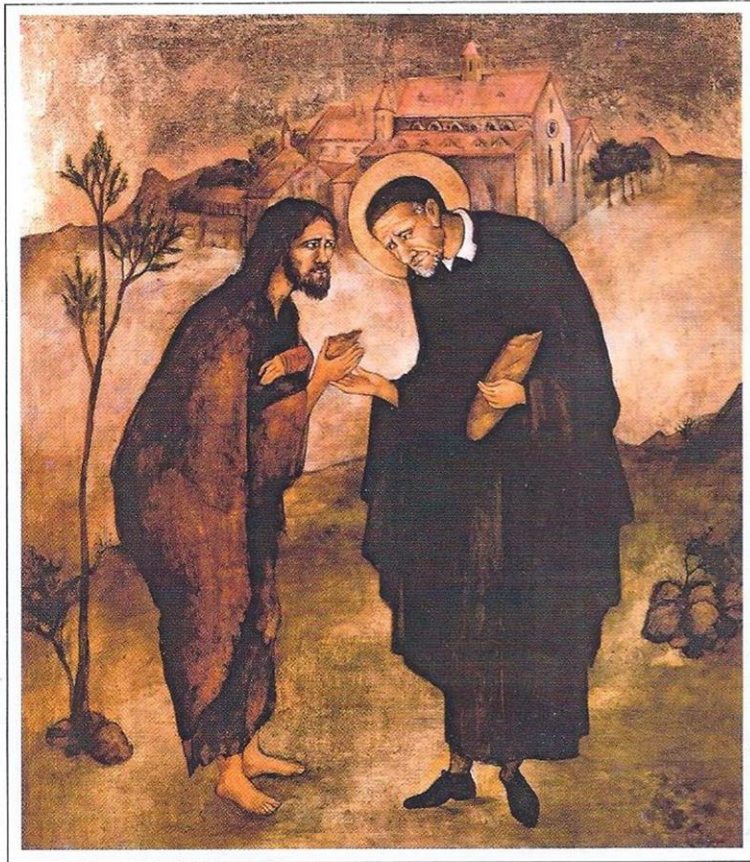


VINCENTIANA

50th YEAR - N. 3

MAY-JUNE 2006



Directory of the Provincial Directors of the Daughters of Charity

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

GENERAL CURIA

GENERAL CURIA

Rome, 5 May 2006

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

Sensitive to the reality of the men and women of our world, the members of the Vincentian Family, and in a special way the Daughters of Charity, have tried, from the beginning, to respond in many ways to the challenge of an illness which is spreading by leaps and bounds especially among the poor: HIV/AIDS.

The Union of Superiors General (USG) in Rome, through its Health Commission, held a conference on 10 March with Superiors General and some members of their General Curiae. At this meeting it presented the conclusions of the panel: *“Religious in the world of the HIV/AIDS pandemic: commitment, challenges and prophecy.”* We are not alien to this reality; thanks be to God, many sisters and brothers witness to their generous devotion to the victims.

I invite you to participate more broadly in this struggle, uniting ourselves to the USG’s initiative. Its documents are attached. I ask you to send them to each of our local communities, requesting that they respond to the questionnaire and collaborate, through their replies, in drawing up the information solicited of us. May our experience, united to that of religious throughout the world, help the USG make concrete commitments in favor of the most vulnerable.

The replies should be sent to the Office of the USIG/USG, as is indicated in the documents attached to this letter. I would also like you to send a copy of those replies to my address: cmcuria@tin.it

I am sure that the road already covered by the members of the Vincentian Family throughout the world in favor of our brothers and sisters will not only contribute to the Church's initiatives, but will also enrich the mission of all the members of our Family.

May the Lord strengthen you and fill you with his peace and his love in this Easter season.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

RELIGIOUS IN THE WORLD AND THE AIDS PANDEMIC: COMMITMENT, CHALLENGE AND PROPHECY

Introduction *A Samaritan traveller who came upon him was moved with compassion* (Lk. 10:33)

The third millennium has reawakened a need in us; a need to come together, to join forces, to share expectations and hopes in order to reflect on a theme which for us is life. We are talking about that life which we encounter daily and which we seek to serve: that life which has been wounded in so many ways and in diverse circumstances by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This desire to serve became a reality when a group of 40 male and female religious from many different countries and various Religious Congregations met in Rome from 12th-14th December 2005. The theme of the meeting was, "Religious in the world and the AIDS pandemic: commitment, challenge and prophecy." The event was organised by the Health Commission of the two Unions of Superiors General UISG and USG to which about 2000 religious institutes and their approximately one million members involved in many and diverse fields in the various continents belong.

Representatives of Caritas Internationalis and UNAIDS,¹ organisations with whom we are working to establish dialogue, were also present at our meeting.

The meeting brought us to the heart of the world. During these days together we heard the cry of many brothers and sisters; we shared our experiences, hopes and concerns and, even more, we rediscovered the two icons which seem most significant for our present reality, the Good Samaritan and the Samaritan Woman. These two icons were presented to us in the Congress on Religious Life last year one of the fruits of which was this meeting.

We feel that this moment is a call to be prophetic, to speak out courageously about a reality which questions us even while we try to deny it or run away from it. The pandemic challenges us to find new forms of radical poverty in sharing in the suffering and the tragedy of a great part of humanity, and it also invites us to unconditional love.

From the beginnings of this enormous tragedy of our time, just like the Good Samaritan and led by our shared passion for Christ and for humanity, we have stopped to help the many people left on the side of the road. At the same time we recognise that we are among the wounded; we are vulnerable people marked by our

¹ The United Nations Department which is specifically concerned with the HIV/AIDS problem.

fragility and limitations. In fact, AIDS is not just outside of us but is found within our very communities.

Like the Samaritan we are aware that it is faith, the living water, which offers a response to the many questions on the meaning of life, death and illness. It frees our capacity for love and forgiveness while it reminds us of the people we have met who have given us so much and have shared their great human and spiritual richness with us. Our service has been an exchange of gifts.

We have been reconfirmed in our commitment and in our conviction of the need to mobilise our energies and outline new strategies for future collaboration among ourselves, overcoming division and individualism. In the fight against HIV/AIDS, which presents us with extremely vast and diverse challenges, each Institute has something to contribute from its own charisma.

The reality *Give me a drink* (Jn. 4:7)

AIDS is considered by the WHO² to be among the three principal dangers for our planet together with nuclear risk and climate change. The situation of HIV/AIDS infection in the world (as given in the UNAIDS Report 2005), is that of an epidemic currently in expansion with an increase in the number of infected people in Eastern Europe and in Asia. There are also alarming signs in the Pacific. The increased number of people at risk in these areas makes our commitment to programmes of prevention and care, which will bring about a change in behaviour, even more urgent.

In December 2005 the estimated number of people with HIV was 40 million. Almost 5 million new cases were reported in 2005. AIDS has already killed 25 million people since it was first recognised in 1981. In spite of the great number of new cases and the fact that the number of people who are HIV positive is greatly increased, there is ample evidence that the efforts at prevention have lessened in many groups and especially among young people. Although there are new cases all over the world, sub-Saharan Africa is still the most strongly affected and has about 26 million people who are HIV positive, which means that two thirds of all the people there are living with AIDS. The growing number of AIDS orphans, of families headed by children, of grandparents who take on the burden of a large number of orphans and the tremendous weight of suffering carried by children in Africa is a growing concern for us. We are challenged by the growing number of women affected by this pandemic; 50% of those who live with the virus are women and they pay the highest price in this situation.

² World Health Organisation.

The prevention of the disease among the youth and those who are most at risk needs to concentrate on education for life and on sexuality. It needs to be carried out clearly and thoroughly particularly in areas in which neglect and poverty makes those who work in the sex industry and those who seek “escape” through drugs more vulnerable to HIV infection.

Though the responses to HIV/AIDS have increased and improved notably in the last ten years they have still not kept pace with an epidemic which is constantly worsening. Access to anti-retroviral drugs has increased and these are available in the richer countries, but the situation is different in the poorer countries of Eastern Europe, Latin America, the greater part of Asia and virtually in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa.

Responses and challenges *He went up and bandaged his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them* (Lk. 10:34)

Effective prevention is still undermined by stigma and discrimination that create a climate in which the pandemic continues to advance. These challenges require competent co-operation from all men and women of good will, from international agencies, with NGOs³ and Faith — based groups, cross cultural co-operation and the sharing of resources which can guarantee the best care, education and prevention which our human creativity can put together.

In this collaboration, we religious can offer in a particular way, the richness of our experience inspired by evangelical values. We would like to point out what is specific to religious life and which brings us to:

- a) Be and create bridges of mutual dialogue:
 - Inside Congregations, local Churches, Social Organisations, Governments...
 - With people: proximity, nearness, vital relationships, listening in order to understand the problem, care (cf. The icon of the Good Samaritan)
 - With cultures, in order to discover their values and bring them out rather than importing everything from outside (cfr. Icon of the Samaritan Woman)
- b) Harmonise the response to the urgency of the pandemic with an integral approach that considers all the various sides of the problem, which takes time.

³ Non-Governmental Organisations.

- c) Recognise the challenge to conversion for us as religious in the face of a problem which touches the way we interpret the illness, overcoming ignorance and the tendency to “moralise,” and to recognise, with humility, the presence of the illness even within our communities.
- d) To be prophetic in recognising the demands that this illness brings into the pastoral environment and to deepen the theological and pastoral reflection brought about by HIV/AIDS.

Action points

1. Bring about awareness in all the Congregations and in the Church that the AIDS problem is a complex reality that goes beyond the medical aspect; that it includes education, social, economic and political conditions; that it is about justice and that is the responsibility of all of us. For this reason HIV/AIDS should become a part of our pastoral programmes, of our teaching, preaching, care, social development programmes and justice education programmes.
2. Continue the plan of mapping⁴ and bringing about awareness in religious communities to facilitate subsequent interventions in this area according to the various charismas.
3. Collaborate and network among ourselves and with other groups continuing along the lines of this initial event with the formation of a larger forum in order to bring about the recommended resolutions.
4. Learn from one another which are the best strategies, such as those we have heard in these days. These will include preventive care programmes, sexual education for life, the formation of youth, care of the sick, integration of children with HIV/AIDS into society, particular attention to orphans and children in the counselling⁵ field, the setting up of research in this area, support programmes for women, for the sick and their families etc.
5. Involve ourselves in advocacy.⁶ The aim of this will be to seek funds, to facilitate treatment of the most vulnerable groups so

⁴ One of the aims of the AIDS project of the Union is to know and make known the activities world-wide that religious are carrying out in the fight against HIV/AIDS. To help with this a questionnaire will be sent to all religious communities as a basic tool to help in drawing up a complete picture or a map, of all our initiatives.

⁵ Psycho-spiritual support.

⁶ Assistance, speak for, support, encouragement.

that all might have access to anti-retroviral⁷ treatment and other necessary care, and for prevention.

6. Make use of the Justice and Peace web site (UISG-USG) and establish links with the websites of the various congregations and of other Catholic organisations, which are committed to combating the pandemic.
7. Pay attention to the call for the pastoral and humane care of those caught up in the pandemic; the care of the sick and dying of AIDS, solicitude for those who care for them, for those who are HIV positive and for those who lose their relatives. Organise days of support and of healing prayer and create family support groups.
8. Specific formation in the training of health workers and those working in pastoral care. Set up programmes in our houses of formation which should include courses on HIV/AIDS, as well as personal and religious development. Create models of formation that others can follow.
9. Circumscription superiors should establish guidelines that offer support to priests, brothers and sisters who live with the virus.
10. Face the problem of stigmatisation and discrimination by means of a series of theological and pastoral reflection and offer our witness of involvement with people living with HIV.
11. Work in collaboration with those who live with HIV/AIDS, with other Catholic organisations who are involved in the fight against the pandemic, with people and organisations of other denominations and faith groups, governments, international agencies (such as UNAIDS, WHO and the Global Fund for the fight against AIDS, TB and Malaria), and civil society.

Conclusion

Last November Pope Benedict XVI, referring to World AIDS day, declared that the statistics of those who suffer from AIDS were *“truly alarming.”* He went on to say, *“Following the example of Christ, the Church has always considered the care of the sick an integral part of its mission. Therefore, I encourage the many initiatives being carried out, especially by the Christian communities, for the eradication of this disease, and I am close to those who suffer from AIDS along with their families, as I invoke the help and comfort of the Lord upon them.”*

We have a steadfast hope that this initiative is only the first step on a long journey that we have to take and along which we can

⁷ Specific drugs for the treatment of AIDS.

proceed together. We hope that other Congregations that are not specifically involved in health ministry might also respond to this call according to their charismas. We are also aware that the response of the Congregations which are already involved need to move to greater unity as we work to overcome the present fragmentation of our various commitments.

Forty million people who suffer from AIDS are looking to us with hope!

Rome, 15 December 2005

For the participants:

Fr. Frank Monks, MI
President of the Health Commission
UISG/USG

Sr. María Martinelli, CMS
Group Co-ordinator
UISG/USG

Rome, 11 May 2006

To all the members of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

I hope all of you are living the graces that came from the celebration of Holy Week with an abundance of life in community and in your service of the poor in your various apostolates.

I recently made a trip to Mozambique during which I had the opportunity to visit with many members of the Vincentian Family. In particular, I met with our confreres who are members of the Vice-province, the community of the Province of Mexico in Chongoene and the community of the Province of Salamanca in Nacala. I also visited the Daughters of Charity in different places throughout the country.

I have one purpose in mind for writing this circular. As you are well aware, we have a shortage of missionaries available in the various apostolates that depend on foreign missionaries. The number of volunteers, in response to the Mission Appeal letters that both Fr. Maloney, my predecessor, and I have written, has fallen off dramatically. This raises for me a question, which requires reflection on the part of all members of the Congregation of the Mission, especially the Visitors, who are responsible animating the missionary spirit of the provinces. Are we instilling, within the hearts of each member, the spirit to serve as missionaries either at home or abroad?

On a number of my visits, especially when I speak to those in houses of formation and formation teams, as well as to members of provincial councils, I have made it very clear that our young men, although they are prepared in such-and-such a province, they are prepared for the Congregation of the Mission. I remind them that our Constitutions state (12, 5^o) that they must have a “readiness to go to any part of the world, according to the example of the first missionaries of the Congregation.”

At times I have the impression that, as a Congregation, we have become too “provincial”; that is, we have a concern only for our particular area of work, our own territory and we forget about having men available to work outside the limits of the province. This is a dimension that has always been part of our tradition and is a way of showing willingness to collaborate with the efforts of the Congregation at the general level. There is a need to do some

awareness building in our provinces and that depends on the Visitors. I hope to discuss this theme with them at the International Visitors' Meeting in Mexico next year.

Now, once again, I would like to make an urgent appeal to all members of the Congregation of the Mission to consider making themselves available to serve in the missions, particularly where certain provinces have asked for assistance. Such a petition was made by the Vice-Province of Mozambique and that is why it was listed as the number two need in my Mission Appeal Letter last October.

Over the past two years, the Vice-Province has lost six men. After giving of their time generously in the vice-province, they made the decision to return to their provinces of origin at the conclusion of their contracts. That is certainly a right which everyone has to exercise when collaborating in the evangelization efforts of other provinces. But, as a result of this drastic loss in the number of confreres in the vice-province, the Vice-Visitor and his council had to close, unfortunately, three of their mission posts, precisely because there are not enough personnel to guarantee evangelization in the context of good community living.

I want to make another appeal. This is not the ordinary time to do it. But because the situation is urgent and necessary, I do so to all the members of the Congregation of the Mission. If anyone has an inclination to serve on an international mission or to serve by collaborating with another province of the Congregation that is in urgent need of assistance, please write to me. It is, of course, important that you share your desire with your Visitor. But you need to discern how God wants you to live out your vocation as a member of the Congregation of the Mission. Even though the needs of a particular province may be great, the needs of the international Congregation of the Mission are just as great. The Superior General and his council always ask the opinion of the Visitor and his council about the different candidates who offer themselves as volunteers for various missions. But the last word with regard to whether or not a man will work on a particular mission is a decision of the Superior General.

I also ask the following of the Visitors and their councils:

1. That, in both your initial and ongoing formation programs, you provide adequate time to the development of a missionary spirit within all the members of the province.
2. That you make very clear to the men who enter the Congregation in your province that they are members of the Congregation of the Mission and are not limited to being members of your province.

3. That, if a man in your province shows a willingness and desire to give of himself to a province other than his own, you take seriously his concern for living out his vocation as a member of the worldwide Congregation.

Rest assured that, with faith and trust in God, when we give from our needs, the Lord will truly bless us. I say that with all sincerity and with great confidence in the God who desires that our mission continue in the world today.

