send strong missionaries to aid him.(2).

One thing is certain: St. Justin lived poorly and humbly amongst the poor. It seems to me that his greatness and his credibility actually depend on this lifestyle of his. His temptation would have been to present himself as rich in all senses; rich in pocket and in culture and therefore, as someone who must give

without ever receiving, someone who must teach without ever learning. St. Justin put aside and overcame definitively this temptation and he sent himself to school to learn and actually to defend the language, the rite and the customs of his priests. All in all, he made himself poor to earn his poor priests and to be earned by them at the same time.

Another thing which distinguished Justin De Jacobis from the other missionaries, though these may have been Vincentians and actually amongst his most loyal collaborators - was his conception of the Abyssinian clergy. First of all and above all, we must say that the matter of the formation of the local clergy was not just any ordinary matter for St. Justin: it was the central and the most important missionary activity.(3). Hardly arrived in Abyssinia, we find him preoccupied with building the seminary, already in 1845 in Guala. But then he transferred to Alitiena. Already in those few years St. Justin led the following conviction in regard to the local clergy for his church:

"An Abyssinian priest who is profoundly Catholic and sufficiently instructed, because of his perfect knowledge of the language, the customs and down to the prejudices of his compatriots ... labours here with incomparably superior success to that of a European ... as they (his priests) follow the Eastern liturgy and Catholic discipline, for this reason they advance the Catholic cause rapidly in a people such as this, who will not be convinced except by what they can see and count by hand. In fact, the three Abyssinians whom we have with us do on their own what all of us Europeans can ... notwithstanding this visible advantage (however) they must be educated not by others but by the sons of Saint Vincent ..."(4) St. Justin is perfectly in line with Saint Vincent in how much to "help" or "instruct" the clergy is not an optional work but is the *raison d'être* and the supreme aim of the little company. This conviction of Saint Justin was of no small account. We wonder, however, how he wished to form his priests? St. Justin does not seem to be preoccupied, at least at the beginning, with the superiority of the intellectual formation which was to mark the discontinuity between his priests and those of the Abyssinian church. In fact, the study plan adopted in the seminary of Saint Justin seems similar to that of monks in the monasteries:

"Until midday," says abba Asheba in his diary, *"we learned Amanc Ge'ez and Ethiopian song; (more precisely, the sung Mass or otherwise all the songs which the liturgy of the Ge'ez rite includes) then in the afternoon on the other hand, we learned French."* (5) St. Justin in his letter of the 17th February 1844 asked to dress as do the Abyssinian priests and said in his letter: *"I believe that the principle of the Congregation in question, which is the principle of the Founding Saint himself, is that the missionaries may wear habits which are as near as possible to those worn by the most exemplary priests of the country in which they live. Here the priests are dressed in this way: they have a big white shirt, with wide trousers, also white, bare feet and a white turban on the head, and a big coat which is also white. I am dressed in this matter."* (6) It seems

clear to me that his own priests also followed his example; that through the fact of becoming Catholics they do not abandon these customs of the exemplary priests, as he calls them. (7)

THE ATTITUDE OF JUSTIN DE JACOBIS TOWARDS HIS PRIESTS

According to Delmonte, also a Vincentian Missionary close to St. Justin in his last years, De Jacobis made this moving observation about the local Abyssinian priests.... *"The monks are my eyes, my mouth, my hands and my feet. They do what I cannot do and they do better than me what I do myself..."* (8) This is the best means of expressing his affection and his esteem and his recognition towards the priests newly-converted to Catholicism. And as he wanted to help *"his priests like members of his own family, he loved them with the care of a father and as such provided for their maintenance and for all their needs ... he believed in treating them like this to keep them united to him ... so that they might be as productive as possible."* (9).

From Paris, however, came the accusation that he was *"buying"* conversions. (10). This behavior of St. Justin was displeasing not only to the Superiors who lived far away (Paris) but also to his future successor in the guidance of the Abyssinian mission - Biancheri. Mons. Pane says that as regards the formation of the native clergy, the opinions of De Jacobis and those of Biancheri were (11) *"two opposing poles"*. Is this an exaggeration? Perhaps, but there is also the chronicled fact that after the death of St. Justin the clergy rebelled under the guidance of Biancheri. Thus, they refused to accept him as their bishop. The hows and whys of it are described by Delmonte in his letter of the 2nd April 1861; the Catholic monks of Halai, with Abba Emnetu at their head, had entered into open conflict with Mons. Lorenzo Biancheri, the successor of De Jacobis *"because of a widespread uneasiness ... little misunderstandings...on the one hand rebellion and insubordination were exploding and on the other ... the harshness and narrow-mindedness (of Biancheri.)"* (12). The divergences between De Jacobis and Biancheri were such that St. Justin gives the impression of regretting making him his successor in the bishopric, and above all of having entrusted him with the care of the new mission. At least so it seems from the letter of October 1859 addressed to Fr. Guatni. (13). Apart from this incident in the chronicle, caused to a great extent by the characters of these two personalities, (14) who principally were the people who suffered for this mission, there has always been a certain continuity even of content in the formation on the part of the Vincentian missionaries, as we can read in history. However, it is aware also of a certain change. After the death of Biancheri, a man loyal to the *"Propaganda Fide"* and a man who did not have a lot of credibility with the Superiors in Paris, Fr. Etienne put a condition to the Vatican and to the missionaries working in Abyssinia: If the mission was to continue, it had to join with the French Lazarists or else it would be definitely closed. (15) Willingly or unwillingly, the group accepted this determined and decisive proposal. The first French Missioners sent by this Superior General

would arrive in Massawa on the 23rd March 1866. They were Mons. Bel et Pierre Piccard: this last would remain in Abyssinia for a good 38 years and would die in Alitiena in 1904.

Mons. Bel found on his arrival 27 Abyssinian priests, 19 of which had been ordained by Mons. Massaia, 6 by St. Justin and the remaining 2 by Mons. Bianchari. Mons. E3el would found a seminary in Massaw; in the warmer months the seminarians took refuge in Hebo.

He had eight major seminarians and another eight minor seminarians. Because of the severity of this Confrere they left not only the seminary, but also the religion. Mons Touvier says that he was in conflict with eight local priests and in the seminary only one of the teachers remained..(16)

Under the guidance of Mons. Touvier, the seminary would be established in Keren, in North Eritrea. This seminary held from 20 to 4a boys. The judgements which are given to the seminarians and of the seminary itself are always the same; the mental layout and the judgement criteria are always based on the models of the European Seminaries and Seminarians.

WHAT DID THEY HAVE TO LEARN IN THE SEMINARY?

- Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia
- Ge'ez, the official language of the Abyssinian liturgy
- Latin, useful instrument for theological study
- And, finally, singing, for one hour every day (17)

Among the shadows of the persecution, this sensitivity in the formation of the Abyssinian clergy would remain present on the part of our confreres until the 20th January 1895, - an unforgettable date in as much as it was on this day they were hunted out, by a decree of expulsion along with the French Confreres from Italian Eritrea. As a consequence, everything would end up in the hands of the Capuchians(18) Clearly, the Capuchins did not have the same sensitivity as the Vincentians for apart from Fr. Michele de Carbonara, their "*option*" was for the Latin rite with all the consequences of this option. In Eritrea we had to wait for 1947\48 for the new beginning of this mission whereas in central North Ethiopia in 1897 the Superior General on the request of the Propoganda Fide group sent new missionaries: P. Coubbeaux would be the new Superior of the mission, accompanied by three other confreres. This time the zones entrusted to the Vincentians were Tigrai, Godjam, and part of Shewa (Amhara).

THE NEW BEGINNING IN ERITREA

One could say that this new beginning came through a purely historical coincidence, at least from the human point of view. The missionaries who began this new adventure had come as military chaplains in Mussolini's Italian army. But whatever about the historical circumstances, in 1948 construction began on a house in Hebo, where there is the tomb of our Saint. This new beginning started where St. Justin's life finished. Symbolically, it's perfect. These confreres, two at the beginning, through the example of St. Justin, had one preoccupation only; to form Vincentians who should educate the native clergy as St. Justin wanted. For this, even before finishing the construction of the Hebo house, they opened the Hebo apostolic school. And immediately afterwards they began to educate seminarians throughout the diocese of Asmara. In the years from 1950 to 1968, our confreres were involved on various fronts - on one side completing the buildings, on the other building the hearts of the young people, future leaders of the Church. These confreres, apparently convinced by the attitude of the time, were, thank God, in favour of our customs and our rites. Even if they did not wish to learn it and practise it, they walsy encouraged and supported the essence and practice of the Abyssinian Church. That meant a great deal. From 1968 onwards, on the contrary, the house in Hebo was and still is involved in the formation of diocesan clergy. This permanent formation of the clergy functions in the following manner: with monthly retreats, or even sometimes every two months, with annual spiritual exercises, and sometimes on going formation courses (which we intend to continue). But it has to be said that, notwithstanding the goodwill on everyone's part, that was not always possible, in as much as the political situation did not permit it. Since 1991 we have a new political situation; we are looking into new possibilities and a new methodology suited to this new situation- with a new thrust of our charisma with and through the Church of St. Justin De Jacobis.

