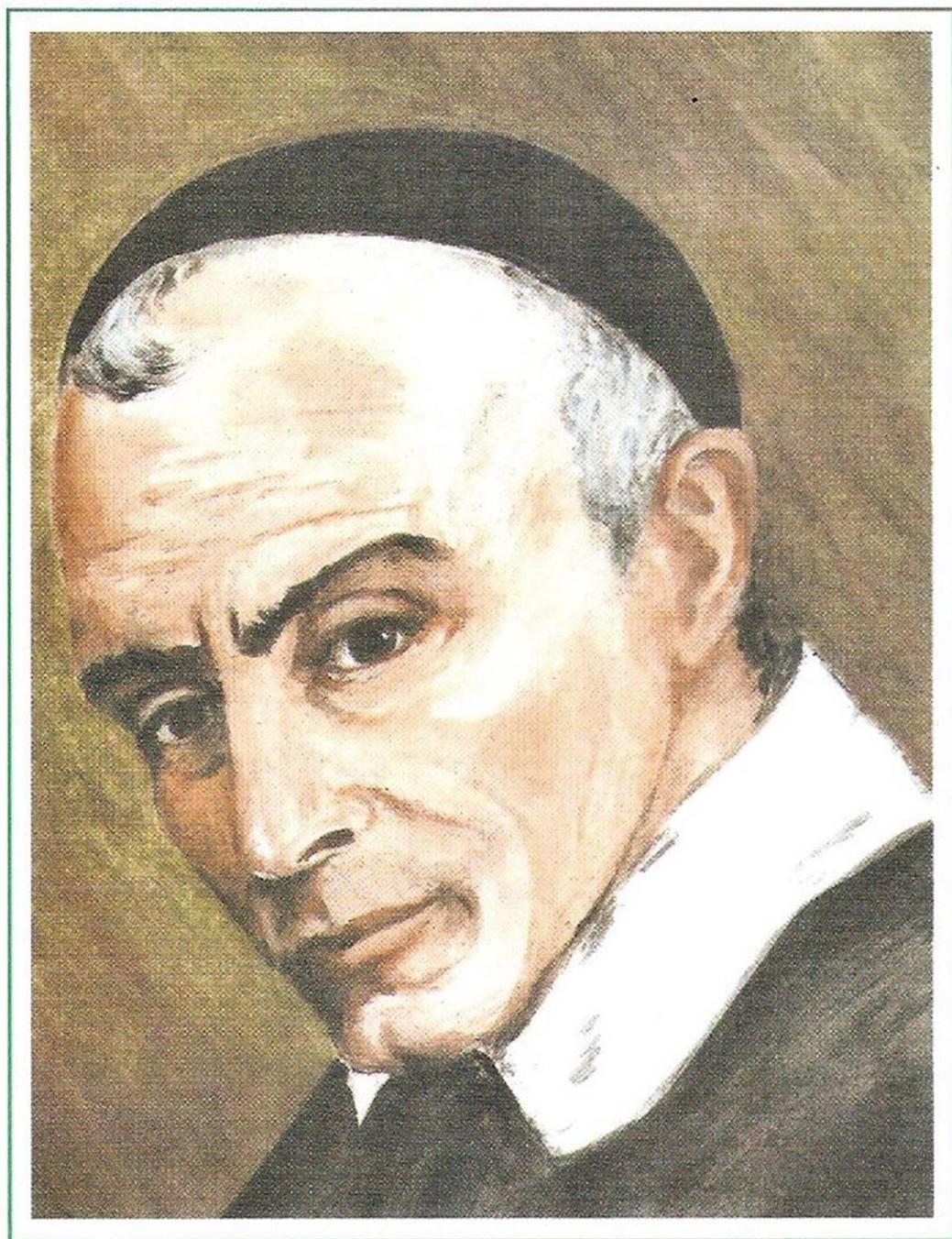


# VINCENTIANA

47<sup>th</sup> YEAR - N. 2

MARCH-APRIL 2003



*Blessed Marcantonio Durando, C.M.*

*(1801-1880)*

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

GENERAL CURIA

## Three Invitations of Blessed Fr. Marcantonio Durando to the C.M. of the Province of Turin and to the Vincentian Family

*by Bruno Gonnella, C.M.  
Former Visitor of the Province of Turin*

### 1. An invitation to revive the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul

Fr. Marcantonio Durando, CM, was always “fascinated” by the spirituality of St. Vincent de Paul. Thanks to the presence of the *Signori della Missione* [the “gentlemen” of the Mission] in his native city of Mondovì, he chose to enter the Congregation with the intention of realizing his desire to “go as a missionary to China.”

He cultivated that “spirituality” for his whole life.

Of his many letters, I cite one written to a sister<sup>1</sup> where our beatified confrere manifests clearly his search of (and his request for) “the spirit of St. Vincent”:

*... I recommend myself to you during this novena to St. Vincent. I need his spirit, and I lack it and I do not see in me any mark of it except a faint desire to have it; as I get older and approach death, I still I feel in me the spirit of the world, and the spirit of vanity.*

*Obtain for me then this spirit of St. Vincent, so that I can still do, or better, that I can begin to do some good for the Congregation of the Mission, and pray to him that that he may enroll me in the number and in the book of his sons who are good, pious, humble, and observant....*

At his death it was said: *We have lost another St. Vincent.* In the 79 years of his life he focused attention on the *Vincentian vocation* through the ministries characteristic of the Company:

- he began his priestly ministry with the *preaching of popular missions to the people;*

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<sup>1</sup> P. Marcantonio Durando, *Epistolario*, letters transcribed by Luigi Chierotti, CM, Vol. VI, pp. 65-66, Sarzana 1979, letter of 13 July 1862.

- almost immediately he added the *formation of the clergy* especially as guide of priests, confessor and advisor of souls in the Turin of his time;
- the task of being a “spiritual guide” allowed him to “raise up vocations,” especially among women (Daughters of Charity, Daughters of Mary, the foundation of the Nazarene Sisters);
- like St. Vincent de Paul, Fr. Durando worked creatively in the area of *enhancing the role of the laity*, directing them toward collaboration with the Daughters of Charity in the numerous “charitable groups” which he established in Turin (the *Misericordie*);
- He did not neglect, notwithstanding the decision of superiors not to send him to the missions *ad gentes*, a commitment in the area of a *missionary spirit*: wherever he could he sent confreres; he supported the work of the “College for Clerics of the Foreign Missions” (*Brignole Sale Negroni* of Genoa); in a letter to Fr. Fiorillo, Assistant General, in 1841, he wrote: *the needs of a mission touch me*.

Fr. Durando was one of the collaborators and supporters of the work of the Propagation of the Faith, whose purpose was not only to raise funds, but to make people aware of and to form in them a *missionary spirit*.

## **2. An invitation to be faithful to the characteristic Vincentian virtues**

Convinced that *the extraordinary is suspect*, Fr. Durando grew in holiness by following, as he himself loved to say, *a normal life*.

He found the path to holiness, in fact, in ordinary ministry, working on himself (often keeping silent and keeping himself out of the limelight). “His” *normal life* called him above all to *concreteness* (cf. the well-known phrase of St. Vincent: ... with *the sweat of one’s brow*...). Holiness, for Fr. Durando, was of the type that *nothing appeared extraordinary*.

Rich in the “wisdom” of valuable persons, and balanced by an deep-rooted (from his character?) practical bent, he worked on “reeducating people, rather than complaining about institutions,” from a sense that *evil comes from persons and not from things*.

He taught that the love of God is exemplified in accepting his will, remaining faithful to one’s own commitments, practicing charity toward the

neighbor, but a *delicate* charity, especially toward the sick. He was accustomed to recommend to his confreres to *preach more with good example than with words*.

In becoming an example of gratuitousness and availability, he interpreted in the best way possible the five Vincentian virtues: (*prudence in*) humility, simplicity, meekness, mortification, and apostolic zeal. St. Vincent called these virtues the *five stones of David*, calling to mind the noted biblical story in 1 Sm, 17.

### **3. An invitation to rethink our presence as confreres and as the Vincentian Family**

The many courageous intuitions that Fr. Durando left us invite the Province of Vincentians and the Vincentian Family to be “creative” even in the third millennium, as St. Vincent knew how to be brilliantly creative in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Fr. Durando lived during a time of “transition” (as we are accustomed to say): after the French Revolution and after the “fall of Napoleon Bonaparte.” The confreres were few in number, the “laws of suppression” provoked the *scattering of subjects* (the dispersion, and in many cases even the abandonment of the Congregation). In so many “difficult” moments he remained “in the faith that everything hopes,” convinced that “everything is in God’s hands.”

Thanks to his marked ecclesial sense (even though he could not have grown up with it in his own family of origin) Fr. Durando collaborated with everyone without distinction: in the ecclesiastical world of Turin (bishops, priests, saints), with the civil-political world (Kings Carlo Alberto and Vittorio Emanuele II), and with the Christian people (the *Misericordie* foundation).

Blessed Fr. Durando found the solution for *helping the poor girls who were not accepted by any Congregation in their plan to give themselves to God in service*: for them he instituted the *Company of Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified*.

His was a vigilant “presence” in events, as if the solution to problems depended on us, yet with the greatest trust in Divine Providence! A secret as we *rethink* our presence as Vincentians today.

(ROBERT STONE, C.M., translator)

## A Short Life of Blessed Marcantonio Durando (1801-1880)

*By a group of Nazarene Sisters  
Turin, Italy*

### 1. The family: childhood and youth

The Durandos were a respected and wealthy family in Mondovì. They had ten children, of whom two died in infancy. Marcantonio was born on 22 May 1801. The family atmosphere was one of liberalism tainted with secularism, even if not always with real anticlericalism. The mother, Angela Vinaj, however, was very religious and rich in Christian virtues, and there is no doubt that she had great influence on her son Marcantonio. She saw to it that he was brought up more carefully because she detected real openness in him.

Marcantonio's lifestyle was clearly marked by his mother's influence. This was behind his going to the diocesan seminary in Mondovì at the age of 14, to begin philosophy and theology. His exceptional degree of maturity suggests that already at that stage of his education he was weighing up other possibilities for dedicating his life to the Lord's kingdom. In fact, his departure for the novitiate of the Priests of the Mission, at the age of 17, happened more or less suddenly. He was a prayerful and reflective young man. We know that his decision to join the Congregation of the Mission was because he wanted to be a missionary in China. At that time the Vincentians had a very extensive and thriving mission there which, from time to time, experienced anti-Christian persecution.

When he had completed his first year in the novitiate he was sent to resume his theology in the seminary in Sarzana, which was staffed by the Vincentians. The superior of the novitiate sent a report on him to the superior of the seminary, in which he said:

*Brother Durando is someone of the highest quality in every way, and is clearly sent by God for the current needs of the Congregation ... He is calm, he is systematic, is respectful and humble; so, I hope you will be very pleased with him.*

There was a brief interruption of his studies in 1822, for two reasons. His health was not too good at the time, and his mother died. He felt this more than his brothers did. This period strengthened him, and prepared him for ordination to the priesthood. He was ordained in the cathedral in Fossano on 12 June 1824.

His frequently repeated request to be sent on the foreign missions was not granted by his superiors. They wanted him to stay at home for the ministry of **parish missions**, including ones in rural areas, and **clergy retreats**.

His zeal was tireless but balanced. The preparation he made, his interior life and his eloquence all contributed, in a decisive way, to the reinvigoration in Piedmont of these two primary ministries of the Congregation.

Here is what one person said about the mission in Sommaria, in the diocese of Turin:

*The sermons were given by Fr. Durando. There was a huge attendance at the exercises; the taverns were more or less closed for the duration; confessions began on the fourth day of the mission, and there were so many penitents that 17 confessors, hearing continuously, could not meet the need and many people had to go to neighbouring parishes [...] On 9 February Fr. Durando preached on perseverance; it is impossible for us to describe the emotion which was seen in the huge crowd at the preacher's farewell. No one present could restrain the weeping; tears and choking sobs broke out to such an extent that for a while not a word of what the preacher was saying could be made out.*

He spent six years at this work. In 1830 he was appointed superior of the house in Turin. There were many problems to be solved, starting with the reorganization of the priests' quarters. The suppression of religious communities and confiscation of their property during the Napoleonic period had greatly upset the organization of religious life. Priests and brothers had had to find some means or other to maintain themselves. When the storm had passed and calm returned it was necessary to round up the scattered members and provide a house for them where they could resume community living. Fr. Durando succeeded in providing a definite framework in the Turin house, which is the present house, and turned it into a building which could be used for one of the ministries most dear to St. Vincent and most typical of his Community: clergy **conferences** and **retreats for both clergy and laity**.

He was in great demand, and much appreciated, throughout Turin as a counsellor and director of conscience. The archbishop, King Carlo Alberto and other prominent persons went to him for advice and guidance. He rightly became known as "the little St. Vincent of Italy."

The Vincentian house in Turin, which had been a Visitation monastery, became a focal point for the clergy of the city and all Piedmont. The best known persons in that remarkable period of Turin saints, knew it and came often to it for

prayerful recollection, to obtain advice, to come to decisions: St. Benedetto Cottolengo, St. Giuseppe Cafasso, St. John Bosco, St. Leonardo Murialdo, Bl. Giuseppe Allamano, and numberless others, who have enriched the diocese, and Piedmont, by a huge number of useful and holy undertakings.

St. Benedetto Cottolengo took St. Vincent as his model for his undertakings and his spirituality. He made him patron of the main group of his Sisters, and also of his Brothers. St. John Bosco, when he began his ministry of the printed word, which was to teach a trade to his youngsters in Valdocco and to be a way of getting through to people, published a book with the title: *Virtue and Christian Refinement According to the Spirit of St. Vincent de Paul*. Its subtitle was: *A Book for Consecrating the Month of July in Honour of this Saint*. It would not be rash to say that Fr. Durando radiated the spirit of this great saint with simplicity and humility.

## **2. Director of the Daughters of Charity: almost a Founder.**

He worked hard to bring the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul to Italy. His request was accepted and on 16 May 1833 the first two French Daughters of Charity, with the characteristic starched white “cornette,” arrived in Turin. Some more came in August, and from then on more as needed. There was a rapid increase in the number of vocations.

Fr. Durando identified himself with the spirit by which St. Vincent had directed his Daughters. He put to good use the spirit of courageous innovation which he had breathed at home, where his father and brothers were revolutionary: he never refused any proposal for a charitable venture, no matter how risky.

King Carlo Alberto asked him to supply sisters for the Military Hospital. He sent them there, to the great scandal of not a few priests, and he even sent them into military field hospitals during the wars of the Risorgimento. This started with the first one, during which the sisters nursed the wounded, and his brother Giovanni, a general, fought at the side of Carlo Alberto. The Daughters of Charity were also with the expedition to the Crimea.

This great service, along with many others, rendered by the Daughters of Charity, made a great impression on Carlo Alberto, and increased his admiration for Fr. Durando and the Daughters. To the amazement of the general public, Carlo Alberto was seen going to the huge San Salvario convent, which had formerly been occupied by The Servants of Mary, and handing over its keys to the Daughters of Charity. This became their Provincial House, large enough for all their works, both in-house and outside. It is a sort of Vatican Palace, and

today it still proclaims the appreciation of the King for the Vincentian Community and their superior.

### 3. The Mercy Units

These Mercy Units, *Le Misericordie*, were, in 19<sup>th</sup> century Turin, the equivalent of *les charités* in St. Vincent's Paris. As the first sisters took their name from those, and were called *Les Filles de la Charité*, the later sisters in Turin were known as *Le Suore della Misericordia*.

