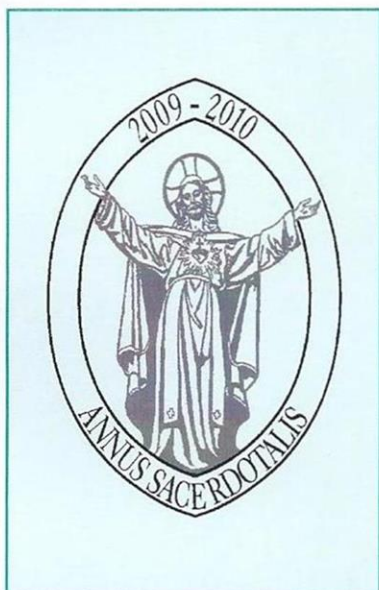
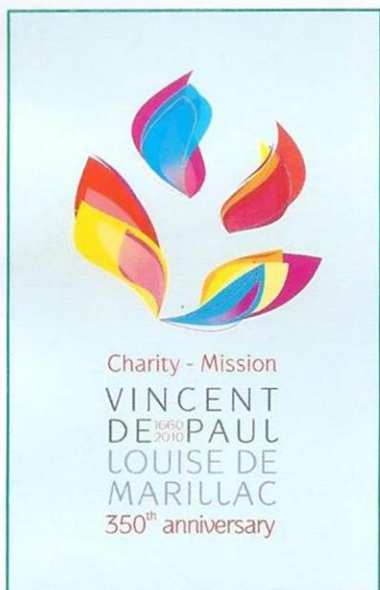


VINCENTIANA

54th Year - N. 1

January-March 2010



St. Vincent and the Priesthood

CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION
GENERAL CURIA

HOLY SEE



Mons. Vicente Bokalic Iglic, C.M.

Vatican Daily Press Bulletin has announced, March 15, His Holiness Benedict XVI has named Fr. Vicente Bokalic C.M., former Visitor of Province of Argentina the auxiliary bishop of archdiocese of Buenos Aires, Argentina and assigned him the titular bishop of Summa.

Vicente Bokalic was born in Buenos Aires on June 11, 1952. He entered the Congregation of the Mission on March 1, 1970. Incorporated on June 5, 1976. On April 1, 1978 he was ordained priest by Msgr. Alfredo Expósito, bishop of Zarate, Campana.

He worked in the pastoral and vocational ministry of the youth



Mons. Milan Amantius Šašik, C.M.

On March 17, 2010 Pope Benedict XVI nominated Msgr. Milan Šašik (Shashik) the Eparchial bishop of Mokachevo in the Catholic Church of Byzantine-Ruthenian Rite. Until his nomination he was Apostolic Administrator *ad nutum Sanctae Sedis* of the same Eparchy and Titular Bishop of Bononia (since November, 2002).

Milan Amantius Šašik (Shashik or Sasik) was born on September 17, 1952 in Lechina, in the diocese of Nitra, Slovakia. On July 31, 1971 he entered Congregation of the Mission. He was ordained priest in Bratislava on June 6, 1976. On November 12,

in Escobar and Buenos Aires. His assignments were: formation ministry in two periods: 1983-1990 and 1997-2000; pastor of the parish of Miraculous Medal Shrine 1991-1994; mission parish in Cordoba 1994-1997 and presently, in mission parish in Goya. From 2008 he was involved in the popular missions.

In the Congregation, twice, he was Superior of the Seminary 1987-1990 and 1997-2000, twice Provincial Councilor 1987-1993 and 1997-2003 and Visitor of the Province of Argentina 2003-2009.

2002, Pope John Paul II nominated Fr. Milan to be Titular Bishop of Bononia and Apostolic Administrator *ad nutum Sanctae Sedes* of Mukochevo Eparchy of Catholic Church of Byzantine-Ruthenian Rite in Ukraine. He was ordained bishop on January 6, 2003 by pope John Paul II in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

The Greek-catholic Eparchy of Mukachevo has its roots in the Union of Uzhorod, which took place on 24 April 1646. In the northeastern part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire the Catholics were called Ruthenians or the Ruthenian church. In 1771 during the rule of Maria Theresia the Eparchy of Mukachevo was officially recognized and was introduced to all the faithful as the Greek-Catholics and the church as Greek-catholic.

The Eparchy is located in the region of Transcarpathia, Ukraine. There are 1.248.000 inhabitants.

GENERAL CURIA

SOLIDARITY WITH HAITI

Rome, 15 January 2010

*To all the Visitors and Vice-Visitors of the Congregation
of the Mission*

Dear Visitors,

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

The people of Haiti call out to us. Thousands are suffering from the 7.0 earthquake that struck their homeland this week. Among the suffering are our own confreres, the Daughters of Charity, and the Vincentian Family in general. The six confreres stationed in Haiti have survived the earthquake uninjured, and there has been no serious damage to our two community houses, including the seminary. The Visitor of Puerto Rico reported the sad news that one Daughter of Charity died as a result of the earthquake and another was injured. The provincial house of the Daughters was also completely destroyed. Families of our confreres have also lost their homes.

I am writing now to share the reflections from the General Council meeting this morning. The purpose of the meeting was to put some order into our response to this situation. We recognize that there are immediate needs calling out to us and that there are intermediate and long-term needs to be met as the country seeks to reconstruct itself. In this letter we are focusing only on the immediate needs. The intermediate and long-term needs will be an agenda item at the upcoming meeting of the heads of the Vincentian Family. An opportunity has presented itself for the Vincentian Family to come together in a common effort on behalf of the poor.

The Curia this morning made an initial commitment to contribute 25.000 USD toward the purchase of items urgently needed. We are

sending the money to the Province of Puerto Rico, since they are already organizing storage centers for supplies to be handed over to the Daughters and the confreres. They will deliver these goods by traveling across Haiti's border with the Dominican Republic.

The Curia has received inquiries from individual confreres and from provinces as to how they might respond to the situation. Our preference, in the interest of tracking donations from the Congregation, is that contributions either be sent directly to the Curia or that Visitors direct the Econome General to withdraw money from their respective accounts at the Curia. All contributions will then be wire transferred from the Curia to Puerto Rico, even on a daily basis, if required.

I thank all of you for your expressions of solidarity with the people of Haiti. Even in their sufferings may our prayers sustain them in knowing that God is still with them!