Thank you for your attention.

[nota1] Cfr Annals of the Mission 82 (1975) p. 14.

[nota2] St Justin, in order to have the help of missionaries who would be capable of resisting everything and who would have a sense of mortification, was describing the situation of life in the new mission, compared obviously to the European one and said on this account: "*Here we sleep on the ground, we eat dreadful bread and sometimes unappetizing goats meat. No fruit, no wine, no fish. We walk barefoot*".

[nota3] Mons. Pane expresses this fundamental preoccupation of De Jacobis in the following manner: "*The native clergy was for him the work which cost him*

much sacrifice, many tears and much work; it had been the dream of his missionary life, the fulcrum on which he intended to hang the development of the mission"

Cfr. in s. Pane, The Life of Blessed Justin De Jacobis, p. 907.

[nota4] De Jacobis himself who was writing in his letter of the 28th September 1846, addressed to Fr. Etienne, the superior General of the time. In this letter St. Justin saw the vincentians suitable to form this clergy with which he had so much to do, but specifying which type of confrere is at the high level needed for doing this (in as much as not all do and live as befits a missionary): "*Brothers who are capable of sustaining the harshest privations.*"

The above-quoted letter Cf. Annals of the Mission 82 (1975) p. 45.

[nota5] In fact, the end of the congregation besides its own perfection and the evangelization of the poorest of the countryside, we must "*help the ecclesiastics to acquire the knowledge and virtue necessary to their state.*" (Cfr. Regole Communi p.1)

[nota6] This testimony of Abba Atsbeha, to be absolutely precise, does not belong to the exact period of St. Justin, but it is surely a tradition indented and actualized by the Vincentisms who came after him. In the era of St. Justin, a printing press with Ge'ez characters was invented at the Vatican.

St. Justin sent several books translated from and into Latin/Amaric to Rome. In his letter of the 29th June 1858 he listed the books sent. Here are some:

- The Ethiopian Rile with the Latin translation and notes. The Tract on Christian Truths
- The History of the Bresie existing in Ethiopia.
- The Grammar and the Dictionary of the Ge'ez language written by abba Ghebremichel in collaboration with the missionaries. A book; on the Spiritual Exercises All this u /as meant lo serve in the formation or his priests.

[nota7] Cfr. Letl. Man 11, no. 209 and other testimonies say of him:

"In general he dressed like the Abyssinians but even worse than them, he was extremely poor, he went around dressed like the poor people." (This testimony is from Father Delmonle)

[nota8] Cfr. Fr. Delmonle. Arch Storico Diocesi di Napoli 1c. p. 347.v. quoted from the Annali of the Mission 82 (1975) p. 18.

[nota9]Cfr. P. Salvatore Pane, op. cit. p.907.

[nota10]St. Justin replied to their accusations very gently but without hiding the gravity of the matter, saying to them, "*it it is in the interest of the Abyssinian mission, to wich I have dedicated my whole life, that I be hunted out ol it, I beg*

you not to save me... make a clean break;" Cfr. Lett. Man 11 n 231. The Superiors did not understand that the saint was one of the few missionaries who had come with the power of the "world" which is Jesus Christ and not with the power of the full pocket.

[nota11] Cfr. S. Pane op. cit. p 907

[nota12] This letter was quoted by Chierotti, in his article "*Fr. Carlo Delmonte (1827-1869). The Missionary dearest to Justin De Jacobis*" in *Annals of the Mission, X* (1975) p11 and it can be found at the ASDN. This author says that the crisis had already begun before the death of De Jacobis, when Bianchen had openly declared himself opposed to the importance given to the native clergy and their maintenance at the expense of the budget of the mission. On the 11th October 1859 and thus a year before his death, he came to write to P. Guarini as follows: "*Know well what a mistake I made when I did my best so that Signor Biancheri might become Monsignor Biancheri.*" Cfr. Lett Man of Mons. De Jacobis vol. 11 n.402) at the General Arch of the Congregation of the Mission in Rome. The quotation is taken from CHIEROTTI *ivi.* already cited in the preceding note.

[nota13] Wishing to justify and to find the interpretative key to these differences of opinion between these two personalities, van Winsen presents De Jacobis as the "*Idealist*" whereas Biancheri would be the "*Realist*". If by "*realism*" one means a concrete and achievement-oriented vision; that is a vision which takes into account sufficiently the cultural and environmental situation, the realist is not Biancheri but De Jacobis. Whatever it was no ordinary difference. To reason in economic terms at the expense of the formation and the help given to the clergy as not to the benefit of the mission, and this was exactly the preoccupation of De Jacobis: The White Saint for all the Abyssinians of all religions.

[nota14] Generally, De Jacobis is portrayed as a good kind, loving man, with a mother's heart. Biancheri himself portrays him thus on the the January 1845 "*tender as a mother*", that is _ arm-hearted, sympathetic and understanding loving and lovable... whereas Biancheri portrays himself with the priest's authority; that is, a cold blooded man, a man living in his head, a man capable of standing back...

This and note 13 can be seen in Dr. G.A. Ch. Van Winsen: "*One hundred and fifty years of Priestly Formation by the Lazarists in Ethiopia*" in *Ethiopian Review of Cultures, theological philosophical centre, Addis Abeba, Vo 1 1991* pp 87-88.

[nota15] Cfr. Van Winsen op. cit p. 88

[nota16] This is the testimony of Touvier, quoted by van Winsen, op cit. P98-100

[nota17] Cfr. van Winsen, op. cit. p. 105: As one can see the continuity between De Jacobis and the study plan of his seminary run by our confreres seems guaranteed. The fundamental elements of the formation dreamed of by De Jacobis are present: The Side of the Orthodox Catholic Discipline, Ge'ez. Singing.

[nota18] If the decree was for the 20th January 1895, our missionaries were already leaving Massawa on the 30th January 1895. And, sadly, on 4th February, 1895 they were leaving Keren with all the glorious and grandiose works which they had there; including the first and only printing press in Ge'ez characters from our parts which was handed over to the Capuchins. The orphanage of the Daughters of Charity on the other hand, was given to the Daughters of Saint Anna.

PRIEST OF THE MISSION: FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

A study of the development of the French Provinces from 1810-1960.

Andrés Sylvestre C.M.

Vincent's legacy.

On his death St. Vincent left about 120 confreres who had, with and through Vincent's guidance, deeply transformed the Church of their time. Their small number (this "little company" of which M. Vincent spoke) did more for the renewal of the Church than the serried ranks of the large well-known orders.

At a time when we are wondering about our survival and recruitment, at least in France and Europe, it is useful to seek to learn the lessons of history, particularly those St. Vincent has given us.

Having begun his ecclesiastical career, since it was at that time a career for him, circumstances then brought him into contact with poverty. Grippled by what he saw, Vincent would spend years exploring the terrible spiral of poverty: the hospitals, beggars, abandoned children, girls at risk, country people ravaged by war, and at the very bottom of that spiral, prisoners and the galley-slaves.

He put his finger on a festering sore of his times: the poverty of the weakest cheek by jowl with the extravagance of the powerful. Vincent comes to this conclusion: "The poor are dying of hunger ... and are being lost." He proclaims this conviction to the rich and powerful, and to all who have the influence and resources to change this state of affairs. He insists that the clergy be not like the priest in the parable who passes by the needy person without helping.

Vincent went to the very heart of the problems of his time and came up with an answer to them. Others, he knew, had also heard the urgent cries for help but often without understanding them. But he was in a good position to hear their cry because he himself was one of them. And the people knew and recognised Vincent as one of their own.

Vincent incarnated the Church's call as described in *Gaudium et Spes* No 4: "Search out the signs of the times ... get to know and understand the world we live in, its desires and expectations, its changing character...." Can we today adopt Vincent's approach? It was because he was responding to the needs of his time that Vincent was understood and joined by the first Priests of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, and numerous others since.

Among ourselves as confreres, we often wonder what is the Community's specific characteristic which is different to all other Congregations. The answers are varied. But on

the evidence of St. Vincent, it could be said : "Nothing, except to respond to the most pressing needs of our times." But surely this is the call of the whole Church, one that cannot ever be lost sight of, one that the Council has re-emphasised. Vincent merely did what the whole Church is called to do, and managed to remind the Church of that call.