God bless you all.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in black ink and is centered on the page.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Superior General

Rome, 23 June 2006
Sacred Heart of Jesus

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

Tempo Forte (12-16 June) Circular

Dear Brothers,

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

In our **ongoing formation** session, we were accompanied by Dr. Leticia Soberón Mainero, from the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, with the theme, "Technology at the Service of Communication of the Kingdom of God."

Also present at the Curia, during the time of our *tempo forte* meeting, were the **members of the Preparatory Commission for the International Visitors' Meeting**, which will take place in Mexico in June 2007. The members are: Daniel Borlik (Visitor of the South USA), Francisco Solás (Visitor of Venezuela), Yves Bouchet (Visitor of Toulouse), Antonius Sad Budianto (Visitor of Indonesia), Michael Ngoka (Vice-Visitor of Nigeria), and, as translator from French, Roberto Gómez, missionary of the Province of Toulouse.

1. During the first moment of our session, we evaluated the **meeting of the General Council with the Presidents of the Conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces**. The week before, from 9-10 June, we met with the representatives of each of the Conferences of the Congregation: Corpus Delgado, President of CEVIM - Europe; Mathew Kallammakal, President of APVC - Asia Pacific; Michael Ngoka, President of COVIAM - Africa and Madagascar; Francisco Solás, President of CLAPVI - Latin America; and Daniel Borlik, representative for the NCV - United States.

Each made a brief presentation of his Conference: the strong and weak points, as well as the principal concerns. We then reviewed the commitments that each Conference made during the General Assembly. We also received suggestions for topics for the Visitors' Meeting in 2007. The Presidents, with the opinions of their Conferences, evaluated the different services that the Curia provides to the Congregation. Then they made recommendations to the Superior General and his council. These were some of the matters that we treated in this two-day meeting.

2. We heard a presentation by Ann Frances Margolies, who is an expert in information technology, concerning the **new data base of the General Secretariat**. This project has been implemented to modernize the personnel files, as well as to facilitate the publication of the *General Catalogue*, which we hope will be available on-line for all the confreres.
3. Elmer Bauer, Treasurer General, and José Antonio Ubillús, Assistant General for the Missions, presented the **Mission Distribution Fund** for 2006. Thirty entities of the Congregation were beneficiaries of this financial assistance, which basically contributes to initial and ongoing formation, as well as providing for the missionaries' basic needs.
4. We selected the winners of the **Mission Award 2006**. We received 13 projects from different provinces, from which we selected five winners, whose names will be announced on 30 July, the Feast of St. Justin De Jacobis.
5. We studied the report from the **Vincentian Solidarity Office**, presented by its administrator, Brother Peter Campbell. Between 1 March and 31 May, the office accepted eight new projects, of which three were completely financed and another five partially so. Seven mini-grants also were given by the Vincentian Solidarity Fund to finance projects. For more information with regard to the activities of the Vincentian Solidarity Office, you can consult its website: www.famvin.org/vso
6. Manuel Ginete, the **Delegate of the Superior General for the Vincentian Family**, highlighted in his latest report the visits that he made to the Vincentian Family in Brazil, Nigeria, the Philippines, Thailand and Cambodia. He gave some conferences on the themes of the most vulnerable and the worldwide Vincentian Family, which included the principal branches and criteria for mutual collaboration. In the next few days, he will visit, with the Superior General, the Vincentian Family in Ireland. He will also participate in Valencia, Spain, in the Fifth World Meeting of Families.
7. We want to inform you the **SIEV** (International Secretariat for Vincentian Studies) has prepared, with the collaboration of John Freund and his team, a CD with the digital edition of *Vincentiana* (1995-2003). This material will be sent by the General Curia to all the provinces. This is the conclusion of a work process which was initiated by the previous SIEV commission.
8. Fr. José Antonio Ubillús, Assistant General for the Missions, presented, for our review, a new draft of the **Statutes of the International Missions**, with the hope that in the next *tempo forte*, we will be able to approve it *ad experimentum*. He also communicated to us with great joy that Frs. Fernando

Sánchez and Cyrille de Nanteuil, missionaries in El Alto, Bolivia, have been awarded scholarships by CIAM, the International Missionary Animation Center (of Rome). The course will take place from 16 October - 1 December of this year.

9. We studied the list of **volunteers for the missions**. We received six offers, of which one confrere was named immediately. Within the next few months, we hope to be able to name another confrere to a needy mission of the Congregation.
10. We then analyzed the various **reports from the Conferences of Visitors and/or Provinces**.
 - **CEVIM** had its annual meeting in Istanbul, Turkey. Throughout the meeting, Fr. José María Nieto, Assistant General, was present. I also joined them for two days. All the information that was shared in this meeting of the Visitors of Europe and the Middle East can be found on the Conference’s website: www.cevim.org
 - **COVIAM**, had its General Assembly in Madagascar from 4-9 May. I was present throughout the course of the meeting, being the representative from the Curia to the Conference of Africa and Madagascar. Fr. Sylvester Peterka, from the Eastern USA Province, was present. He will be supporting COVIAM in different aspects of formation. Michael Ngoka was elected President and Emmanuel Typamm was reelected as Executive Secretary of the Conference.
 - The **NCV** had its meeting on 9 February in Los Altos Hills, California. It was decided to move ahead with the process of a two-province model for the United States. Each province will do its own process in order to gather information from the grass-roots level.
 - The **APVC** had its annual meeting in Surabaya, Indonesia, from 1-12 May. The first part of the meeting was an ongoing formation session concerning Islam. At the same time, the confreres visited various communities in the Province of Indonesia. At the APVC meeting, the representative of the Congregation to the United Nations, Fr. Joseph Foley, was present. He gave a presentation to the Visitors concerning the nature of his work and how the Conferences can benefit from his services. At this meeting, they elected a new Executive Secretary, Fr. Serafín Peralta, former Visitor of the Province of the Philippines, as well as former Director of the Daughters of Charity there. Fr. Gérard Du, Assistant General, also participated in this meeting.

11. One of the central points of this *tempo forte* was the preparation for the **International Visitors' Meeting**. The theme of the meeting will be: "Ongoing formation for a Vincentian missionary today." This theme will be developed by way of two conferences and group work. Within the next few weeks, the Preparatory Commission will be sending more information about the development of this meeting.

Many other subjects were treated in this *tempo forte*, but I have mentioned some of the more important matters. I hope that this information is helpful to you as members of the Congregation of the Mission. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in dark ink and is centered on the page.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

A Passion for Justice¹

by G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Superior General

God is passionate about justice. Sound surprising? Well, look no farther than the prophet Micah 6:8. Here is a text that speaks for the heart of God. In Micah 6:1-7, we find a scene where God puts Israel on trial for forgetting the divine liberation from slavery in Egypt (6:4), and for forgetting what such liberation requires of God's people. Like many of us, I suppose, Israel tries to plea-bargain. Can they buy off "the Prosecutor" by increasing their sacrificial offerings? Maybe God could be persuaded to look the other way if they sacrifice a better quality of calf or ram. Israel even offers God the unspeakable — its own firstborn.

In response, God addresses Israel and all humankind as well: "This is what God asks of you, only this: that you act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with your God" (6:8).

Note that these are not three separate commands. They are a unity. A right relationship with God requires justice, love, and faith. Or, to sum it up in another way, God expects from us faith that does justice with love. Nothing else will do.

The person of Jesus shows us just how passionate God is about justice. In a foundational text from St. Luke's gospel (4:16-21), we witness Jesus on a Sabbath day in his hometown. "As was his custom," Jesus came to the synagogue for worship. Obviously a "regular" in his local faith community, Jesus was invited to read. He took the scroll of Isaiah the prophet, searched out its mighty missionary text (61:1-2) and proclaimed: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, and has anointed me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, and to proclaim God's year of favor." Then, after a dramatic pause, Jesus made the astonishing announcement: "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:18-21).

¹ Conference pronounced by Fr. G. Gregory Gay, Superior General, in the St. John's University Convocation, Jamaica, New York, USA, 26 January 2005.

Here we have a passionate social justice text which Jesus deliberately chose to launch his work. So passionate was Jesus about justice and God's Kingdom, that he wanted the heavenly harvest to begin right here on earth, in and through him.

The importance of the Kingdom of God for Jesus is underlined by the earliest gospel, Mark. The first words from Jesus are about the Kingdom of God: "Now after John the Baptizer was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying: 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the good news'" (Mark 1:14-15).

When Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of God, his hearers would have noticed an important contrast. They lived under other kingdoms, the kingdom of Herod and the kingdom of Caesar. They knew what these kingdoms were like; they suffered poverty and oppression every day under these kingdoms. What was different about what Jesus was announcing? In a sentence, Jesus was proclaiming a Kingdom that showed what life would be like on earth if God were king and the rulers of this world were not. God's Kingdom is about God's justice; as such, it is in stark opposition to the systemic injustice of the kingdoms and domination systems of this world.

Significantly, the Kingdom of God for Jesus was something for the earth, something for the right here and right now. Perhaps we have often lost sight of this. Maybe we have even forged a false divide between our spiritual quest for holiness and the promotion of justice. But the coming of the Kingdom of God is for this earth of ours. So it is not surprising that the Lord's Prayer we recite so often contains this petition: "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." Heaven's doing fine; earth is where we have got work to do.

The Kingdom of God is what life would be like on earth if God were in charge. It is God's dream, God's passion. Jesus was so passionate about fulfilling God's dream that he lived and died for it. It is *the* dream for this earth of ours.

Down through the centuries, countless women and men have latched on to the dream. They sensed that the dream required them not only to seek the holiness of a right relationship with God, but also to pursue and promote justice with passionate hearts. They were jolted into the consciousness that more was demanded than personal honesty and private charity. They needed to participate in the struggle to change whatever it was that caused people to be hungry or homeless, oppressed or victimized, in the first place. These men and women, our heroes and heroines in the faith, could not do everything, but they did something, and did it well. Yes, and did it passionately.

Vincent de Paul, one of the saints of the Kingdom of God on earth, is an enduring model and guide for us, and not only during Founder's Week at St. John's University. His passion for justice and his preferential option for the poor still call out to us. We often think of Vincent as a man of action, and indeed he was. No poor person was invisible to him; no organizational detail on behalf of justice escaped his notice; no avenue of remedy was left unexplored. If one door was closed to him, he always seemed to find another that was open. He literally transformed the face of France in the 17th century and he continues to inspire countless imitators and friends in the Vincentian Family even today.

What sometimes escapes our notice, however, is that Vincent was as passionate about his prayer as he was about his activity. It seemed that his prayer energized his service and his service gave shape to his prayer. Although it is somewhat risky to peek into Vincent's mind, allow me to cite but one example of how Vincent might have linked his prayer to his passion for justice.

You may know that Vincent de Paul had a special devotion to the Trinity. Here is what he said in a conference on May 23, 1659: "What is it that produces unity and community in God? Is it not the equality and distinction of the Three Persons? What produces their mutual love, if not their perfect resemblance? If they did not possess mutual love, what would be lovable in them? Unanimity, therefore, exists in the blessed Trinity; what the Father wills, the Son wills; what the Holy Spirit does, the Father and the Son do; they act in the same manner; they have but one and the same power, one and the same operation. Behold then the beginning of perfection and our model."

Our own Vincentian Constitutions pick up this same theme in Article 20: "The Church finds the ultimate source of its life and action in the Trinity. The Congregation of the Mission, within the Church, does the same."

What is instructive here is that the symbol of the Trinity — for so many of us a doctrine on the sidelines, and not very well attended to — was for St. Vincent not only an object for contemplation but a warrant for social justice. For if the inner life of the Godhead is a right and loving relationship, then people made in God's image must be allowed to live in like manner with each other. And if these right and just relationships are out of sync, someone must endeavor to put these relationships right, so that God's will might be done on earth just as it is in heaven.

All of us know how challenging it is to "keep on keeping on" in a faith that does justice. It is hard not to feel overwhelmed by the sheer size and seeming intractability of the problems of social injustice. How is it possible, for example, that there are millions of Americans living below the poverty line and going hungry? Is it impossible for

us to come up with a plan to provide health insurance for all Americans? Are we owners of the earth or stewards who manage what belongs to somebody else? Is it really true that a rising tide raises all boats? How difficult is it for a superpower to be wise, gentle, and compassionate? Are we really as welcoming to immigrants as we once were? In the face of hard questions like these, there is a temptation to run for cover, to shelve away our faith and keep it utterly private. We must not do this. Faith and justice cannot, must not, be separated. And yet, it is hard to maintain this linkage, especially in our country.

After all, our American culture is dominated by an ethos of individualism. It is the air we breathe, a core cultural value. Although there is much that is good about individualism, it often leads to a way of seeing life that obscures the enormous effects of social systems on the lives of people. The notion of the “self-made person” is the coin of the realm. According to this way of thinking, we, as individuals, get what we deserve. And yet, to think that we are primarily the products of our own individual efforts is to blithely ignore the web of relationships and circumstances that deeply affect our lives. Understanding God’s passion for justice and becoming a willing partner with Jesus and Vincent in making present the Kingdom of God on earth require a different way of thinking and doing. And here is where St. John’s University comes into the picture.

Since 1870, St. John’s has consciously put higher education at the service of the poor. By educating first generation college students, many from immigrant families, by instilling in all students an affective and an effective love for those in need, by searching out the causes of poverty and advocating for justice through short and long-term solutions, St. John’s University has demonstrated that a large institution can be vigorously academic, Catholic, and Vincentian. It is a very unique, distinctive, and attractive mix. I applaud it and endorse it enthusiastically. While continuing to provide educational opportunities for the poor and to a very diverse student body, St. John’s has made education for justice, charity, service, and advocacy a hallmark of its identity and a focus for its institutional force.

What remains to be done? Two things, I think

First, the challenge to “act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with our God” underscores the necessity of bringing a Vincentian spirituality to bear on our passion for justice. The ability to “keep on keeping on,” even in the face of insurmountable odds, is grounded in the realization that achieving social-justice goals and building the Kingdom of God do not depend solely on our efforts. Justice is a partnership of God’s grace and human effort. Vincent’s spirituality

and life's activity must continue to fuel our own lives and our quest for holiness.

The second challenge is to engage the future with hope and a clear sense of who we are and who we want to continue to be. St. John's University is distinctly Catholic and distinctly Vincentian. Can it, will it, remain so in the future, especially with the rapid diminishment of Vincentian priests and brothers, as well as Daughters of Charity, available for this kind of apostolate? Are we effectively, as a Vincentian presence, passing on that wonderful tradition that Vincent has given us? What goals and standards are we willing to articulate together, concrete and specific enough, so that we would be able to know whether we had failed or succeeded in meeting them?

Vincentians who are not members of the Congregation of the Mission or Daughters of Charity are called to carry the mantle of St. Vincent de Paul at St. John's. Where are these Vincentians to be found? I am convinced that they are in our midst, people like those whom the University is honoring today. Are there others who have the sensitivities and the skills to foster a Catholic identity with a distinctively Vincentian flavor here at the University? I am convinced that there are, for how would it be possible that a Vincentian or Daughter of Charity could work day in and day out side-by-side with other colleagues and not have that charism of Vincent "rub off" and live within the hearts of their fellow workers? Let their presence be recognized. Let us promote together the passion of Vincent. Let us share his charism as a Family.

We are all called, my brothers and sisters, to reflect a passion for justice which comes from a passion for Jesus and a passion for Jesus' poor.

May St. Vincent de Paul inspire us and all those who come after us with this spirit and may God grace us with love so that we might be faithful to the call.

Together with the Poor on the Road to Peace ¹

by G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Superior General

I would like to speak to this topic from the perspective of our own Vincentian spirituality. In any number of different places St. Vincent calls his followers to be contemplatives in action. It would be a mistake to see our spirituality, contemplatives in action, as two different entities. To truly understand our spirituality, we have to see it as one, contemplation-action. Our relationship with the poor is always seen in this context. We are called to contemplate our experience with the poor, which at the same time motivates us to act together with the poor. It is essential that we be clear that this is the context in which we develop our own spirituality and it is the same context in which I would like today to develop the theme that I have been given: "Together with the poor on the road to peace."

I will begin with a bit of an analysis of the title itself. First of all, as stated, "together with the poor." It is of utmost importance, in terms of our being able to be effective in our service to the poor, that we be close to them, that we be with them, that above all we treat them as they are, our "Lords and Masters," with utmost respect, seeing them as protagonists of their own lives, rather than objects of the living out of our own spirituality. Taking a step further, "together with the poor" will certainly involve what St. Vincent meant when he said that we should love God, but we should do it with the sweat of our brow and the strength of our arms. Our working together with the poor, from their own situations of marginalization, necessarily means a lot of blood, sweat and tears.