Your brother in Saint Vincent

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. Gregory Gay, C.M." in a cursive script.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

LENT 2010

Ash Wednesday, 17 February 2010

To all Members of the Vincentian Family

*My grace is sufficient for you;
my power is made perfect in weakness.*

The Lenten Season has once again come upon us and in order to help us as a Vincentian Family to enter deeply into this time of grace, I propose to you the following reflection.

Shortly after the publication of my Advent letter, in which one of the main topics was peace as a significant aspect of Christian life, I had a fruitful dialog with a friend of mine from my Central American experience as a missionary. This friend is very committed to the poor, and considers herself to be a Catholic Christian. One of her distinguishing characteristics is that she is in favor of revolution, including armed revolution, especially in and for developing countries that are struggling to progress in this world today. Our discussion obviously centered on the question of peace and non-violence. My position is totally opposed to armed revolution and more open to, as I consider it, an evangelical approach to non-violent revolution that Jesus Christ proposed in and through the different examples that He gives us for the transformation of society, not through force but through love.

My friend sent me an article that she had come across on non-violence. Even though perhaps she was not fully in agreement with its content, it made her think about the value that non-violence has in the world today. For me, it showed a very deep reflection and basis on non-violence from our Christian tradition from the very life example of Jesus Christ Himself.

The author of the very brief reflection on non-violence begins by noting that we are part of a culture that has historically justified the use of violence. As history has developed, progressed and become so sophisticated even with its use of modern technological means of producing arms, it has constructed a cultural paradigm that, in one sense, we can say, has put the human race and the whole life of the planet on the border of extinction. But at the same time, parallel to this cultural proposal that we have lived for centuries, new ways of acting are emerging that begin by dismantling the justification of the

methods of violence, of all types of violence. They propose that in the diversity of expressions of human life, life in itself can be enriched rather than destroyed. In other words, it is possible to build a world in which people of different backgrounds and cultural expressions can learn to live together and therefore create harmony based on diversity rather than diversity being the justification for violence and therefore destruction.

Among the different creative ways of resisting violence in our world today, the author puts forth fragility as an essential. At the same time he proposes the strength of horizontal dimensions in the organization of society as a solution, rather than hierarchical structures. In other words, the basis of solutions is achieved in a circular fashion, a sort of “around the table” type of discussion where all those who are at the table, including the poor and the marginalized, are given the opportunity to express themselves as equals in the discussions.

The article further shows that the image of the enemy has to be deconstructed by recognizing that those who have a contrary opinion also may be able to contribute in a significant way to the construction of the truth. In other words, all those who sit at the table, even if their opinion is different one from the other, have a part of the truth and can contribute to the construction of the whole of the truth. We as Christians, see the truth being constructed in the values that are contained in the richness of the life of Jesus Christ. It goes without saying that war in itself, in these days, is an illegitimate way of achieving harmony in the human society.

Furthermore, humanity, throughout its history, has dominated the planet to the point that now the planet is beginning to show its wear and tear. Harmony with nature is an alternative to the need to harness and dominate nature.

If we neglect to care for our planet, there is greater likelihood that the poor will suffer the most. Care for the planet is one of the signs of the times that we as people of the 21st century ought to respond to as a Vincentian Family. To quote Pope Benedict XVI, “Today the great gift of God’s creation is exposed to serious dangers and life-styles which can degrade it. Environmental pollution is making particularly unsustainable the lives of the poor of the world. We must pledge ourselves to the care of creation and to share its resources in solidarity.” (Angelus for 27 August 2006 at Castle Gandolfo prior to the celebration of the Day for the Protection of Creation)

Care for creation also is an issue of systemic change. There is an enormous system that is prevalent throughout the world that focuses far too much on efficiency and economic good without sufficiently considering the impact of our choices on the planet, particularly on

the poor. It would be good for us as a Vincentian Family to involve ourselves with other organizations seeking to change this destructive system by getting to the root causes of it.

These presuppositions are put forth as different elements involved in the transformation and cultural reconstruction of our world. A key element in making that possible is non-violence. It involves an unconditional protection of life in all its forms, protection that is promoted through concrete actions. These actions move us towards a greater attempt to understand one another and our relationships as human beings in the political, social and economic fields. The basic understanding is that as human beings, we share with others this planet which God has graciously provided for us.

For some, non-violence is considered to be utopian, unrealistic. As Christians and as followers of Jesus Christ evangelizing and serving the poor, we know that such is not the case, and in many places around the globe non-violence succeeds.

My brothers and sisters, the reflection on non-violence is very much a part of our tradition as Catholic Christians and very much at the heart of what Lent means to us. We focus on the need to change our attitudes in order to live more deeply the life that has been given us in the person of Jesus Christ and through his passion, his death and his resurrection. At the very heart of that gift of new life is fragility.

Let us reflect this Lenten season on the fragility of Jesus Christ and on our own fragility to see it not as a limitation but rather as a means of building a new life for ourselves and others and the world in which we live. Jesus' fragility is most concretely expressed as he gives up his spirit after the experience of his own passion prior to and on the cross itself. St. Paul's letter to the Philippians expresses the deep theological reflection in the Christological hymn which says that Jesus emptied himself becoming nothing in order to make of us something through the fullness of life in the resurrection. Prior to this complete gift of himself on the cross, Jesus shows how fragility has its place in the transformation of society. The night before his death, Jesus showed us the way to be, the way to act. He washed the feet of his disciples, an act that would only be carried out in his time by slaves. He became the servant of the servants.

Saint Vincent, in his writings to both the confreres and the Daughters of Charity called us to be unworthy servants, seeking lowly places. This reflection of Saint Vincent de Paul is simply yet eloquently reflected in the article written by Father Jean Pierre Renouard as the 5th theme reflected on as part of our on-going formation during our 350th anniversary year. In Father Renouard's

article, "Who was Jesus for Vincent," he quotes Saint Vincent de Paul, and I include part of that quote here:

"What touched me the most is what has been told about Our Lord, who was the natural Master of everyone, and yet made himself the least of all, the disgrace and abjection of men, always taking the last place wherever he went. Perhaps, my dear confreres, you think that a man is truly humble and has really abased himself when he has taken the last place. Does a man humble himself when he takes the place of our Lord? Yes, brothers, the place of our Lord is the last place" (SV XI, 124).