The Mercy Units were the main work of the Ladies of Charity, who supported them financially. The Daughters of Charity were the arm which pushed them forward, but Blessed Durando was the mind behind it.

The Mercy Units were real private centres of social assistance, where a poor person found not only hot soup in winter, a wardrobe of clothes to choose from, and basic medical treatment, but also often a job. Above all, though, what he encountered was so much Christian friendliness and charity. It was not help given with a hidden motive, but Christian love, which levelled social differences.

As time went on various other works developed around these centres, such as refuges for children from poor backgrounds or who were neglected because their mothers were working, orphanages, small nursing homes for the elderly, home visits to the poor and sick, etc.

The first Mercy Unit was that of San Francesco da Paolo (1836), which also ministered to the poor in Sant'Eusebio parish, which at that time was called San Filippo because the Oratorians of St. Philip were in charge. This unit was known by even a third name, *Le Cascine*, because it operated in the outbuildings of the Alfieri-Carrù palace not far from the centre of Milan.

The full-time sisters, who lived in the Mercy Units so as to be always on call for those who needed them, were poor like those whom they helped. Many years later one of them said this about Marcantonio Durando:

*This good Father came to visit us every week. On one occasion he noticed that I was in bad humour. With his usual kindness he took me aside and asked what was the matter. I told him: "Father, we do not even have cloths to wash our faces! ... We do not have dusters to wipe the furniture, nor dishcloths to clean the pots. We have to make do with paper, and we do not have that either!" The good Father said: "Poor girl, I feel for you! Rest assured that I will see to all that!" The following day a man arrived with a load of old soutanes from which we could make dusters, a length of thick*

*material from which to make cloths for cleaning the pots, and a dozen beautiful facecloths for washing our faces. Who could fathom my happiness and that of my companions?*

Visiting the poor in their homes made the Daughters of Charity aware of other needs which had to be met. There were in particular two types of persons who needed above all a home and a family. These were elderly women with no one to care for them, and young girls whose working mothers could not look after them.

At the suggestion of Marcantonio Durando the Countess Alfieri was pleased to provide a remedy for these needs, and she set up, in her own home, a “mini-hospital” for the old women, and a combined refuge, school and workshop for the girls, both children and teenagers.

The driving force behind all this activity was Fr. Durando, and he was often also the most generous benefactor. Sr. Mattacchio wrote about these beginnings:

*He was the president of the Misericordia house. I remember that all those women, busy about the works of the house, would not move a leaf without Father noticing.*

One of the best all-round Mercy Units was the first one, that of San Massimo and the Madonna of the Angels. It was established in 1854 and was directed by the Servant of God Sr. Maria Clarac. Over the winter this unit would give out up to 14,000 helpings of soup. Its refuge cared for up to 400 children.

Following the first Mercy Unit in the parish of San Massimo another was opened in San Salvatio in 1856, and in 1865 the Mercy Unit of San Carlo was separated from those in Le Cascine. The Servant of God Luigia Borgiotti contributed generously to this foundation. At that time she was collaborating with Fr. Durando in the founding of the Nazarene Sisters.

Ten years later, in 1874, another Mercy Unit was opened. This was in the Istituto dei SS Angeli, quite a distance from central Turin, on the other side of the Po.

The final help centre was opened by Fr. Durando in 1879, shortly before his death. This was once again in the parish of San Massimo, in Via S. Lazzaro (the present Via dei Mille), and was called San Massimo Mercy Unit Two. At its formal opening at least 200 Ladies of the San Massimo Group were there with Fr. Durando.

In this way Turin had a veritable network of works of charity to which the poor could freely come, knowing that they would be welcomed and helped.

In the Minutes of the San Carlo Mercy Unit for 1880 the death of Fr. Durando is referred to: *In Turin he was the real initiator of the associations of mercy.*

One can only join in joyfully with such an opinion. The work done over so many years of assiduous work by these centres of Vincentian charity will in some way leave a shining wake in the water from which it sprang.

#### **4. The Children of Mary (1856)**

In the Miraculous Medal apparitions in Paris in 1830 Our Lady asked Catherine Labouré for this Association. Pius IX did not give approval till 1846, and it was introduced into Italy by Fr. Durando in 1856 for the girls who were in residence, and for those coming to the workshop, in Le Cascine Mercy Unit, the Alfieri-Carrù Institute.

The purpose of this association was not precisely charity towards the poor, but rather the Christian and Marian formation of youth. Many others followed the establishment of the first group, and Fr. Durando had powerful help from his confreres in this ministry. It could be said that in every centre for young people which was run by the Daughters of Charity, the association of the Children of Mary was set up. Such associations had a profound effect on the spiritual formation of the young. They were real seedbeds of religious vocations, of devout mothers of families, and of women apostles in everyday life.

#### **5. Visitor of the Province of Upper Italy**

In 1837 he was appointed Visitor of the Province of Upper Italy, known at that time as the Province of Lombardy. In those days, such an appointment, and for somebody so young, was definitely something unusual. It showed the reputation which had grown up around him in the short while that he had been superior of the central house in Turin.

There were seven houses, in which various ministries were carried out with dedication: parish missions, retreats, formation of novices and students, in Turin, Genoa and Casale Monferrato. They had the ministry of formation for the secular priesthood in the Collegio Alberoni in Piacenza, in their own college in Sarzana, and in the Collegio di Savona.

By the time of Durando's death the number of houses had almost doubled. The new houses were in Mondovì, Scarnafigi, the Brignole-Sale college in Genoa, the Casa della Pace in Chieri, Casale Monferrato, Cagliari and Sassari.

The list can be quickly run through, but poor Fr. Durando had to travel a worrying and painful Via Crucis because of the storm caused by the suppression of religious communities on 3 July 1866!

Along with the suppression there was also, obviously, the confiscation of all property, houses and possessions. This meant that Durando had to buy back, in various ways, each confiscated house, one by one.

It should also be borne in mind that this business of buying back each individual house, as well as the enormous financial outlay which it involved, was a huge worry for Fr. Durando. He could not bequeath the houses and possessions to the Community, because it was legally suppressed, but he had to leave them to individual persons, with all the risks involved and the expenses connected with inheritance.

## **6. During the “Troubles” of the Italian Risorgimento**

The events of the Risorgimento involved Fr. Marcantonio Durando, because he was a brother of General Giovanni Durando. He was a dissenting general who led the Pontifical Army in the first war of independence, fighting heroically in the Crimea, at San Martino della Battaglia, and at Custoza. He was also a brother of General Giacomo Durando, who was a journalist, and who supported the long series of repressive laws concerning church property and the operation of religious communities. He was a minister in the Rattazzi government from March to December 1862. Fr. Marcantonio never gave up on advising and admonishing his brothers when they took extreme positions, especially if these were anti-clerical. He wrote to his brother Giacomo in 1857:

*With all my heart I want peace between the government and the Church, and that there should be an end to this uneasiness in which we find ourselves all the time, and an end, in short, to this attacking of the Church and its institutions and its rules, and, in short, that we be allowed to live and breathe.*

And when, in 1870, support from France had failed and Rome was occupied by force, Fr. Marcantonio wrote him a long letter in which he showed his puzzlement at what had happened and at the intentions of the politicians and men in power at the time:

*Reflect, and if your heart disapproves, as I suspect, object, or at least speak out openly ... At your age, and in view of all that you have accomplished, you should not be afraid of the idle talk of some newspaper, or some exaggeration...*

His conclusion was:

*I love and wish for the greatness of Italy and, I will say it again, unity achieved by legitimate means, and I wish for, and see the importance of, absolute independence for the Vatican, intrinsic to, and essential for, its splendour, just as much as for the greatness and unity of Italy!*

Perhaps he did not speak out openly, or sufficiently openly.

The government and parliament kept up the anti-clerical pressure. On the pretext that some priests were involving themselves in politics, they wanted to restrict the ministry of the clergy. Fr. Durando got the impression that the clergy did not have the courage to stand up to this. On the other hand, lay people did, even the liberals who did not have a preconceived anti-clerical position.

It was unacceptable that there should be this lack of freedom of expression, especially when the first article of the Constitution itself laid down that the Christian religion was the majority one. He wrote:

*O happy America, of the United States, where liberty is extended to everyone, and the clergy, religious communities, Protestants, Dissenters, and Catholics, all combine to form just one united and compact nation. In our case we normally neither hear nor see anything except ideas, projects, regulations and stingy minutiae which do not raise up the nation, do not make it great, do not encourage morality, because the religious dimension is absent from everything.*

His brothers, though, retained their affection for him and even tried to help him. This was the case especially when the administration of the United Italy wanted to extend the laws of the State of Savoy to all Italy, including the repressive norms. These also affected the houses of the Congregation in the Provinces of Roma and Naples. Fr. Marcantonio, prompted even by the General Curia, let his brother Giacomina know the facts. Unfortunately, this made little difference.

## **7. At the School of Jesus Crucified: Founder of the Nazarene Sisters**

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that this foundation was Fr. Durando's main work, though it could more affectionately be called a **work of the heart**.

The provisions of Church law at that time meant that entry into the consecrated life was forbidden to anyone born outside of a Church marriage; this was the classic "irregularity of birth." Fr. Durando was in contact with many institutions for orphan girls, or girls of illegitimate birth. At that time such girls remained in these homes until the age of 21. Again and again he found himself meeting excellent young women, educated by the sisters, who felt called to the religious life. Naturally enough, they consulted the priest whom they knew best, Fr. Durando. Many times he tried, without success, to have them accepted into various communities. He resolved this situation with the same courage and initiative which he had shown in sending sisters on to the battlefield. On the occasion of the reception of the habit by the first sisters he himself, spoke about it in words which even today, 136 years later, touch and stir the heart:

*27 September 1866*

*It is several years now, you see, since some of you turned to my poor protection for support in your attempts to be admitted to some religious community. I did my utmost to back you up, by making recommendations, proposals, suggesting advice, but every initiative of mine was fruitless, no matter what community I approached, whether in Turin or elsewhere, bearing in mind the spiritual good of you all. As a result of my not being able to achieve a successful outcome, I began to reflect on what was involved in this business, to such an extent that I had difficulty in getting it out of my mind. What happened was that, moving from one idea to another, almost without adverting to it, the whole matter was so fixed in my mind that I solved it by offering myself to the Lord for this work in his service.*

*I was already debating with myself: but these poor girls, should they not be helped in some way in their desire to leave the world in order to give themselves over to God's service? Should there not be some haven, some framework of a religious community, among the many which exist in Turin and elsewhere, which can, or wants to, accept them? And if it is a question of setting up for them a special Company in which they would be received, and where they would be a separate group, living a holy, virtuous and Christian life, sanctifying themselves and edifying others, well, then, why could not a religious community be established? And also, from whom do these holy young women receive the good inspiration? Who suggests to them the good intention of giving themselves to God?*

*They are definitely moved by the goodness and will of God..., and if the matter originates in God, they should, then, be helped in this holy idea of theirs.*

*Also, are not these girls destined for paradise? So, if they live holy lives, a fine reward awaits them in heaven, which, perhaps, many men and women will not have, people who may be important on earth and could easily have entered religious communities!*

*Oh, yes! These girls can be, can become, chosen souls, dear to God, more so than my wretched self, the last of God's sacred ministers. As a result of these thoughts, and urged on by your repeated requests to me, I decided to trust divine Providence and follow up the good intention by carrying it out. Oh! What a really loveable arrangement by God's merciful goodness to you, my good daughters! Oh! The great grace of a religious vocation! I encourage you, then, my daughters, to welcome this loving plan of divine Providence with the greatest gratitude, because, thanks to God, every obstacle in the way of consecrating yourselves to God's service having been smoothed out, you can do so with great fervour and lasting zeal.*

And that is how the Community of the Daughters of the Passion of Jesus the Nazarene was born. It is still extant and effective, and is more simply known as the Nazarene Sisters. The new Community did not come on the scene to meet a particular need outside itself, so the founder did not immediately designate a definite end for it. Following his initial objective, which was to make the consecrated life possible for them, he launched them with these words: *Pray, obey, and make saints of yourselves!*

Following St. Vincent's way of acting, he waited for signs of divine Providence. Helping the sick in their own homes, night and day, was indicated. The different pastoral situation of that era should be noted. At that time poor people ended their lives in hospital, where they were given dedicated spiritual help. On the other hand, better off people were cared for at home, and normally did not meet either priests or nuns. The ministry of the Nazarene Sisters was quickly seen to be of great help for the salvation of the souls of those whom they helped. There are various famous and legendary conversions of important persons, who ended their days totally changed.

As well as ministry to the sick, and to abandoned babies, Fr. Durando also introduced them to devotion to the Passion of Jesus, which was already his own *spiritual treasure*. He had also spread this devotion among the general public,

and in the Vincentian church in Turin he had erected a *Chapel of the Passion*, which is still popular.

He wanted to bequeath to his daughters a rich heritage of devotion and spirituality, and he bound them to this devotion by a fourth vow.

## **8. The Missionary Commitment**

*...it was not God's will that I should go to China. I put my heart at ease....* That is the same as saying that the desire which had guided him as a youth to choose to join a religious community, which would have allowed him to go on the foreign missions, instead of the secular clergy, was always present to his mind. When various situations arose, it was this that determined the choices which he made. He supported, and got his confreres to support, the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. He succeeded in sending it 20.000 *lire*, which the politician Camillo Cavour and his brother Gustavo, a devout God-fearing man, had, but they could not decide to which of them it belonged.

Under the guidance of Providence he had ample scope to help the foreign missions. He welcomed all the requests from his confreres to be sent on the foreign missions, and encouraged them to ask. He had been unable to accept going along with Fr. Justin De Jacobis, now canonised, to Ethiopia; there was the possibility of his being appointed Prefect Apostolic. He agreed to the departure for that region of Frs. Giuseppe Sapeto and Giovanni Stella. Unfortunately they did not turn out to be missionaries, but one became an explorer and the other a conqueror.

In the history of Italy they are remembered as the forerunners of Italian colonial expansion in Eritrea. But in contrast to these “failures” it must be remembered that at least 27 of his missionaries left for Syria, Abyssinia, North America, Brazil and China, with excellent results. The missionaries from Turin, with Felix de Andreis, were among the founders of the Vincentian Provinces in the USA.

The Marchese Brignole Sale, ambassador of Piedmont, mayor of Genoa, withdrew from public life because of the anti-clerical attitude of Piedmont, and so was able to devote his attention and his wealth to plans which he had. Along with the noblewoman Artemisia Negroni, he wanted to establish a seminary for vocations to the foreign missions. He put the Vincentians of Genoa in charge of it. Fr. Durando, as Visitor, was fully cooperative. The Brignole Sale Negroni college was ready to begin its work in 1854. Three of the 24 seminarians, who were non fee-paying, finished their studies and were ordained in 1858, and left for California. Over a period of 30 years 110 priests left from the seminary. Later

on the college welcomed seminarians from abroad, who came to Italy for their studies. Some of the alumni became bishops and important churchmen.

## **9. A Fine Replica of St. Vincent**

From 1830 to 1880, when he was in Turin, Fr. Marcantonio Durando was seen as the initiator of a great number of projects, a person to whom people went, or should have gone, to seek advice, to learn what path to take, and a role model to be imitated. Because of his innate ability, his deep spirituality, his family's involvement in the political scene, which implicated himself as well and gave him a certain standing, and because of his large circle of friends, he found himself caught up in an endless round of entanglements to be unravelled, within his own community, in the diocesan structures, in religious communities and in the difficult relations with the civil authorities.