The good times.

Begun by Vincent, the Company continued till the French Revolution, both in France and abroad. There were some difficulties but I will not delay on this period. The Company then disappeared in the storm of Revolution, at least in France where about 20 confreres were martyred, some of whom have been beatified. Twenty years after the start of this persecution the Congregation rose from its ashes. There are several reasons for this new growth and we will try to tease out some of them.

In response of the Vicar General, M. Hanon, confreres scattered throughout the dioceses started to regroup in communities from 1809 on. About 100 confreres came together and by the middle of the century the number rose to 220, to 585 in 1875, and to 680 by the end of the century.

What did this unusual growth mean to the Company in France? It was in fact a sevenfold increase in less than a century and at a time when the Community had no means of recruitment worth talking about. However four Apostolic schools were set up in the last part of the century.

We must bear in mind the birth and growth of missionary communities in the course of the nineteenth century. Our Community was carried along in this tide and benefited greatly from it. However, leaving aside these general reasons which were common to all communities, we can point to some specific facts concerning which we played an important role.

The Company appeared very well integrated into the French Church: it was responding at different levels to the most urgent needs of this century.

1. The reorganisation and the preaching of the Christian message which were necessary once more. In the middle of this century we managed to re-establish 7 Mission houses. This number would rise quickly to 30 by 1875.

2. The formation of a sound clergy to reinforce the Christian message. In the middle of the century we once again took charge of 11 major seminaries and 1 minor seminary. By the end of the century there were 19 major seminaries and 5 minor seminaries. This development is proof of the great trust placed in us.

3. The large scale opening of the foreign missions, missions which had a particular appeal to the French sensibility. Missions in Islamic countries, especially since the conquest of Algeria, missions in Latin America where liberation movements in favor of independence had been widely inspired by French ideas, a mission in China where France intervened as a protector of the missions.

As a result of these three involvements and indeed others as well, the community found itself at the heart of the French clergy. Two facts prove this: the extraordinary success of the travel accounts of P. Huc and the beatification of Blessed Perboyre. A priest who was ordained in 1900, in a diocese where we had no confreres, Nancy, told me in 1950 about the great excitement caused by the beatification of J G Perboyre among seminarists and priests shortly before 1900.

Entrants to St Lazare.

The register of entrants to the internal seminary tells us that between 1850 and 1900 there were 523 seminarists who came from the major French seminaries. That is an average of ten or eleven a year. In the same fifty year period 281 diocesan priests also asked to be admitted to the internal seminary, which is an average of five or six per year.

They knew that they were going into St Lazare to work in one or other of the Church's major objectives. They knew that by entering St Lazare they would have the support of the community life. They also knew that in the Congregation of the Mission they would have a much broader canvas than the limited horizons of the diocese. A kind of balance had been established between the community and the diocesan clergy. The community worked for them and with them, and was in a way an extension of them.

The most pressing needs in the minds of the diocesan clergy had their repercussions with us. Priests of the Mission were by the end of the century at the forefront of the French Church in intellectual pursuits: Pouget, Ermoni ... in ecumenical dialogue, Portal in missionary expansion. One need only mention the great bishops of China, Mouly, Jarlin.... About 1900 we had 680 French confreres of whom 260 were in mission countries.

The exile.

The community in France suffered a terrible blow by the separation of Church and State. Due to the fact that we were unhappily regarded as religious we almost completely disappeared from the French Church. Although we had been involved in various works in about thirty dioceses, with some dioceses having up to three houses like Montpellier, Carcassonne, Combrai, Marseilles, after the separation we only had four houses: Paris, Bordeaux, Dax and Marseilles.

Almost 200 confreres went abroad either to help the 260 already on the missions or to begin new works. In this way in response to the Holy Father's request four diocesan seminaries were taken on in Sicily.

This great test was perhaps to the advantage of the whole Church since some Orders benefited. But for us it was a disaster, a complete disorganisation since all of our assets in the French Church were removed. The German province had suffered a similar fate as a result of Bismarck's Kulturkampf. This situation continued until after the First World War.

The restoration or the misfortune.

From 1919 onwards we went back to France and quickly took up our role again. In spite of these testing years and our absence we still had almost 500 confreres in place of 680 twenty years earlier.

In 1920 we again took on eight major seminaries and opened eight mission houses. In the following years apostolic schools were reorganised or started: Berceau, Primecombe, Marvejols, Loos, Beaupreau, Gentilly and Belletence which soon was transferred to Cuvry.

The number of confreres grew. From 500 after the war the number rose to 552 in 1939. Replacing those who died in these twenty years and the increase of 52 represents a little more than 200 new confreres ordained between 1919 and 1939.

Our recruitment and formation teams included a total of 55 confreres in apostolic schools for at most 400 students. The future of the company seemed assured, it seemed to have developed normally again, then the numbers began to rise. That was how it seemed but something had been broken and the injury could not be seen.

The close link so important for us between the community and the French clergy, our presence at the heart of the French Church and at the core of her problems, our attention to the pressing needs of the world of France were gone. Some of those clergy who knew the community well and held it in high esteem sometimes spoke with regret about this.

An effort to explain.

We had been absent for twenty years and like emigrants coming back to France at the restoration of 1815 we did not notice that the world had changed. It had changed without them and also without us. Doubtless we had our halo from before the Separation and without necessarily saying it we would too willingly fall back on our experience before the exile. We did not give sufficient consideration to the present state of affairs and the needs of the world in the period between the two wars.

In our seminaries and in our missions we used tried and trusted methods. But it was much easier to rest on the glory and security of our past than to try to find answers for a new world.

Now, also, in this evolving world apart from: the beginning and development of the Children of Mary; the birth of the Marillacs; the formation and the spread of the Miraculous Medal and Novena, we had been neither prime movers or collaborators in the birth of any of the major apostolic movements which characterised the life of the French Church between 1920 and 1970. Among these were the birth of Catholic Action, the formation of Catholic Aid or the Ragpickers of Emmaus, the Fourth World A.T.D., the establishment of the Mission of France for which we had been asked to set up the seminary but which we had declined.

Perhaps, all of us could not have been at the heart of the life of the Church to the same degree as M. Gounot, but the Church was not mistaken when choosing him as bishop.

We continued our work as previously and thanks to our apostolic schools we continued to get vocations. People still joined us but they did not really know why. A general consultation of the confreres of the Paris and Toulouse provinces took place in the winter of 1966-67 and the following question was asked: "Why did you become a Priest of the Mission?" More than half of confreres under 55 answered: "By chance of Providence."

Providential it may be, but still it is regrettable that so many confreres only entered the community by chance. Would our idealism be damaged to some degree if so many entering the community did not know clearly why they were entering, even if later on they became more aware. Older confreres gave a much clearer answer to the same question. They knew why they entered, for the foreign missions or the seminaries or the popular missions.

Our apostolic schools which had been reorganised after the First and Second World Wars fulfilled their role. Thanks to them the community was able to carry on and look to the future. Without them we would only have a third or a quarter of our French confreres, and that is a positive outcome. Unfortunately, however, due to the fact that we were able to recruit more or less normally through these schools, we failed to ask ourselves important questions about our presence and our role in the French church. At least, shortage of numbers did not force us to ask these questions brutally and bluntly. Reassuring numbers were like a curtain hiding us from reality. In the years preceding the Second World War we had 15 to 20 ordinations each year. Our numbers gave no concern as to our future.

However, one fact should have troubled us. Apart from rare exceptions hardly anyone came to us from the major diocesan seminaries, and this was during a period when the seminaries had big numbers between 1930 and 1940, and between 1945 and 1950. During these years only 17 major seminarians and 2 priests sought admission to the internal seminary. We were far removed from the extraordinary numbers of the second half of the previous century when 16 or 17 entered each year.

They no longer wanted to join us, they could no longer see what they would be doing. In spite of daily contact with numerous diocesan seminarians (between 500 and 600) and our confreres teaching in seminaries, we seemed to be strangers living in a separate world, while in some houses we certainly lived apart.

The problems of the time, the demands of evangelization, the initiatives of the clergy trying new methods all seemed to us, perhaps, to be a fruitless struggle compared to the eternal Church and the unchanging character of the community. We had our history and thanks to our increasing numbers we also had our future so why do anything at present?

Each of us can in the light of his own experience consider the truth of this analysis. One may say that as far as he is concerned he felt that he understood the problems of his times very well and that he got on well with the clergy. I will not argue with this because at the time I thought so myself. However, major problems always come to the surface eventually even if they remain hidden for a long time.