Is there any more humble place to be taken at this time in history than to be at the service of the poor in Haiti? The Haitians are said to be an incredible people whose power to resist suffering has been proven time and time again throughout the history of their country, considered to be the poorest of the poor in the western hemisphere. Today, after the most destructive earthquake that they have seen in more than 200 years, they are in an even lower place. I have been edified by the response of the entire Vincentian Family to this immediate crisis and tragedy of Haiti. It has been written in different reflections relating what has happened in Haiti, that the world has taken the opportunity of this tragedy that we could never consider less than the most horrible and horrendous experience of the loss of human life, and has transformed it into a masterpiece, a work of all humanity, a work of our world today, prompted by the love of God that has been poured out in all our hearts. The response on the part of the world to this tragedy, as to many other tragedies that are made known throughout the world, is certainly uplifting and shows that as a world we do have possibilities. As people of this world, we can work together, putting aside our differences in order that the most fragile among us might be cared for, and love may be shown and given to them. In the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac, we are called to put ourselves below them and at their service.

Such a presence to our brothers and sisters who live in poverty in places such as Haiti, can be seen as a symbolic representation of the resurrected Lord Jesus. In the midst of the ashes of death He rises up and gives new life. Such experiences are witnessed in many places throughout the world where the Vincentian Family is present. Places that otherwise would have no hope, find hope in the followers of Jesus Christ, evangelizing and serving the poor. In situations like Haiti, where much of what people would consider their security has

disappeared, it is the presence of caring people giving of their lives to others that remains a sign of the resurrection, a sign of hope and life.

My brothers and sisters, I bring this reflection to a conclusion, but not to a close, for I hope it will open further personal reflection as well as reflection and discussion among yourselves. At the heart of our Christian faith is the reality of fragility in which new life came to be. We, as followers of Jesus Christ and faithful to his call, recognize our fragility and that of others, and we promote new life whether through non-violent means or through the care of our planet. Through our fragility we respond to the fragile state of the world and of all creation.

Our God, the God of Jesus Christ, is a God of Life and a God of Love. God pours out that love continually in and through the gift of his resurrection which we celebrate at the culmination of the Lenten Season. Let us never forget that the resurrection is who we are. We are a resurrection people, and Alleluia is our song. So let us sing, and let us do so as a family, together with our brothers and sisters who are poor.

Your brother in Saint Vincent

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

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

MISSION AWARD 2010

Rome, 1 March 2010

To all Visitors of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Visitor,

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

I invite you and your council to submit a project from your province for the Mission Award 2010. Below, I have included information you will find helpful in identifying a project eligible for the award. You will also find an application form with this letter. The completed application should be submitted to the Econome General by **31 May 2010**. The complete application must be signed by the Visitor or Vice-Visitor.

Please note:

1. Only one application can be submitted for each province or vice-province.
2. The application submitted must be no more than three pages in length.
3. Previous projects that have received the award are **not** eligible.
4. Applications received after **31 May 2010** will not be considered.

“MISSION AWARD”

This is an award given to acknowledge and support a specific project, developed by an individual confrere or group of confreres, which promotes in a noteworthy way their missionary work. This award will be granted every two years from 2006 to 2016.

Some criteria for choosing the recipient(s) of the award:

1. A creative missionary project, either for popular missions or for mission *ad gentes*.
2. A creative project for a **new** possible mission.
3. The creative use of media in missions.
4. Creative programs for formation of the clergy and/or the laity.

The Mission Award will be granted at most to five projects on July 30, 2010, chosen by the Superior General with his council. The amount of \$100.000 will be divided equally among the projects that have been granted the award. Within a year's time a report should be submitted on how the project has developed, including how the money was used.

I look forward to receiving an application from your province.

Your brother in Saint 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.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

APPLICATION FOR THE “MISSION AWARD 2010”

How does the project fit the criteria of the Mission Award?

Provide a brief history of the project.

What is the goal of the project?

A “goal” is a simple, one-sentence statement about the general purpose of the project that addresses the specific need stated above. Example: *“To train members of the Vincentian Family to give missions in St. Vincent’s Parish.”*

What are the objectives for the project?

The “objectives” are specific, concrete and measurable results that accomplish the goal of the project. Example: *“To hold missionary training workshops for 5 consecutive Saturdays in the parish hall.”*

If the project should receive the Mission Award, how will the award money be utilized to meet the goal of the project?

If the project should receive the Mission Award, who will be responsible for submitting the report to the Superior General on how the award money was utilized?

Signature of the Visitor or Vice-Visitor

Date

TEMPO FORTE CIRCULAR
(8-12 March 2010)

Rome, 30 March 2010

To the members of the Congregation of the Mission

My dear brothers of the Congregation of the Mission,

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

**Lord, I dream of dying for them.
Help me to live for them.¹**

It is in this spirit of “helping us to live for them,” that we gathered in our *tempo forte* meeting 8-12 March. We began our ongoing formation with a presentation given by the members of the Community of Sant’Egidio, a movement of laity, who spoke to us of the different dimensions of peace and the different processes followed by the Community of Sant’Egidio to promote peace.

The General Council has invited the founder of Sant’Egidio, Andrea Riccardi, to give a presentation on the signs of the times at our General Assembly in Paris. We have asked him to speak to us of three significant signs of the times: poverty, peace and justice, and interreligious dialog, pertinent for our reflection on Creative Fidelity to the Mission.

The agenda that we followed for this *tempo forte* is as follows:

1. We worked on final preparations for the **General Assembly**, reviewing the different materials that will be sent to all the delegates at the end of March. We reviewed the Commission for Communication. The persons responsible are Father Julio Suescun, Brother Adam Budzyna and Father Celestino Fernandez. The support persons for this Commission will be Father John Freund from the United States and others in Paris.

¹ Prayer of Father Carlos Mújica, Argentina, Member of the movement of Priests for the Third World, Assassinated on 11 May 1974.