In our closeness with the poor, we will come to know them better and experience the different aspects of their lives: the good and the bad, the redeemed, the unredeemed, their lights and their shadows. Among the shadows that we certainly would discover would be the level of violence that exists in most of the contexts

¹ Conference pronounced by Fr. G. Gregory Gay, Superior General of the Congregation of Mission, AIC Assemblée, Santo Domingo, 11 February 2005.

where the poor live and work and make strides to struggle to survive. I single out the point of violence, because it is important to come to a recognition of violence not only in the lives of the poor, but in our own lives as well, if we want to take seriously the task at hand: "Together with the poor on the road to peace."

The second part of the title, "on the road," speaks to me of a process, a process which takes into consideration our own personal growth processes, our growing together in the process of community or association, together with the process of drawing close to the poor. Growth processes are painstaking. They involve a lot of learning, a lot of listening and a lot of giving, a lot of taking and certainly a lot of patience. What is truly good never comes easy. The consequence of patient struggle, together with the poor "on the road," is peace and harmony one with another. If we are willing to work through the processes together, then we will be true witnesses that peace among human beings is possible.

From a Christian perspective we use here as a model — and as more than a model, an inspiration — the doctrine of the Trinity. Just as the Trinity was one of the favorite doctrines of St. Vincent de Paul, I see it becoming such for me as well. You may know that Vincent de Paul had a special devotion to the Trinity. Here is what he said in a conference on May 23, 1659: "What is it that produces unity and community in God? Is it not the equality and distinction of the Three Persons? What produces their mutual love, if not their perfect resemblance? If they did not possess mutual love, what would be lovable in them? Unanimity, therefore, exists in the blessed Trinity; what the Father wills, the Son wills; what the Holy Spirit does, the Father and the Son do; they act in the same manner; they have but one and the same power, one and the same operation. Behold then the beginning of perfection and our model."

What is instructive here is that the symbol of the Trinity — for so many of us a doctrine on the sidelines, and not very well attended to — was for St. Vincent not only an object for contemplation but a warrant for social justice, which is absolutely necessary in the construction of peace. This was so often stated by Pope Paul VI and equally repeated by Pope John Paul II. The inner life of the Godhead is a right and loving relationship. People made in God's image must strive to live in a like manner with each other. If these "right and just" relationships are out of sync, there must be an endeavor to put these relationships right, so that God's will might "be done on earth just as it is in heaven." When we speak of peace, which means much more than an absence of war, we are speaking of harmonious relationships, equal relationships one with another as is so clearly modeled in our Godhead, the Trinity.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are invited to do the will of God as Jesus did. Doing the will of God can be understood as imitating God, living as God in and through our own humanness with the gift of his divine grace. Certainly in the society in which we live the reality of equal relationships is not such. Many times there are those who dominate and those who are dominated; there are those who oppress and the oppressed. Even in supposedly “Christian relationships,” there exists a lack of equality, for there are “the do-gooders” who do for others in a way that is at times paternalistic or maternalistic, often doing for the other what the other could do for him or herself. This is where the need for empowerment becomes so essential.

“Empowerment” is a concept that certainly has been coined in a new way by the International Association of Charities. It is a term “which implies giving the first place to the last, to those who are our “Lords and Masters.”² Once those who are beneficiaries of our commitment of solidarity come to a recognition of their dignity and equality, we can more easily work together in a co-responsible manner. Through co-responsibility “we hope to show a path which leads to peace, real peace, which cannot exist as long as there are men and women dying of hunger, with no life opportunities and living in despair.”³

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity speaks eloquently to the concept of co-responsibility in our world today. The Trinity in itself, being the Godhead and source of grace and love for us, is the key element needed as you (AIC) walk together with the poor on the road to peace.

To be able to walk together with the poor on the road to peace there is a preliminary call to each of us to undergo a personal process of conversion. The goal that we hope to achieve — “peace together with the poor” — can have as its basis growth in the five virtues that St. Vincent de Paul recommended to the Congregation of the Mission. Most of us recall that he recommended three virtues to the Daughters of Charity: humility, simplicity and charity. For the Congregation of the Mission it was five: humility, simplicity, meekness, mortification, and zeal for souls. Each virtue integrally contributed to St. Vincent de Paul’s own personal process of conversion — the basis of his transformation.

In other writings about peace an emphasis has been placed on the role of meekness. Certainly that is a topic beautifully developed

² Assembly of Delegates, AIC, 2002, “The Social Co-Responsibility, a Path Towards Peace,” p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

by our own former Superior General, Fr. Robert Maloney.⁴ I would like to show how we can develop in our lives the five virtues as an integral way of helping us to live more clearly as persons of peace, experiencing the process within ourselves and walking together with the poor in the same process in their lives. “Together with the poor,” we give witness to what true peace is all about in this violent, war-torn world of ours.

As we all know well, St. Vincent de Paul singled out these five virtues in the life of Jesus as he meditated on the Gospels. He did so in and through the recognition that he himself did not have these particular virtues and he felt the need to develop them in order to be more faithful in following Jesus, the Evangelizer of the Poor. Sometimes the best way to understand the virtues is to speak first about their opposites, which can help come to a deeper understanding of what they are about. I would like to try that method here as I share with you what I consider to be essential; that is, the development within our Vincentian spirituality of these five virtues, helping us to be more clearly “imitators” of Jesus Christ, thus helping us to walk faithfully with the poor on the road to peace.

The gradual living out of these virtues in his life drew St. Vincent closer to Jesus himself. It was for him a true change of heart, leading him to be a more Christ-like person, a peace-filled person, a person energized with the life of Christ and with an overwhelming desire and great courage to share that Christ-likeness with others. Growing in these virtues entails a process of conversion or true change of heart for all of us. I believe that, at the basis of establishing true peace, what is important is a change of heart.

Humility

Let me begin with the virtue of humility. Its opposite is to be arrogant, or as we would say in Spanish, “prepotente.” It is seen in he or she who dominates, controls, and imposes him or herself upon another. It is sometimes interpreted as feeling more than the other or above the other, but in the eyes of God we are all equal. I find it interesting that in order to be able to strike that balance and come to an understanding that we are all equal in the eyes of God, St. Vincent de Paul reversed the scales. Normally, from the societal perspective, there is certainly an imbalance in relationships. Those at the lower end of the scale would certainly be the marginalized, the excluded, the impoverished in the world in which we live. St. Vincent, in order to help himself realize that the poor are equal, that we are all equal

⁴ Cf., ROBERT P. MALONEY, “A Vincentian Reflection on Peace,” in *Vincentiana* 48/2 (March-April) 2004, 115-127.

in the eyes of God, made the poor his “Lords and Masters,” perhaps as a deliberate way to help him to come to an equal relationship with them. At the same time, he encourages us, his brothers and sisters, Daughters of Charity, Ladies of Charity, and members of the Congregation of the Mission, whom he often spoke to of the poor as being our “Lords and Masters,” to come to the same discovery, as a way of helping us to become humble. Simply put, that means the ability to recognize not only our weaknesses, but at the same time our strengths; to recognize our limitedness, as well as our giftedness; and to be able to recognize the same in the other. It is through humility then that we can come to see that we are all equal in the eyes of God and that it is only God himself who is above us, although he chose to be one like us in all things but sin. Equal relationships is an essential ingredient in the process of building peace.

Simplicity

The second of the virtues is that of simplicity. Its opposite is understood as deceitfulness, the image of someone who is two-faced, someone who would speak or act in one way in front of you and then speak or act in a different way behind your back. The gift of simplicity calls us to be utterly sincere in our relationships one with another, transparent, open, with a capacity for saying things as they are with great compassion. As Scripture tells us, “Let your ‘Yes’ mean ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ mean ‘No.’”⁵ Sincerity builds trust and trust is yet another essential piece for building peace. True peace can be built up only in mutual trust.⁶

Meekness

The third virtue is that of meekness, often understood as a key virtue in bringing about peace. The opposite of meekness is aggressiveness, the one who attacks, the one who beats down another, the one who abuses either by word or action, the one who deeply hurts the other, often leaving long-lasting scars. In the imitation of Jesus, we are called to be meek, to be gentle; stepping back and putting the other first; not being afraid to draw near to another or allow the other to draw near to me. Meekness leaves one open and approachable. We can be open and approachable when we see others as they are in the deepest part of their being. Despite all the limitations, despite all the exterior roughness, people in the deepest part of their hearts are good and they are good because they

⁵ Mt 5:37.

⁶ Cf., Pope JOHN XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 113.

have been made so by God, who is all good. The virtue of meekness is one that invites us to have an attitude of non-violence. We need to become aware of the violence within ourselves, which then can help us deal more easily with the violence in the lives of others, a violence which many times blocks possibilities of creating environments of peace and prohibits the empowerment of others being peacemakers for this world in which we live.

Mortification

The fourth virtue, that as Vincentians we are called to imitate in order to help us walk together with the poor on the road to peace, is mortification. The other side of mortification is understood as selfishness, a concern for one's own well-being, looking out for one's own personal interests or trying to preserve the interests of one's particular constituencies. These are attitudes which dominate the world in which we live today: those who look out for number one, seeing themselves at the center of the world in which they live, doing all that they do so that it benefits them, sometimes even under the guise or behind the mask of "being good and generous and all-giving." The root of the word mortification is to die to oneself, to sacrifice, to put the other first. It requires taking into consideration the needs and concerns of others. To build peace we need to struggle, to sacrifice, to give of ourselves.

Zeal for Souls

The fifth and final virtue that St. Vincent recommends to his followers is that of zeal for the apostolate or zeal for souls. The opposite could be understood as apathy and indifference, social blindness, closing the door on the reality of the lives of many with whom I share this world. Once again, as a virtue, zeal calls for putting the other first and having enthusiasm for this life in which we live. Certainly it means having a passion for this life that we can draw from a passion for Christ, from a passion for the poor. Having this passion, even in spite of all the hopeless situations in which we many times see the lives of the poor lived out, we have the capacity to hope. Zeal is a burning passion or love for the poor in whom, as St. Vincent teaches us, we can clearly see the face of Christ. Hope encourages people to continue the long journey on the road to peace. It is yet another essential piece of building peace that is true and lasting.

It is my conviction that we, as followers of St. Vincent de Paul, and you, as members of the International Association of Charities, truly hope to walk with the poor on the road to peace. We can do so in the light of the development of these five virtues which St. Vincent

himself worked toward developing in his own life. The end result will be the ability to build together with the poor relationships of peace and, therefore, give a witness to the world in which we live that peace is possible.

In order to capture clearly these virtues in the life of Jesus, we need to draw close to Him. We do that in a twofold way, as taught by St. Vincent. We draw close to Jesus by drawing close to his word. The Gospels are where we contemplate his very person. His Word is dynamic. When listened to with openness, it penetrates the deepest part of our beings and transforms us. We also contemplate Jesus in the face of those who suffer.

It is obvious, as it was obvious in the life of St. Vincent, that any human project and one so beautiful as a project of walking together with the poor to build peace, in no way can be undertaken without the recognition that our driving force is the creative grace of God. Grace comes to us in and through our contemplation of his presence in Word and in sacrament, lived out in the community of believers. We know what a great power of mercy transforms us in the Sacrament of Reconciliation;⁷ not to mention too the gift of the Eucharist, especially in this year in which we are celebrating its meaning in the lives of all committed Catholics. The sacraments unite us in love and peace around Him who is the way, the truth and the life.

To walk together with the poor is certainly a challenge, especially as we try to walk together in building peace. Our guiding light needs to be the grace of God which is God's very love for us. Pius XI stated that there cannot be true external peace between individuals and peoples where the spirit of peace does not possess minds and hearts; minds, in order to recognize and respect the rights of justice; hearts, in order that justice be linked with charity and that charity may even prevail over justice, for if peace must be the work and fruit of justice, it belongs rather to charity than to justice.⁸ Taking direction from Pope Pius XI's statement, at the very heart of building peace is charity. And charity is at the very heart of what it means to be a member of the International Association of Charities. The AIC has come a long way in its understanding of charity. I am happy to have experienced this myself in and through the recent documents of the Association, as well as in my sharing with different members of AIC both in Panama and Guatemala and other countries of Central America. All of us who live in the spirit of St. Vincent have come a long way in understanding charity, moving from a "paternalistic" or

⁷ Cf., Pope JOHN PAUL II, *From a New Heart, Peace is Born*, 1 January 1984.

⁸ Taken from a discourse of Pius XI on 24 December 1930.

“maternalistic” attitude to seeing charity as a liberating, transforming force in the lives of those whom we call our “Lords and Masters.” Charity, when it is deep within our hearts, helps to transform us personally and transform our Associations, which is so necessary, as indicated by the different documents that have been written in preparation for your Assembly this year.

Before concluding I venture to go a bit further with how we might understand charity from a Gospel perspective. St. Vincent, as we well know, was very practical in his dealings with the poor, as well as very practical in giving concrete examples to his Family members so that they might live more deeply in the spirit of Jesus Christ, Evangelizer of the Poor. So we might truly be able to walk together with the poor on the road to peace, may I suggest three types of action in the name of charity.

The first would be political action. We are all called to feel concern for our brothers and sisters, especially those most marginalized by society, because we are all one and the same human family, even though we might live at different ends of the world. In order to bring about right relationships between peoples, we are called to take action, especially political action in order to confront the causes of poverty and rally in solidarity for justice for the poor, who are often made poor by the unjust systems, whether social, political, or economic, generated by the selfish hearts of men.

As we work to renew hearts, we are also called to renew systems, institutions and methods in order to live in this world with equality, in a sense of global solidarity among those who have and those who have not, in mutual trust and fraternal love. At times, for some people, the word “political” seems to be incompatible with charity. That may be when we understand “political” as politicizing. A challenge for the International Association of Charities would be to continue to work politically to change unjust structures. A real concrete way is in and through the support you show your own NGO at the United Nations. Together with other members of the Vincentian Family and other groups with NGO status, we can work to diminish and even eliminate the causes of poverty in the name of charity. That is all part of the process of building peace with the poor.

A second type of action in the name of charity, which frees the poor to be empowered to act on their own behalf, we can call “educational” action. I encourage all of you in AIC who have different “types of schools” to continue to work for the promotion of human dignity and the well-being of all peoples, especially of women. To quote John Paul II, women have an important role in contributing to the process of peace in the world. “Women, who are intimately connected to the mystery of life, can do much to advance the spirit of

peace, in their care to insure the preservation of life and in their conviction that real love is the only power which can make the world livable for everyone.”⁹

A third type of action, again in the name of charity, are those concrete actions performed directly in the service of the poor, especially in situations of crisis, where they are empowered to be who they are through the sense of solidarity that they experience from good women like all of you present here today.

Charity is an essential component in the construction of peace. The challenge before all of you, my sisters and brothers, as members of the International Association of Charities, is to act in solidarity with the poor, initiating processes that lead toward the construction of peace. As I hope to have stated here in these reflections of mine, our own Vincentian spirituality, and the very person of Vincent de Paul himself, can be our main source of inspiration in carrying out the challenge that is before us all: becoming more Christ-like in and through the living out of the five characteristic virtues reflected on in this presentation. We set the stage for becoming persons of peace ourselves. We have to encourage one another in the Association to continue to grow in being persons of peace. At the same time, we are called to draw close to, to reach out to the poor, who are often ridden with much violence in their own lives and robbed of this great gift of peace that God desires for all his children.

Conclusion

Together with the poor we can build communities of peace, realizing that it is a project that can only be accomplished with the help of God's grace and love. Our challenge is to transform God's love into concrete acts of charity, whether these actions be political, educational, or in direct, loving service of the poor. May Jesus, who is the Prince of Peace, and Mary, Our Mother, the Queen of Peace, be ever at our sides as we try to witness to the fact that charity is the only force capable of bringing fulfillment to persons and societies, the only force capable of directing the course of history in the way of truth, justice and peace. Jesus himself is the true embodiment of charity and so we are called to imitate him, imitate him in the virtues that are evidenced in the Gospels, especially the virtues that transformed the person of Vincent de Paul into another Christ.

As Pope John Paul II says, during this year dedicated to the Eucharist, may the sons and daughters of the Church of which we, the Vincentian Family, are very much a part, find in the supreme

⁹ Cf., *op. cit.*, Pope JOHN PAUL II, *From a New Heart*.

sacrament of love the wellspring of all communion: communion with Jesus the Redeemer, and, in him, with every human being. By sharing in the one bread and the one cup, we come to realize that we are God's family and that, together, we can make our own effective contribution to building a world based on the values of justice, freedom and peace.¹⁰ So, I say to you, members of the International Association of Charities, be together always, with the poor, on this beautiful road that leads to everlasting peace.

¹⁰ Cf. Pope JOHN PAUL II, *Do Not Be Overcome by Evil, But Overcome Evil with Good*, 1 January 2005.