For the Church as a whole a moment of truth arrived. As a result of the Council she had to ask questions about her role in the world, about what the Church should be for mankind. Otherwise, she would become introspective focusing on her internal affairs and would be nothing more than a ghetto. Similarly, for the community as a result of its renewed interest in St Vincent, it is time to search with him for what is required of us to prepare the Church of tomorrow. If we do not wish to do this all that remains is to write our epitaph and prepare for the last rites.

Our numbers.

I was writing in 1967 when we had 465 French confreres in France and abroad according to our catalogue. I added on that considering the age profile this number would be halved in 20 years. 27 years have elapsed since then and at the end of 1994 there are 224 French confreres more or less half of what there were.

The works.

The Seminaries.

In 1955 we had 54 confreres directing 10 diocesan seminaries and two university seminaries. In 1968, 13 year later, only Montpellier remained and a few confreres teaching in regrouped seminaries, in all about 15 confreres teaching in seminaries. One should add to this number those who were teaching in our own houses of study. How many confreres are involved in formation work in seminaries or in permanent formation of the clergy today? For the two provinces this number is less than 10.

A serious consequence is the fact that we do not have more than 40 confreres to teach theology or to do research. This is a serious loss of grey matter.

The Missions.

In 1955 there were 8 mission houses in France with a total of 65 missionaries. In 1967 there were only about 30. Today there is properly speaking only one mission house which does marvelous work in the general diocesan struggle to reorganise the rural areas.

Former missionaries and teachers in apostolic schools have turned to the parish ministry working in parishes or groups of parishes. The bishops asked no more of us than to come along and fill the gaps.

The aim of these teams in rural areas is not or rather is no longer simply to replace diocesan priests who are in short supply. It is rather to respond to one of the pressing needs of the Church in the country areas. The aim in huge areas where there are no longer any priests is to awaken the laity by a mission or some other means to bring them to take on pastoral responsibilities and to undertake the organisation and the life of the church in their area. This is no small matter.

Elsewhere we have taken charge of urban areas in imitation of other congregations. Confreres have done and continue to do excellent work there. But we were less well prepared for this type of work and some confreres have been unable to adapt and have left us.

The Apostolic Schools.

In 1938 we had six apostolic schools consisting of about 600 students with 55 priest-teachers. These ensured record numbers entering the internal seminary. In 1938 48 students entered. True enough it was the war period and out of this number only 15 became Vincentian priests and three diocesan.

After the war we built several new apostolic schools and refurbished several others. In 1955 there were 7 with 70 confreres. Unfortunately, they did not repay the efforts made to establish them. Educational reforms forced us to make changes in them. They became schools or else they ceased their work. All of a sudden we had scarcely a single vocation coming from this source.

What might we have done instead of simply closing them? Perhaps, we should have established some hostels to prepare vocations. It is a pity that this experiment was not tried out.

The Foreign Missions.

We are rightly considered to be a missionary institute and in this area we have a long and glorious history. A certain number entered the community to go on the missions.

But our missionary resources have lessened considerably. In 1938 out of 515 French confreres under the age of 75 almost half, 245, were on the missions. In 1967 out of 400 confreres under 75 only a quarter, 101, were on the missions. In 1994, out of 133 French confreres under 75 years of age there are only 29 on the missions. It is true that in several countries local recruitment has taken up the slack.

We must maintain the missionary dimension of our provinces. In the course of several journeys I have been able to note numerous provinces which have been grateful to the French confreres for having set them up and then helped them for a long time and even still. Quite often young people are attracted to join us by this missionary dimension.

I have been unable to assemble the numbers of those who entered and left the internal seminary between 1960 and 1990. I can say that like the French dioceses the numbers entering collapsed, and are beginning to rise a little. The comments I have made about our numbers in the last 150 years do not allow me to predict the future. But one can legitimately wonder:

What should we do?

So that young people might wish to join us they must feel that we are trying to respond according to our vocation to the needs of the Church. I do not have to say what should be done, provincial assemblies must consider this question. However, let me point out two needs which I think deserve our attention because they are in the mode in which St Vincent acted.

1. The country areas are becoming a religious desert unless they are evangelised to establish teams of lay people who will be capable of taking charge of the life of the Church. In this work we find a hint of St. Vincent.

2. The world of the marginalised in whose service so many people are devoted. We should study this problem in our society and make our young people aware of it. At the end of our retreat in Aiguebelle with Fr. Durand O.P. we had more or less resolved to take on this analysis and reflection. At least we ought to encourage and support the vocations of confreres who feel called to this work.

All of this should not make us neglect the foreign missions, to assist provinces in mission countries by way of exchange and to send some confreres on missions and to welcome students and priests coming from these provinces.

Candidates entering and leaving St. Lazare 1840-1960.

| | Entrants | | | | | Departures | | | | |
|---------|-------------------|--------|-------|------|------|------------|----------|----|--------|-------|
| | From dioc. clergy | | Total | % | Oth. | Tot. | 10 years | | Before | After |
| | Prie. | Semin. | | | | | | | | |
| 1840-44 | 18 | 35 | 53 | 51% | 48 | 101 | 25 | 5 | 30 | 30% |
| 1845-49 | 31 | 56 | 87 | 68% | 42 | 129 | 51 | - | 51 | 38% |
| 1850-54 | 26 | 55 | 81 | 66% | 41 | 122 | 19 | 7 | 26 | 21% |
| 1855-59 | 553 | 63 | 116 | 73% | 43 | 159 | 24 | 1 | 25 | 17% |
| 1860-64 | 28 | 58 | 85 | 64% | 49 | 135 | 29 | 1 | 30 | 22% |
| 1865-69 | 39 | 93 | 132 | 76% | 43 | 175 | 42 | 8 | 50 | 29% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1840-69 | 195 | 360 | 555 | 67% | 266 | 821 | 190 | 22 | 212 | 26% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1870-74 | 31 | 89 | 120 | 56% | 93 | 213 | 60 | 8 | 68 | 32% |
| 1875-79 | 27 | 33 | 60 | 50% | 61 | 121 | 54 | 6 | 60 | 50% |
| 1880-84 | 21 | 41 | 62 | 42% | 86 | 148 | 37 | 11 | 48 | 33% |
| 1885-89 | 15 | 38 | 53 | 34% | 105 | 158 | 26 | 15 | 41 | 26% |
| 1890-94 | 19 | 25 | 44 | 29% | 105 | 149 | 33 | 14 | 47 | 32% |
| 1895-99 | 21 | 56 | 77 | 38% | 125 | 202 | 46 | 5 | 51 | 25% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1870-99 | 134 | 282 | 416 | 43% | 565 | 981 | 256 | 59 | 315 | 32% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1900-04 | 4 | 43 | 47 | 28% | 120 | 167 | 44 | 24 | 68 | 41% |
| 1905-09 | 5 | 14 | 19 | 20% | 78 | 97 | 39 | 10 | 49 | 49% |
| 1910-14 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 12% | 61 | 69 | 21 | 12 | 33 | 48% |
| 1915-19 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 6% | 65 | 69 | 25 | 7 | 32 | 46% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1900-19 | 17 | 61 | 78 | 19% | 324 | 402 | 129 | 53 | 182 | 45% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1920-24 | 5 | 5 | 10 | 10% | 92 | 102 | 24 | 10 | 34 | 33% |
| 1925-29 | 4 | 9 | 13 | 14% | 79 | 92 | 41 | 4 | 45 | 49% |
| 1930-34 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 3% | 185 | 190 | 54 | 6 | 60 | 32% |
| 1935-39 | - | 1 | 1 | 0,7% | 153 | 154 | 97 | 4 | 101 | 66% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1920-39 | 10 | 19 | 29 | 5,5% | 509 | 538 | 216 | 24 | 240 | 45% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1940-44 | - | - | - | 0% | 112 | 112 | 72 | 4 | 76 | 68% |
| 1945-49 | 0 | 12 | 12 | 25% | 37 | 49 | 45 | 0 | 45 | 92% |
| 1950-54 | - | - | - | 0% | 62 | 62 | 27 | 6 | 33 | 52% |
| 1955-60 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 15% | 41 | 48 | 32 | 6 | 38 | 80% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1940-59 | 2 | 16 | 19 | 7% | 252 | 271 | 176 | 16 | 192 | 71% |

Récapitulation

| | Entrants | | | | Departures | | | | | |
|---------|-------------------|--------|-------|------|-------------------|------|----------|-----|--------|-------|
| | From dioc. clergy | | Total | % | Oth. | Tot. | 10 years | | Before | After |
| | Prie. | Semin. | | | | | | | | |
| 1840-69 | 195 | 360 | 555 | 67% | 266 | 821 | 190 | 22 | 212 | 26% |
| 1870-99 | 134 | 282 | 416 | 43% | 565 | 981 | 256 | 59 | 315 | 32% |
| 1900-19 | 17 | 61 | 78 | 19% | 324 | 402 | 129 | 53 | 182 | 45% |
| 1920-39 | 10 | 19 | 29 | 5,5% | 509 | 538 | 216 | 24 | 240 | 45% |
| 1940-59 | 3 | 16 | 19 | 7% | 252 | 271 | 176 | 16 | 192 | 71% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |
| 120 ans | 359 | 738 | 1097 | 36% | 1916 | 3013 | 967 | 174 | 1141 | 37% |
| ----- | | | | | | | | | | |

1st column priests entering the CM; 2nd column seminarists; 3rd total of both; 4th percentage of total entries; 5th layment entering; 6th total entries: 7th departures before ten years of presence; 8th numbers leaving after 10 years; 9th total number leaving; 10th percentage of entrants who left CM.