2. We reviewed the report from the **Executive Commission of the 350th anniversary**. We reviewed reports from the Heritage Commission, which is in the process of producing, on schedule, reflections on a monthly basis to help us deepen our Vincentian spirituality. We also reviewed the Projects Commission through a report from its coordinator, Father Robert Maloney. As we know, the Vincentian Family has accepted to do a pilot project on micro-financing in Haiti. Certainly, since the earthquake in Haiti, we consider our choice to be providential. We have committed ourselves to a long-term process of support for the poor with the hope that different projects might coincide with the millennium development goals. As part of the 350th celebration, DePaul University has created a documentary on Saint Vincent de Paul. We will be distributing copies to the delegates of the General Assembly in the three official languages of the Congregation.
3. We reviewed a report from Father John Rybolt on the **History Project of the Congregation**. It is a six volume project; at this time, the first four volumes are almost complete and the Superior General has sent letters to different language groups in order to encourage translations.
4. We reviewed the evaluation of the **New Visitors Meeting** which was held in January. The next New Visitors meeting will not be held until 2012.
5. We reviewed the reports of the **Postulator and Procurator General, Father Giuseppe Guerra**. Even though Father Guerra has been named Visitor of the Province of Naples, the Superior General has asked him to remain in his position until the end of this administration. Father Guerra will be in the Curia at least one or two days during the week.
6. We reviewed a report from the **archivist and librarian, Father Alfredo Becera**. The Superior General has sent a letter to all the Visitors asking for copies of the books written by different confreres of the provinces to enrich our Vincentian library.
7. We reviewed a letter from **Brother Fahed Yehya** who is finishing his three-year commitment to the General Curia. We want to thank Fahed publicly for the contribution that he has made to our community here at the Curia and for his generous service in many areas that have helped to improve the appearance of the Curia and its grounds.
8. We reviewed a letter from the **Secretary General, Father Claudio Santangelo**, whose commitment to the Curia is also coming to an end; he offered himself to stay until December 2010 to help

with the transition to a new Secretary General. In our next *tempo forte* we will be discussing possible candidates for the position of the Brother as well as the position of the Secretary General.

9. We discussed information received from the **Union of Superiors General** declaring that in their meetings of 2010 in May and November the topic will be Religious Life in Europe. Father José María Nieto will accompany the Superior General in this session that will do an analysis of the situation of religious life in Europe.
10. We handled economic questions guided by the **Econome General, Father John Gouldrick**. Among the different issues discussed were the new patrimonial funds with a redistribution of the amounts of money to be received by the different provinces in development.

The Econome General also shared with us the amount of donations that we have received to respond to the immediate recovery of Haiti. We have made the decision to deposit the remaining moneys that we have received, in the account of the Daughters of Charity to respond to the different projects that are created by the Vincentian Family there or projects that the Vincentian Family recommends.

The Econome General also gave us an evaluation of the first workshop held for money management in the Philippines for the Asia Pacific Visitors Conference. There were a total of eight participants from all the provinces of the APVC: Northern and Southern India, Indonesia, China, Philippines, Fiji of the Province of Australia, and Papua New Guinea.

11. We received the **VSO Report** with the director present. I encourage you to check out the web site of the Vincentian Solidarity Office www.famvin.org/vso. The Director, Father Miles Heinen, will be present at the General Assembly to give a report and to answer questions from the delegates as well as to make contacts with Visitors.
12. The following item was a report from the Directors of the **CIF program** wherein we discussed the new contract with the Motherhouse and the participants in the program.
13. We reviewed the **SIEV** report from Father Julio Suescun, Executive Secretary.
14. We received the report from Father Manuel Ginete, the **delegate to the Vincentian Family**. He gave us an update on the meeting of the Vincentian Leaders in Paris held in January. The session was divided into two segments. The first was a meeting of the

newly formed Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family made up of two members each from the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, the AIC, the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission. Those representatives are the respective Superiors General or Presidents as well as the delegate that they designate. This Executive Committee of the Vincentian Family will meet on a yearly basis. The second grouping was the Vincentian Leaders of the Vincentian Family throughout the world. The focus was on ongoing formation and deepening our understanding and knowledge of the spirituality of Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac as well as an interchange of information on how each of the different congregations and lay movements contribute to the living out of the Vincentian charism. It was decided that every two years, the Vincentian Family Leaders would meet, alternating between Rome and Paris. The next meeting will be in January 2012 in Rome.

Father Ginete also reported on the Continental Session for moderators of the Vincentian Family and their training in systemic change. The sessions have been held in a number of different areas of the globe: Mexico and Brazil for Latin America, Cameroon for all of Africa, and Bangkok for all of Asia. The next session is planned this year in the United States; the different members of the Vincentian Family in Europe are organizing times in 2011 in order to develop the topic of the Vincentian moderators and systemic change.

15. We reviewed a report from Father Hugh O'Donnell with regard to the Vincentian Family member, **DePaul International**. We reaffirmed our commitment to supporting them in their formation as members of the Vincentian Family.
16. Then we reviewed the periodic report of Father Joe Foley who **represents us at the United Nations**. He began with a quote, "Climate change is already undermining the realization of a broad range of fundamental rights of many people." My brothers of the Congregation, I ask you to become acutely aware of the question of climate change. It is something that is affecting the integrity of the creation. We need to be more knowledgeable about what is happening and what we can do to reverse the trends. One of the issues that most concerns us is how climate change affects the poor.

Father Foley participated in Rome in February in a Forum for Catholic-Inspired NGOs. They dealt with a number of issues, beginning with the financial and economic crisis from the perspective of Caritas in Veritate as well as a presentation on a

global migration authority, a global environmental agency and a desire to create a second chamber in the United Nations that would be for non-governmental organizations, churches, etc.

One final thing to report from the NGO at the United Nations is that the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity are collaborating on a NGO website: www.cmdcngo.org. It is a work in progress and I encourage you to check it out.

17. We reviewed information from two **Conferences of Visitors**: CLAPVI, having to do with the course that was held in Colombia for the formators and COVIAM, a report from the assistant for formation of the COVIAM, Father Sy Peterka. He reported on his most recent visits to four areas of Africa: Congo, Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia. We publicly acknowledge and thank Father Sy Peterka for the support and love that he has for our confreres in Africa as they work to strengthen the roots of the Vincentian charism in the continent.
18. With regard to **the international missions** of the Congregation, we began with the mission of El Alto, in Bolivia. The four confreres of the community live in two different communities. They presented their community project which was approved by the Superior General and his Council. We discussed and gave approval to the moving forward of a new community of the Congregation of the Mission in Cochabamba. We will begin this mission in the diocese for which Bishop Tito Solari is responsible with two confreres, David Paniagua, a Bolivian from the Province of Chile and former Director of the Daughters of Charity of Bolivia and Father Joel Vásquez, Colombian, who is the new Director of the Daughters of Charity in Bolivia. The good news is we have had positive responses from different members of the Congregation to create this new mission of which we have to give credit to the Vincentian Marian Youth community and MISEVI members who invited us to come to the area of Cochabamba. We then reviewed the reports from the mission of Papua New Guinea from the mission superior Father Homero Marín as well as a letter from the Visitor-elect of the Philippines, Father Rolly Santos, who is currently a missionary in Papua New Guinea, informing us that the Province of the Philippines has nominated a new missionary for Papua New Guinea to work in the program of the Holy Spirit Seminary.
19. With regard to **missions**, we reviewed a letter that we received from the Bishop of Tunis, asking for the establishment of a community of missionaries from the Congregation of the Mission

in this very historic site of the early days of the Congregation of the Mission, in which Saint Vincent himself was involved. It will be left to the Visitors of Paris and Toulouse to study this invitation to begin a new project. The Congregation at the international level remains open to supporting a positive decision on their part. We studied a letter from the Bishop of Bereina of Papua New Guinea, who invites us to send missionaries. At the present time one of our confreres from Poland, Father Vladimir, is working there and has made great strides in a very remote and difficult missionary territory.

