

VINGENTIANA

**41th year-N°2:
March/April 1997**



**FEATURE:
The Formation of our
student**

January 25, 1997

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

I am writing to let you know that, after a long, detailed study, we have decided to hold the General Assembly here in Rome once more. Let me offer you a brief account of the process leading to this decision.

As you recall, during the Visitors' Meeting in Salamanca a number of sites were suggested: Rome, Dublin, Niagara Falls, Rio, Indonesia, and Taiwan. Almost immediately after the meeting, upon further investigation, the Visitors of Ireland, Indonesia, China, and Rio informed me that the proposed sites in their countries did not seem feasible. Several other sites, however, were proposed spontaneously by various Visitors: Lebanon; Camarillo, California; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and two other possibilities near Castel Gandolfo. I sent a questionnaire to each of these places, plus several other sites within Rome itself, asking information about the number of rooms they could provide, the availability of bathrooms and showers, simultaneous translation facilities, air-conditioning, proximity to an airport, the daily cost of rooms, meals, equipment, etc. We also asked a travel agency to assist us in estimating the cost of transportation from our 48 provinces to various sites. It quickly became evident that the cost of the General Assembly would vary very significantly in relationship to the different sites. In our final meeting we narrowed the choice down to two options, ultimately arriving at Rome once again. The members of the General Council judged that, overall, Rome had the most advantages, though we were conscious of some of its disadvantages (the heat of summer, some inconveniences in the living facilities).

The Assembly will be held, as in the past, at the Casa Maria Immacolata, Via Ezio 28. We will be lodged both there and at the Collegio Leoniano. In order to obtain these two facilities, it was necessary to shift our dates somewhat. The Assembly will begin at 9 a.m. on Monday, July 6, 1998 and we anticipate that it will end at supper time on Friday, July 31. Hopefully, therefore, we will finish before the arrival of the torrid August days! I would ask that all arrive in Rome by Sunday, July 5 in order to begin immediately on the morning of the 6th.

I am somewhat embarrassed that after such a long study we arrived at the same place. I am conscious that some (including myself) had been envisioning other sites for the General Assembly. But the evidence led us back to Rome. In any event, it is a wonderful city with significant advantages. For many of the delegates it will be their first time here (at the Assembly of 1986, 67% of the delegates were new).

By now you will have received the document of the Preparatory Commission. I ask the Lord to be with all of you as Domestic and Provincial Assemblies get underway.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission throughout the world

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

Even though we are only beginning Lent, today I ask you to leap with me to the resurrection. Not that we can skip the cross; on the contrary, it will be our companion throughout life. But I leap to Easter right from Lent's start so that we might view the cross with resurrection faith, as the New Testament always does.

At the center of our creed is the Risen Lord. When we abide in his presence, our lives are full. In his absence, they are empty. Without the Risen Lord, our faith (and of course our vocation) is meaningless. "If Christ is not risen," Paul tell us clearly, "your belief is in vain" (1 Cor 15:14).

Let me reflect with you today about two key aspects of our resurrection faith.

First, we believe that Jesus is *alive*. Our faith focuses on a living person. To paraphrase the psalmist, some fashion idols of silver or gold or power or pleasure. These have always been, and will continue to be, seductive. But we believe in the living Lord who loves us deeply, who walks with us daily, who listens to us, whom we can speak with in return, who gives us his life, his strength, his peace, his joy. We believe not merely in someone from the past who lived, died, and left us a rich heritage. Our faith is in the person of Jesus who overcame death once for all, who lives on, who abides among us, who prepares a place for us with God. We believe in the presence of the living Lord, who has become for us a life-giving spirit (1 Cor 15:45).

Secondly, we believe in the *flesh*. Have you ever noticed how much our faith as Catholics is connected with the flesh? Two of the articles of the creed speak very concretely about it. "By the power of the Holy Spirit he took flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary." Our faith in Jesus is precisely that he is the Word made flesh. We also pray in the creed, "We believe in the resurrection of the flesh and the life of the world to come" (when we will be with the Lord in the flesh!). The gospels tell us that Mary the Mother of Jesus was the first to believe in this striking mystery. She believed not only in the transcendent God of Israel, but in God's immanence in the flesh of her son.

I want to suggest to you two things this Lent.

1. First of all, use this Lenten time to focus on the presence of the Lord. In Lent we renew our baptismal commitment to renounce all "idols" and to give ourselves over completely to the following of Christ. As the New Testament describes it, this "following" is not the mere embracing of a rule book or a charter; rather, we join the

community of those who profess their faith in the living Lord. In the rich Lenten readings, he speaks his word to us. John and Paul both tell us that the word of God was present even from the beginning of creation (Jn 1:1-3; Col 1:15-16). So I encourage you to contemplate his presence. See him in the wonders of creation. Love him in the beauty of nature, in the majesty of the mountains, and in the stars at night. See him, now in the fullness of time, in the crucified and risen Lord. Let him take hold of your heart. Allow him to draw you into prayer in Lent. Let him teach you his wisdom and assure you of his love. The hour of personal prayer to which our Constitutions call us daily (C 47) is a wonderful opportunity for listening to the living Lord and for discerning what he is asking of us in this Lenten time.

2. At the same time, like Mary the Mother of Jesus, focus on the word made *flesh*. He still lives among us, especially in the person of the poor. The test of our faith is to see him in the flesh. The first letter of John sets out a high standard for Christians: "Whoever does not love a brother or sister whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he does not see" (1 Jn 4:20) _ because God lives in the flesh. Seeing him in the flesh is the Vincentian secret of holiness. St. Vincent encourages us to recognize him and serve him in the most abandoned with practical, concrete charity. He urges us to be simple and humble before the poor person because he is the icon of the Lord, the body of Christ, the enfleshment of Jesus' presence today.

In some ways, at least it seems to me, it is more difficult to believe in God's enfleshment than in his transcendence. It is easier to believe in a God whom we do not see than in a God whom we do see. It is easier to be caught up in a distant mystery than to come face to face with the revelation of God in human persons, especially when they suffer and die before our eyes. It is surely a challenge to see the Lord in the crucified peoples of Rwanda, Burundi, Algeria, Zaire, Albania, Serbia, Bulgaria, China _ to mention only a few of the countries where he suffers greatly in his members today. In almost all our countries, it is a daily challenge to recognize him in street people, in refugees, in AIDS victims, in disillusioned young people. "But turn the medal," St. Vincent says to us, "and you will see by the light of faith that the Son of God, whose will it was to be poor, is represented to us by these creatures...." (SV XI, 32). This was also the same challenge Mary faced. Her contact with Jesus had numerous joys and privileged moments, as we recalled at Christmas. But she also witnessed his rejection, punishment, and dying _ and continued to believe. I urge you to share your faith in the enfleshed Lord this Lent by encouraging others _ especially young people _ to serve him in his suffering members. Let our Vincentian charism be contagious!

I wish you a Lent, my brothers, in which the waters of a renewed baptism refresh your heart and in which the Lord's presence is your strength.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

February 15, 1997

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission throughout the world

My very dear Confreres,

May the grace of Our Lord be always with you!

I am writing today to give you a brief account of the third meeting of those responsible for the principal branches of our Vincentian Family, which took place in Paris on January 17 and 18. The participants were the Mother General of the Daughters of Charity, Sr. Juana Elizondo, and Sr. Therezinha Remonato, the Assistant General; the President of the International Association of Charity, Mrs. Patricia Palacios de Nava, together with Mrs. Mauricette Borloo, Vice-President; for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, Mr. Amin de Tarrazi and Mr. Gerry Martin, Vice-Presidents, accompanied by Mr. Francesco de Barberis, Coordinator for Europe Group 3. Fr. Lauro Palú and I represented the Congregation of the Mission. This time two representatives of the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups joined us: Edurne Urdampilleta, President of the Juventudes Marianas Vicentinas in Spain, and Vincent Grodziski, ex-President of the Jeunesse Mariale in France.

As you recall, the purpose of our various meetings has been "to look for means by which, while preserving the particular identity of each branch, we might cooperate more effectively with each other throughout the world in serving the poor better." This third meeting went very well. The evaluation we made at the end of the second day was unanimously quite positive. The acts of the meeting are seven pages long. Here I wish to offer you only a brief summary of the highlights.

1. We spent much time exchanging information and reflecting on experiences that we had participated in together during the past year. All of us noted that collaboration among the branches of our family _ in formation programs, in common works, and in prayer together _ has grown notably over the past year. We were all particularly struck by how fully the whole Vincentian Family took part in the canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre. At the time of the canonization, AIC held a General Assembly here in Rome. The Vincentian Marian Youth Groups transferred their European Congress here too. Likewise, the Vincent de Paul Society was well represented (some of us will have the chance to reciprocate next August 22 in Paris at the beatification of Frédéric Ozanam!). A huge number of Daughters of Charity also took part, as well as almost all of the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to speak with many of these groups during those days. At the gathering of the Visitors in Salamanca after the canonization, a number of participants suggested a theme for our next General Assembly, which was eventually approved by our General Council: *The*

worldwide Vincentian Family and the challenges for the mission in the third millennium. This is surely a sign of the importance that our global family, with its many branches, is taking on in our consciousness.

2. All the branches commented on how positive had been their experience of the common day of prayer last September 27. In some places the feast of St. Vincent also provided the occasion for an ongoing formation program, in addition to prayer and celebration together. We decided to continue this practice each year. I will be writing to the Visitors at a later date, giving more details about organizing the day of prayer for 1997.
3. We discussed the juridical status of each branch, according to its constitutions and statutes, as well as how each relates to the others. In this context we discussed some of the problems that arise (happily, they are few!) if someone fails to respect the autonomy of a particular group. This can occur, for instance, when a spiritual advisor attempts to exercise control over the government of a lay group.
4. We evaluated the level of collaboration that exists among the branches of our family throughout the world. Last year I asked each Visitor to fill out a brief questionnaire to provide us with information about how much or how little the groups within our family are cooperating. It is evident (cf. the results on the attached sheet) that in some countries the level of cooperation is very high. Somewhat to our surprise, however, there is little cooperation in some countries and even little mutual acquaintance among the members of the various groups in those countries.
5. We spent a large portion of our meeting discussing nine model projects in which the branches of our family will be working together on different continents. Some of these projects are already underway. Others will soon begin. Over the coming year we will be gathering further information about each of them. Next year we will publish a small booklet describing the nine cooperative projects. The places envisioned at this time are Mozambique, Brussels, Granada (Spain), Cuba, Madrid, Madagascar, Mexico, Cologne (Germany), and the Philippines.
6. We also envisioned other collaborative programs on the level of initial and ongoing formation, using as an example the *Institute for Vincentian Spirituality and Apostolate* in the Philippines, which all of us found to be a very interesting model. Many other examples of cooperation in formation programs already exist: the Vincentian Weeks in Salamanca, meetings organized by CLAPVI in various countries, GAV in Italy, the annual gatherings of the JMV at Benagalbón in Spain, the École Ozanam organized by the Conferences of St. Vincent in various countries, etc. I will treat this matter in greater detail in a later letter to the Visitors.
7. We discussed the formation of spiritual advisors for the various groups in our family. AIC is presently drawing up a document on the role of the spiritual advisor. This will be useful as a basis for discussion in formation programs for these advisors. CLAPVI too has had considerable success in organizing sessions for the formation of spiritual

advisors and in publishing materials on their role. At a later date, I will be writing to the Visitors about this too.

8. I took the occasion of this meeting to speak with the representatives of our youth groups about working toward a better organized international structure. This branch of our family is now, as you know, very large, with more or less 200,000 members. Representatives will be coming from all over the world to take part in the celebration of the World Youth Meeting, with Pope John Paul II, in Paris this coming August, when we will also be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the papal approval of our youth groups and the 50th anniversary of the canonization of St. Catherine Labouré. In conjunction with the World Youth Meeting, a forum is being organized for the national leaders of the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups on August 25-28. It will address themes like: a better understanding of a Vincentian Marian spirituality in the service of the poor; a contemporary Marian piety; concrete commitments to the service of the poor; cooperation with other Vincentian groups. The working sessions of the forum will take place in the Motherhouse of the Daughters at Rue du Bac.