DIRECTORY
of the
PROVINCIAL DIRECTORS
of the
DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY

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Abbreviations

CCM	<i>Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission</i>
CDC	<i>Constitutions of the Company of the Daughters of Charity</i>
SCM	<i>Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission</i>
SDC	<i>Statutes of the Company of the Daughters of Charity</i>

CONGREGAZIONE DELLA MISSIONE

**Via dei Capasso, 30
00164 ROMA - ITALIA**

Rome, Easter 2005

Dear Confreres,

“May the Holy Spirit ever guide our lives”

It gives me great pleasure to present to you this Directory. It is the fruit of much consultation, many hours of work, reflection and prayer. I would like to express my gratitude to all those who have contributed to its development: to all the Provincial Councils of the Daughters of Charity and their respective Directors, the General Secretariat, the Translation Center and the General Council of the Daughters of Charity. I am also very grateful to the members of the Commission who had the responsibility of editing this Directory: Sister Julma Neo and Sister Blanca Libia Tamayo (General Councillors) and Fathers Joseph Daly, Fernando Quintano, Alberto Vernaschi and Javier Alvarez. The General Council of the Congregation of the Mission studied this Directory on two occasions, article by article, and after having made some modifications, I now present it to you as an officially approved document to guide Provincial Directors in the office that has been confided to them.

In developing this document, we did not start from zero. We took into careful account the suggestions made by the Directors in the Formation Encounter in Paris in July 2001, and above all, the guidelines promulgated by our former Superiors General, particularly the Directory approved by Father Richard McCullen in 1985. Many of these guidelines are reflected in the present Directory, of course, with a slightly different framework based on the revised Constitutions and Statutes of the Daughters of Charity in 2004.

I am sure that this Directory will be a useful instrument for the Provincial Directors in the delicate and important role that God has confided to them. Putting it into practice will guarantee the quality service that the Company expects from them. It is very important then, that the Directory be understood and assimilated by all in order for it to bear fruit. As is evident in the content of the Directory, the office of Director has experienced an obvious evolution in recent decades: it has moved from a mission of governance to one that is clearly pastoral. The meaning and importance of the role of Director resides in this latter sense: he is a spiritual animator, collaborator in formation, guide for the Sisters and the activities of the Province. All of this is carried out in close collaboration with the Visitatrix and her Council.

It is also my hope that the Sisters will become familiar with this document in order for all to have a correct understanding of the role of the Provincial Director. Certainly, this Directory has no other goal than fidelity to the deeply held intent of Saint Vincent and Saint Louise, adapted to current times and sensibilities. They saw how important it was for the Priests of the Mission to help the Company to fulfill its mission of service to those who are poor. Today as well, the Sisters continue to value and appreciate this service.

Provincial Directors can be assured that in serving the Sisters, they are serving those who are poor. I ask the Holy Spirit to accompany them and assist them in this ministry. Your brother in Saint Vincent,



G. Gregory Gay, C.M.

Superior General

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The office of the Provincial Director goes back to the origins of the Company. In fact, it was Saint Louise who always desired it and who did everything possible so that the Company be under the authority of Saint Vincent and his successors, the Superiors General of the Congregation of the Mission, and moreover, that the Sisters would receive spiritual help from the Vincentian Missioners. The Foundress thought that this was the most effective means of maintaining the spirit which God had given the Company as well as preserving its identity. She expressed this desire very clearly in her writings, for example, in 1646 she wrote the following words to Saint Vincent: *"In the name of God, Monsieur, do not let anything happen that would, even in the slightest, draw the Company away from that direction God has given it, because you can be sure that immediately it would no longer be what it is, and the sick poor would no longer be assisted. And thus, I believe that God's Will would no longer be done among us"* (COSTE, III, p. 132).

The office of Director was created by Saint Vincent himself (cf. COSTE, IX, p. 57, 395) The Founder's numerous occupations prevented him from giving his attention to the Sisters as he would have wished and as they required. He therefore appointed some of the Missioners to assist him in this ministry. We can consider Father Antoine Portail the first Director General of the Company, and Father Guillaume Desdames the first Provincial Director of the Sisters who were sent to Poland.

For a considerable time, it was the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission who were charged with the direction of the Sisters in a particular Province or Region. With the passage of time, the office of Director was established. It can be noted that until 1954, the functions of the Director depended on the decision of the Superior General. The Director was his representative in a Province and

the faculties delegated to him by the Superior General varied. It was Father William Slattery who tried to define more clearly the judicial role of the Provincial Director by the publication in 1965 of the *“Rules for the Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity.”* These years were thus the most significant times in the evolution of the profile of the Provincial Director.

In 1968, General Assemblies began to be held every six years in the Company of the Daughters of Charity. The General Assembly has supreme authority in the Company to *“establish Statutes and Decrees”* and present the Constitutions to the Holy See (cf. CFC 87d, C. 96b). It was in this way that the Constitutions and Statutes of 1983 were approved. The *Directory for the Provincial Directors of the Daughters of Charity*, approved by Father Richard McCullen in 1985, was developed from these Constitutions and Statutes.

In the 1985 Directory, the influence of the social and ecclesial changes which promoted the legitimate autonomy of Communities of women can already be seen. Despite these changes, the Company of the Daughters of Charity, in fidelity to the wishes of Saint Louise, recognizes and accepts as its Superior General, the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission. It includes the Provincial Director as one of the Superiors to whom the Daughters of Charity owe obedience; he makes the Canonical Visitation of the houses and is considered a Major Superior.

This way of understanding the task of the Provincial Director is not in harmony with the new sensitivities of the Sisters nor those of the Directors themselves. The Sisters as well as the Directors envision the service of the Director in terms of animation, accompaniment and collaboration rather than authority and government. This new mentality came forth very clearly at the International Encounter of Directors in 2001.

The 2003 General Assembly was particularly sensitive to the theme of inculturation and the role of women in today’s society. At the same time, however, it confirmed the link between the Company and the Superior General of the

Congregation of the Mission, while transferring a significant number of his responsibilities in the realm of government to the Superioress General.

At Provincial level, the Visitatrix, a Major Superior assisted by a Council, is the one to whom the Constitutions and Statutes have entrusted the major functions of government in the Province. In the revised Constitutions and Statutes, the Director is no longer categorized as a Major Superior, nor is he assigned any function of government. His pastoral service is predominantly one of animation and accompaniment, collaborating with the Visitatrix and her Council to promote the Vincentian spirit within a Province. The 2003 General Assembly considered that, in this way, it was remaining faithful to the original intention of the Founders as well as the rightful autonomy in the government of the Company which is called for by inculturation and by the new sensitivities of Sisters and Directors alike.

The present *Directory for Provincial Directors* seeks to be faithful to the spirit of the 2003 General Assembly and has thus been based on the revised Constitutions and Statutes.

**CONSTITUTIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY,
C. 75**

- **“The Provincial Director is a priest of the Congregation of the Mission, who provides for a Province of the Daughters of Charity a service of Vincentian animation and accompaniment...**
- **... in collaboration with the Visitatrix and her Council.**
- **He is appointed by the Superior General and represents him in the exercise of the functions that the proper law of the Company recognizes, in particular:**
 - **to promote in the Province, together with the Visitatrix and her Council, the Vincentian spirit,**
 - **to be attentive to the formation of the Sisters, most especially of the Sister Servants,**
 - **to participate in the Provincial Council and the Provincial Assembly,**
 - **to visit the local communities,**
 - **to be available to the Sisters, who have full liberty to speak with him,**
 - **to grant poverty permissions related to personal goods of the Sisters.”**

STATUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF CHARITY,

56

- a)** The Superior General appoints the Provincial Director for six years, after consulting the Visitatrix and her Council and, if he judges necessary, the Sisters of the Province. The Provincial Director may be reappointed, but his term of office may not exceed twelve years, other than in exceptional circumstances.
- b)** If the needs of the Province require it, the Superior General may, in agreement with the Provincial Director, the Visitatrix, and her Council, appoint a Sub-Director.
- c)** During Council meetings, the Director gives his opinion. This opinion is required for
 - acceptance of a candidate to Postulancy,
 - admission of a postulant to the Seminary,
 - sending on mission of a Seminary Sister,
 - acceptance of a Sister for vows for the first time,
 - delay for the renewal of vows, whether requested,
 - authorization for a Sister to live outside a house of the Company,
 - dismissal or readmission of a Sister,
 - use of goods of the Province in important matters.
- d)** The visitations of the Director to the local communities focus specifically on the spiritual and Vincentian aspects of the Sisters' lives. After the visit, he makes a report to the Visitatrix and her Council, while safeguarding confidentiality. These visitations are made at least every five years.
- e)** He encourages the Sisters' participation in the pastoral mission of the Church, according to their proper identity.

- f) The Director and the Formation Commission give special attention to Church documents and their appropriate application.

CHAPTER I

The Provincial Director is:

“... a priest of the Congregation of the Mission who provides for a Province of the Daughters of Charity a service of Vincentian animation and accompaniment...” (CDC 75a).

1. The Congregation of the Mission includes assistance to the Daughters of Charity among its ministries (cf. CCM 17). The Provincial Director embodies and exercises this ministry in a Province in a special way.
2. This ministry is carried out in collaboration with the Visitatrix and her Council, to promote and encourage fidelity to the spirit and aim of the Company in the Province, and in the accompaniment of the Sisters in order to help them carry out, as Daughters of Charity, the mission of the Company within the Church.
3. The Director is entrusted with a very important ministry, even if he is not a Superior in the Company and his service does not include a governmental function. The Constitutions and Statutes specify and enumerate his functions clearly (cf. CDC 75, SDC 56). His collaboration with the government of the Province is likewise important in the process of discernment and in the support of decisions that are made.
4. To carry out this service appropriately, he should:
 - Have a sound knowledge of the identity and spirituality of the Company. (Constitutions and Statutes, biographies and writings of the Founders, Instruction on the

Vows, Directives for different offices, circulars of Superiors General, *Echoes of the Company*, etc.).

- Be able to work in a team, in order to work with different commissions that are active in the Province, in addition to collaborating with the Visitatrix and her Council.
 - Have the capability for listening and discernment.
5. To help him in his preparation for this task, the Superior General, in conjunction with the Superioress General, will promote the organization of a formation meeting every two years for Directors who are beginning this service for the first time. This does not preclude the organization, every ten years, of another meeting for all the Provincial Directors who are in office at that particular time. Continental, regional or interprovincial meetings are also recommended, at the judgment of the Directors themselves.
6. Assistance to the Daughters of Charity, and collaboration with them, provided by the Congregation of the Mission, is not expressed solely through the office of the Provincial Director. The Constitutions and Statutes of the Company mention that the Daughters of Charity address themselves preferably to the Priests of the Mission for accompaniment and spiritual direction (cf. CDC 20b; SDC 35). The Constitutions of the Congregation of the Mission state: *“Since the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity share the same heritage, members should willingly give them assistance when asked, especially in the matter of retreats and spiritual direction. They should also show a brotherly spirit of cooperation in those works which have been undertaken together”* (CCM 17). Given the importance and the sensitivity of accompaniment and spiritual direction, the Priests of the Mission who exercise this service will seek to acquire the formation needed. The Congregation for its part may offer certain means to attain this.

CHAPTER II

The Provincial Director:

Carries out his service **“in collaboration with the Visitatrix and her Council...”** (CFC 75a).

7. The relationship between the Director and the Visitatrix should reflect the attitudes of mutual respect, trust and simplicity.
 - Mutual respect and trust are given concrete expression in a willingness to dialogue openly and on a regular basis, in a spirit of understanding in the work they carry out together, with mutual discretion concerning information which one or the other may have received in confidence, and without any sign of public disagreement or opposition relating to each other’s opinions.
 - In a spirit of simplicity, they adopt an attitude conducive to openness, frankness, a sense of freedom and a way of acting that is clear and apparent to both of them.
 - The Director should not seem to be so close to the Visitatrix as to have the Province identify one with the other, nor so distant as to jeopardize unity and collaboration. A certain complementarity is appropriate regarding criteria for actions and concerns, but without undermining the freedom that should characterize the relationship between the Director and Visitatrix.
 - In order to carry out their respective responsibilities without conflict, the Visitatrix and the Director should exercise them as harmoniously as possible.

8. The Director will maintain good relationships with the Councillors:
 - At Council by contributing to its spiritual vitality and by fostering a simple, cordial and friendly atmosphere.
 - Outside of Council, by collaborating with them whenever requested.

CHAPTER III

The Provincial Director:

“... is appointed by the Superior General and represents him in the exercise of the functions that the proper law of the Company recognizes...”
(CFC 75b).

9. The Provincial Director is appointed by the Superior General for six years. He may be re-appointed for a new term but his term of office may not exceed twelve years, other than in exceptional circumstances (cf. SDC 56a).
10. The Superior General appoints the Provincial Director with the consent of his Council, after consultation with the Visitatrix and her Council (cf. SDC 56a), the Visitor concerned (cf. SCM 51 & 12) and the outgoing Director. If he judges it appropriate, he may also consult the Sisters of the Province (cf. SDC 56a). The aim of this consultation is to provide the Superior General with elements which may help him in his discernment. The first consultation for the appointment of a Provincial Director may be limited to the Visitatrix and her Council, since the Sisters of a Province generally know few Confreres. With regard to a second appointment, the Superior General can consult all the Sisters of the Province because, in this case, they have sufficient information to be able to give an opinion.
11. If the needs of the Province require it, the Superior General may appoint a sub-Director, after consultation with the Provincial Director, the Visitatrix and her Council, the Visitor and his Council (cf. SDC 56b). The

responsibilities of the sub-Director are defined in the letter of appointment from the Superior General.

- 12.** Although the Provincial Director does not have powers of government, he exercises the functions recognized by the proper law of the Company; in which he represents the Superior General in the Province (cf. CDC 75b). These functions, specified in the Constitutions and Statutes of the Company, issue from the function of the Superior General in the Company: to stimulate the vitality of the Vincentian spirit (cf. CDC 2), to help the Sisters to remain faithful to their identity and to fulfill their mission in the Church (cf. CDC 64b). These functions can be summarized as: animation, formation and accompaniment.
- 13.** The Provincial Director, by virtue of his ministry, maintains a direct relationship with the Superior General. This relationship is expressed specifically by:

 - spiritual union through prayer,
 - the biennial report (cf. Appendix 3),
 - occasional correspondence,
 - personal dialogue, when possible,
 - reference to the Superior General in important matters,
 - participation in meetings.
- 14.** The Director General has the role of coordinating and guiding the mission of the Provincial Directors (cf. SDC 45). The latter maintain a special relationship with him, which is expressed primarily through:

 - spiritual union through prayer,
 - sending a copy of the report sent to the Superior General,
 - correspondence concerning the affairs of the Province related to his role,
 - personal dialogue,
 - attention to his communications and instructions,

- participation in meetings with the Directors of different Provinces or countries, and in all activities organized by the Director General.
- 15.** The Provincial Director will also maintain a relationship marked by esteem and collaboration with the Superioress General of the Daughters of Charity and her Council, especially with the General Councillor who has responsibility for the Province. He will be attentive to her guidance, and will give his opinion in various circumstances, especially at the time of a consultation for the designation of the Visitatrix and the Provincial Councillors.

CHAPTER IV

The Provincial Director:

“Promotes, with the Visitatrice and her Council, the Vincentian spirit in the Province...” (CFC 75b).

- 16.** The offices of Visitatrix and Provincial Director are clearly described in the Constitutions and Statutes:
- The Visitatrix *“has the immediate government of the Province, which she directs in accordance with the prescriptions of universal and proper law”* (CDC 73d). At the same time, she *“receives from the Company the mission to promote the spiritual and apostolic vitality of the Province”* (CDC 73a). These two aspects are complementary.
 - For his part, the Director has the mission of collaboration with the Visitatrix and her Council in the animation, accompaniment and formation of the Sisters of the Province (cf. CDC 75a, b).
- 17.** Collaboration between the two in the promotion of the spiritual life as well as the Vincentian spirit involves a certain convergence of their tasks: the Visitatrix has the ultimate responsibility for the government of the Province and for the promotion of the Vincentian spirit; the Director collaborates by his support and by participating, as far as possible, in all that might foster this responsibility.
- 18.** The Director has a variety of means to promote the Vincentian spirit in the Province:
- collaboration in the organization of and participation in various formation meetings and celebrations;

-
- visits to local communities;
 - proposals of themes for reflection;
 - personal accompaniment of Sisters;
 - personal correspondence, etc.
- 19.** The Director will strive to be present at the annual retreats, at least for part of the retreat, and to be available to the Sisters who wish to speak to him.