Eamon Devlin, C.M., Translator

Théodoric Pedrini CM (1670-1747)

The Emperor's Musician

André Sylvestre, C.M.

During the latter part of the 18th century the Vincentians were asked by the Holy See to replace the Jesuits in various countries: Prussia, the Ottoman Empire, and especially China. However, even before this several of them had volunteered for this Chinese mission and had been sent there by The Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*.

The first examples of this were Fathers Appiani and Mullener. They were great missionaries constantly coping with difficulties, but we are not concerned here with the story of their apostolate.

In 1645 Pope Innocent X had condemned the Chinese Rites, but many missionaries, including the Jesuits, sought loopholes to avoid implementing the Holy Father's decree. A directive from a bishop, Mgr Maigrot, was no more successful. Pope Clement XI therefore decided to send a legate to investigate the question on the spot and find a solution. He chose a reputable priest, Charles de Tournon, aged 33, and consecrated him bishop and appointed him Patriarch of Antioch. He made his pre-consecration retreat with the Vincentians in Montecitorio and was consecrated by the Pope himself on 27 December 1702. The legate was to be accompanied by several missionaries sent by the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*.

The legate was to go and deal directly with the Emperor Kangshi in the Court in Peking. The emperor had the reputation of being a shrewd melomaniac, so the Pope, thinking the emperor would be happy to welcome an experienced musician to his court, asked for a Vincentian priest who was already well-known as a talented musician to become a member of the expedition.

Fr Théodoric Pedrini eagerly accepted the suggestion put to him, and so was to leave with five other missionaries, including another Vincentian Fr Biasi.

Fr Pedrini was born in 1670 in Fermo, a small old village in the Ancona Marches. He studied law and had a doctorate *in utroque*. He joined the Vincentians in 1698 at the age of 28.

The expedition, made up of the legate and six missionaries sent by the Congregation *de Propaganda Fide*, was to leave Barcelona on 9 February 1703 on a French ship of the Compagnie des Indes.

A long-term voyage

Fr Pedrini asked permission from the legate to go to Paris first to visit the Maison-mère and greet the Superior General. He left Rome on 13 January 1702 and caught a boat for Toulon in Leghorn and went on to Paris.

He was supposed to join the legate in the Canaries in April 1703, but he stayed too long, perhaps, in Paris, and also decided that a journey though Spain would be too difficult, but, to cap it all, he missed his boat for the Canaries in St Malo. At Christmas 1703, though, he found a boat was leaving St Malo for China, via the Straits of Magellan and South America.

Voyage to the Americas

He went on board on 28 December. It was a rough voyage and they met several storms, for the passage round Cape Horn is no pleasure trip. They called in to Concepcion in Chile on 13 May 1704 and shortly afterwards arrived in Callao, the port for Lima. But on arrival in Peru the captain decided he was going no further, and made preparations for going back to France. So our candidate for China found himself stranded in Lima, the prestigious capital of the Spanish West Indies and residence of the Viceroy. Fr Pedrini had plenty of time to go and pray at the tomb of the holy bishop Turibio, who had died a century earlier, and to show his devotion in the house where St Rose had been born; she had been canonised more than thirty years earlier, in 1671.

Hearing that a ship was to leave Acapulco in Mexico for the Philippines, Fr Pedrini decide to take a chance on that. He found a ship which took him from Peru to Guatemala, but that left him with another 1,200 kilometres to cover. He covered them partly on foot and partly by boat. He eventually arrived in Acapulco and went on board the ship on 18 March 1707. He had a calm voyage and landed in Manila on 9 August 1707.

The last stage

But he wasn't yet at the end of his troubles. However, he found a ship which was supposed to take him to Macao, but at that time of the year the winds were so unfavourable that the ship had to change course three times and eventually return

to Manila. Just at that moment an edict from King Philip V of Spain arrived, forbidding all trade with China. But also just at that moment five missionaries for China from Propaganda arrived in Manila, entrusted by the Holy Father with the mission of bringing the cardinalatial biretta to the legate, Mgr de Tournon. This was a recognition by the Holy See of all its legate had done to bring peace to the burning issue of the Chinese Rites; up to then he had received nothing but affronts, insults, and an attempted poisoning.

Fr Pedrini, whose imagination had never yet been found wanting, went to the Spanish Governor and pointed out to him that it would be totally unacceptable to leave the envoys of the Holy Father stranded in Manila. They had to get to Mgr de Tournon as quickly as possible, the honour of the Holy See being at stake, not to mention that of the Most Catholic King of Spain. The governor allowed himself to be persuaded, and prepared a frigate. Fr Pedrini shaved off his beard, dressed in lay clothes with a sword at his side and, with the governor's agreement, presented himself as the captain in charge of the expedition. The envoys of the Holy Father were let in on the secret of their captain's identity, and kept it.

They set sail on 29 November 1709 but had a rough crossing, being battered by storms three more times, but they eventually landed in Macao on 1 January 1710. Fr Pedrini was on Chinese soil at last; he had needed a perseverance far from common.

A dying cardinal

He was able to give the cardinalatial biretta to Mgr de Tournon in a private ceremony on 8 January. The legate, whose embassy had been undermined by the intransigent partisans of the Rites, had been sent back from Peking to Macao by order of the Emperor, where he was kept under house arrest by soldiers, thanks to the intrigues and ill will of the upholders of the Rites. He died a few months later, on 8 June 1710, exhausted by the insults and the opposition. As for his interpreter, the Vincentian Fr Appiani, he also was a victim of the ill will of the Reverend Fathers: he spent 18 years in prison.

A musician at the Court

The Emperor Kangshi, who had been notified by Mgr de Tournon of Fr Pedrini's coming, sent word to him to come to the Court in Peking. Having stayed a short while in Macao to familiarise himself with the Chinese language Fr Pedrini set out for Peking with one of the Propaganda missionaries, Fr Ripa, a priest of the diocese of Naples, who was to remain a close friend. It is to him that we owe the account of all that happened subsequently to Fr Pedrini. They were welcomed very cordially by the Emperor, who assigned them accommodation and work, Fr

Pedrini as a musician and Fr Ripa as an artist. Fr Ripa notes in his diary: "Fr Pedrini, thanks to his talent in music, in managing workmen, in the making of various instruments and, even more so, to his friendliness, found more and more favour with this great monarch".

Fr Pedrini made various musical instruments, such as spinets, organ, violins, which were much admired by the Emperor. The partisans of the Rites, jealous of Pedrini's influence with the Emperor, wanted to make him lose face with the Emperor. They wanted to force him, along with some of the Propaganda missionaries, including Fr Ripa, to reject the Holy Father's decree about the Rites. Fr Pedrini made it clear to the Emperor that he could not do this, and Fr Ripa took the same attitude. The emperor did not insist, and he retained his esteem for Fr Pedrini. He even entrusted the musical education of two of his sons to him. These two princely pupils never lost their esteem for their former teacher, and always supported him. When Fr Pedrini got sick in 1714 the Sovereign heard that one of his sons had sent some medicine to him, and sent some of his own as well.

Fr Pedrini was led to make a written submission to the Emperor on the Holy Father's view of the Rites, a submission which could have been made only by Mgr de Tournon. The Sovereign was satisfied with this, but the partisans of the Rites, along with the mandarin Tchao Tchang, the protector of the Jesuits, kept up their animosity against Fr Pedrini. Fr Ripa and himself had bought a house, as a residence for the Propaganda missionaries. The chapel of this house was much frequented by the Christians in the city who did not want to disobey the instructions of the Holy Father. The success of this caused only more jealousy.

In 1717 Fr Pedrini was promoted to the rank of Protonotary Apostolic by the Holy Father, in recognition of his talents, but he never availed of this.

The time of trial

In 1720 the Emperor's mother died. Fr Pedrini was himself sick at the time and could not fulfil the duty of paying the visit of condolence to the Court. His opponents made much of this omission and turned it into an offence against the Sovereign. Fr Pedrini was imprisoned for a few days, then released.