He needed to have the virtues of courtesy, gentleness and humility, but also strength and firmness, and it is well known that the latter two virtues are less welcomed by people than the former ones.

And there were times when he was not appreciated.

This shows him in a realistic light, and comes from history rather than from a panegyric. Like so many other people he had to put up with the bitter taste of not being understood and of unsympathetic opinions. There were, also, times when he felt discouraged.

It was fortunate, though, that he never lost his mastery of self. His health showed all the signs of frailty, yet he reached his 80<sup>th</sup> year.

He would have liked to step down from his positions as Visitor and Director of the Daughters of Charity, because advancing years had increased his ailments, yet all he was offered was the help of a confrere who relieved him of much of the work.

Because of this he had more time for prayer and recollection. Stooped though age, seated in an armchair, he still retained his cheerful and kind expression. His desk was still strewn with letters to be dealt with.

In the summer of 1880 he was still strong enough to go to Casale Monferrato, and the Collegio di Virle, one of the many establishments with which he was involved. He had wanted to be present at the consecration of the Children of Mary, the association which he had introduced into Italy.

After that he went downhill, and died around one-thirty on 10 December.

Fr. Giovanni Rinaldi, superior of the Casa della Pace in Chieri, remarked: “We have lost another St Vincent.”

This notion was well received by all the Vincentians, and it became widely accepted that Fr. Marcantonio Durando should be seen as another St. Vincent.

In actual fact, if one looks well at his personality, his style of intervention, his way of dealing with affairs, his skill in interpreting St. Vincent’s thought and putting it into practice, even after well over a century one can only endorse this idea.

During the ceremonies at the time of his death some unknown facts emerged. For example, Msgr. Frasoni, Archbishop of Turin, turned to Fr. Durando for the revision of the Rules of Don Bosco’s Salesians, and of those of Antonio Rosmini’s Institute of Charity. Rosmini was a great friend of the Vincentians.

(THOMAS DAVITT CM, *translator*)

## A Humble and Impassioned Witness to the Gospel

by Luigi Nuovo, C.M.  
Province of Turin

A Piedmontese priest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was accustomed to say: “In Turin there are four saints: Don Bosco, Cottolengo, Don Cafasso, and Fr. Durando.” The last one mentioned is the least known, and has only now reach the honors of the altars. He is the least known, but in Turin during the time of the *Risorgimento* he was appreciated, esteemed, and thought of as a man of God and a spiritual counselor, rich in virtue, prudent and capable of discernment, a formator of numerous priests and men and women religious.

This consciousness of the holiness of Fr. Durando was also known within the Vincentian community. At his death, Fr. Giovanni Torre, his successor as the guide of the Province of Turin, wrote these words to the confreres: “We have lost a father, but we nourish the hope of having gained a protector in heaven.” He gave the order that be gathered together “as soon as possible the news about the particulars of his life and of the singular examples of virtue which he left us, so that they not be lost.” We can thus say that his reputation for holiness was alive both inside and outside the Vincentian family.

A priest of an intense spiritual life, he was above all a man of government, demanding in requiring the observance of the Rules, but measured and balanced with a sense of reality united to a exquisite and attentive charity, above all for the weakest, that grew with time. In him, provincial for over 40 years, Director of the Daughters of Charity and founder of the Nazarene Sisters, we find (at the school of St. Vincent de Paul) a man who walked on ordinary, simple, hidden ways, but, if need be, tenacious and courageous, overcoming his natural timidity. This lifestyle came from a profound conviction that manifested itself in his way of acting and in his words:

*That which is extraordinary is always suspect. I love what is ordinary, what is common, the evangelical virtues, true humility, mortification, observance, but all this done well, in a perfect way, but simply done, and without noise.*

He recognized that all this required the sustenance of the grace of God, and a constant working on oneself. He wrote:

*With the grace of God, little by little, to form truly humble, simple, mortified, patient hearts, detached from everything and that only think about and draw life from Jesus.*

He himself lived what he taught, there was nothing showy in the 80 years of his existence; he sought to live in Christ, clothing himself in the virtues of a priest, and those characteristic of a Vincentian missionary. He recommended everyone to be exemplary in these virtues, and he said with certainty: *We cannot give to others what we do not have.* Fr. Marcantonio Durando, with his thin figure, had a reserved and shy character, but at the same time he was cordial, richer in sensitivity than he appeared, capable of paternal and even maternal affection, but without affectation.

At the center of his spirituality was Christ the Lord, especially Christ, suffering in his passion and on the cross. On the pained and striking face of the *Ecce Homo* the new Blessed fixed a moved and admiring gaze. The passion of Christ was “his refuge, his favorite subject of meditation.” He recommended it to the people whom he directed: “do everything you can to make this devotion your own and to inspire it in others.” On another occasion he wrote: “Let your ordinary subject of meditation be the life, passion, and death of Jesus Christ.” For Durando, the Passion of Christ is a school of high spirituality, the most sublime *school of love*. In fact, he said of it:

*In the Passion of Christ you will find humility, obedience, meekness, and all the virtues, and he taught his daughters, you will find humility and charity at the feet of the Crucified.*

In another intense and significant passage, he expressed himself thus:

*Calvary is the mount of lovers and the open wounds of Jesus Crucified are a shelter and a dwelling place for the Lord's doves. Whoever does not like being on Calvary or living in those wounds will never be a true lover of Jesus. If his love was such that it made him embrace the cross and nailed him to the hard wood, if in short he suffered and died because of the great love that he bore for each one of us, can we be indifferent to so much charity? Is it possible not to love an infinite good, a God who consumes himself out of love for us? It is on Calvary that all the saints of heaven were formed in love.*

The devotion to the Passion of the Lord was linked to the celebration of the Eucharist, and was its prolongation, and from this inexhaustible font of love he daily drew both strength and joy. He said:

*The Eucharist is unparalleled sign of the great and tender love of Christ and of his profound humility.*

He felt the Passion of Christ as a spur to consume totally his existence for the Lord, and it moved him to be ready and generous in the service of the God and of his brothers, saying: *He sacrificed Himself completely for you, and you sacrifice yourselves completely for Him.*

He was guided in his daily life by the contemplation of the suffering Christ, but this did not make him closed or sad; on the contrary, he transmitted serenity and peace to those he met. He made his goal, as he wrote in a letter, *to act always in the charity that everything hopes.* He affirmed: “The perfection of the love of Jesus Christ is manifested not only when one suffers adversities and humiliations with patience, but with joy and thanksgiving.” On another occasion he exhorted:

*One needs to have ever present the example of Jesus Christ's life ... The contemplation of Jesus humiliated, of Jesus poor, of Jesus scourged, of Jesus crowned with thorns, of Jesus crucified, changes suffering into joy.*

He taught that we must learn from Jesus, that he abandoned himself into the hands of his Father, to do God's will and to live in obedience. He counseled in a letter:

*Abandon yourself into God's hands; do not have any thought other than doing the will of God; do not anticipate the counsels of God with thoughts and desires on your future. The will of God is that you do with heart, with commitment, with zeal the things, the duties that have been entrusted to you ... Meditate well on this great truth; make it your norm, your rule, your life, your good. In this consists all our holiness and perfection.*

The certainty of being able to make the journey of holiness came to him from the strength that prayer gave him, and he affirmed:

*Prayer is the source of all good and the mother of all virtues, — and, he added, — let the spirit of prayer, of interior and exterior recollection and of silence reign in the whole house and in all the religious.*

Prayer was for him the fountain of serenity and interior peace, and because of this he taught:

*Rigorous silence, great interior recollection, the spirit of prayer, a love of work, and a spirit of penance, but at the same time, nothing melancholy, no sadness or hypocrisy. You understand that when*

*the spirit of prayer and penance is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, there is always joy and holy spiritual happiness.*

He himself had made this the style of his life. He sought evangelical perfection by living with passionate zeal the ordinary priestly life: the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrament of Reconciliation, the preaching of parish missions and of spiritual exercises, of retreats and of conferences to clergy, and the spiritual direction of persons belonging to all social classes, welcoming them with availability and kindness.

Marcoantonio Durando, faithful disciple of Vincent de Paul, invites us to a humble and trusting sanctity, simple and prudent, meek and strong, lived in the exercise of charity, above all in the fidelity to the little things of everyday life, accepting adversities, tests, and sufferings that can come one's way when one seeks tenaciously to live in a consistent and faithful way with Christ and with his gospel.

In a writing of 1876, he recommended to his confreres:

*Let charity always rule in our midst, and govern our actions, our words, and our thoughts, so that, with one mind we may honor Jesus Christ always, and may the peace of the Lord be always among us and in our hearts.*

(ROBERT STONE, C.M., translator)

## The Unedited Collection of Letters of Blessed Marcantonio Durando

by Luigi Chierotti, C.M.  
Province of Turin

Fr. Durando never wrote a book, nor published one, except for an “educative” pamphlet, written for an Institute of the Daughters of Charity at Fontanetta Po.

His collection of letters, however, is a veritable “monument,” and a mine of information on civil and religious life, on the spiritual direction of persons, of the dispositions of governance for the works, etc., from 1831-1880.

Today his correspondence is collected in eight large volumes, typewritten, and photocopied, with an accompanying analytical index.

I spent a long time working like a Carthusian, in order to transcribe the texts of the “original” letters, the notes, and the reports.

They form a document of great historical importance, and not only for Vincentian studies. Among the many letters, a particular importance is found in those of the *Epistolary Risorgimento*, published in the *Annali Della Missione* in 1969-1978.

### 1. The sources

I list these with a certain order of importance:

- 1) *Archives of the C.M. General Curia, Rome*: Conserves the correspondence of Blessed Durando with the Superiors General and the Italian Assistants General.
- 2) *Archives of the Museo del Risorgimento of Turin, and the Vatican Library*: These are letters of high historic value, addressed for the most part to his brother, Giacomo, Minister of State. They embrace the period of over 30 years from 1847-1879.
- 3) *Letters found in various archives in the Dioceses of the Piedmont region, especially in Mondovì, Saluzzo, Fossano, etc.*
- 4) *Letters in the archives of various houses of the Congregation of the Mission*: Turin, Chieri, Mondovì, etc.
- 5) *Letters of individual sisters or lay people, collected by Fr. Giovanni Tonello, by the Daughters of Charity, the Nazarene Sisters, and by the Magdalens of the Marchioness of Barolo.*
- 6) *Twenty letters of Fr. Durando, preserved and published by Fr. Vito Guarini, concerning the Secret Storm on the Vincentian Family,*

1842-1843 (attempt to separate the confreres of Italy from Paris).

I have collected as many as I could, but I do not exclude that there might be many letters still in circulation written by Blessed Durando.

## 2. Content

Every little happening in the houses of the confreres was punctually reported by the Visitor to the Italian Assistant General or to the Superior General, with the frequency of about one letter per month. Thus it was for 40 years. Hundreds of figures of confreres, of Daughters of Charity, or of notable persons in the civic or the religious world, come before our eyes vividly and synthetically treated with their virtues and their defects, enthusiasms, and spiritual crises. The protagonists of civil and religious life during the *Risorgimento*, mentioned by Blessed Durando, go from Pius IX to Garibaldi, from Kings Carlo Alberto and Vittorio Emanuele II to Emperor Napoleon III, from Rosmini to Gioberti, from Msgr. Frasoni and his sad trials to Faà di Bruno, from the brothers Camillo and Gustavo Cavour to General La Marmora and the events in the Crimea.

Blessed Durando followed every event with a watchful eye and did not stop struggling against deleterious liberalism and the intrigues of Freemasonry.

## 3. Fr. Durando as a keen writer

The language of Fr. Durando is obviously that of his time. However, his use of language is lucid and clear: simple, legible handwriting, good punctuation, very rarely any crossing out, even though he is writing in a “stream of consciousness” style. Frequently we find expressions from the Piedmont regions, French expressions, and appropriate Latin citations that are part of his wit.

Of some lazy confreres, he writes: *Fruges consumare nati* = born only to consume provisions!

Of a confrere who many times had promised to correct in himself a very grave defect with no success, Blessed Marcantonio sadly writes: *Substantiae non mutantur! ... Potest Aetiops mutare pellem suam?* = The substance cannot be changed. Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin?

Of a superior miserly in the smallest things, he said: *Ab ungue disce leonem!* = Judge the lion by his claws!

A confrere who was a big eater was defined as: *The best teeth in the house*. Another, as secret as thunder, was called: *a trumpet!* Two rival confreres in the same house: *two cocks in a chicken coop*. Of another, stubborn in on his own ideas, Blessed Marcantonio writes: *When he puts a nail in, there is no way to make him change it*. One time a confrere had overstepped against his own superior rather passionately. Fr. Durando commented: *Let us hope that this*

*winter's snow will cool off such a great fire!*

Of a subject not very competent to be a treasurer, Fr. Durando wrote to Paris: *He is as good to be the procurer as I am to be a poet.*

#### **4. Typical expressions**

Some of the expressions from the pen Fr. Durando are quite tasty.

*When they are in rags, they run to the Visitor*; which means: the local superiors incur debts, and when they do not know how to get out of them, they go to the Visitor.

*If I do not have any fire* means: if I do not have other subjects. *Il busillis é unde capere* = The difficult thing is where to find it.

*Stitch it together again (mend)* means to fix a situation with the last expedient.

*Pulling it with your teeth* = a difficult economic situation.

*Beat it into the countryside or get out of an affair* = keep one's distance or wash one's hands of an affair.

*Take your time and you will get by* = have patience.

*From "liberal" priests, libera nos, Domine!*

Fr. Durando knew how to laugh at himself. He did not know the French language very well, and he was even worse at writing it. Thus, one time he asked Fr. Sturchi, an Assistant General, to read over and correct a letter of his before giving it to the Superior General.

*Be so kind as to read the enclosed letter before sealing it. You will find in it a piece of eloquence and so much purity of the French language and elocution, that if I were known as I merit to be, I would be made a member of the French Academy. You can clearly see that do not want to die of melancholy.*

#### **5. Spiritual and organizational content**

The collected letters of Blessed Durando are also a firsthand testimony of his humility, of his charity toward his confreres, and of his method of action.

From 1839 until the end of his life, he never desisted from asking the Superior General to relieve him of the burdens of being Visitor, Superior, and Director of the Daughters of Charity. His useless requests were renewed in 1845-

46-47-48-56-63-71-72 and in the following years until his death, but every one of his requests ran counter to the wishes of Fr. Etienne.

Fr. Etienne, the Superior General, was much more decisive in disciplinary determinations, but Fr. Durando calmed him, adopting the methodology of *fortiter et suaviter* — *If one would yearn for some subjects too zealous for good order — he wrote — may I be like a German who speaks and raises a stick at the same time; but to proceed in this way seems against the spirit of our saint. If one can attain the same thing without shouting in a little more time, ... it seems more convenient to me.*

Of a confrere who was about to be dismissed by the Superior General, Blessed Marcantonio wrote, defending him:

*The poor boy, what will he do now? To dismiss him seems harsh to me, because you would deprive him of a pension, if the law were to be applied ... I would not want to go against the Apostle who says Caritas omnia sperat [love hopes for all things]! In men, I have little hope; the Lord will do all ... When possible, let things be done calmly, and Providence will do the rest.*

We know of his love for the foreign missions: his own vocation among the missionaries of St. Vincent came from his desire to go as a missionary to China. As Visitor and as representative of the Propagation of the Faith, Fr. Durando was one of the most active supporters of the foreign missions, contributing personnel and material help. In 1841, he wrote to Fr. Fiorillo, Assistant General: *I was not worthy to go to the foreign missions; at least I can cooperate with you in some way....*

*The needs of the missions touch me, and speaking between you and me, I feel dead, and I no longer have the strength and he did what was possible to send missionaries to the missions *ad gentes*.*

What Fr. Durando could not stomach was inertia or laziness. With a lot of pain, he wrote one day: *There are houses where our confreres do nothing, ... they do not go out to give missions, or spiritual exercises ... Not a few of them are bored!*

How much it must have made him rejoice when he was able to write to Paris in 1877:

*The house in Turin gives 10 or 12 missions a year, some short, some long ... and they are as fruitful now as they were 40 or 50 years ago. Our confreres who go on the missions have never displeased the local authorities in all these years, because they take care not to get into political matters. Actually, rather frequently the mayor and the local authorities come to visit the confreres when*

*they have finished, and more than once the musical band of the area has accompanied the confreres to the railroad station. Rarely do you find someone who has not received the sacraments. The thank you letters that I receive from the pastors are truly moving.*

I do not have enough space to continue the analysis of the letters of our new Blessed, so I ask interested readers to consult the two volumes I published in 1987-1988.