St. Vincent encouraged us to "cherish and respect each other as brothers and sisters whom Our Lord has bound together in unity by his love" (SV XIII, 562). He tells us that unity is our strength (SV IX, 96). It is the source of the success of our works (SV X, 201) and the foundation stone of peace (SV IX, 97). My prayer, as we begin Lent, is that the Lord will strengthen the bonds of unity within our family, that he will give us the peace which binds us together, and that, by uniting our hearts and our energies, he will make us more effective servants of the poor.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

Robert P. Maloney, C.M.
Superior General

LEVEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION AND OTHER BRANCHES OF OUR FAMILY

- Results of a Questionnaire Sent to the Visitors -

The numbers below refer to provinces (i.e., 5 = 5 provinces responded in this way).

Between the CM's and the:	High	Good	Regular	Little	Sporadic	Beginning	None
Daughters of Charity	5	15	6	1	10	2	2
AIC		6	9			17	11
Society of St. Vincent de Paul		9	14	16			6
Vincentian Marian Youth Groups		10		6		4	25
Miraculous Medal Association				17			29
Other Vincentian Groups				21			24

SIEV
International Secretariat
of Vincentian Studies

INFORMATION SHEET
on the work and decisions of SIEV

The members of SIEV: Frs. Emeric Amyot d'Inville, Hernando Escobar, John Prager, Kazimierz Stelmach, Norbert Tix, and Roberto Lovera (Executive Secretary), at a meeting which took place in Rome on 7 and 8 January, thought it useful to send out an information sheet on the decisions made by SIEV and the work they are carrying out, so that the Visitors, the Vincentian studies organisms, and the Daughters of Charity might be deeply involved and collaborate better in a growing development of our common spiritual research.

The principal decisions, made during the meeting of 7 and 8 January and which were developed by the suggestions and approval of the Superior General and his Council, are as follows:

1. The preparation of the Vincentian Month on the theme of the Popular Missions, which will take place in Paris from 7 July to 2 August 1997, is well underway. The Month will be characterized in particular by sharing and mutual enrichment among the confreres, sisters, and laity (around 70) who work on the popular missions on the various continents. The organization of this has been confided to Frs. Emeric Amyot d'Inville and Roberto Lovera, who are members of SIEV, with the collaboration of Fr. Luis Mari Martínez, from the Saragossa Province.
2. To help the Congregation prepare for the 1998 General Assembly, we suggested to our main magazines that they dedicate some articles or a special issue to the theme of the Assembly; that they report initiatives which have already been carried out in common among the various groups of the Vincentian Family; that they promote the knowledge of all the Vincentian groups present in their territory; and that they confront the study of the challenges to which the Vincentian Family must respond today and in the future.
3. The project of developing a CD ROM of Vincentian texts (the works of St. Vincent and other important texts of the Congregation of the Mission) in various languages is also well underway. Moreover, we are going to insert the complete Vincentian bibliography of books, using as a base the considerable work which Fr. José María Román has achieved. We asked our principal magazines to prepare too a bibliography of the articles of a Vincentian nature which they have published and which will also be inserted into the CD ROM.
4. We are also studying a project to bring together in a CD ROM a vast collection of Vincentian pictures, relating to our history as well as to our present life and activities.
5. The canonization of Perboyre has been an interesting stimulus for studying this figure and making him known through numerous publications. We are trying to collect the entire existing bibliography, as well as stimulating and promoting new studies on the aspects which have not yet

been sufficiently developed. The objective we have fixed for ourselves is to arrive at the publication of a critical biography of the saint, which is still lacking. We are looking too for competent and available confreres for this undertaking.

6. We are interested in highlighting the valuable work achieved by two of our deceased confreres: Frs. Raymond Chalumeau and André Dodin, in order to put the fruit of their efforts and reflections at the disposition of the entire Vincentian Family.

7. We have started researching all the documents that the Holy See has issued in favor of the Congregation of the Mission since 1876, the year of the previous publication. The most significant documents could be collected in a future publication.

8. The Superior General and his Council have made SIEV responsible for preparing a Colloque on our Vincentian mission in countries with a large Moslem presence. The colloque is scheduled for 1999 and will allow the confreres concerned to have a good exchange of ideas and information. It should lead to concrete propositions for the entire Congregation.

9. We are acting to collect, by making an appeal to the confreres of various provinces, information on texts (books, work documents, etc.) which, in diverse languages, have been prepared for the Vincentian formation of our young. As soon as this is ready, we will send a list to the Visitors who would otherwise be unaware of them.

A good part of the work which we are carrying out and the initiatives which we are taking had already been initiated by the confreres who belonged to SIEV before us. It is appropriate that all of us express our thanks to them.

SIEV will also be grateful to all who would like to send it propositions or suggestions, as well as constructive criticism in order to move forward.

SIEV has fixed its next meeting for 4 and 5 August 1997 in Paris, immediately following the Vincentian Month on the Popular Missions.

25 February 1997

Fr. Roberto Lovera, C.M.
Executive Secretary of SIEV

1996 ANNUAL – CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

MINISTRIES

MINISTRY	PRIESTS	PERMANENT DEACONS	BROTHERS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful	142		4
2. Missionary parishes or districts	207		
3. Parishes	812	1	17
4. Pilgrimage sanctuaries	55		7
5. Seminaries and clerical formation	187		2
6. Formation of our own exclusively	190		14
7. Missions Ad Gentes	230	4	6
8. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)	144		
9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)	232		18
10. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)	31		1
11. Special studies	77		2
12. Chaplains: military, immigrants, hospital, associations	170		6
13. Chaplains: Vincentian Lay Groups	37		
14. Direct Service of the Poor	20		8
15. Manual work	5		61
16. Administration	131	1	10
17. Retired, ill, convalescing	311		39
18. Absence from the Congregation	82		2
19. Other	122	4	4
TOTAL	3185	10	201

PROVINCE	HOUSES & INCORPORATED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 1996							ADMITTED MEMBERS BY PROVINCE - 1996																
	Houses	Bishops	Priests	Permanent Deacons	Brothers	Sudents with VOWS	TOTAL	ADMITTED MEMBERS					ASPIRANTS											
								P*	PD*	CP	CBr	TOTAL	Voc. Grps.		Minor Sem.		Prep. Yr.		TOTAL					
													AP	ABr	AP	ABr	AP	ABr						
General Curia	5		7				7																	
AFRICA																								
Ethiopia	4	1	27		1	1	30			7		7				28								28
Madagascar	8	1	67		4	2	74			28	6	34							6					6
Mozambique	6	1	12		3	1	17			4		4	10	1	20	1								32
St. Justin de Jacobis	6		29		1		30			10		10			61									61
Zaire	6		34		1	2	37			17	1	18							6		2			8
NORTH AMERICA																								
Eastern (USA)	25		196		11	2	209			8	1	9	18		8									26
Midwest (USA)	18		142		19	1	162			2		2						1						1
New England (USA)	9		33		5		38	2				2												
Southern (USA)	5		33		1		34																	
West (USA)	10		51	2	3	1	57		1	4		5						1						1
LATIN AMERICA																								
Argentina	9		45	1	1	1	48			5	1	6			3			11						14
Curitiba (Brazil)	8	3	65		3		71			6		6	120		22			7						149

Fortaleza (Brazil)	4		31			5	36			6		6	10				8		18
Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)	9	4	80			9	95			33		33			27		5		32
Central America	11	5	41			3	50			13	7	20	13	1	10	2			26
Chile	6		22				25			3	2	5	9				8		17
Colombia	22	2	120			13	156			25	1	26	100		56				156
Costa Rica	5		17			2	21			2	1	3	12	4					16
Cuba	4		10				11				1	1	2				1		3
Ecuador	6		28				33			15		15					5		5
Mexico	21		80			3	90			4	1	5			26				26
Peru	12	1	54			1	57			10	1	11					12		12
Puerto Rico	13		54			2	56			6	1	7	76		25				101
Venezuela	14		63			1	67			2		2	10	4	4	7			25
ASIA																			
China	5		33				33										1		1
India	14	1	105			6	118			53		53			75				75
Indonesia	9		75				75			54		54					3		3
Orient	9	1	40			4	47			9	1	10			17		3	1	21
Philippines	13	1	70			5	79			33	1	34					18		18
EUROPE																			
Austria	4		17			4	22			2	1	3							
Belgium	3		11				11												
Paris	21		116	4		9	133			19	3	22					4		4

Toulouse	15		76		9	6	91			1		1	2						2
Germany	5		12		2	1	15			2		2							
Hungary	3		14		2	6	22			6		6			3				3
Ireland	24		118		1		119			27		27	10						10
Naples	14	1	58		4		63			3		3	6						6
Rome	9	1	61	1	3		66			4		4							
Turin	14		97	1	7		105			2		2			1	1			2
Netherlands	6	1	68		4		74												
Poland	31	3	256		4	6	269			4	1	5							
Portugal	11	1	52		2		55			6		6	76		12				88
Slovakia	7		31		2	2	35			28		28	6	2			3	1	12
Slovenia	9		47		5	1	53	1		4		5	1						1
Barcelona	10		53		1		54			2	1	3	6				1		7
Madrid	19		148		18	2	168			9	1	10			82		2	1	85
Salamanca	22		101		12		113						5						5
Saragossa	21		126	1	5	1	133			5	1	6			6				6
OCEANIA																			
Australia	12		59		5		64			12	1	13							
TOTAL	556	28	3185	10	201	95	3519	3	1	495	35	534	479	11	476	9	114	5	1112

Appointments and Confirmations by the Superior General

Date	Name	Office	Province
24/01/97	Luciano da Costa Ferreira	Visitor 2/3	Mozambique
25/03/97	Adrián Bastiaensen	Visitor 2/3	Central America
01/04/97	Miguel Pérez Flores	Vice-Visitor 1/3	Costa Rica
04/04/97	Jean-François Gaziello	Director D.C. (1/6)	Lyon
15/04/97	Gabriel Naranjo	Visitor 1/6	Colombia
15/04/97	Gregorio Alegría	Visitor 1/6	Puerto Rico
17/04/97	Victor Groetelaars	Visitor 1/6	Netherlands
22/04/97	Félix Álvarez	Visitador 1/6	Madrid

The Present State of the Formation of our students throughout the World

By J. Ignacio Fernández Mendoza, C.M.

In the reflection on the state of the Congregation carried out at the last General Assemblies, one of the aspects which necessarily has been presented with a particular prominence is that of vocations and their formation. It is, in effect, something of vital importance, not so much for the survival of the Congregation, as much as that there be in the Church continuers of the evangelization of the poor according to the charism and spirit of St. Vincent.

The General Assembly of 1980 asked the Superior General to publish a *Ratio Formationis* for the Internal Seminary. The General Assembly of 1986 formulated the same petition for the Vincentian Major Seminary and about the formation of the Brothers. The Superior General published the *Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary* in 1982; the *Ratio Formationis Vincentianae for the Major Seminary* in 1988 and the document, *Brothers for the Mission*, in 1991.

In the same way the General Assembly of 1992 asked the Superior General to promote the elaboration of a new instruction about the vows in the Congregation. On January 25, 1996, the Superior General published the *Instruction on Stability, Chastity, Poverty and Obedience in the Congregation of the Mission*. All of these documents, including the last, emphasize a Vincentian formation for a deeper and more lively identification with our charism.

As for the promotion and the recruitment of vocations, the aspirations of the Assemblies have acquired definitive form in Statute 37:1, which says: "Provinces, houses and individual members should actively engage in encouraging candidates for the Vincentian mission."

They undertake the Mission of Jesus Christ

The candidate, arriving at a decision to begin the specific preparation for a missionary, is accompanied by the formation personnel.

Allow me to remember with gratitude my formators and, in them, all of the formators we have had in the Congregation. I had formators who were truly exemplary for their sanctity, knowledge and generosity. I owe them almost everything I am as a Vincentian.

The ministry of the formation of our students is of the utmost importance and very pleasing in the eyes of God. It is continuing the work which Christ the Lord did patiently with the disciples: "Dedicating oneself to the formation of good priests and cooperating with that work ... is to undertake the mission of Jesus Christ, who during his earthly life, took on the task of making twelve good priests, his apostles, choosing because of that to live with them for several years to instruct and form them in this divine ministry" (SVP XI, 703). The Son of God "began

preaching the Gospel to the poor; later, in time, he chose the apostles, he labored to instruct, admonish and form them, and finally he filled them with his own spirit, not just for themselves, but for all the nations on earth" (XI, 390).