Meanwhile the Pope had sent a new legate, Mgr Mezzabarba, to examine once again the question of the Rites and to bring the dissident missionaries back to obedience. He did not succeed in convincing the Emperor, nor in correcting those who up to then had availed of all the loopholes to get round the instructions of Rome and of several bishops in China. On the occasion of a final audience on 20 February 1721 the Emperor entrusted the legate with a memorandum for the Pope. This memorandum, called "The Diary of the Mandarins", was to give an account of the different imperial audiences granted to the Legate and the conclusions

drawn from them. It was drawn up by the Jesuits. Tchao Tchang their protector insisted that it be signed by all the missionaries present. The Jesuits, of course, signed it; Fr Ripa ended up by signing it under protest, not knowing what it contained. Fr Pedrini, for his part, refused absolutely to sign a document which he had not been able to read and treating of matters of which he had not been a witness. The Emperor was furious at this refusal and ordered him to receive one hundred strokes of a cane, and to be chained and imprisoned.

On the legate's departure on 1 March Fr Pedrini's chains were removed and he was transferred to a cell in the Jesuits' residence, and they became his jailers. He was released in May and recalled to join Court in Tartary for the six summer months. On returning to Peking, though, the Jesuit superior Fr Parennin insisted on his reincarceration in their house.

At the end of the following year the Emperor caught a cold while hunting and died on 30 December 1722, aged 69. Before his death he had nominated his fourth son Yountcheng to succeed him.

A new reign

The new Emperor had also been a pupil of Fr Pedrini, and as soon as he had assumed power he had him released. Fr Pedrini was once again free to come and go to the palace. On the other hand, having learnt of the intrigues of certain Jesuits to block his accession he had them expelled from Court and even had one of the most seriously involved arrested and executed. On the occasion of an audience the new Emperor made a point of showing publicly his esteem for and confidence in Fr Pedrini. The latter was able to intervene and get the Emperor to release Fr Appiani, who had been 20 years in prison in Canton because of the inflexible antipathy of the partisans of the Rites against him, as Mgr de Tournon's loyal interpreter.

The missionaries were generally expelled from China, though not from Peking or Canton. Fr Appiani stayed on in Canton and spent the rest of his days educating young Chinese in preparation for the priesthood, but he died in 1732 at the time of the expulsion of the missionaries from Canton.

On being released Fr Pedrini left the Jesuit residence, Pétang, because it held so many unpleasant memories for him. He bought a huge house to serve as a residence for the Propaganda missionaries and added on a church which served as a parish, in spite of lively opposition, still coming from the same source. Unfortunately on 30 September 1730 an earthquake partly destroyed house and church. Fr Pedrini was seriously short of money for having repairs carried out, as also for buying a site for a cemetery. He was even denounced to the Propaganda

Congregation for embezzlement. He was eventually cleared of these malicious accusations.

Accession of Kienlong

The Emperor Koutcheng died on 8 October 1735. For the succession he had availed of a system long in use in the Congregation for the appointment by the Superior General of a Vicar General who would take over after his death until a successor would be elected by a General Assembly. The Emperor had written on a sheet of paper the name of his designated successor. This sheet was enclosed in a sealed box hanging in a room in the palace. Keimlong, the fourth son, was the designated successor. He had all religious preaching stopped in all the parish churches in Peking. Fr Pedrini's, though, being considered a private residence, was exempt from this prohibition and it continued to be very well attended. In order to convey the point that a Christian was faithful to the decrees of Rome concerning the Rites it was said that "He goes to Pedrini's church" or even "He's a member of the Confraternity of the Seven Dolours!"

Fr Pedrini was even recalled to the palace to resume his position as musician, but he fell gravely ill in the autumn of 1741. He wrote in a letter to his brother: "The Jesuit Fathers [not his former persecutors] have helped me day and night with the greatest charity".

He died on 10 December 1746, aged 77. He was a man of extraordinary courage and constancy. During his life he had experienced both favours and sufferings. These latter, though, did not diminish his natural good spirits nor his optimism. He was loyal to the Holy See right to the end. The Emperor bore the expense of his funeral, on 27 February 1747

Final note: Fr Dulucq, a former missionary in China, gave me the following information: The Divine Word Fathers discovered in the archives of Fu Jen University (founded in Peking in 1924) a cantata, with the composer's name given as Nepridi; they easily deciphered this as an anagram of Pedrini, the Court musician. This cantata was then edited and performed.

(Translated by Thomas Davitt)

THE EMBLEM AND MOTTO OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

John E. Rybolt, C.M.

Introduction

Does the Congregation of the Mission have an official emblem and motto to identify it? The emblem most commonly used, and hence familiar to its members, consists of an oval frame enclosing the figure of Jesus standing on a globe, facing forward, rays surrounding his head, and arms outstretched downward. This study will show that this familiar figure of Jesus and the motto *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* both date from the time of Saint Vincent. However, the use of both of these together, with the motto surrounding the oval, dates only from the mid-nineteenth century.

Origin of the emblem

Louise de Marillac seems to be at the origin of the Community's emblem.(1) Among the religious scenes which she drew is a miniature figure of the resurrected Lord Jesus. She has drawn him standing on a globe or clouds, rays coming from his head. He faces forward, arms down, with his cloak billowing over his left shoulder. In addition, he bears the marks of four wounds: the place of the nails in his open hands and feet. This miniature is not dated, nor are there references to it in her extant writings, but it is the earliest surviving "Lord of Charity." This was a figure of Jesus, gesturing to the poor below, intended to nourish the piety of the members of the Confraternities of Charity. Louise wrote a letter to Vincent, dated provisionally as August 1647: "If you have any pictures resembling the one of the Lord of Charity in any of your books, I would beg you most humbly to do me the kindness of giving me one."(2) The meaning here is unclear. Louise may be referring to holy pictures (*images*) slipped into a book, or she may be referring to some other reproductions. The clearest reference is found in another letter, also dated provisionally between 1640 and 1646. Louise wrote to a sister: "I am enclosing pictures for you. One is a Lord of Charity to put in the room where you receive the poor. The other is for your room."(3) In a letter to Jean Martin, from Paris, 29 September 1656, M. Vincent refers in all likelihood to the same pictures: "We will send you the images of the Charity which you are asking for."(4) Since "image" often referred to small reproductions, it is unclear whether he was referring to them or to the six or more large canvases still extant. It should be noted that none of these paintings of the Lord of Charity includes the eventual motto of the Congregation of the Mission.

Use of Emblem for Seals

An examination of the wax impressions on letters which Vincent de Paul wrote, and of other early seals, shows that the Lord of Charity had been adopted as the seal of the Congregation, but without the four wounds. The text on these early seals relates to the person or house using the seal, such as SUPERIOR GENERALIS.CONGREG.MISSIONIS. The earliest surviving use of his seal is on a letter dated 31 March 1641. Use of similar seals by other houses became common in the 1650s.

It was left to René Alméras, to regulate the question of seals. He did so in a circular letter dated 4 August 1670, to accompany the Rules of Office revised by the assembly of 1668. He described the text but did not describe the seal. Neither did he treat the subject of the motto.

It should be noted that the engraving done for the frontispiece of the Common Rules, dated 1658 does not depict the seal or motto, nor is their use prescribed in the rules or other early documents. Nevertheless, Firmin Get, the superior in Marseille wrote to ask permission of the founder to display the arms of the Congregation on a new building. He received the following reply: "*Très volontiers je trouve bon que vous fassiez mettre sur la porte de votre nouveau bâtiment les armes dont vous m'avez envoyé le modèle.*"(5) ["I very willingly approve your placing above the door of your new building the arms, whose design you sent me."] The fragile page sent by Get with the drawing of the arms and the motto may still be the one in the archives of the Maison Mere. Following the traditional shape, the arms are not oval, like seals, but rectangular. In this drawing, the motto appears on a ribbon below the shield, and not surrounding the figure on the shield. This letter may make it appear that Get was the designer of the emblem, but the late date of the letter shows otherwise. What the saint probably meant was that he approved the use of the traditional emblem taken from the seals worked into a coat of arms, with the addition of the text.

Origin of the Motto

The origin of the motto is unknown. Louis Abelly, Vincent's first biographer, did not mention the choice of a motto, either for the Congregation as a whole or for the founder personally.(6) Firmin Get may have chosen the text (see letter 1872 above), but this is unlikely, given its importance. Vincent commented occasionally on the text, taken from Luke 4:18, based on Isaiah, "*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me,*" but did not claim that this text summarized his entire spiritual way.(7) The Common Rules, in the introductory letter, do allude to the text: "My idea was that men who are called to continue Christ's mission, which is mainly preaching the good news to the poor [*quae potissimum in Pauperum Evangelizatione consistit*"] should see things from his point of view and want what he wanted." This is far from the choice of a motto.(8)

One early engraving by Hérault of "Monsieur Vincent de Paul, institutor and first superior general of the Congregation of the priests of the Mission," dated from the end of the seventeenth century, has included the motto as part of the text below his

portrait: "*Evangelizare Pauperibus misit me etc. Luc c. 4.*"(9) This might prove only that someone, Hérault, associated this text with Vincent de Paul. It probably points, however, to its more widespread use in connection with the founder.