CHAPTER V

The Provincial Director:

“... is attentive to the formation of the Sisters, most especially of the Sister Servants...” (CFC 75 b).

20. One of the principal functions of the Director is to collaborate with the Visitatrix and the Council in the formation of the Sisters, both initial and ongoing formation. In exercising this function, he pays particular attention to the Sister Servants whose mission it is to animate the local communities.
21. It is strongly recommended that the Director be a member of the Formation Commission (cf. *Guide for Initial Formation*, p. 48, 5) and that he work with those responsible for the various stages of formation.
22. This collaboration is expressed by participation in the formulation and application of a plan of formation for the Province that has clear, specific objectives which correspond to the:
 - identity and mission of the Company in the Church,
 - general and particular lines of action proposed by the Constitutions and Statutes (cf. CDC 52),
 - needs of persons and the principal challenges of our time and culture,
 - objectives for each stage, so that there is coordination and progression between them.
23. Where possible, he will support other special Commissions so that their respective programs and applications

will contribute to the formation of the Province and its spiritual and apostolic vitality.

24. *“The Director and the Formation Commission give special attention to Church documents and their appropriate application”* (SDC 56f).
25. In collaboration with the Visitatrix and the formation personnel, he gives particular attention to Sisters who are preparing to make vows for the first time. With regards to the Sisters who are at the stage of “initial formation on mission,” he has particular care for their formation and spiritual accompaniment. He will also take interest in the Sisters in the Seminary, and as much as possible, collaborate in their formation.
26. In dialogue, the Director, the Visitatrix and her Council plan the annual Retreats and designate the persons who will direct them. In like manner, they choose the persons who collaborate in formation.
27. Since the formation of the Sister Servants is of utmost importance for the life of a Province, the Director collaborates with the Visitatrix and her Council in drawing up a concrete Formation plan for them, especially for those who are taking up this office for the first time.
28. The Director pays particular attention to the elderly and sick Sisters (cf. CDC 34b), and to those who may be going through a difficult time, trying to help them to find the meaning of their vocation in these circumstances of their lives.

CHAPTER VI

The Provincial Director:

“participates in the Provincial Council and the Provincial Assembly...” (CFC 75b; 79b; 86b).

29. At the Provincial Council

- a) The Visitatrix or the Provincial Assistant presides at Council meetings (cf. CDC 79b, d). The Director participates (cf. CDC 79b; 75b) through an active presence and intervenes when he has something to contribute or when he is asked for his opinion.
- b) The Director must give his opinion explicitly in the following cases included in Statute 56c of the Daughters of Charity:
 - acceptance of a candidate to Postulancy,
 - admission of a postulant to the Seminary,
 - sending on mission of a Seminary Sister,
 - acceptance of a Sister for vows for the first time,
 - delay for the renewal of vows, whether requested or imposed, and authorization to renew them after a delay,
 - authorization for a Sister to live outside a house of the Company,
 - dismissal or readmission of a Sister,
 - use of goods of the Province in important matters.
- c) He has the obligation of participating in Council meetings, in order to remain connected with the life and development of the Province and to collaborate in matters being treated at Council. His participation is also an expression of co-responsibility. When he is

prevented from being present, the Visitatrix informs him promptly of the most important matters discussed.

- d)** Since he is not a member of the Council, he does not vote nor sign the minutes (cf. SDC 60).

30. At the Provincial Assembly

- a)** The Visitatrix convokes and presides over the Assembly (cf. CDC 73h). The Provincial Director actively participates without influencing the decisions of the Assembly (cf. CDC 75b; CDC 86b).
- b)** It is recommended that, in addition to the daily celebration of the Eucharist, he should intervene during the Opening and at the Closing of the Assembly, and at any time he is invited to give his opinion during the Assembly.
- c)** The Provincial Director does not have the right to vote at the Assembly. The Directory of the Provincial Assembly should indicate if his signature is required for the minutes of the Assembly.

CHAPTER VII

The Provincial Director:

“... visits the local communities...” (CDC 75b).

- 31.** *“The visitations of the Director to the local communities focus specifically on the spiritual and Vincentian aspects of the Sisters’ lives. After the visit, he makes a report to the Visitatrix and her Council, while safeguarding confidentiality. These visitations are made at least every five years” (SDC 56d).* Canon Law requires Superiors to carry out the canonical visitation. As the Provincial Director is not a Superior in the Company, the visit that he pays to the communities is not a canonical visitation but the one required by the Proper Law of the Company. (It can be called “the Director’s pastoral visit.”)
- 32.** It is a privileged time of reflection and prayer to encourage personal and community renewal.
- 33.** The purpose of the visit is to:
- know the Sisters better in order to encourage them in their spiritual, community and apostolic life, from a Vincentian perspective.
 - support, from a spiritual perspective, the vitality of prayer life and its balance with service and community life.
 - promote, from a Vincentian perspective, the Sisters an attitude of servant and animate them to joyfully live their service of those who are poor.
- 34.** Preparation:
- Visitations planned during the year are prepared for in dialogue with the Visitatrix and her Council. In

agreement with the Sister Servant and the local community, the Director fixes the most suitable date for the visit to their houses.

- To help the Sister Servant to prepare for the visitation, an outline describing the purpose, format and closure of the visit can be sent in advance.

35. Format of the visitation:

- Opening of the visitation during the Eucharist or other celebration.
- Opportunity for a personal dialogue with each Sister.
- Meeting with the whole community. This meeting could address a topic taken from the local community plan, the Provincial Plan or another topic considered appropriate.
- Visit to the areas where the Sisters serve, if considered appropriate.

36. Closure: The Director encourages the community in its common life, its prayer and its service. He may leave some written recommendations with the Sisters.

37. After the visitation, he gives a report about the visit at a Provincial Council meeting (cf. SDC 56d).

38. According to the Director's possibilities, it is appropriate for him to make other "informal" visits to local communities as an expression of his proximity and solidarity with the Sisters.

CHAPTER VIII

The Provincial Director:

“... is available to the Sisters, who have full liberty to speak with him...” (CFC 75b).

- 39.** The Sisters’ communication with the Provincial Director is a very important aspect of his service to the Province. For this reason, the Director informs the Sisters of the most suitable and convenient meeting times.
- 40.** Although the role of the Provincial Director is different from that of a spiritual director, the Director can nonetheless help the Sisters during this communication time to look at their situations from the perspective of faith and their Vincentian vocation. He can also help them to discern and take responsibility for their personal decisions.
- 41.** In communications between the Sisters and the Director:
- a)** It is necessary to safeguard, in all circumstances, the Sisters’ freedom to communicate with the Director.
 - b)** The Director maintains utmost discretion and prudence in everything that refers to the Sisters’ communication with him.
- 42.** The Provincial Director’s relationships with the Sisters are marked by the following characteristics:
- a)** A brotherly relationship, built on openness, welcoming and listening.
 - b)** Respect and detachment, seeking only the Sisters’ good.

- c)** Impartiality, without showing any preference for certain Sisters or groups, based on age, ethnicity, culture, form of service, etc.
- d)** A positive outlook which inspires self-confidence in the Sisters.
- e)** Collaboration and accompaniment to assist them in responding to the requirements of their vocation.
- f)** A spirit of mutuality, showing not only his readiness to offer help, but also his willingness to be enriched by the Sisters.

CHAPTER IX

The Provincial Director:

“... grants poverty permissions related to the personal goods of the Sisters” (CFC 75b).

43. One of the tasks that the Constitutions entrust to the Provincial Director is *“to grant poverty permissions related to the personal goods of the Sisters.”* This practice was reconfirmed in the 2003 General Assembly. This is based on the fact that everything that relates to the vows is within the competency of the Superior General, whom the Director represents (CDC 64c). To interpret this aspect well, the Director will have to have understanding of this subject according to the Constitutions and Statutes of the Company and the explanation contained in the *Instruction on the Vows*.
44. The Director will help the Sisters to cultivate a Vincentian spirit of poverty and to live their total gift of themselves to God for the service of poor persons concretely through their use of personal goods.
45. He will guide the Sisters who have personal goods to ask the necessary permissions in order that their possessions of personal goods not cause any differences in life-style (cf. CDC 30e).
46. Asking poverty permissions is a characteristic and requirement of the vow of poverty (cf. CDC 30a). It also offers a Sister the opportunity of reflecting with the Director on the use of any income accruing from her personal goods exclusively for “good works”. (See the

Glossary of the Constitutions for definition of “good works”, p. 198.)

- 47.** The Director and the Visitatrix together are to specify the cases where the permission of the Sister Servant is sufficient (CDC 30d).
- 48.** It is recommended that the Director inform the Visitatrix and the Sister Servant when he gives significant poverty permissions to a Sister.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

49. Role of the Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity

- a) It is within the competence of the Superior General to appoint missionaries for the office of Provincial Director. Consequently, by virtue of his office, the Director enjoys the necessary autonomy to carry out his mission, and in this service, he depends on the Superior General and the Director General. In everything else, he is a member of his local or Provincial community like every other missionary.
- b) The service of the Provincial Director is generally a full-time service. In some Provinces, however, it is part-time service, in which the Director carries out this service in parallel with other part-time ministries. In such a case, his additional ministries must be compatible with his office as Director, to which he gives priority. The practical implementation of this will be agreed upon in writing with the Visitatrix, the Visitor, the Director himself and, if need be, the Superior General.

Appendix 2

50. Economic Considerations

- a) The Director receives a monthly compensation from the Province in which he works. Social security expenses are generally covered by the Province of the Daughters of Charity. In any case, it is advised that the Visitor and Visitatrix come to an agreement about these two points, taking into consideration the situation of the Provinces, his time commitment to the

office (full-time or part-time), local ways and customs and various circumstances. It is appropriate that this be in writing and be revised as necessary.

- b) Expenses related to his office are assumed completely by the Daughters of Charity. However, expenses related to the formation of the Director are generally assumed by the Congregation of the Mission, as in the case of other ministries.

Appendix 3

51. Suggestions for the Biennial Report to the Superior General

The report can be developed from the knowledge that the Director has of the Province through his visits to local Communities, the Council sessions in which he has taken part, his dialogue with the Sister Servants and his individual meetings with the Sisters during the annual Retreat etc. This report can include the following sections:

- a) Province statistics: number of Sisters, number of houses, areas of service of those who are poor, average age, number of retired Sisters, young Sisters, departures, deaths, Seminary Sisters and Postulants. The Director can obtain this information from the Provincial Secretary.
- b) Spiritual life: his overall impression of: specific virtues, vows, Sacraments, prayer, etc. How do you, as Director, collaborate in the animation of spiritual life?
- c) Service of persons who are poor: quality, faith vision, evangelization, collaboration in parish ministry, revision of works.
- d) Community life: overall impression of common mission, local community plan.
- e) Formation: initial stages, ongoing formation, Vincentian and professional formation, formation of Sister Servants, overall Provincial Formation Plan, special commissions. How do you collaborate in formation?

- f) Government: animation of the Province, Director's relationship with the Visitatrix and Councillors, Provincial Plan, Provincial Council plan.
- g) Vocation ministry: general awareness of the Sisters and the local Communities, vocation team. How do you, as Director, collaborate in animating vocation ministry?

Are you at ease in your role as Director?

(It is recommended that the report, not exceeding 4 pages, be sent to the Superior General during the first quarter of the year, with a copy sent to the Director General.)

Appendix 4

52. Suggestions for the Installation of a New Provincial Director

- The installation can be made in the context of the celebration of a Eucharistic Liturgy or Liturgy of the Word.
- Those generally present: the outgoing and the new Directors, the Visitatrix and her Council, the Visitor, the Sisters of the Province who are able to be there, especially the Sister Servants.
- The reading of the patent may occur during or outside of the celebration.
- The outgoing Director reads the patent. If that is not possible, it is read by the Visitor or his representative.
- The new Director addresses some words to those present.

Monsieur Pouget and Alfred Loisy*

by Erminio Antonello, C.M.

Province of Turin

When Alfred Loisy published his little red books, Guillaume Pouget was a nearly unknown Vincentian, teaching the theologians of his congregation in Paris. A few years later, in 1905, his blindness and removal from teaching confirmed definitively the common misunderstanding about him. While being relegated to a small room in the Maison Mère, it was only his friendship with a few young students that kept up his contact with the outside world (such as Jacques Chevalier and Jean Guitton).¹ The encounter between Loisy and Pouget, therefore, took place at a distance.

In his *Mémoires*, Loisy cited Father Pouget in two places. He had a vague memory of him, to the point that he did not even recall his name. Under the heading Fr. X. (P.X.), he quoted him: "The Vincentian Fr. X. had been removed from teaching Holy Scripture since he had published a letter in my defense."² Besides this mention, no information exists about this letter. We have only a few letters of Pouget, and there are no traces of any public position that he took in favor of Loisy at the time of the modernist controversy. In any case, this citation shows that Loisy believed that Pouget was favorable to his own position, as another passage in these *Mémoires* demonstrates: "... Fr. X., a good old Vincentian, who around age sixty began to engage in biblical criticism, and acknowledged its results."³

* Alfred Loisy (1857-1940).

¹ J. GUITTON, *Portrait de Monsieur Pouget*, Paris, 1941; PÈRE POUGET, *Logia, propos et enseignements, présentés par J. Chevalier*, Paris, Grasset, 1955.

² A. LOISY, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire religieuse de notre temps*, Paris, Nourry, 1930 (3 vols.), II, p. 517.

³ *Ibid.*, II, p. 399.

Here, too, there is no precision, since the *Portrait de Monsieur Pouget* shows that Pouget began to engage in historical criticism in 1889,⁴ at age forty-two. In addition, his first work of historical-critical method dates from his fifties.⁵

Pouget's early sympathy for Loisy

By contrast, Pouget's attention given to Loisy was much clearer. Loisy's publications interested him. He read them and showed a sincere sympathy toward them, as unpublished letter from 1903 proves. This was a private letter for use within the Congregation,⁶ written in answer to a question from the superior general. He had wanted to know Father Pouget's thinking about Loisy's *L'Évangile et l'Église*, since he had rejected the protectionist criteria of the time by placing a copy of the book in the theology students' library. Pouget wrote:

This is what I have to tell you about the explanations that you asked of me. Since you asked me on other occasions about the book *L'Évangile et l'Église* by abbé Loisy, this is what I thought of it then: I had some clearly expressed hesitations about the first two chapters, ("Le royaume de Dieu," and "Le fils de Dieu"). Concerning the last one, in particular, I supposed that he allowed the traditional value of the proofs and was attacking only their form. Today, because of further writings, I believe that I cannot be so charitable, and I wonder how he can rationalize his faith in the divinity of the Savior. In the same chapter, I found what he said about the messianic consciousness to be naïve and

⁴ "I was a conservative of the strictest type. Vigouroux was my kind of man. I held for the agreement of geology with the biblical accounts. In 1889, I had read certain remarks of Loisy, although quite inoffensive, which bowled me over. I had no guide. It was Duchesne who opened my spirit. I started to follow his course on the Acts, but I gnashed my teeth and did not return. You understand: I had read the Bible, I don't know how many times, but why? To find geology there. Then reading Duchesne, I checked the text, and I told myself: there are not a lot of proofs, but they are good." J. GUITTON, *Portrait de Monsieur Pouget*, pp. 30-31.

⁵ G. POUGET, *La mosaïcité du Pentateuque d'après les données de l'histoire et les enseignements de l'Église*, Paris, 1897.

⁶ Father Pouget was suspected of adhering to heterodox positions because of his conversion to historical criticism. Beginning in 1897, he had to defend himself before the superior general and, on the day after the publication of the little red books, the criticism of his teaching became more pronounced. Since the superior general, Antoine Fiat, was a little deaf, Pouget wrote him several letters to avoid misunderstandings, and to show clearly his proper position in relationship to biblical criticism.

needing some corrections concerning the redemption and especially the resurrection. For the last three chapters, on the Church, dogma and worship, I would judge them as the bishop of La Rochelle did, who said that these chapters had swept him away. They were the ones that pleased me both about the book, and I still supposed that many things could not have been said more explicitly, but I crossed out two sentences that neither the bishop of La Rochelle nor Father Grandmaison mentioned. You see, Father, I noticed some weak points in this book, and about others I was perhaps too charitable in my suppositions, but I cannot condemn in advance of competent authority. Now, Rome has not yet condemned it, and it is said that it is not probable that it will; that does not mean that it approves the book. And the cardinal has not prohibited reading it and has not examined it thoroughly.⁷

His judgment, although critical, manifests a certain benevolence, almost a tendency to excuse Loisy, and it certainly does not refuse an excuse. Pouget was in the group of thinkers who gravitated to such journals as *La Justice sociale*, *L'Observateur* and, in particular, certain ecclesial publications, like the *Revue du Clergé français*. This latter, although it pointed out dogmatic difficulties that the little book raised, tended to a certain confidence and sympathy toward Loisy for the whole of his studies.⁸ Beyond objective reservations of a dogmatic type, always minimized in the light of their benevolence, this sympathy evidenced the need to defend the critical method that had conquered Pouget.