This is an activity which demands sacrifice and, at times, is not very gratifying. That is why all formation personnel deserve a word of thanks from the whole Congregation. They do the Lord's work and with their sacrifice and self-giving present to him, to the Church and to the Congregation the most precious fruit that they have to offer.

From another perspective this is a ministry which, from the beginning, belongs inseparably to the historic structure of the Congregation and is destined to its particular end: "Do you not know, Father, that we are obliged to form good clerics just as we are obliged to instruct the country people, and that a priest of the Mission who wishes to do one of these things and not the other would only be half a missionary" (VII, 476-477).

I. A look at the origins

The idea of contributing to the formation of the clergy originated in St. Vincent when, on the occasion of preaching missions, he became aware on the one hand of the situation of the poor people of the countryside and on the other hand of the decadence of the clergy. His contribution to the formation of the clergy had as its particular goal to assure the fruits of the missions: "We also try to contribute to the formation of good clerics by means of the retreats for ordinands and seminaries, not to abandon the missions, but rather to preserve fruits that are achieved through them" (IV, 46). For the saint the missions and the formation of the clergy are two complementary roads to the evangelization of the poor. Both ministries figure in the legacy that the founder left to his Congregation.

St. Vincent was creative in this regard. He formed the clergy through various initiatives: a close relationship with priests, the retreats for ordinands, the Tuesday Conferences, retreats, the seminaries and even through his contributions in the Council of Conscience.

From the beginning until the end of his life he contributed to the formation of priests. The bull *Salvatoris Nostri*, dated January 12, 1633, approving the Congregation, affirmed that the objective of the Congregation is to seek the salvation "of the souls that live in the towns, villages, lands and most humble places" and "to instruct those who are to be promoted to sacred orders, trying to help them make retreats" (X, 307).

In the Common Rules, St. Vincent, at the point of closing the cycle of his missionary life, will tell us clearly that the end of the Congregation is "to dedicate oneself to one's own perfection," "to the evangelization of the poor," and to help clerics achieve the knowledge and virtue necessary for their state" (CR 1:1). In the conference of December 6, 1658, the missionaries heard from St. Vincent's own lips these expressions: God "called us to contribute to form good priests, to give good pastors to the parishes and to teach them what they needed to know and practice. What an important task!" (XI, 390). This firm objective of the saint was confirmed by the twenty-one seminaries opened during his lifetime.

At Home

It should be remembered that St. Vincent, while he employed all sorts of resources in the formation of the diocesan clergy, also was taking steps to guarantee the future of his favorite work: the Congregation of the Mission.

The development of the Congregation was halting and gradual. The saint avoided haste at the moment of taking in followers to his nascent community. He wrote to Antoine Portail: "The number of those who have entered since you left is six. How I fear, Sir, great numbers and recruitment" (I, 343).

The first to join the cause were ordained clerics. The *Act of Association* of the first missionaries, signed in Paris on September 4, 1626 (X, 242-243) shows us that. Attracted by the manner of the saint and to the ministry which they proposed to undertake, the missions and formation of the clergy, they came to join the newly-formed community. The saint never ceased to be demanding with regard to the purity of intention and the basic virtues of the candidates: "Ten men who are as they ought to be are worth more than a hundred; and a hundred who have not been called or who do not respond to God's plans are not worth even as much as ten" (II, 271).

In time those who asked admittance were usually young men who were not ordained and were at least seventeen years old. In the beginning, for about ten years, the responsibility for formation fell on St. Vincent because of the lack of solid structures and trained personnel.

They spend two years in the seminary

In the year 1637, when the numbers of those who were knocking on the door of the Congregation had grown, St. Vincent opened the first internal seminary at St. Lazare. Beginning with this decision the number of petitions for admittance grew: "Our seminary is very full, thanks be to God; there are thirty-six or thirty-eight students. We received several last month"(II, 271).

The saint consolidated this institution by giving it structures which were at the same time solid and flexible. The internal seminary is obligatory for everyone (III, 188); in it the seminarian's vocation is strengthened: "the years of testing are not to recognize if they have the required dispositions, since it is necessary to have recognized these beforehand, rather these attitudes are further strengthened (VI, 149); the seminary lasts two years: "They have two years of seminary"(I, 552); the seminarian usually lives separated from the other clerics: "For various reasons the seminarians do not associate with the priests" (I, 552); they leave the house accompanied, they make a retreat every six months (CR X, 9); they do not study and do the seminary at the same time because: "this would be an impediment to validly making vows" (VII, 410); he allows to seminarians who are finishing the seminary to study philosophy (VIII, 391); the seminarians are sent on the missions: "we just sent two seminarians this morning to the mission in Champagne, and tomorrow or the next day we will send seven or eight in two groups" (II, 295). The daily communal activities were the same as in the other local communities: morning prayer, study time, Eucharist, examen, meals, recreation and times of silence. The program included reading of the Sacred Scriptures and spiritual authors and catechism (I, 551-552). At the end of the first year, the seminarians made good purposes.

San Vincent gradually delegated part of the responsibility for formation to well-prepared missionaries. During the saint's life two seminaries were opened in France: St. Lazare and Richelieu.

The attention that St. Vincent gave to the seminary shows that, besides dedicating himself to the formation of the clergy, he was also interested in strengthening the formation of his own students. At stake was the survival of his most cherished work: the Congregation of the Mission and, definitely, the proclamation of the Good News to the poor.

If we have to remember one characteristic of St. Vincent as a formator of missionaries, we would have to point out his interest in centering the life of the aspirants in Jesus Christ, the evangelizer of the poor, in order to serve the Church by means of the missions and the formation of the clergy. The letters and conferences directed to the missionaries by the saint make very clear the deepest personal convictions which he tried to transmit to his students.

They do not forget to dedicate themselves to the necessary studies

Taking into account the growing number of candidates, St. Vincent decided to create a center for studies. This was an indispensable work for the nascent community. Without a common, harmonious and articulated preparation, the new community, made up of men from different backgrounds, would have lacked a common identity and ideals.

The first center for studies was set up at Bons Enfants. The not very spacious building also held other works at the same time: the clerical seminary for ordinands, a retreat house, a residence for travelling priests and the study center for the Congregation. In a letter of February 3, 1639 to Robert de Sergis, St. Vincent alluded to the fact that interests us: we have sent "this year ten or twelve to study theology at Bons Enfants" (I, 530).

The distinctive elements of the formation given to the students by St. Vincent are not known. He preferred the use of a good manual to dictated lectures (II, 179); piety, the virtues and the Eucharist took on special importance; and the same can be said for the liturgy, dogmatics, moral theology, the administration of the sacraments, catechesis, cases of conscience and disputed questions: "there are two who debate: one argues against and the other defends. This is the way to become wise. This same practice is done in the seminaries, at Bons Enfants and in many other places" (IX, 1149).

In any case the method would have been orthodox and oriented towards practice (X, 227). During the time of studies certain pastoral activities were included: "where there is a seminary, it is convenient that we have a parish so that the seminarians can practice there" (VII, 220). The chair of dogmatics was suppressed at Bons Enfants: "I have heard that the Scholasticism taught at Bons Enfants is of little use, practically worthless; I have considered doing away with it so that they can study Scholasticism at the College of Navarre or the Sorbonne (X, 227).

The project was oriented towards the formation of missionaries with a good, practical preparation and capable for the ministry of the missions and seminaries. St. Vincent warned his students against studies that were not oriented to action. He tried to form pastors not doctors.

Frequently he advised his students about avoiding certain temptations: sacrificing piety to know more, the danger of vanity and false curiosity (XI, 49-51; 372-373; 722). At the same time, despite what has sometimes been said, the holy Founder wanted well-prepared missionaries in his community: "they will not cease to dedicate themselves to the studies necessary to carry out well the activities of a missionary" (CR XII, 8).

Practically all of the missionaries of the Congregation passed through these two institutions, the internal seminary and the center for studies, during the saint's lifetime.

The above-mentioned facts suffice to bring us to a primary conclusion: St. Vincent directed his life and the lives of many others to the evangelization of the poor. To support this goal he presented his own spirituality. Moreover, he was concerned with developing strategies to achieve this end by including and preparing his closest collaborators. He dedicated himself for life to the ministry of missions and the formation of the clergy, without leaving aside assuring the future of the Congregation by forming his own students as well as he could.

The Congregation has received as its inheritance the parcel that St. Vincent cultivated with his own hands: the poor, to whom we get close, above all, through certain ministries: the evangelizing mission, the formation of the clergy and, without a doubt, the strengthening of our own community by the formation of our candidates. It does not seem opportune to forget some of these ministries under the pretext of promoting others. The missions, the formation of the clergy and the impulse given to the formation of new vocations for the Congregation guarantee the future.

II. Lines of action for the Formation of our Students today

The Constitutions, coming from the General Assembly of 1980, make reference to the foundation of the clergy (C 1, 3; 15) and the formation of our own students (C 77-95). The General Assemblies of 1986 and 1992 moved in the same direction. These facts show the present consciousness of the Congregation concerning priestly formation and translate into two aspirations:

On the one hand, in accordance with the inheritance received from St. Vincent, there exists the ministry of clerical formation, although very reduced in the number of confreres involved in the work. The former superior general, Fr. Richard McCullen, in his reflection on the state of the Congregation, put forth at the General Assembly of 1992, manifested that the number of confreres dedicated to the formation of the diocesan clergy has gone down.

On the other hand the Congregation in the post-conciliar period has developed with regard to the formation of our own students new roads and a new theory, rooted in the Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary and the Major Seminary.
Formation on the Different Continents

At the present time the formation of our students is based on the documents of the Church, the Episcopal Conferences, Constitutions, Statutes and the Ratio Formationis of the C.M. But, at the same time, the peculiarities of the various cultures continue to find a place in the local formation programs, due to the efforts at inculturation by the Provinces.

a. The European Provinces

The Internal Seminary

Usually each province in Europe forms its candidates in its own internal seminary. Nevertheless, the tendency towards unification, due to the reduced number of seminarians and the need to take better advantage of the available formation personnel, has been manifested in the last few years.

Right now the internal seminary is inter-provincial in France, Poland-Slovakia and, as things are developing, it seems that it will be in Italy and Spain.

The Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary has a decisive influence in the direction of the seminary. On the other hand the provinces have approved their own formation plans and have tried to give to the seminary the means for a good formation. Frequently the number of seminarians for each province is small, which permits a personalized formation, far from any possible mass program. The closeness between formators and students is clear. The young men who enter the seminary have a human and Christian maturity superior to that of their predecessors in relatively recent times. Generally the present seminarians begin the seminary after having done the studies necessary to enter the university and, in some cases, after having passed through a postulancy which sometimes includes in the program a part of the philosophy studies.

The Major Seminary

Of the European provinces and the Middle East only Poland and Rome, in Cracow and Piacenza, run their own respective centers of philosophical-theological studies, where their own students study. The other two Italian provinces, Turin and Naples, are taking steps to send their respective students to Piacenza which is the responsibility of the Roman Province. This center of studies would become in certain aspects inter-provincial. The Province of Turin has a theological institute in Genoa which lay people and religious attend. The other provinces send their students to academic centers run by groups other than the Congregation of the Mission.

In the first two post-conciliar decades the majority of the provinces, following the tone set by numerous orders and religious congregations, closed the center of studies, which until then had students and teachers who were members of the same congregation. The students were sent to other academic centers in which they received classes in the basic institutional cycle whose ownership fell to a diocese or religious congregation or, as sometimes happens, was shared.

With the exception of the province of Poland, which is responsible for the diocesan seminaries of Gdańsk, Jordanowo and Grodno, the latter in Byelorussia, none of the other European provinces lends a similar service to any diocese on the old continent.

b. The Provinces of Africa and Madagascar

Internal Seminary

Each of the African Provinces continues to receive candidates for the Congregation in its own internal seminary. If it were not for the great distances and for the diversity of languages and cultures, interprovincial collaboration could be undertaken and would result in a great benefit for all. Sometimes on their own initiative the Visitors, because of the reduced numbers of their own seminarians, have looked for short-term solutions, sending candidates to the other provinces.