20. We then reviewed the different responses from **volunteers for mission**.

We assigned to the Solomon Islands a confrere from the Province of Argentina who has generously offered to be a part of this mission in the South Pacific.

We reviewed the request of yet another confrere who at this time will be put on the list of candidates for missions for a future date. Besides the candidates mentioned, we also received letters from four other confreres who have expressed interest in participating in international missions. We are following through with the procedure of consultation of their visitors, personal dialog with them.

21. The final item on our agenda for the *tempo forte* was the sharing of **the calendars** of each member of the General Council from now until the end of this administration. Among the decisions made, Father José Antonio Ubillús, the assistant for missions, will be visiting the international mission in the Solomon Islands between now and the end of our present administration and Father José Maria Nieto will accompany the Superior General in the bi-annual meeting of the Union of Superiors General in May which will focus on the theme of Religious Life in Europe.

I conclude with the visits that I will have as Superior General between now and the end of my term. 14-15 March, together with other members of the Curia, we participated in the 350th anniversary celebration of Saint Louise de Marillac in both the Cathedral in Paris and the rue du Bac. 17-21 March, together with the Secretary General and the Econome General, I participated in the celebration of St. Joseph's High School in Antoura, Lebanon. 24-25 March I will be accompanying the Daughters of Charity in their renewal of vows in the rue du Bac.

I will spend Holy Week this year in an Indian Reservation in Arizona, in the United States with our confrere Father Clay Kilburn as well as with the Daughters of Charity in Tuba City in

Arizona for Easter vigil. Easter week I will be in Colorado in the United States, visiting the Vincentian Colorado Volunteers and the members of the Congregation of the Mission who are assigned to that area. Later in that week I will visit Niagara University of the Congregation of the Mission to share with different members of the staff and student body who are involved in a program for deepening their knowledge of the Vincentian charism. Returning to Europe I will participate immediately in the First Mass of our first Albanian confrere on 11 April.

14-23 April I will accompany Father Javier Alvarez, Director General of the Daughters of Charity and 20 new Directors of the Daughters of Charity in their formation session in Paris. 24-28 April I will visit the Daughters of Charity in the Province of Switzerland. 30 April - 10 May, I will be in Spain visiting the Province of Barcelona, specifically the island of Mallorca, as well as the members of the Vincentian Family and Daughters of Charity. I will also visit the interprovincial Mediterranean internal seminary in Teruel for a day. I will participate in a meeting of the Vincentian Marian Youth international council in Santiago de Compostela, returning to Madrid to participate in a meeting with the newly formed MISEVI international council.

11-13 May I will be in Paris to participate in the **CIF program for Brothers**. From there I will leave for Romania to visit the province of the Daughters of Charity together with their Provincial Director who is also the Visitor of the Province of Hungary. 22-23 May I will visit our interprovincial seminary in Piacenza in Italy and then participate 26-28 May in the bi-annual meeting of the Union of Superiors General together with assistant Father José Maria Nieto.

At the end of May, beginning of June I will be in Salamanca to participate in the General Assembly of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul. From the first week of June until the Assembly I will be in Rome for a *tempo forte* meeting and final preparations for the General Assembly.

With prayers for each of you, dear confreres, I wish you a happy Easter.

Your brother in Saint 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, stylized initial "G".

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

FEATURE

St. Vincent and the Priesthood

Presentation

by Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.

From June 2009 to June 2010, we are living the “Year for Priests” as asked by his Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI. In a letter from the Congregation for the Clergy that was addressed to the leadership of Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life we are encouraged to celebrate the “Year for Priests” with enthusiasm. This same letter refers to the Holy Father’s letter that was addressed to all priests throughout the world in which he invites them to an interior renewal for the sake of discovering their own identity. He also invites them to contemplating with all the People of God, the beauty and the importance of the ordained priesthood and to contemplate with awe and gratitude the work of the Lord who on the eve of his passion desired to institute the priesthood and essentially united it to the Eucharist.

The above cited letter from the Congregation for the Clergy, after pointing out by way of example some objectives states that *the Spirit will bring forth, as the fruit of meditation on the Holy Father’s letter, the most opportune initiatives in order to offer a providential service on behalf of the priesthood.*

In the *tempo fuerte* of October 5-9, 2009, the Superior General and his Council expressed the desire that this “Year for Priests” be *lived in relation to our Jubilee Year of the 350th anniversary of our Founders, particularly Saint Vincent whom we know as the “light of the clergy.”* The Assistant General, Father José Antonio Ubilliús, has been asked to

coordinate different activities and articles that will be published on the www.cmglobal.org web page concerning the "Year for Priests." The desire was also expressed that VINCENTIANA publish an issue dedicated to Saint Vincent and the priesthood. Since several months of the celebration of the "Year for Priests" had already passed, it did not appear, at first, to be easy to fulfill this wish, especially since VINCENTIANA, with its demands of translation into three languages, needs time to accomplish such programs. But through the efforts of all involved, this edition on Saint Vincent and the priesthood is ready to be published at a time when it can help us to make this year of reflection on our priestly fidelity to Christ, the priest, a time of renewing our commitment to follow the example of the priest, Vincent de Paul.

This is not the first time that VINCENTIANA has focused on the theme of Saint Vincent and the priesthood. On the occasion of the 400th anniversary of Saint Vincent de Paul's ordination VINCENTIANA published five articles (# 3, May-June 2000). The same theme was continued as Rev. Robert Maloney published an article entitled "Vincentian Priesthood as Missionary" (# 6, November-December 2000).