Pouget's hesitations about certain theses in *L'Évangile et l'Église*

The point about which Pouget had the greatest hesitations arose from the theses about the divine sonship of Jesus, particularly where Loisy held that "the divine sonship of Jesus is a theological conclusion, not the expression of a doctrine or a thought that Jesus himself would have formulated."⁹ By contrast, Pouget was convinced that, beginning with the constant faith of the Church which recognized Jesus as the consubstantial son of the Father, it would be

⁷ Unpublished letter, 25 July 1903, Archives of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris, *Dossier Pouget*.

⁸ É. POULAT, *Histoire, dogme et critique dans la crise moderniste*, Paris, 1962; Ital. trans. Brescia, 1967, pp. 156-60.

⁹ A. LOISY, *L'Évangile et l'Église*, Paris, Picard, 1902, pp. 41-42. For the position of Loisy: É. POULAT, *Histoire*, op. cit., Ital. trans., pp. 58-60; 103-104; 175-179.

possible to find in the most ancient texts from the beginning of Christianity the historical fundament of such a dogma, as Jesus had indicated to the apostles. This conviction is the basis of an article by Pouget¹⁰ published in the *Rivista storico-critica delle scienze teologiche*,¹¹ in which he drew up an “indirect criticism of Loisy,” while upholding that faith in the divinity of Christ is not the fruit of the theological creativity of the community of believers beginning with the notion of Messiah. Rather, it was a truth unveiled gradually by Jesus himself to the apostles, in a semitic language, through his teaching and his gestures, without neglecting the development that had already taken place in the primitive Church and was clearly evident in texts of the New Testament.

At the time of this article, Father Pouget had already been removed from teaching (1905) and had nearly lost his sight completely. He began to use the young Jacques Chevalier to communicate with Loisy. According to Chevalier’s journal, we learn that there was some exchange of letters with Loisy, and we have confirmation of this in Loisy’s *Mémoires*. Pouget feared that Loisy might be separating himself from the faith of the Church¹² on account of some of his positions. Between 1906 and 1907, Chevalier and Pouget exhorted Loisy several times to examine his own positions and submit himself to the Church.¹³ But Loisy had already established his position and remained inflexible, determining instead that the Pouget-Chevalier position was “ecclesiastical fideism.”¹⁴

¹⁰ GUTOPE (anagram of Pouget), “La fede nella divinità del Cristo durante l’età apostolica,” *Rivista Storico-Critica delle Scienze Teologiche*, 11 (1906): 813-831; 1 (1907): 1-12; 2 (1907): 81-90; 4 (1907): 249-282. The text was translated into Italian by the editors of the journal. The French original is found in the personal papers of Maurice Vansteenkiste, C.M., Paris.

¹¹ This review was defined by Ernesto Bonaiuti as being “the official Catholic face.”

¹² “I am really afraid that M. Loisy has lost the faith.” J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit., p. 19.

¹³ “From Cérilly I wrote to abbé Loisy about his condemnation, the meaning that it assumed in our eyes, the duty to accept it: a letter that I shared with Fr. Pouget, who approved it and to which Loisy remains strangely insensitive”: J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit, p. 6, 18 April 1906.

¹⁴ “J. Chevalier and some others began to find that I had gone a little far and they flattered themselves with organizing the best accommodations with orthodoxy. I have not noticed that, up to now, they had had much success.” A. LOISY, *Mémoires*, op. cit, vol. II, p. 522 (9 May 1907); “Some Catholics like J. Chevalier had understood better than Sabatier and even von Hugel the position that I had taken in my most recent books, but they judged it from a perspective that I could not accept. Chevalier wrote me on 4 March 1908: ‘A religious work that is not done within the Church is, sooner or later, condemned to failure, since all that she constructs that is strong and fertile should be taken up in the Church for generations to come. There is an

Pouget bitterly accepted this inflexibility because of the genuine esteem that he had had for Loisy. From this moment, Pouget separated himself from Loisy and kept his distance, less for his historical-critical method than for his very personal way of applying it to the Scriptures. According to Pouget the historical-critical exegesis practiced by Loisy was breaking down the delicate and necessary relationship between tradition and faith. Pouget would repeat it often during these months.

“For Loisy, Catholicism is nothing much more than the first of the natural religious. He has lost his sense of tradition.”¹⁵ “Loisy is lacking a sense of tradition.”¹⁶ “One of the disciples of M. Loisy told me: ‘As regards the manner in which M. Loisy explains it, the idea that he has of Jesus and his mission is more natural.’ ‘It certainly is too much, Monsieur,’ I told him.”¹⁷ “In the religious life, since it is only one, ideas are enormous, but that is not all. Indeed, it is a question of opportuneness; souls must be taken into account, since it is for them that authority has been established. One has to obey authority, to let it take its time, since little by little ideas get spread abroad. Mankind cannot take them in all at once. And not all of these ideas gain currency.”¹⁸

The occasion that allowed Pouget to deepen and develop his criticism was offered by the publication of Loisy’s commentaries on the synoptic Gospels,¹⁹ during the last months preceding his excommunication.²⁰ His attentive reading advanced slowly, since it depended on the good will of someone to read it to him, but it

unavoidable reality there, more unavoidable even than the anguishing difficulties that overwhelm someone, and which are not always his fault.’ This is ‘ecclesiastical fideism,’ and it seems to me perfectly useless to discuss its premises. Roman Catholicism has not always existed, and it will not exist forever, and it is quite another thing than a living absolute, a absolute of truth, an absolute of holiness”: A. LOISY, *Mémoires*, op. cit., vol. III, pp. 28-29 (4 March 1908).

¹⁵ J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit., p. 20 (12 February 1908).

¹⁶ J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit., p. 21 (29 February 1908).

¹⁷ J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit., p. 17 (15 January 1908).

¹⁸ J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit., p. 17 (15 January 1908).

¹⁹ A. LOISY, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, Paris, Ceffonds, 1907. This book was completed in March 1907, but went on sale only in January 1908. Certain parts of this commentary were previously published in *Revue d'histoire et littérature religieuses*; cf. J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit., p. 19.

²⁰ On 14 February 1908, a general excommunication was issued by the archbishop of Paris; then, on 7 March, a personal one was issued by Rome, declaring him *vitandus*.

reinforced his conviction that, unfortunately, Loisy had come to a rationalist boundary. Finally, in the first months of 1909 he published in *Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne* his article on the synoptic gospels by Loisy.²¹

Pouget's Article on *Évangiles Synoptiques*

This article shows the lack of methodological coherence in Loisy's research on the Gospels. His intention was to try to reconstruct the history and work of Jesus by using exclusively the historical method,²² but in reality he broadened the "creative and interpretive action of the primitive community" to the point of making this responsible for a substantial manipulation of the facts of the Gospels.²³

²¹ G.P.B. (GUILLAUME POUGET BESSE) - J. CHEVALIER, "Les Évangiles Synoptiques de M. Loisy," *Annales de Philosophie Chrétienne*, January (1909): 337-366. This article is a work of collaboration; the final redaction was done by Chevalier on the basis of notes taken in conversations with Pouget between 19 March and 17 September 1908. These manuscript notes are kept in the personal files of J. Chevalier, Cérilly, *Lot-Pouget*, n. 7.

²² "It is properly as an historian and intellectual that M. Loisy undertook this task. He wanted to... try to reconstitute, with his own resources alone, the history and the work of Jesus. We will follow him on his own ground to see if it is solid.... While placing ourselves at the very origin of M. Loisy's attempt, we would simply like to investigate whether the task that he has undertaken is a task that one may accomplish with the forces alone that criticism uses; whether it should not be done for the simple correct interpretation of the data of the Gospels, and to appeal to other resources; and when in fact M. Loisy himself, without realizing it, has not acted in that way, and whether he is nothing more than an historian and critic." G. POUGET - J. CHEVALIER, "Les Évangiles Synoptiques," op. cit., pp. 338-339.

²³ "M. Loisy knows well enough the link between the texts of the Gospels and the work of Jesus, with the living faith of which that they are but a partial expression at a given moment. He had proved with great force, against Harnack, that the study of the Gospel should not be separated from the study of the nascent Church; and in the first pages of his major work, he has situated well the intimate union of the literary and the historical problem, such that one may be fearful of finding in his critique an ingenious interplay of texts, or a personal reconstruction based on preconceived ideas, inspired by a certain systematic representation of the work of Jesus and his disciples. And meanwhile, when one reads his two volumes slowly, you cannot protect yourself from a fear of this sort, and the fear keeps growing as you advance. What is this historical tradition for M. Loisy, in which as a good historian he hopes to replace the texts? From the beginning to the end of his book, M. Loisy seems especially worried about showing the role that 'the constant and progressive elaboration of received impressions and treasured memories' (I, 175) 'played in the formation of the apostolic tradition. He is searching for the elements that could have contributed to the amplification of the primitive data, and the psychological conditions that make understandable for us a

Loisy's hermeneutical insufficiency derived from the fact of his wish to hold unilaterally to the side of historical criticism, and he wound up by applying to the text the perspective of rationalism. In fact, in his exegesis, once the principle is laid down of the radical autonomy of criticism in relationship to faith, then "a small number of more or less admitted presumptions," as Pouget said, enter in between the exegete and the historical documents. These stealthily replace the interpretive horizon of faith and give, not the free and neutral exegesis that Loisy wanted, but an exegesis contaminated exactly by these *a priori* presumptions that direct interpretation. The *a priori* principles critiqued by Pouget are the following:

1. The exaltation of the creativity of the primitive community, stretched to inventing facts recounted in the Gospels;²⁴
2. The reduction of the events mentioned in the Gospels to pure symbols devoid of any historic reality, since their literary genre is prophetic and allegorical in style²⁵

"progressive accumulation of disparate ideas, whose success seems so much the more extraordinary to us, given that its rational base was so fragile" (I, 195)... For M. Loisy there took place a constant alteration and transfiguration of real events." G. POUGET - J. CHEVALIER, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, op. cit., pp. 339-340.

²⁴ "No matter what M. Loisy might think about it, general religious science, or the science of religions, is still in its infancy. It could be hazarded to claim that it had never even been born, since we do not see that it has either its own method or its own object. We do not know almost anything about what M. Loisy supposes to be so well known, such as the way in which a religious movement spreads abroad in a given milieu, the role of imagination and faith in the elaboration of facts; and on the other hand, the minimum of the objective reality needed for this work. Collective illusion, suggestion, the subconscious are only, in many cases, just easy and specious words, by which one covers over a reality which we do not wish at all to dismiss without reasons or explanation. It was this wave that allowed the erection of what is a simple accompaniment into a religious fact; it reacts with it, but it does not create it nor take it into account." G. POUGET - J. CHEVALIER, *Les Évangiles Synoptiques*, op. cit., p. 343.

²⁵ "It does not seem that M. Loisy has a clear idea of the difference that exists between reality and its clothing, between a fact and the formula given to it at a certain period." *Ibid.*, p. 348. "For the Jews, and for the apostolic generations, the allegorical meaning of Scripture did not destroy its literal meaning; we loved to find in the past a figure and prefigurement of the present: prophecy confirming history; allegory making history better for teaching; it does not erase in any way the reality of the fact itself.... The role of symbol in the gospel tradition is incontestable. The whole question is to know whether we are supposed to deal with full symbols or figures empty of reality.... Here and there we have an outline of history. Such texts should not be pushed. Criticism has no right to pull out of it objections against the historicity, in their whole and at root, of the facts that they relate." *Ibid.*,

3. The rational and naturalist conception that denies in advance all possibility of the supernatural manifesting itself in history, such that the Gospels' way of recounting miracles or the resurrection of Jesus itself would be none other than the literary form used by the disciples in expressing the idea of the divine transcendence of Jesus, an idea based on faith in him.²⁶

pp. 346-347. "If M. Loisy had been present to the spirit, as to what touches the facts of the gospel history, this elementary and fundamental distinction between the fact, and the formulation of the fact, he would have seen, and would have made us see, that the facts of the Gospel could have been elaborated in their formulation and for their meaning, by the mentality of the apostles under the influence of the Old Testament, the needs of apologetics, and of their proper beliefs, but making something up out of whole cloth could not be and cannot be, on the part of apostolic men, the result of a suggestion or of enthusiasm, or simply a lie." *Ibid.*, p. 348. "By a singular and doubtless unseen contradiction M. Loisy, who finds everywhere in the Synoptics the traces of a legendary elaboration, treats these same texts as if they were that which is not like a 'rigorous history,' which presents itself as such. These arguments would prevail against a history of this type, but applied to the Scriptures, they carry no weight. In all this, that which is missing the most is, we would say, an historical sense." *Ibid.*, p. 347.

²⁶ "One of the *a priori* principles that inspired the 'purely scientific method' of Loisy is the denial of miracles. And this denial rests on another principle: when a fact represents an idea, there is a chance that the fact has been invented for the idea. In summary, M. Loisy is relying on the meaning of a fact to deny its historicity." *Ibid.*, p. 353. "History is not to be explained, it declares that resemblance is not the measure of truth; and besides, every historical fact, taken from the moral point of view, that is, properly historical, is at the root of the word, a unique fact that will not be seen again. In history, there is no difference of nature between a miracle and an ordinary fact. The historian, as historian, knows only facts more or less established. A miracle is not a fact as such, but a conclusion derived from a fact, and this is why a historian knows nothing of miracles. To draw this conclusion a certain mind-set is required. As to the fact itself, an unheard of fact, and extraordinary event, if it is well established, the historian has no right to deny it. It is enough for me to know that there is contingency in nature, that the laws of nature are not inflexible, for me not to have the right to repress on principle a well established fact, no matter how normal it may be." *Ibid.*, pp. 355-356. "When the question is of extraordinary and not habitual facts that present for us, besides, a primordial interest (like the resurrection of Christ, history is not enough to produce certitude, but it cannot destroy it either. Finally, to affirm it, we have to have a good intellectual and moral mind-set. And even that is not sufficient: we have to have the grace of God." *Ibid.*, p. 353. "If Christ is not risen, the formation of the belief in the resurrection becomes unintelligible for us. Despite the psychology of M. Loisy, his explanation satisfies us rationally much less than the simple facts of the Gospel account. If the faith of the apostles in the resurrection is not born out of the resurrection, one wonders where this faith has been able to draw its assurance and the force of the conviction that it had from the beginning.... Indeed, this would be an even greater miracle than all that had

In the entirety of the article, Pouget is convinced that this quarrel does not concern simply matters of exegesis which could be changed by the development of biblical science, but rather matters the directly threatened the foundation of the faith itself.²⁷ In fact, Loisy's *a priori* principles remove all historical consistency from the Christian faith and reduce it to "pure feeling," or to "a good natural religion, perhaps the best that we have, but lacking supernatural character."²⁸ If it was true, as Loisy seems to support, that the faith of the apostles developed on its own just through their subjective perception, cut off from the objectivity of the facts of the life of Christ, then the witness of the apostles and the faith would be cut off from any historic connection with Christ. It was in this direction that Loisy was developing his exegesis, when he held that Jesus "is not, properly speaking, the founder of the Church nor even of the Gospel. He was only the occasion for it: ... such is the meaning of the sentence so dear to Loisy: 'They were waiting for the Kingdom; what arrived was the Church.'²⁹

If the result of Loisy's exegesis is the dissolution of the Christian faith in its essential characteristic of being founded on the singular history of Jesus, Pouget nevertheless did not want to reject

been able to be produced without a miracle.... We have to accept the testimony of the apostles, without which we would have to admit that they had been tricked, that there was a hallucination from one end to the other of apostolic history: but an hallucination followed by a colossal fact, which is not an hallucination, and which can be proven!" *Ibid.*, p. 351. "What does the following mean for Loisy: 'I believe in the resurrection of Christ?' It means this without a doubt: 'I believe that Christ survived in the belief of his apostles.' For us, we hold to the sense that the apostles gave to it and which the Church gives: 'I believe that Christ is risen.' Indeed, the religious value of a fact like the resurrection, which is (M. Loisy does not answer this) the keystone of all Christian tradition, does not dwell only in the spiritual interpretation given it, but, and before all, in the fact itself. It is on the basis of the fact of the resurrection that the hope of human redemption is based.... In demeaning the witness of the apostles, in denying the fact of the resurrection and the important circumstances that surround it, when he writes, for example (I, p. 223) 'One may suppose that the soldiers took the body down from the cross before evening and placed it in some common grave, where they threw in a jumble the remains of the executed,' M. Loisy has clearly gone beyond the rights of history." *ibid.*, p. 352.