The growing number of men entering the African seminaries is well known. The Ratio Formationis for the Internal Seminary is the common link in formation. On the other hand in the African continent the Church has made a special effort to inculturate the Gospel. The different seminaries of the Congregation are not separate from this very necessary option.

Two characteristic notes need to be pointed out: Frequently the provinces do not have sufficient or prepared personnel for formation. Also the formation in the humanities of the candidates who come to the seminary is often incomplete. This obliges the formators to spend more energy in responding to this lack of preparation. The interchange of personnel, even if only for a time, would be beneficial to the provinces and in the long run to the congregation. It frequently happens that where the number of candidates grows, the lack of formation personnel is felt.

The Major Seminary

In this area we make reference to the provinces of Madagascar, Ethiopia, Zaire and the vice-provinces of St. Justin de Jacobis and Mozambique. We also include the region of Nigeria, dependent on the Irish Province, and the mission of Cameroon, which is the responsibility of the Province of Paris.

The above-mentioned provinces or vice-provinces do not have their own centers of theological studies. They send their students either to diocesan seminaries or intercongregational theological institutes.

None of the above-mentioned provinces has received responsibility at this time for a major seminary in any of the numerous dioceses of the African continent. Nonetheless, the missionaries of the Congregation continue to collaborate in the spiritual and academic formation of candidates for the priesthood in Africa. According to approximate calculations seventeen confreres are employed in formation work and, in particular, in teaching at study centers, which the philosophy-theology students of the Congregation also attend.

In the same way as in Europe each and every one of the provinces and vice-provinces of Africa has a center of studies, or, as some prefer to call it, a theologate. The formative community usually is made up of formators and students. At times the center of studies is attached to a house of the province.

In the last few years, the political and social situation of Zaire set back an attempt, proposed by the superior general, of erecting in that country an inter-provincial center of formation for all of the provinces of Africa. On the other hand, the Mexican Province is responsible for a minor seminary in the Diocese of Xai-Xai, in Mozambique, and the Province of

St. Louis, U.S.A., since 1980 has been in charge of the minor seminary of Nyeri, in Kenya.

c. Asia and Australia

We refer in the following section to the provinces of India, Indonesia, the Philippines, China and Australia.

Internal Seminary

Each province, except Taiwan, has its own internal seminary. Despite considerable distances, two provinces collaborate in this field of the formation of our seminarians. A small number of seminarians from Indonesia goes each year to the internal seminary of the Philippines; the rest make their seminary in their own country. There is a sustained growth in the number of seminarians in Indonesia and India; a more moderate growth in the Philippines and a certain continuity with regard to the recent past in Australia. This province forms its seminarians in the internal seminary located in the Fiji Islands and, sometimes, in Australia. Taiwan does not have any vocations at the moment and, therefore, has no structures for formation.

Just as in the provinces of other latitudes the Ratio Formationis is the point of reference for formators and students.

Major Seminary

The Province of Indonesia has, together with two religious congregations, a center of philosophical-theological studies. Besides our own students and those which belong to the two participating congregations, seminarians from nine dioceses participate. The province has also taken charge of a diocesan minor seminary.

The Province of India maintains its own theologate in Orissa in which the courses of the basic institutional cycle are given. In Pune, a second theologate of the province, the students take classes at the diocesan seminary.

The Province of the Philippines, besides having assumed responsibility for the theology department in the diocesan seminary of Cebu, has its own major seminary in Manila. The Australian Province sends its students to either diocesan or inter-congregational centers. The contribution of the confreres of this province to the formation of the future priests of the Fiji Islands is considerable.

According to the available statistics, a total of twenty-four missionaries of the Congregation collaborate in the academic formation of diocesan seminarians and the students of the Congregation of the Mission.

The new international mission, recently created by the superior general in the Solomon Islands, has taken charge of an inter-diocesan major seminary.

d. Latin America

The Internal Seminary

Generally each province has had its own internal seminary until now. Nevertheless, in this wide zone of the American continent the tendency toward inter-provincial collaboration has been felt. In solidarity the following groups of provinces are responsible for an internal seminary: Peru, Argentina and Chile; Fortaleza and Curitiba, with the probable participation of Rio de Janeiro; Puerto Rico, to whose seminary go the seminarians from Cuba; there is also an interprovincial seminary for Central America and Philadelphia located in Panama. In Central America steps are being taken for collaboration with regard to the formation of the seminarians for the other provinces and vice-provinces which are present in some way in that region. These are, besides those already named, Costa Rica, Barcelona and Saragossa. By reaching an agreement, all would benefit, since at times sufficient formators are not available and, moreover, the number of seminarians for each province is very small. The Provinces of Ecuador and Venezuela, beginning with the course for 1995-1996, have begun mutual collaboration, erecting the inter-provincial internal seminary in Ecuador.

There is no uniformity with regard to age or level of preparation of the candidates when they enter the internal seminary. In some provinces they enter the seminary when they have finished philosophy, in others once they have finished their intermediate studies required to enter the university.

Some of the Latin American provinces continue to keep the minor seminary or, sometimes, the postulancy, which boys of at least seventeen years of age enter. This is a first experience of community life. Such is the case in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Central America, Venezuela, Peru and Chile. In a similar situation are the provinces of Curitiba, Rio de Janeiro and Ecuador. The Province of Colombia continues to maintain an apostolic school.

The tendency, although different in each place, is towards the gradual increase in the number of candidates.

With some frequency the preparation of the formation personnel has been improvised, above all with regard to knowledge of Vincentian spirituality. The help of the provinces which are rich in well-prepared personnel to those who have none is extremely urgent at the present moment.

Major Seminary

The Latin American provinces send their candidates to academic centers run by others. Three provinces are the exception. Colombia has a center for philosophical studies and another for theological studies under its own care. The province of Ecuador continues to maintain its own center of studies in which the academic courses of the basic institutional cycle are taught. The Province of Curitiba has a center of philosophical studies in which teachers from other congregations collaborate and to which students from the other provinces go.

The province of Colombia is responsible for five diocesan seminaries in Colombia and another in Bolivia. The other provinces have given up this ministry.

In Latin America twenty-two confreres hold the office of professor in formation centers for future priests. To this figure we have to add a larger number of confreres, about forty, from the Province of Colombia, dedicated to the formation of aspirants to the priesthood.

e. The United States of America

The Internal Seminary

The five provinces, due to the reduced number of candidates, decided to erect an inter-provincial seminary. The results have been favorable. Several confreres collaborate with the director of the seminary and, in particular, in teaching the subjects given during the seminary year. Normally the candidates who enter the seminary have a considerable level of academic and human maturity.

The Major Seminary

The Provinces send their own students to centers of study, not owned by the Congregation.

Seventeen confreres are formators or professors in teaching centers on priestly formation. Special mention goes to Camarillo Seminary, in the diocese of Los Angeles. Five missionaries of the Congregation are professors and formators in the Theologate and two in the College.

Conclusions

Presently the formation imparted in the internal seminary of the Congregation follows the lines of action marked out in the Ratio Formationis and, in particular, in what is most specifically Vincentian spirituality. Due to the present Ratio Formationis the formation of the seminarians from the different provinces and geographic areas coincides in the fundamental, without detriment to the necessary inculturation in the different places.

Interprovincial Collaboration

The number of provinces which are coming together to share the responsibility for a common internal seminary is gradually growing. The improvisation of the formators is notable. Frequently they do not have the opportunity or the necessary means to prepare themselves sufficiently to competently exercise this ministry. The lack of formators is notable in the provinces in which the number of aspirants is growing. This means a lack which has negative consequences in the long run and which is not easily remedied. It would be desirable that the provinces find ways to help each other by interchanging formation personnel.

Given the fact that presently the groups of seminarians are small in numbers, the problems of large groups have been overcome, without, on the other hand, having resolved satisfactorily the deficiencies which come from having a small group, sometime minuscule, of

seminarians.

Since it cannot be avoided in these times, the academic preparation of the candidates who enter the seminary is characterized by diversity, according to the country and depending on the cultural levels and the local legislation with regard to secondary studies. The provinces agree on demanding that the students who enter the seminary be older and have greater human maturity and sufficient experience of community life.

The Major Seminary

The disappearance of the classical formation structures in the centers of study or major seminaries of the Congregation, not replaced with new or better structures, brought with it, during the decades immediately after the council and even in the recent past, a clear disorientation. In some latitudes the effects are still being felt.

At present there is more stability and serenity in everything which concerns formation. After a situation characterized by rapid change, often not well discerned, we have passed to a situation of creative pause, which is generally a characteristic of the present ecclesial moment.

The formation which the students of the Congregation in the basic institutional cycle receive is usually adapted to what is taught in the formation centers of the local and universal Church. In general terms the Congregation has incorporated into the formation project of its own students the guidelines of Vatican II, the later orientations of the Holy See and the Episcopal Conferences and, of course, the special features of its own Vincentian tradition. Today the Vincentian dimension of formation, as it is spelled out in the Constitutions and the Ratio Formationis for the Major Seminary, and also the document Brothers for the Mission and the respective provincial formation plans, offers guarantees of authenticity to both formation personnel and students. These documents have had favorable effects in the provinces. They have increased congregational unity in the fundamental and, at the same time, have left freedom to cultivate a diversity to the local culture.

Except for a small group of provinces, all of the others have entrusted the academic formation of their candidates to professors and institutions not belonging to the Vincentian Community. The positive results are clear. The students of the Congregation have followed the practice adopted by the majority of religious orders and congregations. Moreover the possibly impoverishing isolation, which surely would have occurred if the students had remained enclosed in their own domestic environment, has been overcome.

But, some negative aspects have resulted from this way of acting. The little or no participation by the professors of the Congregation in the centers which their own students attend carries with it a real and progressive distance between the dynamic of the academic centers and the formation personnel. Another negative element affects the Congregation itself. The decline in the ministry of priestly formation, with the reduced responsibility of the provinces for diocesan seminaries and the reduced number of their own centers of studies, might bring, and in fact does bring, an impoverishment in the specialized academic formation of the missionaries. Due to a lack of incentive, in practice the provinces probably will not consider it opportune that a group of confreres specialize in the theological disciplines.

Formation of the Brothers

Certain anachronisms which came from the past have been corrected in the formation of the brothers. In the Constitutions the Brother is to be equal in everything to the clerics, except in what derives from priestly orders. In some provinces either the growth or the reduction in numbers of lay vocations in the Congregation is equal to the growth or reduction of priestly vocations. In the Congregation as a whole the reduction in the number of brothers is greater than that of the clerics.

The formation of the Brothers in the internal seminary is similar to that of the aspirants to the priesthood. Usually they receive sufficient theological formation either in theological faculties or in school of theology for the laity. The provinces have also looked for ways for the brothers to achieve enough professional training. The variety of offices and ministries that the brothers undertake today has widened. It includes manual labor, domestic service, administration, teaching and pastoral ministry in its many diverse aspects.

Despite what has been said above, two elements with regard to the brothers have not been satisfactorily resolved: the formation after the internal seminary and the integration of the brother in a clerical society. Lately one hears voices favorable to the elaboration of a Ratio Formationis for the brothers.

Without forgetting to look towards the future, we should read with attention the pages which St. Vincent and many other confreres wrote in the past about the ministry of the formation of diocesan priests and, our own members. It will serve as a help and a guarantee for entering the Twenty-first Century on solid footing.

John P. Prager, C.M., translator

The Formation of our Confreres in the thought of St. Vincent

Elements of a Spirituality

by Fr. Luigi Nuovo CM

While St. Vincent often insisted on presenting himself as a *scholar of the fourth form* he had nevertheless a solid theological, spiritual and also canonical formation. He knew how to respond with an assured competence to the questions which were put to him.

He was certainly not a man who reflected on knowledge for the sake of knowledge or in an academic way (it put him on his guard) – but he viewed it in the light of ecclesial and pastoral service – and for the ends of the Congregation; that is, in relationship to the formation of good priests and the evangelization of the poor.