## **6. Fr. Durando through his collection of letters**

Vol. I — *L'uomo di governo* [The man of government]; Vol. II — *L'uomo di virtù* [The man of virtue].

The collection of letters of which I have tried to give a synthetic idea has cost me a lot of work. Perhaps it will never be published, but the archives of the confreres and of the Nazarene Sisters have a copy of it, always at the disposition even of persons who do not belong to the Community.

(ROBERT STONE, C.M., translator)

## **The Chronological Course of the Cause of Beatification and the Miracle of Fr. Durando**

*by Roberto D'Amico, C.M.  
Postulator General*

Fr. Giovanni Torre, the Visitor of Turin, on the death of blessed Marcantonio Durando, wrote these words to the Provincial Community: “We have lost a father, but we nourish the hope of having gained a protector in heaven.” At the same time he gave instruction to gather together *as soon as possible the news about the particulars of his life and of the singular examples of virtue which he left us, so that they not be lost....* Hardly eight years afterwards, in 1888, the first biography, written by Fr. Francisco Martinengo, C.M., was published. But it was only in 1928, after overcoming the misunderstood feeling of community humility and the pretended lack of financial means, that the ordinary process began in Turin. The validity of the two processes, the ordinary and the apostolic, was recognized with the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on 1 July 1951. In the ordinary process, 33 texts were examined, all visually; and in the apostolic process, 15, of which five were visual and ten by listening to the witnesses.

The various complex events, which blessed Durando had lived in person, like the friendship with King Carlo Alberto and with Msgr. Luigi Fransoni, Archbishop of Turin, the movement for the unity of Italy, the attitudes of his brother a general in the Piedmont army in face of Pope Pius IX, the refusal of the sacraments to Count Santarosa, the relationship with the two institutes of Mother Verna and of Sr. Clarac, caused the slowing down of the process, requiring a greater deepening of the proofs called for in 1971 by the Particular Congress of theologians, through the preparation of the “*Summarium storicum addictionale*” in such a way that on 21 September 1978 in the second Particular Congress, the heroicity of his virtues was recognized.

The Cardinal and Bishops examined the “*Positio*” on 27 March 1979. When the last study was done on 20 June 2000, in a second Ordinary session, they declared that the servant of God had exercised in a heroic degree the virtues. The Holy Father John Paul II ratified the judgment of the theologians and the Fathers by promulgating the decree on the heroicity of the virtues on 1 July 2000.

### **The Miracle**

The Postulator General, immediately after the recognition of the heroicity of the virtues, presented to the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints a cure

concerning Signora Stella Vottero Ingianni, who was born in 1903 and died on 10 September 2002.

The above-mentioned woman had a first pregnancy in 1929, which it was possible to bring to a conclusion with the use of forceps. Three years later, on 28 November 1932, at the conclusion of a second pregnancy, she gave birth in her own home. Everything seemed normal, but hardly three or four hours afterwards, the woman noticed “headache and disturbances of sight, to which followed convulsions diffused with spasms of the jaw muscles and biting of the tongue, respiratory difficulty and cyanosis. Furthermore there was fever of above 38°C and high albumin in the urine.” In the following hours, the convulsions were repeated with clear signs of heart problems and pulmonary edema with the result that the patient appeared in a condition of total unconsciousness, having struggled with force, with the bloody mouth and breathing in moans. Doctor Alessandro Vaccari, who had already assisted at the birth, found the woman in an eclamptic coma, successively confirmed by Dr. Giuseppe Ingianni, her father, and the medical doctors, Melanio Laugeri and Ferdinando Micheli, both called for consultation by relatives. The same diagnosis was confirmed by Drs. Ercole Cova and Carlo Fino.

All therapies known at that time were immediately tried: bloodletting, transfusions, intravenous and subcutaneous injections of calcium, magnesium, hellebore, morphine, etc.

Because the very grave state of the patient persisted, the lumbar puncture, was tried as a “last resort” without effect or result. The convulsions were repeated at quicker intervals, the patient remained unconscious, while the signs of cardiac insufficiency and pulmonary edema appeared ever more evident. In such a situation only an unfavorable short-term prognosis could be expressed, so that they proceeded to administer the Sacrament of the Sick to the patient.

Sr. Irene Caulo, a professed religious of the Nazarene Sisters, an Institute founded by Fr. Durando, a professional nurse, in charge of the assistance of the sick in their homes, on the evening of 28 November 1932, at around 7:00 p.m., took over from her sister, Sr. Veronica Trivari, at the bedside of Mrs. M. Stella Ingianni-Vottero. She found her in a desperate condition: the doctors had stopped all treatment because by this time they had lost hope of saving her from death. All night long, the condition of the sick person remained very serious, so much so that they feared her death from one moment to another.

From midnight, Sr. Irene decided to make a *nine-hour novena* in order to ask for a “miracle” through the intercession of the venerable founder Fr. Marcantonio Durando and she began to pray, inviting also the father of the sick person, Dr. Ingianni, to do the same. Early in the morning she noted some signs

of a beginning improvement. At around 7:00 a.m. Sr. Veronica took her place again. Sr. Irene recommended that she pray to Fr. Durando for the healing of the sick woman; then she went to hear Mass continuing the novena.

At 9:00 a.m., coinciding with the end of the nine-hour novena, the patient awoke from the coma, opened her eyes, recognized her father, asked what had happened. The cyanosis disappeared and she could swallow some spoonfuls of milk. At 6:00 p.m. she was completely conscious and in the space of two-three days she recovered a normal appearance.

The diocesan informative Process was held in Turin from 20 October to 9 December 1936 on the matter of this cure. During the process there were 19 sessions to hear 12 witnesses and two expert doctors “ab inspectione.” The Congregation for the Causes of the Saints, by the decree of 13 January 1995, recognized its juridical validity. The consultation of the doctors of the same Congregation on 19 February 2001 verified the cure of Mrs. Maria Stella Ingianni as “sudden, complete, stable and inexplicable by medical science.” On 12 October of the same year, the Congress of Theologian-Consultors was held and on the following 20 November, the Ordinary Session of the Cardinals and Bishops was held. In both meetings, that of the Consultors and that of the Cardinals and Bishops, to the doubt as to whether the miracle was obtained by divine intervention, an affirmative response was given. The Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints presented an accurate account of these facts to the Holy Father John Paul II. His Holiness ratified with his assent the votes of the Congregation, ordering on 20 December 2001 that the decree on the aforesaid miracle be prepared.

(ROLANDO DELAGOZA, C.M., translator)

# **THE BEATIFICATION OF MARANTONIO DURANDO (1800-1880)**

## **Chronicle**

By Leone Galbiati  
Turin, Italy

### **I. The Celebrations in Rome**

The Rite of Beatification of Venerable Fr. Marcantonio Durando was held in the St. Peter's square on 20 October 2002. During the same celebration the Servants of God Daudi Okelo and Jildo Irwa, laymen, catechists and martyrs; Msgr. Andrea Hyacinth Longhin, OFM, Bishop; Marie de la Passion H el ene Marie di Chappotin de Neuville, Virgin; Liduina Meneguzzi, virgin, were also beatified.

The square was almost full of officials and pilgrims when, at 9:00 a.m., the preparatory rites began with the reading of the biographical profiles of the Servants of God and of some excerpts from their writings.

The cortege of concelebrants made its entry at 9:55 a.m.: five Cardinals, 27 Bishops and 51 Priests, preceded by several dozen other priests designated to distribute Holy Communion. Fifteen other Cardinals, numerous Archbishops and Bishops, hundreds of Priests and religious, and several thousand faithful in the square followed the celebration. The arrival of Pope John Paul II signalled the start of the rite and, as always, of the infectious enthusiasm which accompanied the whole celebration.

#### **1. The Vincentian Family**

For the Vincentian Family the following were present and concelebrated with John Paul II: Cardinal Stephanos II Ghattas, Patriarch of Alexandria of the Copts, and Msgr. Germano Grachane, Bishop of Nacala (Mozambique), Vincentians; Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, Msgr. Luciano Pacomio, Bishop of Mondov , Fr. Robert Maloney, Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, Fr. Luigi Calcagno, Superior General of the Nazarene Sisters. The Mother General of the Nazarene Sisters, Sr. Pia Barale, together with numerous sisters, many of whom came from Madagascar; the members of the General Curia of the Congregation of the Mission; the Visitors of the three Italian provinces; numerous Italian confreres and confreres from Spain, Madagascar, Poland, Lebanon, Colombia, the United States; the Mother General of the Daughters of Charity, Sr. Juana Elizondo with some members of the General Curia; the Visitatrixes of the five Italian provinces, with a large crowd of Daughters of Charity, participated in the liturgical celebrations. From Mondov , the birthplace of Blessed Durando, the

mayor, Dr. Aldo Rabbia, with the Banner of the City, and numerous pilgrims among whom were the sisters of the Congregations which work in the Diocese; from Turin and from other cities numerous devotees connected with the activities of the Vincentians and above all of the Nazarene Sisters also joined the celebration.

Also present were Mrs. Maria Elena Vottero, daughter of Mrs. Maria Luisa Ingianni. At the birth of Maria Elena, the mother, Maria Luisa Ingianni fell into a coma that was considered irreversible. But she was cured through the intercession of Fr. Durando: the healing was judged miraculous and concluded the process of beatification. Unfortunately, the woman who benefited from the miracle, Maria Luisa, died in June 2002. Also present were some descendants of the Durando and Vinaj family: Mrs. Regina Rocca with her nieces Regina and Elena Matteodo, the youngest descendants of Giuseppe Antonio and Giovanni, brothers of Marcantonio, as well as the family of Mimmi Battaglia Bertola; Mrs. Milly Nicolai, descendant of Bianca, the sister of Blessed Durando.

## **2. The Rite of Beatification**

The celebration was held a few days after the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the election of John Paul II as Supreme Pontiff: Cardinal Bernardin Gantin, Dean of the College of Cardinals, offered a homage: “We are infinitely happy to take the providential opportunity which is given to us today through the imminent and solemn beatification of certain elect, distinguished sons and daughters of the Church, models of faith and charity, to offer you our heartiest congratulations and our best wishes.”

And it coincided with the World Mission Day, a motive constantly present during the course of the liturgical celebration, enriched by dances, songs, and languages of faraway countries, and symbolically opened out to the whole world in which the missionaries work. John Paul II, bent over in body but strong and firm in voice, evoked this motive in the penitential act which began the liturgy: “The annual date with the mission of the Church in World Mission Day recalls the commitment of all baptized to cooperate in the proclamation of the gospel, in the sharing of spiritual and material goods, so that there be formed from all peoples one sole family, united in love. In this spirit we thank the Lord for the witness of the brothers and sisters whom we propose today for the veneration of the Church, for their faith, their total dedication, even to martyrdom, the untiring and courageous care of the flock of Christ, the generosity in the service of the poorest and the most needy.”

The rite of beatification started with the petition formulated by Msgr. Odama, Archbishop of Gulu, followed by the reading of some biographical excerpts of the six Servants of God, done by the respective bishops, accompanied by the postulators general. Cardinal Severino Poletto summarized the essential events about Fr. Marcantonio Durando.

After the reading of the short biographies, Pope John Paul II pronounced the formula of beatification and fixed the day of the liturgical celebration of each new Blessed: for Blessed Marcantonio Durando it is 10 December. The veils of the five great tapestries hung on the façade of St. Peter's were raised slowly letting the faces of the new Blessed appear. It was a strong emotion for all Vincentians to see the tapestry with the face of Fr. Durando, done according to the sketch of Sr. Isabella Battistella, a Nazarene sister, who had reworked the original portrait by the painter Paolo Emilio Morgari. But the emotion was certainly more intense for the Nazarene Sisters, who "finally" saw their "Father" in glory; and in those who, going over some pages of Italian history, saw Fr. Durando's glance extend beyond St. Peter's Square and meet the Tiber and that Rome which around 1870 was "conquered" by the Italian troops.

### **3. "He lived the faith and a burning spiritual zeal, shunning every kind of compromise or interior tepidity..."**

In his homily, Pope John Paul II selected the words of St. Paul: "Remembering ... your work of faith, and labor of love and your steadfastness of hope" (1 Thes 1:2-3) to draw the spiritual portrait of Fr. Marcantonio Durando "of the Congregation of the Mission and worthy son of the Piedmont region. He lived the faith and a burning spiritual zeal, shunning every kind of compromise or interior tepidity. At the school of St. Vincent de Paul, he learned how to recognize in the humanity of Christ the greatest, most accessible and disarming expression of the love of God for every human being. Still today he indicates to us the mystery of the Cross as the culminating moment in which the unsearchable mystery of God's love is revealed."

In the prayer of the faithful, for the first time, the Malagasy language was used: "Give to your people, the reader said, priests and religious who, following the example of blessed Marcantonio Durando, promote the renewal of Christian life and that ardour of sanctity from which springs radical and total dedication to the mission, passion for the proclamation of the gospel, interest for the formation of missionaries, and solidarity with the suffering members of the body of Christ."

The Eucharistic concelebration lasted until 12:25 and ended with the recital of the Angelus.

### **4. The Meeting of the Vincentian Family in the lobby of the Paul VI Audience Hall in the Vatican.**

On the very day of the beatification, at 5:30 p.m., the members of the Vincentian Family present in Rome and the pilgrims gathered in the lobby of the

Paul VI Audience Hall in the Vatican for a fraternal meeting in honour of Blessed Marcantonio Durando. It was thought that around a hundred people would participate but the turnout was much greater: more than 300 persons. It was a very agreeable gathering which took place in a climate of great enthusiasm and joy. The figure of Blessed Marcantonio Durando is certainly the pride and joy of the Vincentian missionaries, of whose family he was a member and of which he was an “executive” and a model of life; of the Daughters of Charity, whom he introduced and spread in Italy, and for whom he was director and animator for almost 50 years; of the Vincentian Volunteers (AIC), whom he guided and launched into new undertakings of charity; but above all of the Nazarene Sisters, of whom he was the Founder and is the Father. Because of this it should be noted that he is the glory in a special way of the Nazarene Sisters. And really, the Nazarene Sisters felt in a certain way the protagonists. It was felt that, together with their Father Founder, we also wanted to celebrate them: to them, who constitute the smallest family, the brothers and sisters of the bigger family addressed their attention. There was a desire to share their joy in seeing the end so long desired finally reached. And, on the part of the Nazarene Sisters, the desire to express their thanks for this sense of fraternity with which they were accompanied in this happy phase of their spiritual experience.