The reading of this edition of VINCENTIANA cannot leave us indifferent to any of the priests of the Congregation of the Mission. It is a reading that will both challenge us and commit us. The others, the Brothers of the Congregation, members of the Vincentian Family and all our friends who receive this edition will find in it a call to ask Christ, the priest, to gather into his heart all of the priests of the Congregation so that they might be witnesses of his merciful love in this world, as Vincent de Paul was among the poor and as the Curé of Ars was in his parish.

Finally, VINCENTIANA speaks about itself. Specific circumstances, easily imaginable, have led us to make a decision to reduce the frequency of this publication, so instead of publishing bi-monthly we will now publish quarterly. This new schedule will also entail an adjustment in the subscription rate, as noted at the end of n. 6, 2009. This small change allows us to take advantage of this opportunity to review all that VINCENTIANA has accomplished during the past fifty-three years, and in particular, these last fifteen years when we have published each edition in three languages. As affirmed in our study: *VINCENTIANA has, without a doubt, resulted in being a serious and ordered collective instrument of reflection and study throughout the long history of the Congregation of the Mission.*

The Priest According to Saint Vincent and Today

A Vincentian Message to Priests Today

by Alain Pérez, C.M.

“If one wishes to express in one sentence the idea of priesthood proffered by St Vincent de Paul, one might say that for him, the priest is a man called by God to participate in the priesthood of Jesus Christ to extend the redemptive mission of Jesus Christ, doing what Jesus did in the way he did it” (JACQUES DELARUE).

So, this is St. Vincent’s deep insight on priesthood. This idea did not well up spontaneously in him, however, nor did it emerge from received instruction or a deepening within him of doctrine. St. Vincent’s conception of priesthood was forged in the actual reality of his own life experience.

THE EXPERIENCE OF SAINT VINCENT

It seems that the perspective on priesthood had been propounded to him by the concerns of his father. He adopted his father’s views quickly, evidently, since he was ordained a priest on 23 September 1600 by the bishop of Périgueux who was blind and dying! Vincent was only nineteen years old. He will never forget this excessive eagerness; it will have such an effect on him that when it is suggested to him, from motives that were not entirely pure, to ordain one of his nephews he will oppose it saying, *‘For myself, if I had known what it was that I had the temerity to take on, as I have known since, I would have preferred to work on the land than to find myself in this dreadful position’* (Letter to the Canon St-Martin, 1658; SV V, 568; CCD, # 2927, 569-570). He wrote to Monsieur Dupont-Fournier, a lawyer in Laval, in the same way on 5 March 1659: *‘... so, one must be called by God to this holy profession... with my experience of the*

disorders produced by priests who have not made the effort to live according to the holiness of their specific character, causes me to advise those who ask my opinion about receiving it, not to do so unless they have a genuine call from God and a pure intention of honouring Our Lord by the practice of His virtues and the other sure signs that His Divine Goodness is calling them to it. I feel so strongly about this that, if I was not already a priest, I would never become one. I often say this to such applicants, and I have said it more than a hundred times when preaching to the country folk' (SV VII, 463; CCD VII, # 2792, 462-464).

This theme in St Vincent of 'the dignity of the priesthood' may seem excessive to us today and altogether anachronistic. But, as I said above, his conception of the priesthood was forged from the actual reality of his experience. However, St. Vincent's experience — in the early years of his priesthood and throughout his various ministries, as a parish priest or during his appointment as tutor with the de Gondi family — led him to see the deplorable state of the clergy in his time. The 'higher clergy' lived at court or under the influence of the nobility, and the 'lower clergy' lived in the country poverty stricken and ignorant. Both lost sight of their character as **men of God**. As for the 'lower clergy', they were so involved with the people in their charge that instead of helping them to live well, they more often shared their vices, their excess and their dirt to the extent that 'the name of the priest became synonymous with the ignorant and the debauched' (AMELOTTE, II, p. 96). In the same vein, a bishop confided sadly to St Vincent one day, 'I am horrified when I think that in my diocese, there are nearly seven thousand drunken or indecent priests who go to the altar every day without any calling' (ABELLY, *Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, L. I, C. XXIII). One could hold forth for a long time on the deplorable state of the clergy of France in the seventeenth century. Be that as it may, through his different ministries, St Vincent sees the very great spiritual distress of the poor people of the countryside and that the primary cause of this lamentable state was the lack of ability of the priests who were responsible for souls in these places.

From these experiences, therefore, two intimately related convictions are going to take root in his spirit: **the necessity to come to the help of the poor in the countryside who damn themselves in ignorance, and for that priests are necessary, good, zealous and educated priests**. In order to respond to this urgent double need St Vincent organises missions on the de Gondi estates; and thanks to the assistance of Monsieur and Madame de Gondi, he founds a society of missionaries in 1625, the Congregation of the Mission, a foundation which will make the occasional renewal of

the missions, which were high moments of evangelisation in the countryside, easier. In the same way, so as not to lose the benefit of the missions, he sees the necessity to leave behind a clergy capable of continuing the work, a well educated clergy who will help the poor remain in good standing. And so, at the invitation of the Bishop of Beauvais, who had already welcomed some missionaries into his diocese for a three week period, he undertook the preparation of the diocesan seminarians for their future priestly ministry. That was in September 1628. How long does it take to form a good priest, however, for him to be able to persevere? Recognizing this problem, and at the suggestion of one of the ordinands, in 1633 St Vincent organises the **weekly Tuesday meetings** in the house at St Lazare. The purpose of these meetings is to help the ecclesiastics persevere *'in the holiness of their vocation... in presenting together the virtues and the duties proper to their ministry'* (ABELLY, *Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, L. II, C. III, p. 446).