²⁷ "There is no more question here of a battle on a middle ground between the prolongation of the faith or its formulation in a certain era, and the results of science, themselves being subject to revision. This is rather a matter of a conflict on vital points, and of an even graver conflict than a conflict of ideas, since our logic always collapses somewhere; whereas here, in history, the results obtained have an appearance of objectivity. Faith either has to deny the results or adapt to them." *Ibid.*, p. 362.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 362-365.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 364-365.

historical-critical exegesis. Rather, he held that it should follow another path, not that of a “exegesis divided” between history and faith, but an exegesis “coordinated” between faith and its tradition. This means that it had as a preconception the living framework in which the examined documents were generated.

It was not for this reason that Pouget adhered to the idea of a direct and immediate passage between the facts of history and the faith, such that the simple apology of history had to lead to the faith, but it would show that the impossibility of dissociating faith from the history of the Gospels is a singularity of Christian revelation. This path of the exegesis of the Gospels within the tradition, Pouget held besides, agrees better with the historical development from which it developed. In fact, it took shape in, and was received by, the community of believers as the witness to the encounter of the apostles and their experience with Christ, and it is true that the evangelists expressed the witness of the apostles in the form of catechesis, and so used the literary genres proper to the synoptic tradition. However, it should not be deduced that they have deformed or, worse, invented, historical events as part of their teaching.³⁰ In the last analysis, what Pouget did not accept in Loisy's work was the weakening of the Christian faith in its relationship with history and the reality of the Gospel facts.

G. Pouget distances himself from Loisy in the context of biblical modernism

In the Pouget-Loisy confrontation, although Loisy had been an actor in the issues of the biblical question at the beginning of the twentieth century, Pouget confronted these issues only at a distance and privately, as a simple onlooker. The center of the debate was the

³⁰ “The faith of the apostles is based on facts. We have to accept these facts from them if we do have a decisive reason to deny their testimony, since history is not a matter of experimentation, and since, today, we cannot see or determine them. It is true that their faith is expressed in documents. But what kind of documents? This is a matter of conjecture. If the documents were alone, they would leave us more in doubt that they guarantee their affirmation. But behind the documents there is a living society that produced them and accepted them. The documents of the Gospels belong to a society that would not have turned back on what it believed to be their religious duty: that is, to honor Christ as he should be. This is our guarantee. The evangelists made historical catecheses, and so the books teach us. But did they invent, or even simply deformed, history because of the need to teach? This would have to be proved, and the witness of the apostles is difficult to establish. Certainly, a critic has a duty to pull out what was believed at the time that the synoptics were written. They have not been edited by the apostles, but they continued the roots planted in the immediately preceding period, which is the period of the very activity of the apostles.” *Ibid.*, pp. 362-363.

possibility of introducing some historical-critical information into exegesis and theology. Pouget favored this but, in seeking to check Loisy's exegetical method, he distanced himself from the latter since Loisy insisted that it be done under certain conditions. In particular, historical-critical exegesis had to respect the proper nature of the writings under investigation, since it was not a matter of simple literary texts, but of documents coming out of the tradition of the faith of the Church. It was on this point that the difficulty with Loisy arose.

1. In his defense and clarification of *L'Évangile et l'Église* expressed in his work *Autour d'un petit livre*,³¹ Loisy supported with conviction his view that historical and theological perspectives had to be understood in terms of reciprocal independence, and hence exegesis could "be developed only by the critical method;"³² and the Church was not competent to give "guidelines for the historical analysis of sacred texts."³³ This separation of methods seemed decisive for Loisy to resolve the disagreement between dogma and criticism since, because of their mutual exclusion, one could avoid every possible conflict. For Pouget this method was inadequate since, if it were correct to maintain a distinction of method, this should not be transformed into a separation or worse, into a rupture.

But Pouget did not arrive at this conclusion in the way that the conservatives did, by simply defending the "rights" of dogma. Instead, he pointed out the impasse that the "separated exegesis" of Loisy was leading to. He correctly remarked that putting dogma into parentheses within exegesis did not safeguard the presumed

³¹ A. LOISY, *Autour d'un petit livre*, Paris, Picard, 1903.

³² "Theological and pastoral exegesis, and scientific and historical exegesis, are two very different things, which cannot be governed by a single law. Although the material for it seems identical, the object is not really the same. The law of ecclesiastical exegesis, which is to teach, by way of the Bible, Catholic faith and morals, could not be the law of simple historical exegesis. By the same token, the law of historical exegesis, which is the determination of facts and of the primitive meaning of texts, could not be the law of ecclesiastical exegesis. If this latter would impose its conclusions on the former like facts or opinions of the past, it would stifle it. And if historical exegesis were to impose its conclusions on ecclesiastical exegesis, like dogmas to be believed now, it would ruin it.... Criticism should keep to its own area; it should not trespass on the domain of the faith and its dogmatic interpretation. It is not the job of the historian, if he is only an historian, to pronounce about the basis of religion and the object of revelation.... Likewise, the theologian should stop identifying history with theology and consider his speculations as the only adequate and unchanging form of religious knowledge and the science of religion." A. LOISY, *Autour d'un petit livre*, op. cit., pp. 51-53.

³³ A. LOISY, *Autour d'un petit livre*, op. cit., p. 50.

neutrality of the researcher, but introduced surreptitiously certain rationalist principles that demolished exegesis in terms of history. As a result, Loisy's historical method perverted the "inspired" texts reducing them simply to documents of scriptural archeology. Pouget reproached him: "Loisy treats the texts as fragments totally disarticulated from their context. But in reality they constitute a whole within an uninterrupted movement of life in the bosom of a community. The Church has its own psychological laws gleaned from Tradition. Loisy has lost all sense of Tradition."³⁴

Pouget therefore claimed, against Loisy, the interpretation of history as a "moral science," for which one could not go beyond a certain interpretive postulate, namely, "The Church has one of them, and she recognizes it ; Monsieur Loisy has one, too, and we would do well not to hold it against him, but he does not seem to recognize it."³⁵ In this way, the position of the Catholic exegete who conforms to the "pre-understanding," or *mentalité*, as Pouget called it, of the tradition of the Church, seemed more coherent with the nature of the texts being examined. It alone, in fact, could safeguard the hermeneutical continuum between the acts of history and the faith witnessed to by these texts, since it had developed as an expression of the apostolic catechesis. In other words, the debate over Loisy's exegetical method was based on the claim that the texts submitted to exegesis were texts of faith, already interpreted by the living tradition of the Church, and not simply historical texts. In this way, one could not, in historical-critical exegesis, separate the faith of the Church from its hermeneutical context.

2. In his confrontation with Loisy, Pouget found himself in unison with a good number of Catholic scholars who took an intermediate path in Loisy's claim. It was not the opposition of those who reacted on an emotional and defensive basis, but of those who, better advised critically, like Father Lagrange or Maurice Blondel, pointed to the insufficiency of the historical-exegetical method Loisy proposed. Although the historiography of modernism split, a little schematically and quickly, into the two opposing camps of those in favor of and those opposed to the application of historical criticism, and although it reduced at the same time the intermediate positions to simply compromise positions, in fact this historiographical line does not take into account the complexity of the debate.³⁶

³⁴ J. CHEVALIER, *Logia*, op. cit., p. 21.

³⁵ G. POUGET, *Les Évangiles synoptiques*, op. cit., p. 353.

³⁶ J. BELLAMY, *La théologie catholique au XIX^e siècle*, Paris, Beauchesne (1904), p. 193; É. HOCEDEZ, *Histoire de la Théologie au XIX^e siècle*, op. cit., pp. 124-125; Ch. THÉOBALD, *L'entrée de l'histoire dans l'univers religieux et théologique au moment de la crise moderniste*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1973, p. 13.

Underestimating the originality of the intermediate positions has sometimes allowed the superficial establishment of a direct development between modernism and Vatican II. But in reality it is exactly in these intermediate positions, which have not yet been sufficiently studied, that one should recognize the irreplaceable function of having provided a link between old and new, or nearly a backdrop, thanks to which the polemics were cooled down. Now, it has been slowly possible to carry out a reflection on the historical-critical method in exegesis and to formulate in another way the method of understanding in theology. Pouget should be placed in the front line here.

To support this thesis, it is possible to cite a unique episode. According to the account of Loris Capovilla, his secretary, John XXIII took from his personal meditation on the *Portrait de M. Pouget*³⁷ the hermeneutical criterion of distinguishing between the “deposit of the truths of faith” and the “language in which they are expressed,” proclaimed in the pope’s opening discourse at the Second Vatican Council. His text, *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, is recognized in historiography as the “salient point of the spirit of the Council to mark the passage of the Church to a new historical era.”³⁸

This episode is a little witness to how a position at the secondary level, such as Father Pouget was able to play, can be so important in the development of the understanding of the Faith.

(JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., translator)

³⁷ Cf. J. GUITTON, *Une siècle, une vie*, Paris, Laffont, 1988, pp. 180-181.

³⁸ *Storia dei Concilii ecumenici*, Brescia, Queriniana, 1990, pp. 406-407. In this discourse (*Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, 11 October 1962) we read: “Est enim aliud ipsum depositum Fidei, seu veritates quae veneranda doctrina nostra continentur, aliud modus, quo eadem enuntiantur, eodem tamen sensu eademque sententia.” The critical text of the discourse, established from the various editions in the hand of the pope himself, is found in G. ALBERIGO - A. MELLONI, *Fede - Tradizione - Profezia. Studi su Giovanni XXIII e sul Vaticano II*, Brescia, 1984, pp. 185-283.

St. Vincent de Paul and the Bible *

by José Carlos Fonsatti, C.M.

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I present here a synthesis of what some of the well-known authors, renowned for their study of Vincent de Paul, have written on this topic. I do not pretend to write an in-depth study about St. Vincent and the Bible, but rather try to explain why the Sacred Scriptures were important for him. I have attempted to gather together some interesting data on this subject and order it in such a way that the reader will understand how our Founder used the Word of God in his personal life and in his ministry. Excuse me, my dear confreres and sisters, for any imperfection.

1. The Bible in the 17th Century

We know that the *Protestant Reformation* arose from the controversy that surrounded the authority of the Pope and bishops. Luther accepted only the authority of the Bible. The reformers, from the time of John Wycliffe († 1384), affirmed that the Bible ought to be interpreted literally and according to the authority of the Spirit and not according to the authority of human interpreters, including the Church's *Magisterium*. The literal sense of Scripture is the intention of the Holy Spirit and we ought to interpret it in faith in the same Spirit. According to Luther, we can understand the Scriptures only in the Spirit in which they were written and we can only find the Spirit present in the Scriptures. Therefore, Christians ought to have direct access to the Bible and to its true meaning since they are disposed to receive the light of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, according to Luther, the only authority is the Bible: *only Scripture*.

* This article was published in: *Iprosul. Informativo da Provincia do Sul*, Curitiba, Brasil (Year XIX, No. 145 - January/March 2003), pp. 24-37. The author willingly adapted this article for publication in *Vincentiana*. Recently the first part of this article ("San Vicente de Paúl y la Biblia en general"), was published in: *CLAPVI. Conferencia Latinoamericana de Provincias Vicentinas* (Year XXX, No. 116 - January/April 2004), pp. 146-154, in Portuguese. The second part: "San Vicente y los Evangelios" will also soon be published in *CLAPVI*.

The Church, at the Council of Trent, condemned the doctrine of free interpretation of the Bible and decreed that the Vulgate was the only authentic text, with all its books and parts. Since that time biblical commentaries, introductions and biblical theology have flourished. Yet the theology that was meant to respond to the Protestant ideas, minimized the importance of the Bible and highlighted the role of Tradition. The Bible was only the first of the “theological places” where one could find arguments to justify the doctrine of the Church. The exegete was only a technician who prepared the Scriptural arguments that the theologian could use in discussions with Protestants and atheists. Exegesis was only a servant of dogmatic theology and apologetics. The 17th century marked the beginning of a search for the literal meaning of the sacred text. In this search, all the means that were at the disposal of reason were used: comparing the Bible with other literary works of the Ancient Middle East, the findings of archeology, etc. In this way, the Jewish philosopher, B. Spinoza, attempted to interpret the Bible with rationalistic presuppositions. In 1678, the Oratorian, R. Simon, published *A Critical History of the Old Testament*, a work in which he made a critical-literary and historical analysis of the Bible. A group of traditional Catholics, however, led by Bossuet, had this book placed on the Index of Prohibited Books. It was within this context that Vincent de Paul lived and worked (1581-1660).

2. Vincent de Paul and the Bible

The young Vincent was initiated into the mysteries of the faith in his home. His mother was his first catechist. The faith was transmitted from one generation to the next in a familiar environment. At home he learned how to pray and received his first lessons in the faith. The use of the Bible in family catechesis was greatly minimized. The majority of people did not have access to the sacred text which was only available in the Latin edition of the Vulgate. It was not a common practice to have a copy of the Bible in the home. The Bible was only in the hands of the great theologians and was used primarily in controversies with the reformers. Its use, therefore, was primarily apologetical. Nevertheless, Vincent, like many others of his time, was acquainted with the “Sacred History,” that is, in his childhood he learned about the more important events of the History of Salvation: the vocation of Abraham, the sacrifice of Isaac, the Exodus, the reign of David and Solomon, the prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus. Besides his family, his participation in the parish at Dax contributed to his biblical formation. His paternal uncle, Etienne, prior of Poymartet, near Goubera, also had an important role in this area. In summary, the young Vincent had his first contact with the Word of God in the family, in the preaching of the pastor of Dax, and in the reflections of his uncle.

In 1604, Vincent obtained his theology degree. Naturally, during the time of his theological studies he had much contact with the Bible. As already mentioned, at this time the use of Scripture was used apologetically in theological studies. The Bible was used to prove the great truths of the faith. We do not know if, as a theological student, Vincent had great knowledge of the Scriptures. The theology of the time was scholastic, very methodical and not very existential.

As a priest he continued to be nourished by the Scriptures, but indirectly, through the text of the lectionary and the liturgical hours. We might ask: What breviary was in use at that time? How much did it cost? When Vincent died, two volumes of the breviary were found in his room. They measured 18.5 cm by 12 cm; they were printed in 1656 and each volume weighed a little over 1550 grams — because of their weight (something more than three kilos) they would have been difficult to carry.

“A critical reading of Vincent’s life reveals that prior to 1617, that is, before he was 36 years old, Vincent did not use the Bible very much and we might suppose that he had little knowledge of it. He speaks of God, Providence, the Virgin Mary, but the name of Jesus appears for the first time in October 1617 in the *Rule for the Charity at Châtillon*.”¹ Vincent’s arrival in Paris marked a change in his life. During three or four years he was concerned with obtaining a benefice. This period in his life might be seen as a time of postulancy. Fr. de Bérulle was his protector and dreamed of him becoming a member of the recently established Oratorians.

Two well-known events transformed Vincent’s life: the accusation of theft and his dark night of the soul. It was during this time that he decided to give his life to God in service of the poor. God responded by giving him interior peace. Christ revealed himself to Vincent in the poor peasant at Gannes. It was there that he was able to “view the other side of the coin” and see events with the eyes of God. The dying peasant of Gannes led Vincent to focus on Jesus Christ whom he saw in the poor.

The year 1617 marked a radical transformation in the life of Vincent. In January of that year, he discovered the missionary Christ in Folleville. In August of the same year, he found Christ, the servant of the poor in Châtillon. These two events likewise mark a new way of seeing the Scriptures. Two biblical texts will become the foundation of his spirituality and ministry: 1) Luke 4:18 ff.: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives*

¹ A. DODIN, “Monsieur Vincent de Paul et la Bible,” in *Le Grand Siècle et la Bible*, Beauchesne, Paris, 1989, pp. 218-219.

and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord. Vincent used this text eight times to define the mission of Christ and the Congregation. These words would also become the motto of the Congregation. 2) Matthew 25:40: *Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers or sisters of mine, you did for me.* This text appears in the *Rule for the Charities* that he wrote and also in the *Common Rule* of the Congregation.