He was motivated, then, above all by an intense sensitivity and apostolic concern. His counsels and advice regarding the formation of priests and in particular of a future priest of the Mission can be placed under three principal criteria:

1. Strive to practise the Christian virtues and "and those proper to our state," as Christ did who "first practised and then taught" (RC of the CM). The missionary is one called to model himself on Christ, to follow Christ, to conform himself to Christ. To aim at holiness of life is a priority.
2. Set about acquiring a solid and serious formation, theological and spiritual, – as the Church desired in the light of the Council of Trent – in order to be a good communicator, teacher, catechist, confessor (cf. SV M 48, pp. 150-152).
3. A good priest of the Mission ought finally to know how to join in his life a theological culture with solid virtue: "Educated and humble missionaries are the treasure of the Company, just as good and holy doctors were the treasure of the Church" (SV M 48, p. 150).

For St. Vincent the study of theology ought to lead to the Lord. He said: "If every time we enlighten our minds we seek also to inflame our wills, we can be certain that study will be a means to help us to go to God. We can hold it as a sure maxim that the degree to which we strive to attain interior perfection, will render us more capable of producing fruits in our neighbour" (SV M 15, p. 49).

The ideal for Vincent was "a man genuinely learned and genuinely humble" (SV M 48 p. 151) – and for this reason he esteemed André Duval who was "very cultured and at the same time so humble and simple" (ibidem, p. 152), – or Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle who combined culture and holiness of life, or even more so Francis de Sales who proclaimed the Gospel through his writings.

Humility, holiness of life should be specific virtues for those who were called to the formation of the clergy: "If it should please God to make us men of solid, interior virtue and

recollected, we can hope that He will use us to do a little good, not only to the people, but also and principally to the ecclesiastics" (SV M 181, p. 487).

Along these lines he exhorted those who were preparing for the priesthood to live in the consciousness that everything a priest is and has belongs to God: "Convince yourselves that if you have something of value in yourselves, be it little or much, you owe it to God, because it is God who has given it to you. Live, brothers, in this spirit: try to keep it, if you have it already; and if you do not, ask our Lord persistently for it" (SV M 191, p. 534). And yet again "while you study the science of philosophy and learn all its divisions, learn also the science of our Lord and his maxims, and put them into practice" (ibidem, p. 534).

Formation, however, ought to be the most complete possible: dogmatic theology, but also the practice in preaching well and catechising competently; moral theology, but also the solving of "cases of conscience."

Formation centred essentially around three aspects which are closely linked to each other:

- a) spiritual formation
- b) intellectual formation
- c) liturgical-pastoral formation (it was this that most distinguished the "Vincentian" seminary from others).

a) Spiritual formation was that which was closest to St. Vincent's heart. It was to be such that the seminarians would orientate themselves, in a decisive way, to the interior life, to prayer, to recollection and to union with God.

In a special way the students were to complete the formation received during the period of the Internal Seminary, by preserving and maturing its spirit, and striving through their application to study to unite faith and culture, knowledge and piety. In two letters addressed to Firmin Get in the seminary of Montpellier, he confirms these ideas: "In the education of ecclesiastics, you ought to have as a principal aim the directing of them to the interior life, to prayer, to recollection and to union with God.... It is not the work of a day, but of several years..." (VII, 593, SV, pp. 211-212). "I recommend to you to guide your boarders to the interior life. They will not be without knowledge, if they have virtue, nor without virtue, if they give themselves to prayer. If they do their prayer well and diligently, it will introduce them infallibly to the practice of mortification, it will detach them from possessions, and give them a love for obedience and zeal for souls and for all the duties" (VIII 3; SV XV, p. 250). And again to another Superior of a seminary: "You will never be without them (seminarists) if you take care to form them well in the true spirit of their state, which consists especially in the interior life and in the practice of prayer and the virtues. For it is not enough to teach them singing, ceremonies and a little moral theology; what is important is to form them in solid piety and devotion" (IV, 597; SV X, p. 521).

The different moments, such as: personal prayer, mental prayer – "according to the method of our Blessed Father Francis de Sales" –, the celebration and adoration of the Eucharist, the practice of the sacrament of penance, the reading of the New Testament, of the *Imitation of Christ* and other texts, – made up the framework of the spiritual edifice.

b) The intellectual formation was regulated by principles and norms to which the superior of the house, teachers and students, were to pay much attention. A series of valuable counsels

were given to the students.

Firstly, to pray that Divine Wisdom would instruct them; to read books, – choosing them carefully and with discernment, above all, to reflect on the reading; to study in a certain systematic way, to foresee and prepare the lecture to be given in the class-hall in its totality; finally to combine the exercise of memory and critical judgement.

These are the attitudes one is to have in study in order to extract the maximum profit from it in a way that would translate itself into a style of life.

c) The liturgical-pastoral formation, done at that time in the curriculum of studies, was for St. Vincent an important matter. His priests, whether they devoted themselves to the missions, or were destined to teaching in the seminaries, were to receive the most complete formation possible in this domain, in particular, sacred ceremonies, rubrics, chants, preaching, catechesis, celebration of the sacraments, exercises and pious practices.

St. Vincent wanted to apply a remedy to the abuses and other unseemly behaviour which he had seen so many times and which he recalled in the Conference to the Missionaries on 23 May 1659; "If you had seen, I do not wish to say the ugliness, but the diversity of ceremonies in the Mass about forty years ago, you would have been ashamed. I think there is nothing more ugly in the world than the different ways in which the Mass used to be celebrated. Some used to begin the Mass with the *Pater Noster*, others took the chasuble in their hands, said the *Introibo* and then put it on. Once I was in Saint Germaine en Laye where I observed seven or eight priests who all said Mass in different ways. One said it in one manner, another in another. The variations would reduce one to tears" (SV M 206 p. 731) or SV 12:258-259 (*translator*).

For the same reason he wanted future priests in the seminaries to be trained to keep with propriety the places of worship, so that everything would be resplendent with great dignity and nobility. On this point he writes in a letter of March 1652 to Lambert aux Couteaux in Poland: "Like you I blushed with shame when I saw what was said to you about the dirt and disorder in the churches in France and the acts of irreverence being committed in them. I am sure that, seeing just the opposite in the churches in Poland, has affected you quite differently than when you were here. It is indeed a great evil to which people do not give sufficient attention because they have become inured to it. Your letter caused me to reflect on it and I have perceived, first of all, that the solution to it is painful but nonetheless necessary. I am determined to do something about it, beginning with ourselves here, and recommending it to all our houses. Then I shall continue with ordinands, retreatants, and at our meetings with the diocesan clergy; in a word, in every way I can" (SV IV p. 326; SV 10: p. 205).

All these aspects, then, were to be bound together in such a way that the spiritual life, the theological culture, the liturgical-pastoral practice would fashion an integrated, mature and balanced priest, – whose crown would be a warm-hearted pastoral charity towards all and in a special way towards the poor.

A man of God from a burning and infectious charity.

Richard McCullen CM Translator

Some key points about the formation of our members today

by Kazimierz Stelmach CM

Formation is a topic which has always been discussed in our Congregation. For St Vincent the formation of the clergy had even been one of the reasons for which he founded the Congregation. He was alert to the needs of his day and realised that this was precisely the point at which the real renewal of the Church had to start. And, I think, he also wanted to renew the whole of society by this means. These points emerge clearly in a conference to the confreres in September 1655.

The Church is going through a critical period at present. It is living in the midst of a society which, in many ways, reminds us of that of St Vincent's time. This means that in the face of such a situation we have to ask ourselves, as St Vincent did in the conference referred to above, what we ourselves have to do. Or, better still, how to prepare ourselves, and how to prepare our students, to be able not just to face up to such a situation and to respond better to the needs of the time, but also how to share in the ongoing renewal of society and the Church.

In this short contribution I do not intend to answer all the questions which are being asked, but merely to draw on my limited personal experience to highlight at least some of what I consider the more important aspects which need to be emphasised today in formation, or rather in how and for what we are preparing our students. Neither is it a "doctrinal" report, but more a reflection on our everyday life and the urgent calls arising from it.

The *Ratio Formationis Vincentianae* puts human development first. With regard to this "development" I want to stress just one point which the *Ratio* mentions in this section. The documents says: "... to open oneself to others, to other than self even when accepting others becomes difficult". ⁽¹⁾ In my opinion this is one of the problems most often generally encountered with today's young people. In my own experience it has been one of the most obvious problems I have met with as a formator.

The world today, more than ever, needs men who are able to "meet", in every sense of the word. When dealing with our young members there is need to underline, insist on, teach, that in a "meeting" it is not merely a matter of accepting the "other" passively. This point is brought out by St Vincent himself. For him, to meet a poor person meant "to give oneself" completely for him. And this training to be men for "meeting" begins back in the seminary. We can say that if I am unable to accept my brother with whom I am living, then it will be difficult for me to put this virtue into practice when I am on mission. This means that the mission to be undertaken could be limited, superficial, or merely "chosen".

The first task, then, of a formator will be to observe, to get to know the students well, and then to act. This is by no means easy. Every formator has to find a suitable way for enabling the students to learn how to get on with others.

¹. *Ratio Formationis Vincentianae pour le grand séminaire de la Congrégation de la Mission*, VINCENTIANA 2 (1988), p 222.

Another point which seems to me to be very important concerns prayer in general. Our seminaries should be well organised as regards the spiritual life. But this "organised" seminary life carries the danger that when we are by ourselves we are not always capable of organising our spiritual life. This is nothing new. But I think it is a point we have always to keep in mind. I don't think that everything in our seminary timetable should be organised, laid down. There is need, every so often, to leave it to the seminarists themselves to organise "the spiritual day" so that not only will they pick up the ability to pray but will even experience not just the need but above all the "delight" of the spiritual life. To my way of thinking, this leads the seminarist towards responsibility, and the basic thing here is not just responsibility in prayer but later in all senses when he will be a missionary in the future.

The period of formation includes study of theology. The *Ratio Formationis*, when it deals with the scope of intellectual formation in §31 says that this should be: "... to help the acquisition of the ability to know how to evaluate the values and counter-values of today's world, the causes of poverty and the obstacles to evangelization". ⁽²⁾.

It can often happen that the study of theology is considered as just something "to be got through". Today's young people want to get down to work right away, and that is very positive. So formators have to discover how to convince the young people that the world today is not simple, and in fact it never has been. That is why that in order to get down to work, to serve the poor in an effective way, some preparation is needed. St Vincent stressed precisely this at a conference: "He strongly recommended them to study hard... so as to serve God better and to serve the neighbour more effectively" ⁽³⁾. One thing must be made absolutely clear to them: we are not mere "social workers"; we must be missionaries, because that is our vocation.

To end up I would like to emphasise one other aspect of formation which concerns both the Congregation as a whole and community living. The mistake we most frequently make is to treat the Congregation, or rather to look at it, as something which is there for us, and accordingly "owes us something". This is an attitude I have often noticed. It is obvious that the whole thrust of the formation process should be not just to tell them but to show them in a concrete way that our Congregation is our family, and that in it I am "at home". And if that is the case, then "I" must be for that family. And that is not easy, neither for the seminarists themselves nor for those in charge of formation.

The *Ratio Formationis* says that the formation period should lead the students "... to integrate themselves into a fraternal and missionary community, should be the means for living according to the gospel, and the prophetic sign of the Kingdom of God"; that the formation period should lead them "to contribute in an active way to the building up of the community". In brief, it will be my home, my community in which I will be enabled to be, first of all, "for" it. The family can serve as a model for us. The father, the mother or the son do not return there just to sleep, but are there to live.

These are just some points which, in my opinion, are very important for the formation of our seminarists, and which I have noticed both in my experience as a formator and in conversations with missionaries in general. I think every formator will find other points, because of different places and

². idem, 227.

³. SV XII 63.

different individuals. It would be interesting to compare such experiences at inter-provincial level. This would be not merely an enrichment for each one, but above all it would be a help.

Thomas DAVITT cm, Translator

ON VINCENTIAN INVOLVEMENT IN PARISHES

P. Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

Vincent de Paul was not keen about the involvement of the Congregation of the Mission in parishes. His reluctance to accept them, while by no means an absolute refusal, is evident from the earliest days of the Company until the time of his death.