“We come here today to hear about and reflect on Marcantonio Durando. He was a remarkable man, who performed extraordinary works. But I encourage you . . . to reflect on a single question: What made Marcantonio Durando not just a remarkable man, but a saint? How did God so transform him that even in his lifetime people said that he was a man of God? Was it his gentleness? Was it the wisdom in his judgment which attracted so many people to seek his counsel? Was it the simplicity and humility with which he fostered the vocations of others like the Daughters of Charity, the Nazarene Sisters, the Ladies of Charity, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the Children of Mary and many other groups? Was it his confident trust in God’s providence during the turbulent revolutionary times in which he lived? That is the key question, I believe, for all of us here today: What made Marcantonio Durando a saint? And how can each of us grow to be like him? How can we sing the same song that he sang for God?” After the reflection of the Superior General, there was a desire to present the figure of Blessed Marcantonio, which, to be honest, is not well known even among the Vincentians. Sr. Isabella, a Nazarene Sister, outlined a very short but significant biography of the Blessed, accompanied it with some excerpts from his writings, which were read, interspaced with texts sung by a small choir formed of Nazarene Sisters and Daughters of Charity. A group of Malagasy Nazarene Sisters enlivened the recital with a joyful contribution of Malagasy dances: it was also a way of emphasizing the great development of the community in Madagascar.

## **5. The Thanksgiving Mass at the Church of St. Gregory VII**

On Monday, 21 October, the whole Vincentian community in Rome gathered in the Church of St. Gregory VII for the celebration of a Mass of Thanksgiving for the gift of the Beatification of Fr. Durando, which was also the first liturgical celebration of the feast of the Blessed. Naturally there was the whole Vincentian Family who came to Rome for the occasion. The celebration was presided by Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, assisted by the Superior General of the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity and by the Superior General of the Nazarene Sisters; another 60 priests concelebrated.

“Who has read the newspaper this morning? It is not difficult to imagine the topics which the newspapers report today...,” he began in the homily. “When do the non-Catholic newspapers speak of the saints? ... How many people in Turin know of Fr. Durando? The Church, instead, seeks out her hidden treasures and puts them for people to see. This is the purpose of the Pope in proclaiming so many blessed and saints: to make a show of sanctity which does not make noise, but which sustains the world.” And commenting the text of the gospel just read, he added: “I would like to help you be attuned with the Word of God which we just read ... This page becomes, this morning, a suggestion for us. Jesus wishes that we also, today, praise, bless, give thanks to the Father for all that he accomplished in the life of Fr. Durando, a ‘little one’ in humility. Today our society is different from his time; today, to offer witness is more difficult; it is discouraging. Jesus tells us: ‘Are you depressed? Do you have the perception of not achieving anything? Do you have the feeling that your Congregation is becoming ever smaller, ever less efficient?’ Listen to Jesus: ‘Come to me, learn from me who am meek and humble of heart....’ If you are a saint, you are a gift for the world!” And after he summed up the salient features of the religious and Vincentian experience of Fr. Durando he concluded: “I close with a curious note. When photography was developed, Fr. Durando told the Nazarene Sisters: ‘Do not have yourselves photographed!’ We only have three photographs of him. It is not the exterior image that is important; the interior image is important. Let us take up this morning the invitation that the Blessed renews for us from heaven. Let us not be worried about the external image, let us worry about our interior reality, that which only God sees, and let us look at his witness to try to imitate him in our small and hidden daily life.”

## **6. The Audience with the Holy Father**

The audience granted by Pope John Paul II, on the morning of 21 October, to all the pilgrims present in Rome to participate in the Mass during which the six new Blessed were proclaimed, was the last moment of great emotion experienced by the Vincentians for the Beatification of Fr. Marcantonio Durando. To them, John Paul II offered warm greetings: “A profound missionary yearning defines the life and spirituality of Blessed Marcantonio Durando. I am happy to great Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, and the Fathers of the Congregation of the Mission

and those who make up the great Vincentian religious family, that rejoices for the enrollment of one of their more illustrious members in the list of the Blessed.” To them, after having recalled the spiritual physiognomy of the blessed, he addressed this exhortation: “How much we need today this deep reminder of the roots of charity and evangelization. From the example of Blessed Marcantonio we should learn how to place ourselves in our turn at the service of the poor and most destitute, who are present even in today’s society of well-being.”

## **II. The Celebrations in Turin**

### **1. 10 December 2002**

From number 23 of the former Via della Provvidenza, now Via XX settembre, from Corso Einaudi, where the Motherhouse of the Nazarene Sisters is located, from San Salvatio, which continues to be the Provincial House of the Daughters of Charity, from many other houses of the Missionaries of St. Vincent and the Daughters of Charity of Italy, Nazarene Sisters, Missionaries, Daughters of Charity, friends and co-workers of the Vincentian Family went to the Turin Cathedral in order to celebrate the first liturgical feast of Blessed Marcantonio Durando, fixed on 10 December by John Paul II at the Beatification of 20 October 2002. It was not a huge or spectacular crowd: the city did not feel uncomfortable. It continued its daily workday rhythm. There was no awareness of what several hundred people intended to do: remember the figure of a meritorious personality of Turin, because he was, directly or indirectly, for half a century, one of the most active defenders and protectors of the weakest persons, of the Turin of poverty, and naturally, to make his example and commitment their own again.

The liturgical celebration was presided by Cardinal Severino Poletto, Archbishop of Turin, assisted by Fr. Bruno Gonella, Visitor of the Province of Turin, and by Ripa Buschetti di Meana don Paolo S.D.B., Episcopal Vicar for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Around 70 priests, Vincentians and diocesan concelebrated. During the entrance procession of celebrants and concelebrants, an urn which contains the relics of Blessed Marcantonio Durando was carried up and placed on a small altar erected near the presbytery. Together with the community of Nazarene Sisters, many Vincentians in fact and in sentiment participated in the liturgical celebrations. There were some descendants of the Durando and Vinaj families and of Mrs. Maria Luisa Ingianni, whose miraculous cure, obtained through the intercession of Fr. Durando, made possible the conclusion of the beatification process.

Cardinal Severino Poletto noted in his homily: “Fr. Durando was an extraordinary gift that the Lord gave to Turin, where he passed a great part of his life. It is not really that Fr. Durando is very well known, at least considering the talk of the

people. It is not only because he lived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century but also because his figure was not sufficiently made known: I make this observation. And now I repeat a consideration that I also made in Rome, that with the canonizations and beatifications this Pope is going to unearth the hidden treasures of the Church, as if to say: ‘Look where sanctity is found, which we ought to imitate and which is often unknown.’ Certainly his confreres know him, as do the Nazarene Sisters. But in general civil society is not knowledgeable about sanctity. And now he seems to say: ‘Look also at this priest, at this religious: without doing extraordinary things, without making miracles, without exciting waves of popular enthusiasm, he still lived in a heroic manner his Christian life of a priest and of a religious.’”

“With the recall of his commitment to work, of the great fruition of his ‘inventions,’ of the particular conditions of culture and time in which he worked, the confrontation with the present is not lacking: the sisters have disappeared from the hospitals and so many social institutions, many initiatives ended, because of the lack of vocations: what a void! And that gives the measure of what an extraordinary gift religious men and women and the religious life are both for the Church and society. Fr. Durando was a holy religious, and through the religious choice he made his way in holiness, above all on side of charity and evangelization. He guided the Daughters of Charity who, first in Piedmont, then they spread throughout Italy. He founded the Nazarene Sisters in 1865. The Vincentians ought to hold high this discourse about charity above all today with the new forms of poverty, and in these moments of great difficulties: the city of Turin suffers the nightmare of thousands of workers who risk the loss of their jobs. Even the Popular Missions, which were a major engagement of the Vincentians in the past, have changed: in the Diocese of Turin, these last for years and they propose to rebuild the fabric of a Christian community. They require a new method of work. The Vincentians should have the courage to be bearers of charity, of truth and of holiness.

## **2. The Fraternal Meal in San Salvario**

The “after Mass,” or the fraternal meal after that Eucharist, was held in the house of the Daughters of Charity, in the former convent of San Salvario that had belonged to the Servite Fathers, which Fr. Durando acquired from King Carlo Alberto as the seat of the Provincial House and the first seminary of the Daughters of Charity in Italy: that San Salvario which was the first root of a tree which became ever larger and which holds the treasure of tens of thousands of souls who within its walls learned to love the neighbour and to serve him/her in the most varying demands. After the meal, before the celebration of Vespers, the recital of “A Saint without a Halo” by Sr. Isabella Battistella, a Nazarene Sister, was again presented in the chapel. It had already been preformed in the lobby of the Paul VI Audience Hall in Rome on 20 October. A documentary prepared by Fr. Vittorino Zerbinati on the houses and activities of the Nazarene Sisters in Madagascar followed the recital.

### **3. The Veneration of the Relics of Blessed Marcantonio Durando**

The body of Fr. Marcantonio Durando, enclosed in a zinc coffin donated by Mrs. Ernesta Racca, his penitent and great benefactor of his works, “as a sign of her and her family’s great veneration,” was carried to the Community’s tomb in the city cemetery of Turin, acquired by him two years previously.

In 1926, when the canonical process began, Fr. Filippo Traverso thought of transferring the body to the Church of the Visitation. The canonical norms and the funeral laws, which foresaw a series of transfers, had to be respected.

On 17 November, the official recognition of the remains was done in the presence only of the municipal doctor, the Superior of the House of the Mission and two Nazarene Sisters. The remains were placed in a small chest, which was carried to a new, drier tomb. On 4 December, the Prefecture authorized their transfer to the Church. Another recognition was done by two medical doctors, Fortunato Lanza and Domenico Borgna, a Vincentian Missionary, who made the examination and description of the remains, which they dictated to the Secretary of the Turin Curia. A niece of Fr. Durando, Flavinia, a cousin, the Honorable Viale, and numerous missionaries, Nazarene Sisters and Daughters of Charity were present. The remains were placed in a zinc chest, which was enclosed in one of wood. A long procession was formed for the transfer: it was really a out-of-the-ordinary spectacle to see, contrary to the usual, a large cortege which left from the cemetery and went toward the church. The urn was carried to the large Chapel of the Passion and, after the celebration of the Mass, was placed in the sepulchre prepared inside the chapel, on the left, near the balustrade.

In 1947 a recognition was made: it was certified that the bones were placed in a sealed zinc box and enclosed in a wooden chest.

Aside from the foreseen fulfilment of the norms, which regulate the process of beatification in Rome, the Provincial Superior of Turin, Fr. Bruno Gonella, initiated, in 2001, the procedure prescribed for the recognition of the mortal remains of the Servant of God. On 12 November 2001, the first inspection of the tomb of the Venerable was done: the chest was transferred to the Relic Room. On 24 November 2001, in the presence of the Archbishop’s Chancellor, the delegate of the Archbishop, the Visitor, some missionaries, the Mother General and two legal doctors, after previous examination, the relics were arranged by the Nazarene Sisters in a new box of zinc, in order to be placed in the new marble monument, located in the Church of the Mission, at the altar of the Crucified. On 27 December 2002, the Relics were inserted inside a block of black marble from Belgium, placed before the altar in the Chapel of the Passion, which opens on the left wall of the presbytery of

the Church of the Visitation, and exposed for the veneration of the faithful. For this occasion, Msgr. Luciano Pacomio, Bishop of Mondovì, the birthplace of Blessed Fr. Marcantonio Durando, celebrated the Mass in the presence of many missionaries, Nazarene Sisters, Daughters of Charity and faithful.

**Marcantonio Durando : The Decree on the Virtues**

**THE CONGREGATION FOR CAUSES OF SAINTS**

*Turin*

*Of the Beatification and Canonization of the Servant of God*

**MARCANTONIO DURANDO**

A priest of the Congregation of St Vincent de Paul  
 Founder of the Institute of the Sisters of Jesus the Nazarene  
 (1801-1880)

**THE DECREE ON THE VIRTUES**

“Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph 4:15).

These words of the apostle Paul were the norm for the apostolic life of St. Vincent de Paul, a man of action who was never satisfied with mere words. He left this very dynamic rule to his spiritual sons, and to those who carry out any work whatsoever in his Institute. An axiom which this saint suggested to his missionaries was: “Carthusians in the house, apostles elsewhere,” and he added to this: “to become holy, charitable work is necessary.”

Marcantonio Durando was a worthy son of St. Vincent de Paul, who spent the whole of a long life in the service of God, of the Church, of his communities and of the poor. His self-giving was serene and constant. “If I am able to do something good,” he used to say, “I do it; if not, I place the matter in the hands of Providence.”

This outstanding disciple of Christ was born in Mondovì in Piedmont on 22 May 1801 into a prominent and religious family. By the age of eighteen he showed obvious signs of a vocation to the priesthood. He did his philosophy in the diocesan seminary in his hometown and received tonsure and minor orders. He then entered the Congregation of the Mission. His great ambition was to be sent on the Chinese mission. He completed his studies in the theologate in Sarzana and was ordained a priest in the cathedral in Fossano on 12 June 1824.

He volunteered several times for the foreign missions, but his offer was never accepted by his superiors. Instead, he was appointed to the mission team

for parish missions in the rural parts of his own country. He was also named as a preacher for clergy retreats. He was a man of balanced and tireless zeal. He prepared thoroughly.

He was a man of interior life, and he was eloquent. He was therefore successful in injecting new life into these two main ministries of the Congregation of the Mission in Piedmont.

In 1831 he was appointed to Turin as superior of the house. In 1837 he became Provincial, and also Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity in northern Italy. Until his death forty-two years later he governed the Vincentian Province of Piedmont-Lombardy gently and firmly. He took on new works. In 1866 he protected the Congregation of the Mission against oppressive laws. He also renewed religious discipline.

In 1833 he had brought Daughters of Charity from France to Italy. His enthusiasm encouraged a wonderful increase of vocations and works. In 1835 he reestablished the Association of the Ladies of Charity, and his guidance led many very wealthy and noble ladies of Turin to become members. Through the cooperation of these ladies and the Daughters of Charity he created a veritable network of houses permanently open to the poor. These were called "The Mercy Units," and he was their indefatigable champion. Since he himself could not go on the foreign missions he worked enthusiastically for the spread of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith. In the house in Genoa he established a seminary, called Brignole-Sale, for the formation of future apostles for missions all over the world. (This was in 1856).

Turin was the main field of his ministry. He had a great reputation as counsellor and confessor. He dealt with all matters, even political affairs. The city's archbishop, politicians and prominent persons came to him for advice. King Carlo Alberto wanted to have him appointed bishop, but the Servant of God always avoided this honour through humility.

In 1865, in cooperation with the Servant of God Aloisia Borgiotti, he founded the Institute of the Sisters of Jesus the Nazarene, for young women who, because of their illegitimacy, would not be accepted in other congregations. The breadth of his Sisters, as the main thrust of their service, the care of sick persons in their own homes, day and night; he also recommended care of neglected teenagers.

The end of his busy life, a life full of merit, came on 10 December 1880 in Turin.

During a very difficult period the Servant of God engaged in lively, extensive and effective apostolic activity, energized by great faith. Every day he trusted in God's help and in that of the Virgin Mary. This was joined to unconquerable strength of soul and exceptional prudence.

Faith underpinned everything he did. He drew strength from the Eucharist; it was the centre of his priestly life. He felt greatly drawn to Christ's passion and to the ongoing mystery of the Eucharist, the memorial of the Lord's death. He had the trusting attitude of a son to the Redeemer's mother. He liked to meditate principally on her Immaculate Conception, and he took on the direction of the Association of the Children of Mary in the houses of the Daughters of Charity. His hope, his confidence in God and his strength were very obvious at the time of the suppression of religious communities in 1866. At times like that he was accustomed to follow calmly the promptings of Providence. "In the intimacy of our hearts," he used to say, "let us adore God's plans; he allows such great changes in what is happening, things through which, in his own time, he reveals his glory, though we cannot see in advance that moment."