Then, as events would have it, around 1636, came the first attempt at a seminary for the students at the Collège des Bons Enfants. The unsuccessful attempt will drive Saint Vincent to set up the *grands séminaires* which will receive young people of twenty to thirty years of age. Thus, the seminaries will become the principal work of the Congregation after the missions. Here then, drawn quickly and in broad brush strokes, are the context and the events that led Saint Vincent to work with others for the *renaissance* that renewed the French Church in the seventeenth century. It is interesting to note that this renaissance was primarily a priestly work. It is priests who were the instruments, and they agreed to educate themselves and change in depth. Today, as the Church goes through a good deal of turbulence, should we not consider, in the same way, that the 'renaissance' can only work by a thorough formation and reform of the clergy? In any case, it seemed important to me to recall this context and these events, at least in part, before sharing some Vincentian convictions with today's priests, because it seems to me, taking into account the necessary transpositions of course, that the experience of St Vincent, his journey, can be a source of inspiration for us when we try to draw the profile of the priest today. Indeed, one can see every day: France has become a mission country as in Saint Vincent's time, and has been for some decades already. Consequently, **it seems necessary, just as in Saint Vincent's time, to give a real missionary formation to all of those who aspire to work for the building up of the kingdom of God, and especially to priests.**

SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Correctly, the document 'Starting afresh from Christ', published in 2002 by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, proposes in paragraph 20, an element that seems to me essential for formation. **"The spiritual life must therefore have first place in the program of Families of consecrated life,** in such a way that every Institute and community will be a school of true evangelical spirituality."

The document continues: *"Starting afresh from Christ* means proclaiming that consecrated life is a special following of Christ, *a living memorial of Jesus' way of living and acting* as the Incarnate Word in relation to the Father and in relation to the brethren." This implies a particular communion of love for Christ who has become the centre of their life and the continual source of every initiative. It is... an experience of sharing, "a special grace of intimacy." It is "becoming one with him, taking on his mind and his way of life," and it is a life "taken up by Christ."

When we read these lines, how can we not recall the letter that Saint Vincent wrote to Antoine Durand (SV XI, 343-344; CCD X, # 153, 311) and the famous sentence: "Monsieur, you must empty yourself of self to put on Christ." Is this not the first requirement of a missionary? We know well from experience, the ever present temptation to turn our pastoral work into our own work, to use our ministry to draw attention to ourselves and make an impression! Hence Saint Vincent's insistence on purity of intention which makes us renounce worldly views in order to really try to do God's work. Hence his insistence equally on **humility**, for without humility there can be no question of a missionary doing God's work. On the other hand, **"if you act plainly and simply, do you see,"** said Saint Vincent, **"God must in some way bless what you will say, bless your words: God will be with you"** (Conference, 8 June 1658; COSTE XII, no. 182, p. 23). In the same way, he again said: "... *take my word for it, my dear confreres, take my word for it, it is an infallible maxim of Jesus Christ, which I have often proclaimed to you on his behalf, that, as soon as a heart is empty of self, God fills it. God remains and acts in it; and it is the desire for shame that empties us of ourselves; that's humility, holy humility. Then it will not be ourselves acting but God acting in us, and all will go well*" (Conference, September 1655; SV XI, 312; CCD XI, # 141, 278-282).

The spiritual life is the basis, the solid foundation, on which the life of the missionary is based. It is thanks to that that the missionary lives, "... [in] **complete docility to the Spirit**. It commits us to being moulded from within by the Spirit, so that we may become ever more

like Christ" (*Redemptoris missio*, 87). Time devoted to the spiritual life is certainly not wasted for the mission because "... *the more consecrated persons **allow themselves to be conformed to Christ, the more Christ is made present and active in history for the salvation of all***" (Starting Afresh from Christ, 9). Moreover, a privileged way of putting on Christ' is "... *to dedicate regularly, every day, appropriate times to enter deeply into silent conversation with him by whom they know they are loved, to share their very lives with him and to receive enlightenment to continue on the daily journey*" (Starting Afresh from Christ, 25). Thanks to this high point, the missionary will avoid mediocrity in his life and spirituality, gradual gentrification, a consumer mentality and thereby the temptation to efficiency and activism. Yes, a true missionary is someone who adopts the ways of an authentic spiritual life: his life is the proclamation of the primacy of grace; without Christ he knows he can do nothing; on the other hand, he does everything in him who gives him strength. "Give me a man of prayer, and he will be able to do anything" (Undated Conference; SV XI, 83; CCD X, # 67, 76). St Vincent said, "The interior life is necessary, one must reach for it; if one is lacking in it, one fails in everything. Let us seek, Messieurs, to make something of our inner lives, to make Christ reign in us..." (Conference, 21 February 1659; SV XII, 131; CCD XII, # 131).

Pope John Paul II urged missionaries in his encyclical letter *Redemptoris missio*, "For their part, missionaries should reflect on the duty of holiness required of them by the gift of their vocation, **renew themselves in spirit** day by day, and strive to update their doctrinal and pastoral formation." The missionary must be a 'contemplative in action.' **He finds answers to problems in the light of God's word and in personal and community prayer.** My contact with representatives of the non-Christian spiritual traditions, particularly those of Asia, has confirmed me in the view that the future of mission depends to a great extent on **contemplation**. Unless the missionary is a contemplative he cannot proclaim Christ in a credible way. He is a witness to the experience of God, and must be able to say with the apostles: "That which we have looked upon... concerning the word of life..., we proclaim also to you" (1 Jn 1:1-3).

Re-reading this last text of John Paul II reminds me of this anecdote that I experienced when I was a missionary in the Dominican Republic. From time to time my work brought me to participate in retreats or days of recollection with young people. During one day of recollection a young man in the group spoke about a priest who came to organize missions in his village. The priest in question was a young priest, recently ordained, full of hope,

dynamism and plans! Speaking about the priest, the young man said, “Yes... *Fr X is very generous, very nice... but you get the impression he is empty!*” I admit that the remark of that young man challenged me very strongly and made me reflect very much, and then I understood the words of St Augustine who said one day, “***He preaches the word of God externally in vain, who does not listen interiorly.***” From this reflection I meditated for a long time also on the text of Meister Eckhart, the Rhineland mystic of the thirteenth and fourteenth century, who said, “People should not worry so much about what they should do, they would do better to concern themselves with what they should be. If we are good and our way of being is good, we will shine.” One can ask: how to be and be good without a real and deep interior life? Actually, **is it not thanks to prayer that we become accustomed to see the world and others with the eyes of God? Is it not thanks to prayer that we learn to act in and to love this world as God does? Yes, really, it is prayer that helps us rediscover a sense of God that helps us return to our centre, that is to say, to the centre of our being.**

Today, more than ever, we need to return to our centre. Actually, today we are experiencing a crisis of interiority, which is generally poor and superficial and which shows itself in a certain difficulty in ceasing to be active in order to concentrate in silence. This deficit often leads to behaviour that is activist, impulsive or aggressive, and this behaviour is sometimes expressed in an atmosphere of constant noise or music that fragments rather than helps us to occupy and enrich our inner life. Now, Pope Paul VI said: “... *our evangelizing zeal must spring from true holiness of life, and, as the Second Vatican Council suggests, preaching must in its turn make the preacher grow in holiness, which is nourished by prayer and above all by love for the Eucharist... the world is calling for evangelizers to speak to it of a God whom the evangelists themselves should know and be familiar with as if they could see the invisible*” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 76). This is a very important missionary text. It makes us understand that “**we are missionaries above all because of what we are... even before we become missionaries in word or deed**” (*Redemptoris missio*, 23).