In this article I offer some reflections on the Congregation and parishes, in three steps.

- I. The attitude of St. Vincent
- II. Some significant changes that have taken place between the 17th and 20th centuries
- III. Some reflections on Vincentian involvement in parishes today

I. THE ATTITUDE OF ST. VINCENT

Vincent has often been described as the most balanced religious leader of his day. He blended theory and practice adeptly. While he had clear principles, he applied them with flexibility. His life and ministry give clear evidence of his adroitness in doing so. By his own account, for example, simplicity was the virtue he loved most, but he also knew very well how to remain silent when prudence demanded it. He believed firmly in the importance of fidelity to one's vocation and at times struggled mightily to keep members from leaving the Community. But he also knew that some members had a corrosive effect and he thanked God when they left, even hastening their way out at times.¹

Vincent's attitude toward parishes shows the same delicate interplay between theory and practice. In theory, he was reluctant to accept them since he regarded them as lying outside the scope of the Congregation of the Mission. In practice, occasionally he accepted them. Two kinds of reasons led him to soften his objections. First, at times he saw parishes as a positive way of achieving the goals of the Congregation. For example, he accepted parishes attached to seminaries so that the candidates might get experience in exercising ministry.² Secondly, at times pragmatic political considerations forced him to swallow his reluctance. For instance, when the queen or Cardinal Richelieu³ requested the presence of the missionaries in a parish, he found it

¹SV II, 381. "It would be so much better to have fewer men than to have a number of difficult individuals.... Ten good men will do more for God than a hundred of those people. Let us purge, Monsieur, let us purge the Company of worldly persons and those who are not pleasing in the eyes of God, and he will give it increase and bless it."

²Cf. SV II, 377.

³It is clear that St. Vincent negotiated a very "missionary" contract at Richelieu. The contract, besides entrusting the parish to the Congregation of the Mission, also provided for the giving of missions in the area, the preparation of those about to be ordained as priests, and the giving of spiritual exercises to priests. Richelieu also became a very active center for the work of the Daughters of Charity. Cf. SV I, 412-413.

almost impossible to refuse.⁴

But Vincent's hesitations about parishes are very clear. He writes to Bernard Codoing on January 30, 1643:

⁴For a very interesting treatment of the works founded by St. Vincent, cf. J. M. Román, "Las fundaciones de San Vicente," in *Vincentiana* XXVIII (1984), 457-486. Cf. also, Román, *San Vicente de Paúl. Biografía*, (Madrid, 1981) 294-312.

As to your second letter, concerning the parishes, we pray to God unceasingly about them, after having had four or five conferences on this subject without being able to come to an affirmative or a negative decision. I trust that we shall furnish more good priests for the Church through our seminaries than the Company itself (could ever give to a diocese), if after many prayers and discussions, the Company decides in favor of not accepting parishes. Be assured, Monsieur, that you could not put forth any reason, for or against, which has not been examined and considered by the Company in the long period of time it has been reflecting on this....⁵

Vincent had already written to Codoing in the previous year describing "the difficulty you know we have always had in accepting parishes, except for the one at Richelieu."⁶ In a similar vein he writes to Jean Bourdet in 1646 objecting to the latter's accepting a chapel in Plancoët, stating: "... I said that if we are occupied with attending to the devotions of that holy chapel, we are setting aside Our Lord's intention for us, which is to go to the rural areas to seek out the poor souls...."⁷ Seven years later he tells Emerand Bajoue: "... Parishes are not our business. We have very few of them, as you know, and the ones we have were given us against our wishes, either by our founders or by the bishops. We could not refuse them without breaking with them, and perhaps Brial is the last one we will ever accept because the further we advance, the more involved we get in such matters."⁸ In 1655 he admonishes Jacques Chiroye: "Well now, Monsieur, since you acknowledge that the best thing for the Company is not to have parishes and that it is against the custom for individual confreres to have them, why then do you not do what I have asked you so many times to do; namely, to hand over to the Bishop the one you have?"⁹ A month later he writes to Monsieur Thomas at Angoulême: "A second reason why we cannot accept the benefit you wish to confer on us, Monsieur, is that parishes tie us down too much. We have taken them only under pressure and have resolved not to accept any more. The two or three we do possess have served only to make us realize what a hindrance they are to our functions, and how advantageous it is for us all to be obliged to go from village to village for the instruction and salvation of the people, without our attaching ourselves to towns or certain parishes that cannot lack workers. It is to be feared that in the course of time our members might be satisfied with remaining in the parishes."¹⁰

Having assumed some parishes, Vincent mentions on a number of other occasions his reluctance to get involved any further with them.¹¹ He confesses to having second thoughts even about those parishes that were attached to seminaries, such as at Cahors and Agde.¹² In his later

⁵SV II, 359.

⁶SV II, 251.

⁷SV II, 601.

⁸SV IV, 617.

⁹SV V, 401.

¹⁰SV V, 430.

¹¹SV VI, 334.

¹²SV VI, 625.

years he states that he does not want to accept any further parishes¹³ and that he would be happy to get rid of those which the Congregation already has.¹⁴

Missionary mobility was the key factor in his reluctant attitude.¹⁵ When negotiating the purchase of a house in Rome, Vincent, as well as the confreres whom he consulted, decided to turn down the offer of a house at San Giovanni Mercatelli because it had a parish attached to it and thus might impede the missionaries from going to work among the country people, something which "would be a great pity and would tend to pervert the spirit Our Lord has bestowed on the Company."¹⁶

Even when parishes were attached to the Congregation of the Mission, Vincent wanted to be sure that the Congregation had its own freedom in appointing and removing pastors¹⁷ and that it not be obliged to render an account to the bishops regarding the finances of the Congregation.¹⁸

The final two years of Vincent's life exhibit the same ambivalent attitude that earlier years had seen. In spite of Vincent's frequent objection to accepting parishes and his concern about the difficulties that they had caused the Company, even when they were attached to seminaries, he recommends taking one on in Rome just two years before his death: "Experience has made us recognize that where there is a seminary it is good that we have a parish so that seminarians can get experience there. They learn pastoral functions better by carrying them out in practice rather than by merely knowing the theory."¹⁹ But in January 1659 he refuses to take on a chapel, a center for pilgrimages, which had been offered to the Congregation. He states: "It would be difficult for our priests, who gave themselves to God to go from village to village to evangelize the poor, to renounce the missions in order to be attached to a single church...."²⁰ Yet even as he was dying, he accepted a parish. The journal of Jean Gicquel, recording the final days of Vincent's life, notes that on September 16, 1660, Vincent was asked about establishing a seminary to which the Parish of Notre Dame La Maiour would be attached. Vincent replied: "We can receive the parish with the seminary even though that would be a bit beyond the practice of our Institute...."²¹

¹³SV VII, 174.

¹⁴SV VII, 358.

¹⁵SV V, 233-234.

¹⁶SV V, 459.

¹⁷SV II, 195; V, 201.

¹⁸SV XIII, 182.

¹⁹SV VII, 253-254.

²⁰SV VII, 443-444.

²¹SV XIII, 181.

II. SOME SIGNIFICANT CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN THE 17TH AND 20TH CENTURIES

Over the centuries three changes have had great impact on the Congregation's relationship to parishes. The first occurred in the 17th century itself; the other two are of much more recent origin.

1. *Involvement in the royal parishes.* Shortly after the death of St. Vincent the Congregation became involved, reluctantly, in the French royal parishes. At the request of Anne of Austria, Fr. Alméras, Vincent's successor, accepted the parish at Fontainebleau. The Congregation took possession of it on November 27, 1661. Alméras named Antoine Durand as the first superior; he was accompanied by nine other confreres.

In 1672, Alméras informed the confreres that the king had asked the Congregation to take on the parish in Versailles. He also told them that he had reluctantly accepted the king's request. On October 6, 1674, Edme Jolly, Alméras' successor, signed the official contract. Nicolas Thibault went there as superior, accompanied by six priests, three brothers, and one cleric.²²

There can be little doubt that the huge investment of personnel in these two royal parishes cost the Congregation of the Mission considerably in terms of missionary mobility. It also identified the Congregation with the *ancien régime*. The Vincentians would pay a dear price for this at the time of the French Revolution.

2. *"Parochial assimilation."* Our current statistics note that 1074 confreres are engaged in parish ministry, a very high percentage (31%) of our total membership. In comparison, the number of Vincentians involved in such foundational works of the Community as popular missions and seminaries is small.

This huge insertion of personnel into parishes is a relatively recent phenomenon in the Congregation. The closing of many seminaries and other institutions during the last 40 years apparently caught the Congregation, as well as many other Communities, rather unprepared. Not having formulated clear criteria as to where to redistribute their personnel, many provinces somewhat easily acceded to the request of bishops (and, often enough, of the confreres themselves) to work in parishes.

A recent study in the United States makes this observation:

²²Luigi Mezzadri and José María Román, *Storia della Congregazione della Missione*, I (Rome: CLV-Edizione Vincenziane, 1992) 171-193.

*The increasingly widespread insertion of members of religious orders into diocesan and parochial positions, to the point where such commitments take precedence over involvements in the lives of their Congregations, is a growing phenomenon in the United States. This trend, which is known as parochial assimilation, has had a dramatic effect on most religious orders.... It easily can lead to a compromise of the prophetic role of members of religious life.*²³

This phenomenon of "parochial assimilation" is not restricted to the United States but has also shown itself in many countries in Europe. It affects not just Vincentians, but many other communities too.²⁴

3. *Conditioned acceptance of missionary parishes.* The Vincentian Constitutions and Statutes, approved by the Holy See in 1984, recognize the place of genuinely missionary parishes within the framework of the ministries of the Congregation. Nonetheless, Statute 10 lays down four conditions for verifying whether a parish really manifests our mission:

- a. that the apostolate which we exercise there is in accord with the purpose and nature of our Institute,
- b. that the small number of pastors in the area requires our presence,
- c. that the parish consists, for the most part, of the really poor, or,
- d. that it is attached to a seminary where the confreres give pastoral formation.

While there is no doubt that there exist, within the Congregation, genuinely missionary parishes, which are an actualization of "the mission," one must surely ask whether it is healthy for the Congregation of the Mission to be so heavily engaged in parish ministry and whether or not a significant number of our parishes actually do meet the criteria set out in Statute 10.

Visibility is extremely important for the vitality of any congregation's charism. It should be *clear* that we are "missionary" — for the service of the poor and clergy, for our own well-being, and for vocational promotion. If a given parish, or any other work, does not clearly embody our charism, then Statute 1 reminds us: "We are gradually to withdraw from those apostolic works which, after due reflection, no longer seem to correspond to the vocation of the Congregation at the present time."

III. SOME REFLECTIONS ON VINCENTIAN INVOLVEMENT IN PARISHES TODAY

²³D. Nygren and M. Ukeritis, *The Future of Religious Orders in the United States* (Connecticut: Praeger Press, 1993) 250.

²⁴The problem of "parochial assimilation" was clearly recognized in the "Instrumentum Laboris" for the Synod of 1994 on Consecrated Life. Cf. para. 77.

The impact of the changes mentioned above on the Congregation, and particularly the last two (parochial assimilation and conditioned acceptance of missionary parishes) has been profound. Reflecting on the concerns of St. Vincent, the history of the Congregation, the conditions described in Statute 10, and the future that lies before us, I regard it as crucial that we examine the place which parish ministry will hold in the future. Gathering together various elements from our tradition, past and present, let me suggest the following characteristics as the basis for evaluating whether a parish is truly "Vincentian" and "missionary":

- a. *It is among the really poor.*

Of course, this is what the Congregation is all about. The poor are our lot. St. Vincent is eloquent on the subject:

*Our inheritance, gentlemen and my brothers, is the poor, the poor; **pauperibus evangelizare misit me**. What happiness, gentlemen, what happiness! To do what our Lord came from heaven to earth to do, and by means of which we too shall go from earth to heaven, to continue the work of God...²⁵*

- b. *The diocesan clergy lack the resources to staff it.*

Statute 10 states this criterion explicitly: "Parishes are included among the apostolic works of the Congregation... provided that the small number of pastors requires it." This is a very useful criterion, especially in growing dioceses and in missionary territories. When the number of diocesan priests is sufficient, then we should, as missionaries, move on.