His love for God was total, free from all human considerations, and it showed itself in love of the neighbour, especially love for the Church and the Supreme Pontiff.

The Servant of God was a good father, receiving everyone, rich and poor, the powerful and the voiceless, with great love, kindness and affability.

He loved the Pope, and felt keenly what the Pope had to endure during the period known as the Italian Risorgimento. He wrote to his brother Giacomo, who was a minister in the government: "From the bottom of my heart I long for peace between the civil power and the Church, and I want an end to opposition to the Church and its Communities. Were it not for the Supreme Pontiffs Rome would be like Babylon or Niniveh." In anything with a political dimension he acted with the greatest prudence and instructed his missionaries not to preach any politics other than those of the gospel.

His own way of running things was to blend strength and flexibility, and he used to worry a lot when he was unable to avert some unfortunate happening. He was motivated by sincere simple humility to ask, several times, right up into his final years, to be relieved of his appointments as Provincial and Director of the Daughters of Charity. His major superiors never acceded to these requests, as they were aware of the high quality of his administrative ability.

He was an assiduous, temperate, chaste, just and considerate administrator, and his personal inclination was towards the strictest poverty and

exemplified it. The renewal of religious observance in the Vincentian Provinces was due to his example, and even more so to his advice and warnings.

After his death his reputation did not diminish, but actually increased. Because of this, the Archbishop of Turin initiated the cause for his beatification and canonization, and set up the Ordinary Informative Process, 1928-30. When the Decree on the Introduction of the Cause was promulgated (1941) the Apostolic Process on the individual virtues was carried out in the above-mentioned Curia of Turin. The authority and authenticity of these canonical processes were approved in 1951.

When the *Positio* was published there was the inquiry into whether the Servant of God practised the theological, cardinal and other virtues to an heroic degree. The Theological Consultors gave their opinion in a *Peculiaris Congressus* on 12 January 1971. An Additional Historical Summary was drawn up, and a further *Peculiaris Congressus* was held on 21 September 1978, with a favourable result. The Cardinals and Bishops studied the *Positio* on 27 March 1979. Then there were other special studies. Then on 20 June 2000 another *Sessio Ordinaria* of the Cardinals and Bishops was held, with the Most Reverend Ottorino Pietro Alberti, Archbishop of Cagliari, the *Ponens* of the Cause present, at which it was declared that the Servant of God Marcantonio Durando lived the virtues to an heroic degree.

When a full report of all these matters was finally presented to the Supreme Pontiff, John Paul II, by the undersigned Prefect, His Holiness accepted the decision of the Congregation for Causes of Saints as ratified, and ordered the Decree on the heroic virtues of the Servant of God to be published.

When these formalities had been completed, the Most Holy Father summoned to his presence today, the date given below, the Prefect, the *Ponens* of the Cause and myself the bishop-secretary of the Congregation, together with the other persons usually invited and their staff. He solemnly declared:

*The Servant of God, Marcantonio Durando, a priest of the Congregation of the Mission of St Vincent de Paul, founder of the Sisters of Jesus the Nazarene, practised the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity towards both God and the neighbour, and also the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance and Fortitude, and associated virtues, to an heroic degree, in the case and with the effect in question.*

The Supreme Pontiff ordered that this Decree be published in the *Acta* of the Congregation for Causes of Saints.

Rome, 1 July 2000.

+ JOSEPHUS SARAIVA MARTINS  
Archiep. tit. Thuburnicensis  
*Praefectus*

+ EUARDUS NOWAK  
Archiep. tit. Lunensis  
*a Secretis*

(THOMAS DAVITT, C.M., translator)

**Love is Creative Even to Infinity**  
**— On the Eucharist in the Vincentian Tradition —**

*by Robert P. Maloney, C.M.*  
*Superior General*

Within our Family, we often cite the saying of St. Vincent: “Love is creative even to infinity.”<sup>1</sup> Ordinarily, we use this citation to motivate others to be creative pastorally, to respond to new forms of poverty, to be inventive in new formation programs for lay leaders and for the clergy, to investigate ways of rooting out the causes of poverty. But apt as this rhetorical use of Vincent’s words might be, their actual context was quite different. They refer to the institution of the Eucharist. Vincent, in speaking to a dying brother in 1645, exhorted him to think of God’s mercy. After describing many of the signs of God’s tender love, he told the brother that Jesus, foreseeing his death, did not want to leave his followers alone. He feared that in his absence their hearts would grow cold. And so, he tells the brother, “since love is creative even to infinity ... he instituted this venerable sacrament which serves as food and drink for us ... Because love is eager to do everything it can, he so willed it.”<sup>2</sup>

In this article I offer some reflections on the Eucharist in the Vincentian tradition.<sup>3</sup> Following a methodology I have used on many other occasions, I will divide these reflections into three parts:

- I. The Eucharist in the life and writings of St. Vincent
- II. Some horizon shifts between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- III. Some reflections, in a Vincentian context, on the Eucharist today

**I. The Eucharist in the Life  
And Writings of St. Vincent**

Vincent was not a systematic theologian. His works rarely articulate an orderly, well-developed theological analysis of the questions he is addressing. Most of his letters and conferences aim at motivating his audience and suggesting practical ways

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<sup>1</sup>SV XI, 146.

<sup>2</sup>SV XI, 146.

<sup>3</sup>Somewhat surprisingly, the bibliography on St. Vincent and the Eucharist is not abundant. I found the following works particularly helpful: Rafael Sáinz, “Eucaristía” in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Vicenciana* (Salamanca: CEME, 1995) 227-232; Jean-Pierre Renouard, “L’Eucharistie à la lumière de la spiritualité de Saint Vincent” in *Bulletin des Lazaristes de France* (No. 178; July 2001) 16-23; Etienne Diebold, “Notre 'héritage eucharistique' selon Saint Vincent” in *Bulletin des Lazaristes de France* (No. 79; April 1981) 1-10. There are many other brief treatments of this matter in biographies of St. Vincent and other books on his spirituality.

of living out the theme that he is writing or speaking about. Only occasionally, as when addressing the Daughters of Charity about mortification and about prayer, does he offer detailed explanations about a subject, but even these presentations are not original; they simply follow the standard authors of the time.

While from a theoretical point of view Vincent is seldom innovative, his talks and writings show eminent common sense, deep conviction, instinctive insight into human nature, and much insistence about putting things into practice. Vincent's reflections on the Eucharist illustrate this well. Below I offer eight of the principal points he touches on in scattered treatments of the Eucharist. In doing so, I make no effort to systematize what Vincent, I suspect, never intended to systematize.

## **1. The Eucharist is the center of “religion” and of “devotion.”**

For Vincent, the Eucharist is the Lord's testament to his Church. It is the ultimate sign of his love, the source from which the ongoing life of the Church springs. It is also the center of “religion”<sup>4</sup> and the foundation of “devotion,”<sup>5</sup> joining us to Christ's love of God his Father.

“Religion” and “devotion” have special meanings in Vincent's writings, as well as in those of many of his contemporaries. With notable precision Vincent states in one of his letters that Jesus' psychology is caught up in two all-consuming directions, “his filial relationship (*religion*, in French) with the Father and his charity toward the neighbor.”<sup>6</sup> Bérulle, Olier, and other members of the French School speak of “religion” as the basic response of the human person before God, an attitude of adoration, of total consecration of oneself to God.<sup>7</sup> In a parallel manner St. Vincent, in an early sermon on Communion, speaks of the Eucharist as the “true foundation and center of religion.”<sup>8</sup>

Speaking to the Daughters of Charity, he also calls the Eucharist “the center of devotion.”<sup>9</sup> Here, Francis de Sales' influence on Vincent seems evident. Francis stresses the heart, describing devotion as prompt, eager, active love.<sup>10</sup> This contrasts somewhat from Bérulle's more sober use of the term “religion.”<sup>11</sup> Vincent assimilated

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<sup>4</sup>SV XIII, 32.

<sup>5</sup>SV IX, 5.

<sup>6</sup>SV VI, 393.

<sup>7</sup>Raymond Deville, *L'École française de spiritualité* (Paris: Desclée, 1987) 103-104.

<sup>8</sup>SV XIII, 32.

<sup>9</sup>SV IX, 5.

<sup>10</sup>André Dodin, *François de Sales - Vincent de Paul, les deux amis* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1984) 18.

<sup>11</sup>One finds a similar emphasis on “devotion” in the writing of John Eudes. Cf., *Bérulle and the French School, Selected Writings*, edited with an introduction by William M. Thompson (New York: Paulist Press, 1989) 39.

both Bérulle's and Francis' thought and vocabulary in speaking about the Eucharist.

## **2. It is a seed of the resurrection.<sup>12</sup>**

Recalling the sixth chapter of John's gospel, Vincent states that we will rise to new and unending life if we are nourished by the body and blood of the Lord. He reminds his listeners, however, that they must not simply receive the Eucharist, but must receive it well. Citing the words of St. Paul,<sup>13</sup> he states that those who receive the Eucharist unworthily are guilty of the death of the Lord.

His emphasis on the Eucharist as a sharing in Jesus' risen life is rather striking since, while Vincent often writes of the cross,<sup>14</sup> references to the resurrection are relatively rare in his works. In the second of two early sermons on Communion, Vincent, speaking about the Last Supper and also making an allusion to John's sixth chapter, states, "from this we conclude that we will rise and will have eternal life" if we partake of the Lord's flesh.<sup>15</sup>

## **3. It is not just the priest who offers the Eucharistic sacrifice. All who take part do so.<sup>16</sup>**

Vincent places strong emphasis on the dispositions of those who join in the Eucharist. He tells the Daughters of Charity to go to Mass every day, but to do so with great devotion. He recalls to them the example of Madame Pavillon, whose devotion everyone in her parish admired. She walked in the presence of God, he states. When at Mass, she seemed almost insensible to everything else.<sup>17</sup>

In this context, Vincent expresses his desire that the sisters be well instructed about the meaning of the Eucharist. In language that rings well in a post-Vatican II context, he insists on active participation, stating that all who take part in the Eucharist offer the sacrifice of the Lord, not just the priest.<sup>18</sup>

To encourage others to participate well in the Eucharist, Vincent puts great emphasis on preparation. With charming imagery, he states in one of the few sermons of his which are extant:

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<sup>12</sup>SV XIII, 34.

<sup>13</sup>1 Cor 11:27-29.

<sup>14</sup>Cf. Robert P. Maloney, *He Hears the Cry of the Poor* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1995) 30-51.

<sup>15</sup>SV XIII, 34.

<sup>16</sup>SV IX, 5.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*

*Whoever who has to receive someone greater than himself is troubled and takes great care in thinking of how to receive him worthily. He prepares his house, cleans it, decorates it, arranges it, gives orders that there be nothing ugly in it. He has to send to the butcher for meat, to the hunt for game, and there are a thousand other cares that he has. Yet, for Our Lord, none of that is necessary: no work, nor embarrassment; but, without moving, each one can dispose himself, thinking only in his heart to empty the trash of his soul by contrition and by making a firm proposal to offend God no longer.<sup>19</sup>*

#### **4. The Eucharist involves praise and thanksgiving.<sup>20</sup>**

Vincent encourages the priests and brothers of the Congregation to use the celebration of the Eucharist as an occasion for giving thanks to God for the daily gifts that he bestows on the Congregation. He speaks of the Eucharist as a source of “praise and glory.”<sup>21</sup>

He tells the Daughters of Charity that, if we participate well in the Eucharist, we will be careful to render thanks to God. Vincent adds that, if we are faithful in giving thanks at the Eucharist, we will continually draw down on ourselves new grace and will ascend to a higher degree of perfection and love.<sup>22</sup>

#### **5. It is food<sup>23</sup> and medicine,<sup>24</sup> a school of love and a source of peace.**

Vincent frequently uses the word “nourishment”<sup>25</sup> when he speaks of the Eucharist. Just as bread and wine nourish the body, so too do the consecrated gifts nourish the soul.

The Eucharist too for Vincent is an antidote, a medicine, a remedy<sup>26</sup> for our spiritual weakness. He also describes the Eucharist as a source of pardon for sinners.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>SV XIII, 37.

<sup>20</sup>SV XI, 165.

<sup>21</sup>SV III, 371.

<sup>22</sup>SV IX, 339.

<sup>23</sup>SV XIII, 34.

<sup>24</sup>SV III, 371; XIII, 32.

<sup>25</sup>SV XIII, 34.

<sup>26</sup>SV III, 371.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*

Vincent states that the Eucharist is the “most efficacious remedy” against spiritual ills.<sup>28</sup>

He tells the Daughters that they must go to the Eucharist to study “love, mutual support, cordiality.”<sup>29</sup> At the school of the Eucharist they will learn all the virtues that are necessary to help the poor.

Speaking of the Eucharist, St. Vincent tells the Daughters of Charity: “What a grace, my daughters! to be certain that we are regarded by God, considered by God, loved by God.”<sup>30</sup>

The Eucharist will be, he also tells the Daughters, a source of peace and tranquillity of heart for them. It will give them confidence that they are truly united with God.<sup>31</sup> On the contrary, Vincent often warns against receiving Communion when the sisters live in discord,<sup>32</sup> citing Matthew 5:23-24: “If you bring your gift to the altar and there recall that your brother or sister has anything against you, leave your gift at the altar, go first to be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.”

## **6. It makes us one with God.**<sup>33</sup>

Vincent tells the Daughters of Charity that, if we receive the Eucharist well, we become “*une même chose*” with God. He speaks very eloquently: “My Daughters, one of the benefits we derive from making a good Communion is that we become one with God. What! a poor Daughter of Charity, who before her communion is merely what she is, that is to say, a thing not worth very much, now becomes one with God! Ah! my daughters, who would be willing to neglect such a boon? Oh! what a grace! What do you think it is, my daughters, but a pledge of eternity! Could we, my dear sisters, comprehend anything grander! Oh, now, it is impossible for anything greater than that a poor wretched creature is united with God; oh! may he be forever blessed!”<sup>34</sup>

## **7. It is the source of effective evangelization.**<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>SV IX, 298.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup>SV IX, 333.

<sup>31</sup>SV IX, 237.

<sup>32</sup>SV IX, 101.

<sup>33</sup>SV IX, 237.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup>SV IX, 239; cf. also, IX, 339.