Disuse and Restoration

In the period before the French Revolution, the only appearance of the emblem seems to have been on oval or circular seals for letters and documents. Because of the need to identify the authority behind seal the motto did not appear with it. The text did appear on the book depicted lying at the saint's feet in the large statue sculpted by Pietro Bracci (1700-1773) for Saint Peter's basilica in the Vatican, and placed there in 1754.

Although the motto did not appear with the emblem used as a seal, two other texts, however, also became associated with Saint Vincent during the eighteenth century. These appeared in various engravings, paintings and pious images perhaps more as slogans than as mottoes. The first and most common was CHARITAS CHRISTI URGET NOS, ["the charity of Christ urges us"].(10) Although Saint Louise probably chose one form of the text as the motto of the Company of the Daughters of Charity, ("The Charity of Jesus Crucified urges us") it was also used to commemorate Vincent's devotion to practical charity.

The second text used as something of a motto is AD SALUTEM PAUPERUM ET CLERI DISCIPLINAM, ["for the salvation of the poor and the education of the clergy"] taken from the collect written after the canonization of Saint Vincent appears on some engravings of the period.

Immediately after the French Revolution, there was not much need or interest in the question of the emblem and motto of the Congregation. The emblem, with or without the motto, in addition, did not appear on the title pages of the Congregation's official books printed in France. Neither did they figure in the works of Brother François Charbonnier, the artist of the mother house, working in the 1840s. Standard depictions based on the early emblems were not found across Europe, such as in Italy, Spain and Poland, not to speak of overseas missions. Instead, the SV monogram came to be used, as for the new casket made for the relics of the founder, and placed over the altar of the mother house in 1830. Following this, the SV monogram came to be used on the title pages of books, on letter-head stationery, occasionally for the seals of houses.

By the time of the generalate of Jean-Baptiste Étienne (1843-1874), the iconography of the Congregation began to develop again as the Community itself was more and more organized. The restored seals of the provinces or visitors either remained in use or were replaced in the older provinces and newly made for the new ones. The restored emblem also figures in the decoration of the Maison Mere chapel, but without any motto. Instead, the major text in the chapel, is PERTRANSIIT BENEFACIENDO ["He went about doing good"].(11)

Despite this, there is no indication of an official adoption of the emblem and motto for use as a seal in any general assembly decrees in the 19th century, nor in the minutes of the general council in the same period. The impetus to adopt an emblem and motto may have come from the Daughter of Charity seal and motto, which appeared on the title page of their official books beginning in 1852.(12)

Another influence might well have been engravings of the Miraculous Medal. Seen from a distance, the Vincentian emblem and the front of the Miraculous Medal are virtually indistinguishable. In any case, if the Vincentian emblem offered a model for the medal, it was most probably the medal which gave the Vincentians the use of the emblem and motto together.

The earliest known use of the emblem surrounded by the motto took place outside of Europe, among the confreres of the American province. As their need for identification grew, the confreres began to adopt various means for this on early printed stationery. Out of these tentative designs came the first use of the oval emblem with the motto, dated 1862. It was used for letterhead stationery prepared for the province and houses by the printer Murphy in Baltimore. As the American stationery became more widely known, it can be assumed that it offered a model to be imitated.(13)

The earliest known use in France of the oval emblem and the motto is on an illuminated parchment prepared for the fiftieth anniversary of vows of Étienne, 1870, a day marking also the 27th anniversary of his election as superior general. This was followed by an engraving by the artist Dumont in an official publication dated 1876.(14) Whether the French model was taken from the American version, or developed independently is unknown, but it seems likely that the American stationery offered a model to be imitated by others. From 1876, the Dumont emblem with the motto began to be used more commonly, seen in the *Catalogue des Maisons et du Personnel*, and on the cover of the *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*. However, the new design also appeared in the form of the coat-of-arms mentioned above, and these two alternated in some official publications.(15)

Contemporary Use, Theological Content

Today, there are many varieties in the usage of the emblem and its accompanying motto. There is, however, no official "logo" in use. Instead, several versions of the Community's emblem are in use side by side.

Those who follow Saint Vincent can take comfort and strength in identifying with the glorified yet wounded Jesus, sent to evangelize. The text "He has sent me" can be personalized as a call to mission, and a stimulus to fidelity.

NOTES

- (1) This is also the conclusion drawn by E. Didron, "Louise de Marillac et le Sacré Coeur," Petits Annales de Saint Vincent de Paul 1:6 (15 June 1900) 174.
- (2) Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac. Correspondence and Thoughts. (Ed., and trans. Louise Sullivan), Brooklyn: New City Press, 1991, p. 224. Coste 3:254, letter 999; Coste dates the letter as October 1647.
- (3) Spiritual Writings p. 334 (Letter 3.)
- (4) Coste, 6:98; letter 2150.
- (5) Coste, 5:379, letter 1872, and note 2, dated 14 May 1655. The design of this seal as described in the Armorial de Marseille by Godefroi de Montgrand, is reported in H. Simard, Saint Vincent de Paul et ses oeuvres à Marseille (Lyon: E. Vitte, 1894), p. 96.
- (6) Abelly did, however, remark as follows: "We can say in truth that without realizing it, he [Vincent] left us a miniature portrait of his whole life and a sort of motto, when he said one day: 'Nothing pleases me except in Jesus Christ.'" (Abelly, Life, bk. 1, p. 103.)
- (7) See conference 180, on the rules, 17 May 1658, for a discussion of this text (Coste 12:3ff); conference 195, 6 December 1658, on the end of the Congregation (Coste 12:90ff.); conference 216, 7 November 1659, on vows (Coste 12:367f.); conference 19, (Coste 11:32), and conference 86, 29 October 1638, on perseverance (Coste 11:108ff.) Although the text in the Latin Vulgate is that cited here, the original language versions (Greek, Hebrew) and modern translations divide the sentence differently. "... because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives...."
- (8) Other references are both in Common Rules 1,1: "*quando evangelizavit pauperibus*," and *evangelizare pauperibus, maxime ruricolis.*"
- (9) Chalumeau papers, C613, Hérault, in Archives of the Mission, Paris.
- (10) 2 Cor 5:14.
- (11) Acts 10:38.
- (12) Prières extraites du formulaire à l'usage des Filles de la Charité, Paris, 1852.
- (13) The American text sometimes reads: EVANGELIZARE PAUPERIBUS MISIT ME DEUS. CONG. MISS.
- (14) Acta Apostolica... in Gratiam Congregationis Missionis. (Paris, 1876).
- (15) The combined use of the emblems of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, joined with the SV or sometimes with the AM monograms, seems to date only to the late 1930s.

Working in Northern Ireland

Eamonn Cowan

The conflict in Northern Ireland today has roots deep in the history of both Ireland and Britain. The early years of this century brought to a head the long struggle for Home Rule and independence from Britain. That independence grew out of a guerrilla war and a general election in 1918 which produced a majority of Irish in favour of self-rule _ or Home Rule as it was called. That election also highlighted the existence of a large group located in the north of the island strongly opposed to Home Rule. These million people saw themselves as Protestant and British _ they regarded Home Rule as Rome Rule and had no wish to be submerged in Catholic Ireland. For the most part these people were the descendants of those who, many generations before, had been brought from England and Scotland to settle on the land and help pacify the native Irish.

In 1920 the British Parliament passed the Government of Ireland Act, as a result of which Ireland was partitioned. Self-rule was granted to the greater portion of the island and it became the Irish Free State. The six northern counties remained under British rule and formed part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This Northern state had a population of 1.5 million _ 1 million Protestants who were British and 0.5 million Irish Catholics. In 1921 a new Parliament was opened in Northern Ireland _ a Protestant Parliament for Protestant people. With a permanent Protestant majority and a system of government which ensured majority rule, the scene was set.

The Catholic Irish minority never really accepted the new Northern Ireland and was not given any reason to "belong" by the majority. There was concern among the Protestant community that they would remain the majority. With that end in view there was discrimination against Catholics when it came to jobs, public housing, and voting rights. Put simply, Catholics found it difficult to get work, houses, and voting rights were linked to possession of property.