It can be fatal to a missionary Congregation, St. Vincent warned,²⁶ if its members and its candidates begin to perceive themselves as little different from the diocesan clergy.

- c. *Our commitment to a parish is temporally limited (hopefully, by a clear contract).*

Contracts are very helpful. Unfortunately they have not yet found acceptance in many parts of the Church, even though Canon 681, § 2 very clearly mandates that bishops and communities which staff parishes in their dioceses should formulate them.²⁷

When a contract sets a time limit, it has the distinct advantage of reminding us that we are missionaries and that we hope eventually to go elsewhere. It reminds bishops of this same aspect of our vocation. We are not diocesan priests. Naturally, many bishops, focusing on the needs of their own dioceses, have the tendency to "domesticate" missionaries, hoping that they can always count on them to staff some of the works of their dioceses. Contracts can be a stimulant to such

²⁵SV XII, 4.

²⁶SV V, 430.

²⁷Canon 681, § 2: "In these cases a written agreement is to be made between the diocesan Bishop and the competent Superior of the institute. This agreement must expressly and accurately define, among other things, the work to be done, the members to be assigned to it and the financial arrangements." Cf. also, *Mutuae Relationes*, May 14, 1978 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis LXX*) 473-506, # 57b; cf. *Ecclesiae Sanctae* I, 30, § 1.

bishops to seek out candidates for the diocesan clergy and provide good formation for them and for other pastoral agents.

- d. *We have definite missionary goals to be realized within that time frame. Among these is preparation for ongoing pastoral care in the future, particularly for training leaders in various ministries.*

We should be clear not only about *how long* we will be in a particular parish, but about what *we hope to do there* within that time frame. Only when we have formulated clear, specific goals can we evaluate whether we have reached them and have therefore accomplished our mission. When, as missionaries, we have laid a firm foundation, then we can hand over a parish or other works to the residential clergy with much more peace.

In some ways, preparation of future ministers is the principal missionary goal. We seek not only to provide pastoral care, but also *ongoing* care. Today it is evident that this means helping to prepare various pastoral agents: priests, deacons, sisters, brothers, catechists, teachers, Eucharistic ministers, readers, music ministers, youth ministers, etc. Preparation of others, clergy and laity, for a fuller participation in the evangelization of the poor is one of the principal ways of actualizing the purpose of the Congregation of the Mission.²⁸

- e. *Our commitment to the missionary parish is communal.*

Article 12, 4^o describes this characteristic of Vincentian ministry: "... a genuine sense of community in all our apostolic works, so that we may be supported by one another in our common vocation." As is evident, this applies to all our works, but it is especially relevant in regard to parishes since the phenomenon of "parochial assimilation," described above, often led to the dispersion of confreres in parishes where they served alone. Accustomed as some might be today to accepting the reality of isolated placements, it is important to note that St. Vincent was quite firm about living and working in community,²⁹ as are our present Constitutions.³⁰ In circumstances such as mission countries, where laboring alone sometimes seems necessary, then the local community plan must creatively address the problems created by isolated ministries so that confreres really do have a sense that they are members of a community on mission.

In any event, in all Vincentian missionary parishes, wherever they may be, the confreres should work closely together as a team and support one another in a rich common life.

- f. *Organized works of practical charity are functioning in the parish in the service of the needy.*

At the heart of St. Vincent's spirit lies practical, effective charity. He is best known for this characteristic. Wherever he went he organized "the Charities." It should be hard to imagine

²⁸C 1, 3E.

²⁹Cf. CR VIII, 2; SV I, 115; XIII, 144, 200, 206-207, 226, 232, 281.

³⁰Cf. C 21 ^o 1.

a *Vincentian* parish in which organized works of charity do not find a prominent place. This leads to the next characteristic.

- g. *Vincentian lay groups are being formed (Vincentian Marian Youth Groups, Society of St. Vincent de Paul, AIC, the Miraculous Medal Association, etc.).*

In recent years we have become quite conscious of ourselves as a *family*, living in the spirit of St. Vincent. It would be important that a *Vincentian* parish would reflect this.

Today there are numerous *Vincentian* groups. Their membership is growing rapidly. There are more than 900,000 members of the Vincent de Paul Society, 260,000 members of the AIC, and 200,000 members of the various *Vincentian* youth groups. Beyond this one finds countless members in the Miraculous Medal Association. Statute 7 encourages us to have a special concern for such groups.³¹

St. Vincent was very attentive to offering formation to the groups he founded. He always provided them with a rule of life. Similarly our parishes should be centers of rich guidance and formation for the members of our extended family.

- h. *Systematic instruction on the social teaching of the Church is offered.*

Among the essential characteristics that Statute 12 describes for our evangelization work is "attention to the realities of present-day society, especially to the factors that cause an unequal distribution of the world's goods, so that we can better carry out our prophetic task of evangelization." In this light our "Program for *Vincentian* Formation in the Major Seminary of the Congregation of the Mission"³² states:

*The study of the contemporary socio-economic-political situation and of the social teaching of the Church will prepare them [the seminarians] for pastoral activity, for knowing the forms of poverty, and for searching for its causes and for ways of responding to it within the context of our vocation.*³³

Pope John Paul II writes very forcefully in *Centesimus Annus*: "The `new evangelization,' which the modern world urgently needs and which I have emphasized many times, must include among its essential elements *a proclamation of the Church's social doctrine.*"³⁴

³¹Naturally, as Statute 7 indicates, this demands that some confreres receive special preparation for this work: "Although all members should be willing to undertake this work, it is necessary for some to be more skilled in it."

³²Program, 37.

³³Cf. John Paul II, "Discourse of the Holy Father to the members of the Assembly," *Vincentiana* 1986, # 5-6, 417: "Dear Fathers and Brothers, search out, more than ever, with boldness, humility and skill, the causes of poverty and encourage short and long term solutions; adaptable and effective concrete solutions. By doing so, you will work for the credibility of the Gospel and of the Church."

³⁴*Centesimus Annus*, 5.

Vincentian parishes should provide clear instruction in this aspect of the Church's teaching which is so vital to the future well-being of the poor.

- i. *The "style" of ministry is simple and humble.*

Simplicity and humility are the first two "characteristic virtues" of the Company. If that is the style that St. Vincent asks of us, then it should surely characterize our parishes. Enemies of simplicity and humility are complicated language, hidden agendas, clericalism and authoritarianism. Our style, on the contrary, should be direct, clear, and deeply respectful of persons. A listening, inclusive environment should reign in our parishes.

- j. *It is an evangelizing parish, with strong emphasis on the word of God.*

The heart of our Vincentian vocation is to follow Christ as the Evangelizer of the Poor. Our evangelization, in St. Vincent's spirit, should take place "in word and work," serving others "spiritually and corporally." Naturally, the word of God will play a central role in all centers of evangelization.

Concretely, this means that homilies will be well-prepared and will focus on God's word. It may also mean, in many places, that the parish will form small groups (*Comunidades de Base*) for reflecting on the word of God, praying over it, and working out its implications in building a Christian community. Of course, for those who preach and teach in Vincentian parishes, the word of God will be, as the author of Hebrews tells us (4:12), a two-edged sword, so that as we preach it to others it will cut into us too, calling us to ongoing conversion.

These reflections on our involvement in parishes flow from an analysis of Vincent's attitudes and actions and an examination of some significant changes that the Congregation has seen from the 17th century up to today. I hope that the ten characteristics listed above will serve as a help in evaluating, and also perhaps renewing, Vincentian parishes. Undoubtedly, many of the characteristics would be important in any parish, but they are especially so for us. If we are to serve in parishes, then they must be truly "Vincentian" and "missionary." Otherwise, we should not be there. How do our parishes measure up to these criteria?

ON VINCENTIAN FAMILY

by Robert P. Maloney, C.M.

It is important for the members of a family to love one another deeply. We should have a healthy pride in our relatives. In our own family, we have wonderful ancestors in St. Vincent and St. Louise. We have witnessed a long line of heroic men and women who have followed them, sometimes even to death, like John Gabriel Perboyre whose canonization we celebrated last year. But there have been many other heroes, some canonized and some not canonized. All of us have known some of them personally, perhaps a priest or brother or sister or a Vincentian lay person who inspired our vocation, perhaps a teacher, perhaps a nurse in a hospital, perhaps someone we saw visiting the sick poor in their homes. There have been thousands of heroes like that. We rejoice today to be members of the same family with Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, John Gabriel Perboyre, and all of them.

In this brief presentation, I will focus on our family under three headings:

- I. a look at the Vincentian Family itself: who are we? where do we come from?
- II. a brief reflection on the common inspiration that energizes our members;
- III. some suggestions for further cooperation among us.

I. A description of the Vincentian Family

A recent study identifies 268 institutes as constituting our family tree;¹ 70% of them (165) still exist. The criteria used for identifying these institutes are varied. Let me illustrate them briefly.

Criteria

The criteria used in this study represent the degree of affinity that an institute has to St. Vincent.

¹Betty Ann McNeil, *Monograph 1: The Vincentian Family Tree*, published by the Vincentian Studies Institute.

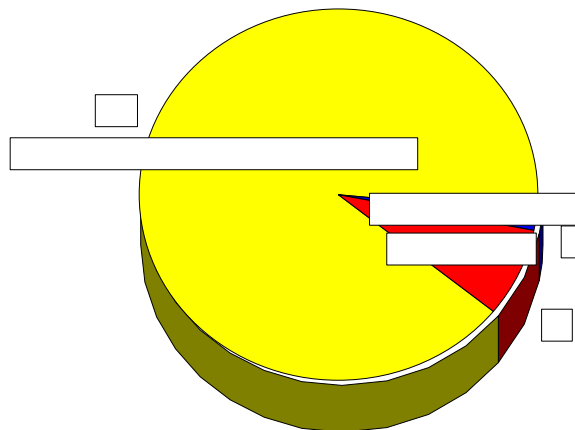
FAMILY TREE PROJECT CRITERIA

Founded by Vincent de Paul.
 Adopted the *Common Rules* of Vincent de Paul.
 Involved with St. Vincent as mentor or advisor.
 Established by CM, DC, or Vincentian laity.
 Daughters of Charity or Vincentians were mentors.
 Ongoing influence from Vincentians or Daughters of Charity.
 Honor Vincent de Paul as one of their patrons.
 Profess the same spirit as Vincentians and Daughters of Charity.
 Adapted and tailored aspects of the Vincentian charism.
 Lay associations that meet one of the criteria above.
 Non-Catholic institutes that meet one of the criteria above.

Findings

- *By Type of Institute*

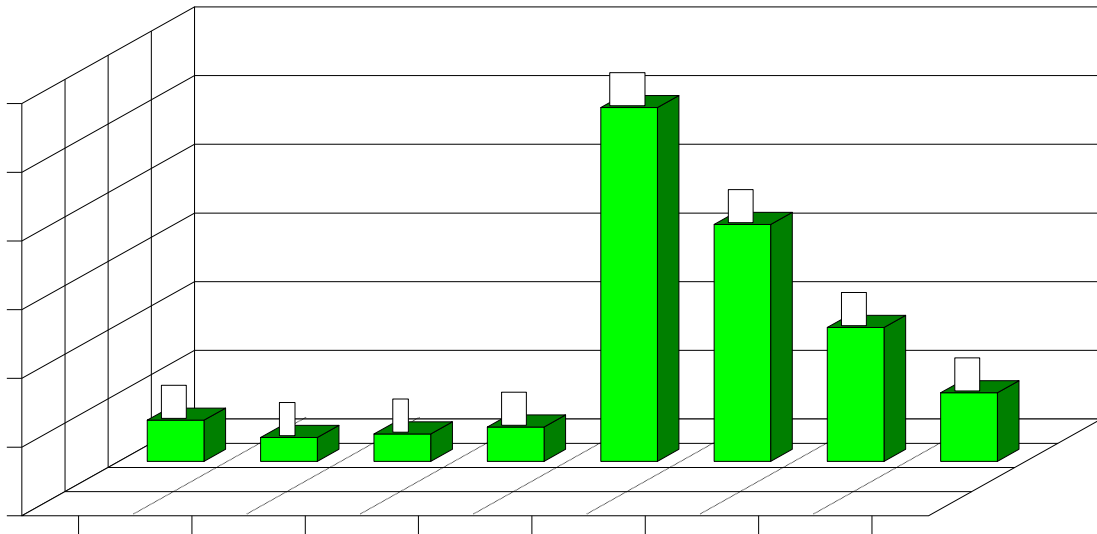
Of the 268 institutes, 239 (89%) are Roman Catholic Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, 21 (8%) are lay associations, and 8 (3%) are Anglican Congregations.