Vincent tells the Daughters that it is at the Eucharist they will really learn how to love: “Go to the Eucharist in the name of God! It is there that you must go in order to study Love!”<sup>36</sup> He also says to them: “When you see a Sister of Charity serve the sick with love, gentleness and great care, you can say without hesitation: ‘this sister has communicated well.’”<sup>37</sup> He says similarly to the members of the Congregation: “Do you not feel, my brothers, do you not feel this divine fire burning within you when you have received the adorable body of Jesus Christ in Communion?”<sup>38</sup>

Vincent often tells the Daughters of Charity that they should serve the poor not just corporally, but spiritually too. The Eucharist will provide them with the wisdom and courage they need in order to bring words of faith, hope and consolation to the abandoned. In a conference given on January 22, 1646, St. Vincent states: “Do you think, my daughters, that God merely expects you to bring his poor a morsel of bread, a scrap of meat, some soup and medicine? Oh! no, no, no, my daughters, that was not his design when he chose you for all eternity to render him the services which you render him in the person of the poor; he expects you to provide for the needs of the soul as well as for those of the body. They are in need of the heavenly manna; they are in need of the Spirit of God, and where will you find it so that you may communicate it to them? In Holy Communion, my daughters.”<sup>39</sup>

8. The fundamental disposition for celebrating the Eucharist is “a lively understanding of the love that God has shown us in this sacrament and a corresponding, reciprocal love on our part.”<sup>40</sup>

Basically, St. Vincent urges those who are celebrating the Eucharist to have the mind of Christ, stating that we must conform ourselves, as far as possible, with Jesus as he offered himself in sacrifice to his eternal Father.<sup>41</sup>

Emphasizing this point at the end of a conference to the Daughters of Charity on October 22, 1646, St. Vincent prays aloud:

*My Lord and my God, Jesus Christ, my Savior, most amiable and loving of all men, you who practiced charity and forbearance incomparably more than all men taken together, you who received more wrongs and insults and felt least resentment. Listen, if it should please you, to the most humble prayer we offer you, that you may be pleased to impart to this Company the spirit of charity with which you were inflamed and the*

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<sup>36</sup>SV III, 298.

<sup>37</sup>SV IX, 333.

<sup>38</sup>Abelly, III, 77.

<sup>39</sup>SV XI, 239.

<sup>40</sup>SV XIII, 31.

<sup>41</sup>SV XI, 93.

*spirit of meekness and forbearance which you displayed toward your enemies, in order that, by the practice of these virtues, the eternal designs of the adorable will of God may be accomplished in this Company, so that it may glorify God by imitating you and win, by its example, souls to your service and, above all else, my God, that your Company, by mutual forbearance, may be pleasing to you.*<sup>42</sup>

The Eucharist must be offered, St. Vincent emphasizes, in the same spirit in which Jesus offered himself to his Father.<sup>43</sup> In a conference to the priests and brothers of the Mission, Vincent states that, in celebrating the Eucharist, we must have, as far as possible, the dispositions that Jesus himself had in offering his sacrifice.<sup>44</sup> Here again he returns to the theme of devotion, stating that we must not just celebrate the Eucharist, but must do it with the greatest devotion possible.<sup>45</sup>

## II. Some Horizon Shifts Between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Enormous changes have taken place in Eucharistic theology since the time of St. Vincent. He lived in a post-Tridentine era when much theology, both on the Catholic and Protestant sides, had a decidedly polemical tone. We live in an ecumenical era in which the partners in dialogue are committed to greater mutual understanding.

During Vincent's lifetime a raging controversy took place concerning frequent communion, an issue resolved definitively only at the beginning of the 20<sup>st</sup> century. Vincent's friend, the Abbé de Saint-Cyran, falling under the spell of Jansenism, became one of the principal proponents of the need for extremely high dispositions for receiving communion and consequently the need to keep putting it off. Vincent was called upon to testify against him<sup>46</sup> in 1639. In 1648 Vincent wrote a long letter to Jean Dehorgny in which he refutes, in considerable detail, the doctrine presented by another proponent of Jansenism, Antoine Arnauld, in his book *On Frequent Communion*,<sup>47</sup> in which the latter repeats many of the ideas of Saint-Cyran. It is interesting to note that Vincent, contrary to the currents of his time, recommended frequent and even daily communion.

For the sake of brevity, let me mention here just three of the most significant

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<sup>42</sup>SV IX, 298-299.

<sup>43</sup>SV XI, 93.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>SV IX, 5.

<sup>46</sup>SV XIII, 86ff.

<sup>47</sup>SV III, 362ff.

horizon shifts influencing this question that have taken place between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

## 1. Modern scriptural studies.

Since Vincent's time, methodology in biblical interpretation has changed notably. A number of factors have contributed to this shift: the rediscovery of ancient pre-biblical, biblical, and post-biblical texts; the development of a historical-critical methodology; archeological investigation; and ecumenical dialogue in regard to biblical questions, particularly with mainline Protestant churches. These developments have led to a deeper understanding of many biblical texts, including those concerning the Hebrew background for thanksgiving meals and the Eucharistic narratives in the New Testament.

We reaped the benefits of these changes mainly in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the Catholic tradition, the encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) opened the door to rich, renewed biblical scholarship, which in turn significantly influenced Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), and the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*). These documents placed strong emphasis on the revealed word, on the unity between word and sacrament, on the relationship between Church and sacrament, and on the Eucharist as an active, participative celebration of the death and resurrection of the Lord.<sup>48</sup>

## 2. The liturgical movement.

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

The liturgical movement, beginning in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, aimed at promoting the full, active participation of all members of the Christian assembly, each according to his or her role. Through persevering efforts, scholars and pastors

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<sup>48</sup>Some of the more important works on the Scriptural Foundations of Eucharistic Theology are: Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987); Jean Delorme et al., *The Eucharist in the New Testament: A Symposium*, trans. E. M. Stewart (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964); Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Edward J. Kilmartin, *The Eucharist in the Primitive Church* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965); Edward Schweizer, *The Lord's Supper according to the New Testament*, trans. James Davis (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968).

like Prosper Guéranger, Lambert Beaudoin, Virgil Michel, Joseph Jungmann, Balthasar Fischer, H. A. Reinhold, Martin Hellriegel, Godfrey Diekmann, Frederick McManus Annibale Bugnini, Carlo Braga, and many others gradually renewed liturgical education and liturgical practice. The reforms that they promoted were adopted in Vatican II's *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*.

The liturgical movement<sup>49</sup> and the implementation of the Constitution on the Liturgy have changed attitudes and practices dramatically. The Constitution on the Liturgy proclaimed liturgy as the summit toward which the action of the Church tends and at the same time the fountain from which all virtue emanates.<sup>50</sup> The enormous energy that the Church has invested in liturgical reform over the last half century demonstrates how extremely important a role it plays in the life of the Christian community.<sup>51</sup>

In practice, the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw remarkable changes in regard to the celebration of the Eucharist: the new rite of the Mass, vernacular liturgy, concelebration, communion under both kinds, a variety of Eucharistic prayers, a richer selection of scriptural readings, and many others.

### **3. Ecumenical dialogue.**

The last 25 years have seen notable steps forward in building bridges and in mutual enrichment among Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Methodist theological viewpoints concerning the Eucharist.<sup>52</sup> The Eucharistic theology of the Orthodox Church, with its emphasis on communion (koinonia) has helped considerably in this dialogue.<sup>53</sup> From this theological perspective the Church celebrates and makes real, through the Eucharist, its communion with the Father, in the Son, through the power of the Holy Spirit. By the gift of Christ's Eucharistic love, the Church is freed from sin and its members are united with one another and with God. The community, called together by the Holy Spirit, gathers at the table of the Eucharist to celebrate a memorial sacrament of the saving death and resurrection of Christ.

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<sup>49</sup>For a very complete, detailed account of the pre-Vatican II stage of the liturgical movement as well as the conciliar and post-conciliar stages, cf. Annibale Bugnini, *La Riforma Liturgica* (Rome: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1983).

<sup>50</sup>Sacrosanctum Concilium 10.

<sup>51</sup>The many official documents on this subject can be conveniently found in: Carlo Braga and Annibale Bugnini, *Documenta ad Instaurationem Liturgicam Spectantia 1903-1963* (Rome: CLV-Edizioni Liturgiche, 2000).

<sup>52</sup>Cf. "The Eucharist: Final Report of the Joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission, 1978," in *Growth in Agreement* 190-214; Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic International Study Commission, "Church and Justification: Understanding the Church in the Light of the Doctrine of Justification," no. 3, 3, *Information Service of the Secretariat for the Promoting of Christian Unity* 86 (1994) 128-81, at 142-43.

<sup>53</sup>Cf. Joint International Commission for Roman Catholic/Orthodox Theological Dialogue, "The Church, the Eucharist and the Trinity," in *Origins* 12 (1982): 157-160.

Through ecumenical dialogue many long-standing divergences among the churches in regard to Eucharistic theology have already been overcome, and a formerly polemical atmosphere has been largely dissipated, at least among Catholics, Orthodox, and many mainstream Protestant churches.

### III. Some Reflections, in a Vincentian Context, on the Eucharist Today

The new Constitutions of both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity provide a brief, well-expressed compendium of the Eucharistic theology of Vatican II.

The text for the Congregation of the Mission reads:

*Our life should be directed towards the daily celebration of the Lord's Supper as towards its summit, for from the Eucharist, as from a living source, flows the power of our apostolic activity and fraternal communion. Through the Eucharist, the death and resurrection of Christ are made present, we become in Christ a living offering, and the communion of the People of God is signified and brought about.<sup>54</sup>*

The Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity state:

*Conscious of the vital importance of the Eucharist as the center of their life and mission, the sisters gather around it in a special way each day. There, Christians "are instructed by the word of God, refreshed at the table of the Lord's Body, and give him thanks" (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 48). In praising God, listening to his Word, entreating him, they do so not only in their own name but in the name of all mankind whose joys, hopes, sadness and anguish they bear (Gaudium et Spes, 1). They offer themselves with Jesus Christ in the mystery of his Paschal Sacrifice, so that finally God may be all in all.<sup>55</sup>*

As a supplement to these texts, I propose below some contemporary reflections on the Eucharist<sup>56</sup> for the members of our Vincentian Family, under six headings:

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<sup>54</sup>*Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission* 45, § 1.

<sup>55</sup>*Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity* 2.12.

<sup>56</sup>The reader might find the following works on contemporary Eucharistic Theology to be useful: Louis Bouyer, *Eucharist: The Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, trans. Charles Underhill Quinn (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968); Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987); Enrico Mazza, *The Eucharistic Prayers of the Roman Rite*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1986); Nathan Mitchell, *Cult and Controversy: The Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass* (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1982); David N. Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer: The Tridentine Dogma and Its Reinterpretation* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark; New York: Crossroad, 1987); Willy Rordorf et al., *The Eucharist of Early Christians*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1978); Edward Schillebeeckx, *The*

## 1. Gathering in the Spirit.

It is essential that Eucharistic theology be firmly rooted in the scriptures, in the great Eucharistic Prayers,<sup>57</sup> and in the accompanying symbolic actions which the Church has celebrated and handed on to us for almost two millennia.

From these sources, we are very conscious today that the Lord's Supper is the sacrament of the Church, gathered together in the Spirit to proclaim the death and resurrection of the Lord until he comes again.

The early Eucharistic Prayers of both the Eastern and Western Churches have in common, with some variations, the same basic structure: remembrance of the Lord (*anamnesis*) and invocation of the Holy Spirit (*epiclesis*).<sup>58</sup> The narration of Jesus' institution of the Eucharist stands at the theological center of all the great Eucharistic Prayers: "On the night he was betrayed, he took bread, blessed it, broke it..." This narrative recounts the reason why we remember (*anamnesis*): Jesus' command to "do this in remembrance of me"; it also re-presents what we do remember: Jesus' farewell meal with those whom he "loved to the end."<sup>59</sup> In conjunction with this narrative (sometimes before it and sometimes after it), the praying community calls upon (*epiclesis*) God the Father to send his Holy Spirit to sanctify the Eucharistic gifts and all those who receive them.

The traditional Eucharistic Prayers also share a common literary form of address: they are directed to the Father as the source of all gifts. With gratitude, those gathered together thank the Father for all that he has given us in Christ (remembrance), while calling upon him (invocation) to pour out his Spirit to sanctify the gifts of bread and wine, their recipients, and all humanity.<sup>60</sup>

One of the newer Eucharistic Prayers<sup>61</sup> illustrates rather clearly the basic structural elements found in the earlier Prayers (remembrance and invocation), as well as their common literary form of address (to the Father).

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*Eucharist* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968); Kevin Seasoltz, ed., *Living Bread, Saving Cup: Readings on the Eucharist*, rev. ed. (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1987). Many complete bibliographies on the theology of the Eucharist are available on Internet. Cf.: <http://camellia.shc.edu/theology/TheologyEucharist.htm>

<sup>57</sup>David N. Power, "Eucharist," in *Systematic Theology, Roman Catholic Perspectives*, edited by Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) II, 261ff.

<sup>58</sup>Cf. A very interesting chart in John H. McKenna, *Eucharist and the Holy Spirit* (London: Alcuin Club Collections No. 57, 1975) 46-47.

<sup>59</sup>Jn 13:1.

<sup>60</sup>Edward Kilmartin, "Catholic Eucharistic Theology," in *Theological Studies*, Vol. 55, No. 3, September 1994, 444.

<sup>61</sup>Eucharist Prayer for Various Needs and Occasions 4: Jesus the Compassion of God.

*Great and merciful Father, we ask you:  
send down your Holy Spirit  
to hallow these gifts of bread and wine,  
that they may become for us  
the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ.  
On the eve of his passion and death,  
while at table with those he loved,  
he took bread....*

While contemporary liturgy and theology place strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit, St. Vincent, who, like many others of his day, was deeply Christological, focuses very little on “pneumatology.” His extant writings rarely touch on the Holy Spirit and, even when they do, the references are made in passing and remain quite undeveloped.<sup>62</sup>

St. Louise’s writings, on the other hand, often highlight the role of the Spirit, something remarkable in the context of the times. Her Pentecostal experience in 1623 was a turning point in her life and is part of the spiritual heritage that she has passed on to the Daughters of Charity.<sup>63</sup>

So striking is Louise’s focus on the Holy Spirit that Calvet writes: “I dare to risk the word ‘pneumo-centrism’ to characterize the spirituality of Louise de Marillac. She is completely given over to the Spirit. She is a mystic of the Spirit. I merely cite for the reader – Calvet adds – these words: ‘The Spirit fills us with the pure love of God – the Spirit makes us docile to God and places us in the state of living the divine life.’”<sup>64</sup>

Still, Louise’s “pneumo-centrism” is not specifically related to the Eucharist; it is more a facet of her own personal spirituality.

## **2. Recalling God’s saving acts in word and sacrament.**

We know from anthropology that the identity of a people rests upon its story. Nations tell the stories of their founders or of a revolutionary struggle that brought them freedom. Such stories are commemorated on holidays and recounted at home

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<sup>62</sup>For an interesting article on this matter, cf. Benito Martínez, “Espíritu Santo” in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Vicenciana* (Salamanca: CEME, 1995) 213-219.

<sup>63</sup>“On the Feast of Pentecost, during holy Mass or while I was praying in the church, my mind was instantly freed of all doubt. I was assured ... that a time would come when I would be in a position to make vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and that I would be part of a small community where others would do the same. I then understood that I would be in a place where I could help my neighbor but I did not understand how this would be possible since there was to be much coming and going. I was also assured that I should remain at peace concerning my director; that God would give me one whom he seemed to show me” (*Écrits Spirituels*, 3 [A. 2]).

<sup>64</sup>Jean Calvet, *Sainte Louise de Marillac par elle-même* (Paris: Aubier, 1958) 204-205.

and in schools and history books. Often, a constitution sets down the guiding principles that gave birth to a nation and that will assure its continuity. For religions, foundational stories are recounted again and again by believers at home, in churches and schools and in books like the Bible or the Koran.

The Church rests upon the narrative of the death and resurrection of the Lord, which the Eucharist reenacts. It links to this narrative many other related stories: from the Old Testament, from the life of Jesus, from the early Christian community, from the first missions of the apostles. Other types of texts also accompany the narrative: wisdom literature, parables, hymns of praise and the stories of outstanding witnesses to the faith.

The celebration of the Eucharist, therefore, recalls God's saving deeds through word and sacramental rites. Word and sacrament are essentially linked; in fact, all sacraments use words to accompany and express the meaning of ritual signs. For that reason, the table ritual of the Eucharist is always accompanied by story and vocal prayer.