We can say that for Vincent, the discovery of Christ present in the poor was at the same time a discovery of God in the Sacred Scriptures. The Christ discovered in the Gospels is a Christ committed to the poor and the forgotten people. The Christ he met in Gannes sets before Vincent's eyes a reality that he never dreamed possible. The poor run the risk of losing their salvation. The mysterious and transcendent God that Vincent knew in the *Rule of Perfection* of Benedict of Canfield invited him to love God by giving himself to the poor. Thus it can be said that the poor brought Vincent to Christ, and this Christ is revealed in Scripture. Each day Vincent read from the New Testament and obliged his confreres to do the same: *The priests and all the students are to read a chapter of the New Testament, reverencing this book as the norm of Christian holiness. For greater benefit this reading should be done kneeling, with head uncovered, and praying, at least at the end, on these three themes: 1° reverence for the truths contained in the chapter; 2° desire to have the same spirit in which Christ or the saints taught them; 3° determination to put into practice the advice or commands contained in it, as well as the examples of virtue.*²

3. How Vincent used the Bible

It is truly an ambitious undertaking to present the relationship between Vincent and the Bible. It would be necessary to search through eight volumes of his correspondence, two volumes of his conferences to the Daughters of Charity and two volumes of conferences to the Missionaries, all of which have been gathered together by Pierre Coste and fill 8,427 pages.

According to Fr. Vansteenkiste,³ in volumes IX and X (which contain the conferences to the Daughters of Charity), there are 164 explicit references to the Sacred Scriptures — 23 references to the Old Testament and 141 to the New Testament. In addition there are 1,755 implicit references — 428 references to the Old Testament

² *Common Rules*, X, 8

³ M. VANSTEENKISTE, "Monsieur Vincent et la Bible," in *Bulletin de la Société Borda*, n. 388.

and 1,327 to the New Testament. Furthermore, according to Jean-Pierre Renouard,⁴ volume XI and XII (conferences to the Missionaries) contain 127 references to the Old Testament and 203 to the New Testament (and this is without counting references that are repeated). These numbers indicate that Vincent used the Bible with great frequency.

Of the 73 books in the Bible, Vincent cites 38 of 46 Old Testament books and 24 of 27 New Testament books. He does not make reference to the Old Testament books of 1 Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, 1 Maccabees, Ruth, Habakkuk, Obadiah, and Haggai, nor to the New Testament Books of Philemon, 2 and 3 John. When he refers to the Bible he uses an introductory phrase such as: “as Scripture says,” “as God says,” “as Our Lord says,” “as St. Paul says,” etc.

Vincent did not use biblical language in a uniform way, always with the same objective or intention. He referred to the Bible from memory and was not concerned with using the exact words. For example, in the conferences he refers to Romans 12:10 on four occasions, but always with little differences. At other times, he uses distinct biblical references but places them together as one single reference: *When he [Vincent] explains the Rule to the Daughters of Charity and the Missionaries, he cites the Biblical text exactly and includes the reference in his explanation. These, however, are very rare instances. His more common method is to cite the Bible as a gloss, a living gloss, a spiritual gloss... usually wonderfully adapted and accommodated to the situation.*⁵

In this way Vincent seems to be like the New Testament writers who freely referred to the texts of the Old Testament. His manner of referring to the Sacred Scriptures is based on the literal sense of the Scriptures and not on the exact historical sense of the text. He is more concerned with the moral sense of the text, that is, with the immediate application of the text. For example, in the conference of June 1642 “On obedience,” he freely cites the text of Matthew 26:52-54: *Jesus Christ preferred holy obedience to life itself. Did he not say to St. Peter, who wished to prevent the Jews from arresting him: “Are you unwilling that I should do the will of God, my Father, which is to obey the soldiers, Pilate and the executioners? And were it not that this most holy will must be fulfilled, would not legions of angels come to deliver me?”*⁶

⁴ JEAN-PIERRE RENOARD, “La Parola de Dio in San Vincenzo,” in *Annali della Missione*, 99, 1992, p. 149 ff.

⁵ A. DODIN, “Saint Paul et Saint Vincent de Paul,” Dax, 1936-1937.

⁶ Conference to the Daughters of Charity, “On Obedience,” June, 1642, I:61; C.E.D., IX:66. The citation of the French edition, *Correspondence, Entretiens, Documents*, will be C.E.D. followed by the volume and page number. The present English edition of this same work, *Correspondence*,

“In light of these frequent references and allusions to the Bible, we can imagine that Vincent ‘studied’ the Bible in the deepest sense of the word ‘study.’ He frequently consulted the Bible, selected passages, and imbued himself with these texts in order to illuminate and simplify the theoretical system of the supernatural life.”⁷

4. The Old Testament

Vincent saw no division between the two testaments. Besides the teachings of the Old Testament books, Vincent referred to specific persons of the Old Covenant, taking examples from their life. He focused his attention on four persons: Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses.

On 11 occasions Vincent referred to the life and the fall of Adam: ten times to the Daughters of Charity and once to the Missionaries.⁸ He focused on Adam’s disobedience and the consequences of this action for the human race: *Adam brought death to the body and caused the death of the soul by sin.*⁹

At times he makes interesting commentaries: *Adam disobeyed God by eating the apple and from this two great evils have sprung; because, just as man was unwilling to subject himself to his Creator, the soul also lost its power to rule.*¹⁰ He then stated that *Adam had*

Conferences, Documents will use the abbreviation C.C.D., followed by volume and page number. Since the conferences to the Daughters and the Missionaries have not been translated into English, I have used the work *Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul [to the Missionaries]*, Pierre Coste, C.M. [translated by Joseph Leonard, C.M.]. This is a one volume edition. When referring to the conferences to the Daughters, I have used *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Daughters]*, translated by Joseph Leonard, a four-volume edition. Thus after the title of the conference, the volume and page number follow.

⁷ M. VANSTEENKISTE, *op. cit.*

⁸ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Daughters of Charity]*, “On the Jubilee,” 15 October 1641, I:43-44; “To Four Sisters who were sent to Sedan,” 23 July 1654, III:2-3; “On Temptations,” 24 August 1654, III:13-14; “On Mortification of the Senses,” 3 January 1655, III:48-49; “On Obedience,” 23 May 1655, III:70-72; “On the Jubilee,” 14 December 1656, III:204-205; “On Persons to whom temptations may be mentioned; relations with externs; the duty of secrecy,” 6 January 1658, IV:75-76; “On mutual charity and the duty of reconciliation,” 4 March 1658, IV:90-91; “On Holy Indifference,” 8 December 1659, IV:296-297; *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Missionaries]*, “Repetition of Prayer,” 15 November 1656, 352-353; *C.E.D.*, IX:47, X, 2, 17, 55, 80, 81, 232, 448, 466, 695, XI:54.

⁹ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Daughters of Charity]*, “To four Sisters who were sent to Sedan,” 23 July 1654, III:2; *C.E.D.*, X:2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, “On mortification of the senses,” 3 January 1655, III:49; *C.E.D.*, X:55, 448.

done penance and bewailed his sin for more than 900 years.¹¹ Note that Genesis 4:1 states that Adam lived for 930 years.

On five occasions Vincent made reference to the patriarch Noah.¹² He focused on two facts: the construction of the ark and Noah's activity. On 25 May 1642, while speaking to the Daughters of Charity, he said: *Do you know, Sisters, how long Noah took to build the ark and to make it as perfect as it should be? A hundred years. Oh Savior of our souls! Oh my dear sisters! If, to build the ark, in which only eight persons were saved from the Deluge, so much time was required, how much do you think is needed to strengthen and preserve this Company into which such a great number of souls will enter and save themselves from the deluge of the world.*¹³

Referring to St. Clement's letter to the Corinthians, Vincent says that Noah was the prophet and preacher of repentance: *God determines to punish the world; he sends a universal deluge to chastise the horrible sins that were being committed. And yet, what does he then do. He inspires Noah with the idea of building an ark, and Noah took a hundred years to build it. Why do you think it was God's will that he should take so long to build this ark if not to see whether the world would be converted, if it would do penance, if men would profit by what Noah said to them, speaking from the window of his ark, crying in a loud voice, according to some authors: "Do penance, ask pardon of God."*¹⁴

Abraham is the perfect example of obedience. He followed Divine Providence step by step. In fact, he left his own country in order to sacrifice his only son: *To this end, remember Abraham, to whom God had promised to people the whole earth from his son. And nevertheless, God commands him to sacrifice this son. If Abraham puts his son to death, how shall God accomplish his promise? Abraham, however, who had accustomed his soul to do the will of God, set about executing this order without troubling himself about anything else. It is for God to look to it (he might say). If I execute his commands he will accomplish his promise. But how? I know not. It is enough that he is all-powerful. I am going to offer to him what is dearest to me on earth, since he wills it. But this is my only son! No matter! But by depriving*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, "On Temptations," 24 August 1654, III:14; C.E.D., X:17.

¹² C.C.D., III:187-188; *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Daughters of Charity]*, "On the faults and failings of the past year," 6 January 1642, I:51; "On Preservation of the Company," 25 May 1854, II:296; *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Missionaries]*, "Repetition of Prayer," 15 November 1656, 352; C.E.D., III:183; IX:56, 696; XI:377.

¹³ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Daughters of Charity]*, "On Preservation of the Company," 25 May 1654, II:296; C.E.D., IX:,696.

¹⁴ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Missionaries]*, "Repetition of Prayer," 15 November 1656, 352-353; C.E.D., XI:377.

*this child of life, I deprive God of the means of fulfilling his promise. It is all the same. He wills it so, and it must be done. But if I preserve my boy, my generation shall be blessed; God has said it. Yes, but he has also said that I am to put him to death. He has declared it to me. I will obey, come what may. And I shall still have hope in his words. Admire this confidence. He is nowise concerned for what is to happen. Yet the thing touches him to the heart, but he hopes that all will end well since God has part in the affair. Why have not we the same confidence and the same hope, if we leave to God the care of all that regards us, and prefer what he commands us?*¹⁵

Vincent refers to Moses more than 25 times. He points out that Moses, like Melchizedek who had no parents or genealogy, was an abandoned child. But above all, Moses was the mediator, chosen by God to transmit the Law and intercede for the Israelites during battle: *Wonderful power of mental prayer! My Daughters, for that was how Moses prayed, with his hands uplifted to heaven, without saying a word: and this was potent enough to win a battle for those for whom he prayed. The Holy Scriptures also tell us that Moses was one day before God, and did not utter a word. And he heard the voice of God, "Moses let me alone for you are forcing me to do what I do not wish to do. This people is ungrateful and rebellious to my law; I wish to destroy them, and you want to save them. Why do you force me? Depart, and let me do what I desire." You see, my Daughters — do you not — how God feels himself constrained by prayer, and by mental prayer, for Moses did not say a word, and yet his prayer was so well heard that God said to him, "Let me alone; you want me to do what I do not wish to do."*¹⁶

Many times he referred to Moses as the lawgiver, remembering especially those who opposed his orders and were punished by God (cf. Numbers 17:5-14): *In the Old Law we have the example of Korah, Dathan and Abiram who were swallowed up by the earth because they murmured against Moses.*¹⁷

Vincent also referred to the passage where Miriam rebels against her brother Moses because he had married a Cushite woman. She became a snow-white leper and then, through the intercession of Moses, was cured (cf. Numbers 12:1-15): *His own sister was covered with leprosy for having criticized his actions.*¹⁸ For Vincent, Moses was a model lawgiver and founder.

¹⁵ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Missionaries]*, "On the Maxim, Seek First the Kingdom of God," 21 February 1659, 479-480; *C.C.D.*, III:187-188; *C.E.D.*, III:183; XI:376; XII:138.

¹⁶ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Daughters of Charity]*, "Conference on Prayer," 31 May 1648, II:50-51; *C.E.D.*, IX:418.

¹⁷ *C.C.D.*, XIIIb:351; *C.E.D.*, XIII:728.

¹⁸ *C.C.D.*, XIIIb:351; *C.E.D.*, XIII,728.

5. The New Testament

The majority of Vincent's biblical references come from the New Testament. The second chapter of the Common Rules for the Missionaries contains 37 New Testament references in just 14 paragraphs. In his works there are about 400 explicit references to the Gospels and more than 1,000 allusions to Jesus' life. The Gospel was part of his horizon. Speaking to his sons and daughters, he always referred to some evangelical maxim or some action of Jesus Christ. Therefore, he always chose the most important references to give a foundation to his explanations: *we are then, by his mercy, both quite prepared and quite bound to observe these maxims, if they are not contrary to our Institute.*¹⁹

Vincent centered on Jesus' mission rather than his parables and miracles: evangelize the poor in accordance with the text of Isaiah 61. This influenced him to place on the seal of the Congregation the image of Jesus as missionary. He adopted as a motto for the Congregation: "The Lord has sent me to evangelize the poor" and called his institute the Congregation of the Mission: *Holy Scripture teaches us that our Lord Jesus Christ, having been sent to the world to save the human race, began first of all to do and then to teach.*²⁰

Vincent referred to the gospel of Matthew most often: 351 times. Vincent utilized this gospel in its ecclesial dimension when he wanted to encourage, catechize, and teach the Daughters and the Missionaries. After Matthew, Luke follows. Vincent used this gospel when speaking of the mission, the poor and the Virgin Mary. Vincent found in Paul the source for his baptismal spirituality. He referred to Paul when he would speak about the necessity of conforming our lives to that of Christ, putting aside the old man and transforming ourselves as we clothe ourselves in the new Adam. Fr. Dodin wrote that: "The spirituality of the mission is not based on a theology of priesthood but on an identification with Christ through baptism."²¹

One of the elderly missionaries of the Congregation noted that Vincent was very devout during the celebration of Mass, especially during the reading of the Gospel. Others noted that when he found a passage that began with the words: "Amen, amen, I say to you..." he became more attentive to the words and his voice became more devout: "He seemed to absorb the meaning of the words of the

¹⁹ *Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul [to the Missionaries]*, "On the Maxims of the Gospel," 14 February 1659, 651-652; C.E.D., XII:129.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, "On the End of the Congregation of the Mission," 6 December 1658, 596; C.E.D., XII:73.

²¹ A. DODIN, *Saint Vincent de Paul*, Paris, 1947, p. 23.

Sacred Scripture, nurturing his soul with the substance of the text just as a child is nurtured by his mother's milk. Thus it seemed that all his actions were filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ."²²

6. Sharing the Word

According to Vincent it would be a serious error to read the Sacred Scriptures to obtain a more powerful arsenal to use in arguments or to make one's preaching more attractive: above all it is necessary to guard against reading the Scriptures as some type of study, saying: this passage will be good for such and such an occasion. In this way the Scriptures only serve to exalt oneself.

For Vincent, the two most important uses of the Scriptures are preaching and catechizing. He created the "Little Method," a style of preaching that is simple, clear, familiar and yet at the same time done with force and charity. The objective of this method was "to explain the truths of the Gospel with familiar examples." Preaching ought to revolve around three key words: nature, motive and means. He was convinced that this style of preaching would enable the Missionaries to draw closer to the poor.

In the area of catechetics he used "the little catechism" for children and "the great catechism" for adults, but taught in the presence of children.

Conclusion

What would a saint be without the Bible? Only a great leader like Mohammad or Buddha.... St. Vincent was, like so many other saints, a man of the Gospels. St. Francis de Sales called him "a walking gospel." Vincent read the Gospels in a very real and concrete way. According to him, we are able to obtain fruit from any biblical text if we meditate on it or if we explain it well.²³ He saw the Bible as his support, and said that all things can be disputed *except those which have been determined by Sacred Scripture*.²⁴ He was opposed to using the Scriptures in a polemical way. Reading his conferences and his letters, we begin to feel like the disciples of Emmaus: hearts burning while "beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interprets for us the Scriptures." It is not important whether Vincent used the historical-critical or the structuralist or the psychoanalytical or the materialist method. The result is what truly matters: "Our hearts burning within us" (Luke 24:32).

(CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M., translator)

²² ABELLY, III, 72-73.

²³ C.E.D., XII:135.

²⁴ C.E.D., II:30.

Rome, 20 June 2006

To the Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Brothers

May the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ fill your hearts now and forever!

I want to thank you for the expressions of solidarity and affection that you have made during this past month of Alfredo Becerra's illness and recuperation.

Even though brain damage is always something serious, Alfredo is recovering slowly but surely. This weekend he began to eat solid foods on his own. Taking away the feeding tubes has definitely made Alfredo look better.

He is still in St. Camillus Hospital, waiting to be transferred to St. John Hospital of the Knights of Malta, where he will be for at least a month, receiving the physical therapy necessary for his recuperation.

He had the joy of the presence of his sister, Virginia, and his brother, Emanuel, for two weeks. They came from Mexico just to be with him. They stayed with us here in the Curia and went to the hospital each day to be with Alfredo, encouraging him and assisting him. It was a pleasure to have them among us.

Besides the members of the Curia, who have been attentive to Alfredo, a group of faithful friends, both priests and laity, have accompanied him constantly. They have celebrated the sacraments with him, and life as well. We really do not know how to thank them for so many signs of friendship and solidarity.

I want to repeat the gratitude of the Becerra Family and the members of the General Curia for your prayers and interest in Alfredo's well being. I am sure that, with your support, our confrere will soon be back into the exercise of his mission in the Congregation.

Your brother in St. Vincent,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and a long, sweeping underline.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General