Attempts to draw attention to the state of affairs were ignored by British governments, on the grounds that such matters were the concern of the regime in Northern Ireland. In 1968, Catholics began a campaign for what they regarded as civil rights. There was a tardy response to those demands and finally the response from the majority government was violence _ Catholics were burned out of their homes in Belfast and were fired on by units of the police. The British army was introduced to protect the Catholic community from attack. At that stage the Irish Republican Army began an armed campaign in the belief that only through the

breaking of the link with Britain and the reunification of the island could justice be secured by the minority in Northern Ireland. The armed campaign of the Irish Republican Army did not have the support of the people of Ireland, nor of the Catholic population of Northern Ireland. In fact, Catholics themselves suffered from the actions of the IRA as well as the attacks of Protestant paramilitary groups _ this was true especially in Belfast where Catholics were killed in large numbers for no reason other than that they were Catholics. Terrible things were done on all sides _ IRA, Protestant paramilitaries, and the security forces. The armed struggle continued for 25 years, resulting in over 3,000 deaths, thousands of wounded, and much destruction. There are very few families in Northern Ireland who have not been touched by the events of these years, and both communities have suffered much. Since last August the guns have fallen silent and the search is now on to find a settlement which may lead to a permanent peace.

Between 1862 and 1987 the Vincentians staffed St Patrick's College, Armagh, which is located in Northern Ireland. St Patrick's was originally the minor seminary for the archdiocese of Armagh, but had in recent years become a secondary school for boys. Because of the problem of declining vocations and the consequent difficulty in staffing schools, the community made a decision to withdraw from Armagh. Our departure from there in 1987 meant that we no longer had a presence in Northern Ireland, and that at a time when people were experiencing so much trauma. We were anxious to find a new way to serve the Church and people in the North. In 1992 Fr Frank Mullan and I went to the diocese of Down & Connor, Fr Frank to Ballymena and I to live and work in a very poor parish in West Belfast _ one that had suffered a great deal in the years of violence. Since 1993, at the request of the bishop, I have joined Fr Frank in living and working in Ballymena. Ballymena has a population of about 50,000 people and lies about 40 kilometres north of Belfast. It is a very Protestant town with a minority Catholic population of about 7,000. We work with two diocesan priests, one of whom is Parish Priest. Frank and I live in a part of the town with a large Protestant community not well disposed to the presence of a Catholic church, much less two priests. Many Catholics have been intimidated into leaving the locality over the past 20 years. Life can be uncomfortable at times, e.g. church and house are stoned, and one of our parish churches was bombed some years ago. There is a poverty of smouldering suspicion, fear, and even, at times, hatred, in many of those living around us. Here we are at the core of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland and it could be a "bridging point." We are searching for small ways in which we can link persons in the work of healing that is necessary.

Each month we meet a small group of Protestant ministers serving in the town _ let it be said that not many ministers are interested in such contacts. We have come to realise how difficult it is for them to be involved with Catholic priests, or

indeed with any ecumenical contacts, due to the hostility of their local congregations. In Ballymena it demands courage for a Protestant minister to be part of cross community contact. Our monthly meeting might be small, but it is not without significance and importance in the task of healing.

The Vincentian Mission team, based in All Hallows, will give a two week parish mission in Ballymena at the end of May. We are presently involved in preparing the parish for that event. Two groups from the parish have joined other lay groups here in All Hallows linked to mission preparation, but also gaining insights into the emerging theology of both Church and ministry. The Church in Ireland is faced with the challenge of something dying and something coming to life. Both the present cease-fire in the North and the possible settlement resulting from present negotiations will present a new scene and new opportunities.

Recently, the diocese of Down & Connor completed an audit with a view to identifying the needs to be addressed in a Pastoral Plan for the diocese. Each diocese in Ireland is involved in a similar audit aimed at putting in place a Pastoral Plan for the whole country. Among the issues raised in this diocese were:

- 1) Pastoral care for young people, especially those in second level schools, many of whom are alienated from the institutional Church.
- 2) Adult religious education and formation.
- 3) Priests are looking for help in the areas of human development, pastoral theology and spiritual direction.
- 4) There are many people in the more deprived areas of Belfast who are angry with the Church _ victims of violence, women, and those who feel the Church did not speak for them when they had been victims of injustice.
- 5) The perceived link between violence and religion has fuelled the movement towards growing secularism in Ireland. Many young people are disillusioned with church and all organised religion _ Protestant and Catholic.

Recent years have seen a great deal of attention given to the matter of collaborative ministry, especially in our attempts to work with and for poor people. The Daughters of Charity have been working and living in some of the poorest Catholic areas of Belfast for many years. We have already made public our interest in working with the Daughters and the Society of St Vincent de Paul in the more deprived areas of Belfast. Presently, this avenue of possible development is being explored with a view to establishing a common project in

the future. In some small ways this is already taking place. Fr Frank has recently been appointed chaplain to the Northern region of the Society of St Vincent de Paul and I have been asked to work with some adult groups in a poor parish in Belfast.

In preparing this statement I have been conscious of the difficulty of trying to make sense of a situation which is complex, even for those living in Ireland and Britain. Only those who have lived here can have an insight into this reality. A question of politics for those in London or Dublin is a matter of life and death for the people in Northern Ireland.

"Little" was a big word in the thinking of St Vincent de Paul. "Now the little Congregation of the Mission wants, with God's grace, to imitate Christ the Lord, in so far as that is possible in view of its limitations."

In many ways it would have been good to present a grand and coherent scheme for our involvement in Northern Ireland. As you can see, what has been described is small, uncertain, tentative, and, possibly, temporary _ our position here will be open to review and evaluation in the coming months. The first form of service to any community is presence, but our presence here in Ballymena has a "mission tent" quality _ a time of wondering, searching, and being able to stay with the process. It clearly falls within the ambit of that word "little" so valued by St Vincent. What is certain is that Northern Ireland is a place in need of much healing. It is good to be here at this time. What we are about is seeking to place a Vincentian thread in a garment of healing for a broken people.

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Praying with Louise de Marillac

Saint Mary's Press - Christian Brothers Publications

Winona, Minnesota 1995 (117 pages)

This book, published in the collection, "Companions for the Journey," offers 15 meditations, presenting commentaries on the life and action of St. Louise, some of her writings, and points for reflection.

Collective. Coordination Team:

MIGUEL P. FLORES, C.M. - BENITO MARTINEZ, C.M.,

ANTONINO ORCAJO, C.M. - ALBERTO LOPEZ, C.M.

Diccionario de Espiritualidad Vicenciana

Ed. CEME - Salamanca 1995 (624 pages)

Five years ago the Spanish Visitors' Conference decided to begin the publication of a Dictionary of Vincentian Spirituality. To this end, it named a Coordination Team to study the nature of the dictionary, what it should include, the collaborators to be contacted, etc.

In ninety-eight themes the Dictionary sums up the various aspects of the life, work, and spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul, offering a real synthesis of the thought and action of this benefactor of the Church and of all humanity. One finds developed the most important terms in the Vincentian vocabulary with their own characteristics. There are also some articles which are largely in the domain of general doctrine and which could figure in any dictionary of spiritual theology. Moreover, one finds theological, pastoral, and spiritual concepts which underlie dogmatic doctrine, its Vincentian interpretation, and its realization. Also grouped are various articles on Vincentian institutions and ministries, succinctly presenting their origin, juridical structure, spiritual dynamism, principal stages of their historical evolution and actual situation.

It can be ordered from: Ed. CEME - Apdo. 353 - 37080 Salamanca - Spain.

MICHAEL PRIOR, C.M.

“Jesus the Liberator”

Nazareth Liberation Theology Luke 4:16-30

Editions Sheffield Academic Press - 1995 (200 pages)

This book presents an exhaustive analysis of Luke 4:16-30, a text which is at the heart of Vincentian spirituality — Evangelizare Pau peribus Misit Me. The author puts the text into its context in the Lukan Writings — The Gospel and Acts of the Apostles — and then brings to bear on it a whole range of contemporary scripture scholarship.

It presents an outline of a biblical basis for a theology of mission that transcends any narrow, parochial, inward-looking view of one's task as a Christian today. It offers a theology of mission that would be particularly challenging to those living in a multi-cultural society, in any society divided by ethnic and/or religious differences.

There is much in this book that will give food for thought to those interested in an up-to-date scriptural analysis of this text, as well as those who take seriously various theologies of liberation and those engaged in work for justice.

MARGARET ALDERMAN - JOSEPHINE BURNS, D.C.

Praying with Elizabeth Seton

Saint Mary's Press - Christian Brothers Publications

Winona, Minnesota 1995 (113 pages)

This book, published in the collection, “Companions for the Journey,” offers 15 meditations, presenting commentaries on the life and action of St. Elizabeth Seton, some of her writings, and points for reflection.