For the members of the Vincentian Family, it is important to note the huge emphasis that St. Vincent placed on the word of God. He was convinced that the word of God never fails. It is like a "house built upon rock."<sup>65</sup> He often begins the chapters of the rules he wrote, and many individual paragraphs, with a citation from scripture. He asks that a chapter of the New Testament be read by the members of his communities every day. In a colorful passage Abelly, his first biographer, notes how devoted St. Vincent was to listening to the word of God: "He seemed to suck meaning from passages of the scriptures as a baby sucks milk from its mother, and he extracted the core and substance from the scriptures so as to be strengthened and have his soul nourished by them — and he did this in such a way that in all his words and actions he appeared to be filled with Jesus Christ."<sup>66</sup> In a conference on the "Gospel Teachings," given to the members of the Congregation of the Mission on February 14, 1659, Vincent holds up Mary as the ideal listener to the word of God. "Better than anyone else," he states, "she penetrated its substance and showed how it should be lived."<sup>67</sup>

Once again, however, the context for focus on the word is not precisely the Eucharist; rather, it is the private reading of scripture.

### **3. The great commemorative prayer of thanksgiving and intercession.**

Basically, the word Eucharistic means "thanksgiving." The New Testament repeats the word often with precisely this meaning.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>CR II, 1.

<sup>66</sup>Abelly, Book III, 72-73.

<sup>67</sup>SV XII, 129.

<sup>68</sup>Cf. 1 Cor 11:24; Mk 8:6; 14:23; Mt 15:36; 26:27; Lk 22:17; 24:30; Jn 6:11; Mk 6:41; 14:22; Mt 14:19; 26:26; Lk 9:15; 22:19.

Actually, the earliest name found in the New Testament designating the Eucharist is the Lord's Supper.<sup>69</sup> A second, and later, New Testament name is the "Breaking of the Bread."<sup>70</sup> Like the name *Eucharist*, these names too bring out important aspects of the spirituality expressed by the rites. The name Lord's Supper identifies the basic symbol of the Eucharistic celebration: it is a memorial meal in which the Lord himself is present in the midst of his people. The name "Breaking of the Bread" emphasizes the Eucharist as a sharing event in which the Lord communicates his life to his disciples and in which they are united with one another in him.

But from the earliest time Christians saw the Eucharist as a thanksgiving meal, in continuity with similar Hebrew meals and prayers. The celebrant begins every Eucharistic Prayer by crying out:

Celebrant: *Let us give thanks to the Lord Our God*  
Assembly: *It is right to give him thanks and praise*  
Celebrant: *Father, All Powerful and Ever-living God,*  
*we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks...*

All of the classical Eucharistic Prayers express words of gratitude to God the Father, focusing on the gifts of creation and redemption. They center on the gift of his Son, who gave his life for all whom he loves.

As mentioned in the first part of this article (I, 4), gratitude is one of the themes that St. Vincent touches on when speaking or writing about the Eucharist, but his emphasis does not fall precisely on the Eucharistic Prayer as a prayer of thanksgiving for God's faithful love in the works of creation and redemption. Rather, he encourages the confreres and sisters to thank God, while they are at the Eucharist, for the gifts that they and their communities have received. Still, thanksgiving is a very important theme in St. Vincent's life and prayer. With striking forcefulness, he states that ingratitude is the "crime of crimes."<sup>71</sup>

#### **4. Memorial of Jesus' sacrificial death.**

In the Eucharistic Prayers the celebrant proclaims the words of the Lord: "This is my body which is *given up* for you" and "this is the cup of my blood ... which will be *shed* for you and for all for the forgiveness of sin."

The Eucharist proclaims a body given up, blood poured out. It reenacts the Lord's handing over of himself for us. The Eucharistic celebration sweeps us up into

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<sup>69</sup>1 Cor 11:20.

<sup>70</sup>Lk 24:35; Acts 2:42.

<sup>71</sup>SV III, 37.

the mystery of faith in which Christ has died, Christ is risen, and Christ will come again. It proclaims the death of the Lord until he comes, while drawing us into Jesus' self-giving love.

In the Eucharist we believe that the Lord gives himself to us in his whole person, body and blood, because he loves us. He shares himself with us in the intimacy of the deepest friendship, giving us his life, his mind, his heart. He is really and fully present to us and in us in self-giving love.

St. Vincent clearly places considerable emphasis on the Eucharist as sacrifice. He writes in the *Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission*: "There can be no better way of paying the best honor possible to these mysteries (the Trinity and the Incarnation) than proper devotion to, and use of, the Blessed Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. It includes, as it were, all the other mysteries of faith and, by itself, leads those who receive Communion respectfully, or celebrate Mass properly, to holiness and, ultimately, to everlasting glory. In this way, God, Unity and Trinity, and the Incarnate Word are paid the greatest honor."<sup>72</sup> Vincent is so convinced of the impact of this "sacrament and sacrifice" in conforming us to Christ that he consistently recommends to the priests and brothers of the Mission and to the Daughters of Charity that they celebrate the Eucharist daily,<sup>73</sup> as do the present Constitutions of both groups.<sup>74</sup>

As noted in the first section of this article, Vincent emphasizes strongly that it is not just the priest who offers sacrifice at the Eucharist, but all the participants.

## **5. Communion in Christ's body and blood.**

The basic symbol of the Eucharistic elements is food and drink. As John's gospel puts it: "My flesh is real food, my blood is real drink. The one who feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I live in him."<sup>75</sup> The Eucharist is a meal in which Jesus offers us nourishment for life's journey. It is the bread of wayfarers, the source of strength for the people of God as we walk on pilgrimage toward the Kingdom.

The structure of the celebration and the words of the traditional Eucharistic Prayers make it evident that this sacramental action, a memorial meal, culminates in

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<sup>72</sup>CR X, 3.

<sup>73</sup>CR X, 6; cf. SV IX, 5.

<sup>74</sup>*Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission* 45 § 1; *Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity* 2.12.

<sup>75</sup>Jn 6:55-56. While scholars debate the origins, and at times the meaning of a number of verses in John 6:22-59, there is little doubt that the final version of John's gospel has clear Eucharistic references, especially John 6:51c-58. Cf. Francis J. Moloney, "Johannine Theology" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* edited by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990) 1426.

eating and drinking: “Take and eat,” “Take and drink.” In doing so we enter into deeper communion with the Lord and, through him, with one another as his people.

St. Vincent’s extant writings place a very strong emphasis on communion: communion with the Lord in the Eucharist, communion with one another in community, and communion with the poor. Contrary to the Jansenists, he emphasizes frequent communion, stating that the Eucharist makes us “like Jesus Christ”<sup>76</sup> and unites us with one another in his love.

Practices recommended by St. Vincent, like visits<sup>77</sup> to the Blessed Sacrament and adoration of the exposed Sacrament (an image of which appears at the front of the first edition of the *Common Rules of the Congregation* in 1658, accompanied by the words, “O Salutaris Hostia”), are ways of refocusing on communion with the Lord at other moments of the day, besides the celebration of the Eucharist. The present-day *Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission* recommend these and/or other forms of “Eucharistic devotion” as extensions of Eucharistic piety.<sup>78</sup>

## **6. A community sent out especially to the poor.**

If the symbols are food and drink within the context of a sacrificial meal which recalls Jesus’ death until he comes again, then the goal is unity in the Lord’s life and unity in his mission. Paul writes to the Corinthians: “Because the loaf of bread is one, we, many though we are, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.”<sup>79</sup> The *Didache*, written around 107, states: “Just as this bread which we break, once scattered over the hills, has been gathered and made one, so may your Church too be assembled from the ends of the earth into your Kingdom.”<sup>80</sup>

The life of the Lord drives us out on mission, especially to the poorest of the poor. The preface one of the newer Eucharistic Prayers puts it quite eloquently:

*Father of mercy, faithful God  
it is fitting that we offer you praise.  
You sent Jesus Christ your Son among us  
as redeemer and Lord.  
He was moved with compassion  
for the poor and the powerless,  
for the sick and the sinner;*

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<sup>76</sup>SV IX, 238.

<sup>77</sup>CR X, 3.

<sup>78</sup>S 19.

<sup>79</sup>1 Cor 10:17.

<sup>80</sup>Didache 9:4.

*he made himself neighbor to the oppressed.  
By his words and actions he proclaimed to the world  
that you care for us as a father cares for his children.*

It is extremely important not to separate the Eucharistic narrative from other New Testament discourses about the Christian table.<sup>81</sup> The Gospel of Luke and the Book of the Acts help us put the Eucharist in the context of a gathering in which Word, prayer, food, and possessions were shared.<sup>82</sup> Luke tells us in his gospel<sup>83</sup>: “Whenever you give a lunch or dinner ... invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.” In the Book of the Acts, he writes: “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to prayers ... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their property and possessions and divide them among all according to each one’s need. Each day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the temple area and to breaking bread in their homes. They ate their meals with exaltation and sincerity of heart, praising God and enjoying favor with all the people.”<sup>84</sup>

St. John Chrysostom focuses on the relationship between the Eucharist and the poor with challenging words:

*Do you wish to honor Christ’s body? Then do not look down upon him when you notice him naked among the poor; nor should you honor him here, in the temple, with fancy offerings, if when you leave you abandon him to his coldness and nakedness. Because the same One who said, “This is my body,” and with his word made manifest everything that he said, also affirmed: “I was hungry, and you did not feed me,” and later,*

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<sup>81</sup>There is much interesting literature on the relationship between the Eucharist and the Church’s mission to the poor: Tissa Balasuriya, *The Eucharist and Human Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Book, 1977); William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology (New York: Blackwell, 1998); James Dallen, “Liturgy and Justice for All” in *Worship* 65 (1991) 290-306; James L. Empereur and Christopher G. Kiesling, *Liturgy That Does Justice*, Theology and Life Series 33 (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press [A Michael Glazier Book], 1990); Peter E. Fink, “The Challenge of God’s Koinonia” in *Worship* 59 (1985) 386-404; John C. Haughey, ed., *The Faith that Does Justice: Examining the Christian Sources for Social Change* (New York: Paulist Press, 1977); Monika K. Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1976); David N. Power, “Worship after the Holocaust” in *Worship* 49 (1985) 447-455; Gail Ramshaw, “The Place of Lament Within Praise: Theses for Discussion” in *Worship* 61 (1987) 317-322; Herman Schmidt and David Power, eds., *Politics and Liturgy*, Concilium: Religion in the Seventies (New York: Herder and Herder, 1974); Catherine Vincie, “The Cry for Justice and the Eucharist” in *Worship* 68 (1994) 194-210; Geoffrey Wainwright, “Eucharist and/as Ethics” in *Worship* 62 (1988) 123-138; Nicholas Wolterstorff, “Liturgy, Justice, and Tears” in *ibid.* 386-403.

<sup>82</sup>Cf. Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Eucharist and Community in First Corinthians,” in *Worship* 50 (1976): 370-385; 51 (1977) 56-69; Gerd Theissen, “Social Integration and Sacramental Activity: An Analysis of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34,” in his *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth*, trans. J. H. Schutz (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 145-174.

<sup>83</sup>Lk 14:12-13.

<sup>84</sup>Acts 2:42-47; cf. also, Acts 4:32ff.

*“whatever you failed to do for one of these little ones, you failed to do for me.”*<sup>85</sup>

In this era when the Church focuses in a renewed way on its preferential option for the poor, the Eucharist should renew our bonds with the poor of our own community as well as with those in distant lands. Paul, having been sent out on mission by the Council of Jerusalem to preach to the Gentiles, states<sup>86</sup>: “The only stipulation was that we should be mindful of the poor — the one thing that I was making every effort to do.”

As mentioned in the first part of this article (I, 7), Vincent saw the Eucharist as the source of effective evangelization. In other words, the Eucharist, in his mind, is connected with life and mission. It is the fountain of the missionary energy and of the missionary virtues that his followers are to bring to the service of the poor.

While it is clear that Vincent’s theological perspective on the Eucharist was, as one would expect, very much influenced by his era, nonetheless, it has tones that ring quite well in the ears of a modern-day teacher or preacher. He insists on the need for all to participate actively. He highlights not just the Lord’s death but also his resurrection. He underlines the importance of praise and thanksgiving at the Eucharist. He sees the Eucharist as food and medicine for our journey as pilgrims. He urges frequent communion, stressing that reception of the body and blood of the Lord is the source of union with him and with one another, and the wellspring of our mission, especially to the poor.

With his usual practical clarity of vision, Vincent recognized and repeated again and again that good dispositions are crucial for participants in the Eucharist. Those who take part badly gain nothing,<sup>87</sup> those who take part well are transformed.

Speaking eloquently during the course of a conference given on August 18, 1647, St. Vincent exclaims in response to a comment by a Daughter of Charity:

*Oh! what a valuable remark! that a person who has made a good Communion, does everything else well. If Elias, endowed with a twofold spirit, wrought such wonders, what will not a person do who has God within her, who is filled with God? She will not be acting of herself; she will be doing the actions of Jesus Christ: she will tend the sick with the charity of Jesus Christ; she will have the sweetness of Jesus Christ in all her life and conversation; she will have the patience of Jesus Christ under trials; will have the obedience of Jesus Christ. In short, my*

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<sup>85</sup>Chrysostom, in his homilies, often points out the close connection between sharing in the Eucharist and caring for the poor. Cf. Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew, XLIX.

<sup>86</sup>Gal 2:10.

<sup>87</sup>SV IX, 331.

*daughters, all her actions will no longer be those of a mere creature, they will be the actions of Jesus Christ.*<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>SV IX, 332-333.

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*Beato Marco Antonio Durando (1801-1880)*

Published by San Paolo, Genoa, Italy, 122 pages, 9 €

The usual waiting for the beatification of Fr. Durando stirred up bibliographical interest in a figure who, as little by little one gets to know him, never stops surprising us by his being completely in tune with our Founder. The numerous writings of Durando lead directly to St. Vincent. Thus, one understands why calling Fr. Durando the “St. Vincent of Italy” is not rhetorical.

Finally, on the eve of his beatification, a new volume on Fr. Durando appeared, written by Fr. Luigi Chierotti, almost the only biographer who has done an in-depth study of the new Blessed. (See also, the most complete biography of Blessed Durando, in its 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of 565 pages with numerous illustration plates). This book, published by Editions San Paolo, is composed, in the first place, of ten small chapters on episodes in the life of Fr. Durando, the events of Turin’s *Risorgimento*, and especially his spiritual journey, which is an exceptional testimony in the Church of his time and in the Vincentian Family. The other 100 pages of the book read at one sitting, and we discover a man remarkable for his intelligence, his wisdom, and his capacity to govern.

One wonders how he could, during his not brief lifetime, but with rather scarce means of transportation, perform such a quantity of particular and concrete works in order to affirm the faith through charity, and with incredible initiatives that seemed very daring to the 19<sup>th</sup> century’s common sense. We owe to Fr. Durando the arrival of the Daughters of Charity in Italy in 1833. The difficulties that he had to overcome prove his complete confidence in Providence and the real boldness of his charity. We also owe to him the spread and the organization of the Congregation of the Mission in Northern Italy, which worked in the popular missions and the formation of the clergy. It is again thanks to him that the work of the *Ladies of Charity* in 1835, the “Misericordie” for the poor, and the *Children of Mary* were established. Even if the work most his was the foundation of the *Nazarene Sisters* to care for and watch over the sick in their homes, nevertheless it is difficult to find in the Turin of the 1800s a work of the Church which had not benefited from his care, his interest, and his priestly attention.

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