- *By Century of Foundation*

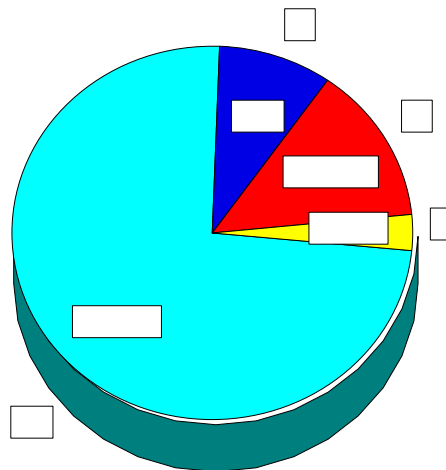
Nineteen percent were founded in the 17th century and 18% in the 18th century. The majority were founded in the 19th century, 103 in the period immediately following the French

Revolution, another 69 between 1850 and 1859. Twenty-two percent were established in the 20th century, with 39 between 1900 and 1949. Twenty are from the second half of the century.



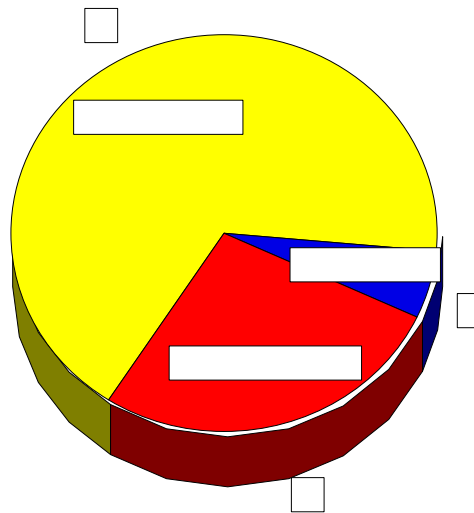
- *By Region of Foundation*

The majority (201) were founded in Europe (75%) with 193 in western Europe. Thirty-six institutes (13.5%) in the Americas (22 in North America and 10 in Central America). Twenty-five were founded in Asia (9.39%), a majority of these in China. Almost two percent were founded in Africa, and .37% in Australasia.



- *By Founders, Members of the Vincentian Family*

Fifty-eight institutes and seven lay associations were founded by 39 Vincentian priests, 16 Daughters of Charity, and four lay members of the Vincentian Family.



- *By Rule*

Seventy-nine founders chose or adapted the Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity for their establishment.

- *By Patron*

Ninety-nine institutes have St. Vincent as their patron.

Some of these groups are enormous. I am especially conscious of how rapidly our Vincentian lay groups are growing today. The Society of Vincent de Paul now has more than 900,000 members. The International Association of Charity has more than 260,000 members. The Vincentian Marian Youth Groups have more or less 200,000 members with 46,000 in Spain alone and 7,000 in Mexico. There are countless members of the Miraculous Medal Association (since it has no international center, we have no accurate statistics on its worldwide membership).

II. Our bonds _ a common heritage

It would surely be helpful if these various groups were very conscious of being a *single* extended family, while maintaining the distinctive charisms and characteristics of each group. We have a great deal in common, even if there are differences. Our spiritual growth, our ongoing

education, and our apostolic effectiveness can only profit from strengthening the bonds of unity that tie us together, while also deepening our particular charisms.

What are those bonds? Besides the many other things that unite all Christians, our family has its own particular bonds based on:

1. A recognition of Saint Vincent as either founder or a principal source of inspiration.
2. A strong thrust toward serving the poor.
3. A spirituality based on Saint Vincent's, usually with a special emphasis on concrete, practical charity, lived out in simplicity and humility.

Are these bonds not part of the heritage of all of us?

III. What might we hope for by deepening the bonds of unity among us _ some suggestions for further cooperation among the members of our family in the third millennium

1. I would hope for greater cooperation on the level of initial and ongoing formation. We have much to share. All of us who are members of the Vincentian Family want to know more about Saint Vincent de Paul. We want to reflect together and meditate on his life and writings. We want to digest his rich spiritual teaching. We want to understand his apostolic charism more deeply, particularly as it relates to the distinctive goals of each of our groups. Surely we can help one another more in this regard. There are already wonderful examples of this in many countries. Are there books, periodicals, workshops, courses that will help us to carry out Vincentian formation better together?

2. I would hope that, through dialogue among the members of the Vincentian family in different parts of the world, we can work out a common assessment of the present-day real-life situation of the poor (their needs, their hopes, their fears) and common criteria for what are the most appropriate means of serving them. AIC does this very well at its center in Brussels. Can we work together in each country to identify the most urgent needs of the poor and the resources available to meet them?

3. I would hope for more collaborative apostolic projects among the members of the Vincentian family. There is a long tradition in this regard. Right from the time of their founder, Vincentians and Daughters of Charity worked closely together first in France and then in new mission countries. Moreover, wherever Vincentians and Daughters went, they attempted to set up confraternities of charity in which lay men and women would be actively engaged in the service of the poor. The Ladies of Charity in Saint Vincent's lifetime worked closely with the Daughters and with Vincent himself. After the Vincent de Paul Society came into existence in the 19th Century, Vincentians and Daughters of Charity often worked closely with it, both in the formation of its members and in the carrying out of apostolic works. This has been true with the Vincentian Marian Youth Groups too from the start.

What kinds of common projects might be undertaken? Let me suggest a few.

- a. Concrete works of charity _ The members of our family in various countries meet the poor every day in their work. What are the most urgent needs right now in each country? Is it education, AIDS, famine, care for refugees?
- b. Would it be possible to work together more in some foreign missions? Some of us are already collaborating in many countries. Would it be possible for the Vincentian lay groups, including the youth groups, to assist the people of Tanzania or Mozambique or Haiti, for example, some of the poorest countries in the world? Would it be possible for young people to volunteer a year or two of their lives in going to mission countries and working with other members of our family there? I recently met five such Vincentian volunteers in Bolivia.
- c. Popular missions _ Today, when we are creating new forms of popular missions, it is extremely important that we work as a team. There have been many experiences in Latin America in which such teams are large, including priests, sisters, brothers, lay men and women who are well-prepared and work in the carrying out of the mission and in the follow-up process afterwards. Such teams can be most effective. Could there be more such collaborative efforts in various countries? I knew a team with 1000 members in Panama.
- d. Dissemination of the Vincentian charism _ I want to encourage a cooperative effort in this regard too. I have asked the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity, wherever they work, to organize and work with the various Vincentian lay groups, men and women. These groups are growing very rapidly. Can we continue to share our charism with friends, with associates, and especially with young people? Can we encourage others to breathe the spirit of St. Vincent?
- e. Pray together _ Are there occasions when the whole Vincentian Family can pray together? Is there a spirituality which unites us and which leads us to pray simply as St. Vincent taught us? Last year I invited all the members of the Vincentian Family to pray together on September 27 that the Lord might give us unity, apostolic zeal, and new vocations in the service of the poor. The response was very enthusiastic.

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

FR. ANDRÉ DODIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO VINCENTIAN STUDIES

Jean-Pierre Renouard, C.M.

Time is the only sure steward on the matter of judging a person or his works. St. Vincent himself remarked: "time changes everything" (III, 390). I have been asked to give some immediate reactions on the work of Fr. André Dodin who died on 18 December 1996. Imprudence? It is up to the readers to weigh, and probably in a variety of ways, the three remarks that I give by way of a first look.

1. Among the numerous works and magazine articles that Fr. Vansteenkiste, celebrated expert in the field, compiled with patience, I recall three titles that have touched me profoundly:

– The 30 introductory pages which appeared in a little book that is now unobtainable, published by Aubier in 1949 and entitled: *Textes et Etudes, Saint Vincent de Paul*, in the series *les Maîtres de la spiritualité chrétienne*.

These pages offered a still valuable first synthesis on Vincentian spirituality. They gave evidence of the author's declared ambition: "to develop the human journey" and "to develop every action." They helped to enter fully into the Vincentian spirituality which at that time did not exist in a formal manner. They announced in their way the springtime of Vincentian studies by exploiting the foundational mines of Pémartin and Coste. Fr. Dodin wrote me in 1966 with regard to these pages saying that they were the best he had written.

– In 1960 his best seller appeared: *Saint Vincent de Paul et la charité*, published by Seuil, in the series *Microcosme, les maîtres spirituels* NE 21. Published and republished in many languages, this book has made a tour of the Vincentian world presenting a renewed vision of the life ("his earthly service") and spirituality ("the spiritual doctrine") of Monsieur Vincent. It presented some pregnant texts and gave the state of criticism concerning the date of birth, the captivity, and the conversion. It is a book to be read again by those wishing to approach St. Vincent from the inside without risking major errors. It is a paradigm and the best condensed version [on the world of St. Vincent] to put into the hands of those who want to know a good amount. The directors of the internal seminary can treasure here a good "manual" for the formation of our own.

– In 1985, O.E.I.L. published the thesis of Fr. Dodin on Abelly's work (Jean de Pange Prize): *La légende et l'histoire, de Monsieur Depaul à Saint Vincent de Paul*. The author upended the way the first biographer of St. Vincent worked when writing in view of his beatification. Fr. Dodin also demonstrated how it is possible to use this apologetic work to go from legend to history. Certainly the intention here is more pointed and sometimes scathing but it has the enormous merit of recalling that history has its rules and demands. The temptation is always there to invent for oneself a Monsieur Vincent according to one's needs and the expectations of one's time. Objectivity is the path to truth. This is a paradoxical book which leads to humility in the subject of knowing St. Vincent.

Let me add a brief mention of the book, which was also published by O.E.I.L. in 1984, *François de Sales, Vincent de Paul, les deux amis*. This little booklet offers the advantage of reminding Vincentians that the old method of prayer imposed by the two St. Lazare's was resolutely of Salesian inspiration. St. Vincent, we know, proposes more in his oral and written teaching.

2. Fr. Dodin fought the idea that St. Vincent was uniquely a man of action. He affirms loudly and strongly that he was a mystic, a spiritual man. Dodin contributed to the knowledge of the interior man. He caught him in prayer. A session given at the Alliance Française in 1960 concurs with the pages published by Aubier and already cited. Monsieur Vincent invites one to live in Christ and to organize one's interior life from this effort of imitation. The apostolic life finds itself sanctified in this. Fr. Dodin's merit is first of all there; he helped us to move from history to Vincentian spirituality, even if sometimes he organized it to the point of giving an advantage to the spirit of logic over the spirit of philosophy.

3. Parallel to this effort of a change of perspective (roughly, from the Tricentennial), Fr. Dodin made Monsieur Vincent interesting; he brought to his hearers the taste for St. Vincent. He showed a human Monsieur Vincent, a businessman, fond of the temporal... of process, of politics! He also helped to develop an understanding of Vincent's time, with the assistance of Fr. Chalumeau whose reputation as a specialist on the 17th century need not be repeated.

It would be precisely unjust to isolate the brilliant work of Fr. Dodin by forgetting that of his predecessors: Fr. Coste, the supplier; Fr. Guichard, who read the manuscripts and carefully collated them (from which Fr. Dodin borrowed much); Fr. Contassot who classified and left (without any publication) the history of all the seminaries of the Vincentian tradition; Fr. Chalumeau who loved to situate St. Vincent in his context and who opened a royal road to later studies; Fr. Morin who charmed his hearers by his new and personal syntheses. There, jointly, one finds a movement which goes beyond French borders and which led, in 1980, to the writing of the Constitutions in a universal language, not to say to works of renown whose authors are still living.

A final observation: Fr. Dodin succeeded better in articles than in large books. The title which best summarizes his talent would be this: he was a *miniaturist*. In his way, he illuminated the very rich Vincentian hours. And these are far from passed.