In fact, St Vincent wished that the priest “***live in a state of prayer,***” that prayer permeate all his life especially his pastoral activity. In effect, it is in this way that a missionary will not become a divided man, who pursues in action and contemplation two incompatible ends: his pastoral work, instead of lessening his being united to God, will, on the contrary, increase it and his prayer life will be extremely powerful in the service and evangelization of his brothers and sisters. This has direct consequences for the mission, if one still believes St Vincent: he said to Antoine Durand, “... *if the man*

who forms and directs others and speaks to them is animated with only a human spirit, those who see him, listen to him, and strive to imitate him will become totally human: no matter what he says and does, he will inspire them with only the appearance of virtue, and not the substance; he will communicate to them the spirit with which he himself is animated.... On the contrary, if [he] is filled with God... all his words will be efficacious; virtue will go out of him that will edify others” (SV XI, 344; CCD XI, # 153, 311).

When answering the call of Christ, we give him our life in the priesthood or the consecrated life; we do so with the fundamental intention of making God the pole star which directs all the plans and aspects of our life. Because of this, **the best service we can render to people today is to be radically that which we must be and which is expected of us: men of God, with God, for God, and men who see in all things the presence of God.** Besides, if it is clear that people are waiting for material bread, it is also clear that they are waiting for a bread that is essential, that satisfies hunger and that saves: the bread of God! Our vocation as priests, as missionaries, therefore, is to be **“specialists in God”** according to the felicitous expression of Paul VI. Not specialists who know a lot about God or who can speak about him in a learned way, but specialists in the way of making the experience of God more alive, and in making that experience the fundamental project in life. This is how our life will be evangelistic, precisely by its special way of placing God at the centre of our existence. Because the current environment is not Christian, Karl Rahner said, *“Tomorrow’s believer will be a ‘mystic,’ that is to say, someone who has experienced something, or he will have ceased to be a believer.”* Does this not apply just as much to the “believer priest” or the “believer missionary?”

That said, the priest may be called, in certain cases, to live out his mission in the exercise of a profession or in voluntary work. For example, he will be a teacher, youth worker, nurse, social worker, permanent or voluntary in an association etc. What is important and decisive for the missionary is the spirit and the motivation with which he has taken up such a profession or activity. In themselves, the profession, the activity is immaterial; sometimes they should be the manner in which we involve ourselves in the world, how we live the mission. However, they can never be, in any sense, a way for us to escape our true identity as priests, as missionaries. That is why it is important and essential for the missionary to wonder always how to carry out this service. In other words, it is essential to know if he is helping others in being a youth worker, a nurse, a factory worker etc., as any other permanent youth worker, nurse or social worker can. It is essential to know if he is doing

it in order **to depart from his position as a priest or missionary.** Neither situation should occur. In such a case, why is he a priest? Is it necessary to be a priest in order to help others? Anyway, one is either engaged in usual pastoral work or in a salaried profession or voluntary work. *“Without an interior life of love which draws the Word, the Father and the Spirit to itself, an outlook of faith is impossible. As a consequence life itself loses meaning, the faces of brothers and sisters are obscured and it becomes impossible to recognize the face of God in them, historical events remain ambiguous and deprived of hope and apostolic and charitable missions become nothing more than widespread activity”* (Starting Afresh from Christ, no. 25).

Fr Arrupe, the former General of the Jesuits, said, *“Every application of the charism and every reform should be carried out by men of great spiritual stature, of unfailing supernatural spirit. This sort has an ardent zeal for the glory of God and the service of the Church, a sincere humility, complete obedience and a deep understanding of the Gospel”* (L’espérance ne trompe pas, p. 70). Saint Vincent was precisely one of those men of great stature: he loved people because he knew and loved God and wanted to serve only him. This God, known and met frequently in prayer, moulded him to make him a giant of charity, whose bold achievements in the service of the poor have not finished astonishing us.

After a century where verbal spiritualism has too often served as an alibi for refusing to see and fight injustice, there is a great temptation today of going to the opposite extreme and, under the pretext of effective action, of neglecting, relativising or minimising the importance of prayer in our missionary life. The mistake would be all the more serious in that prayer is ultimately the source of action. The example of the great mystics is there to prove it: whether it be St Bernard of Clairvaux, Therese of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola, to name but a few. They remind our changing world that **all reform essentially comes down to digging deeper into the inexhaustible resources of the inner life.** For these are not people who are ‘out there’, permanently extrovert, affected by the ‘itch’ of reforming activism; they are people of interiority, that is to say they are so present to themselves and to God, that it is this presence that ultimately enabled them to reform in depth.

Saying this is, of course, not to relativise or even deny the importance of engagement in missionary activity. Besides, St Vincent teaches us not to trust every alleged love of God which remain pious sentiments. Like St John, he knows that **the love of God is not hot air** and risks being no more than pure deception if it does not lead to

effective love, always ready to pay in person the price of the love of God and neighbour. Edifying and lofty thoughts will not match the truth of love. He said (therefore) to his missionaries: "Let us love God, brothers, let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brows; for very often many acts of love of God, of devotion, and of other similar affections and interior practices of a tender heart, although very good and desirable are, nevertheless, very suspect if they do not translate into the practice of effective love" (SV XI, 40; CCD XI, # 25, 32).

Undoubtedly we also remember how Paul VI made a connection between evangelization and human advancement, development and liberation in the apostolic exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi*. For him it is not possible to proclaim the new commandment without promoting, in justice and peace, genuine, authentic human growth. He said in his opening address to the third General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (27 September 1974) "*It is impossible to accept that the work of evangelization can or should neglect the extremely grave questions, so disturbing today, justice, liberation, the building of peace in the world. If this happened, it would be to ignore the teaching of the Gospel on love toward the neighbour who suffers or is in need.*"

So, in our missionary life, does this mean choosing between affective and effective love? This is a false debate, to which St Vincent would undoubtedly reply by saying: "*Oh, that priests would give themselves to the care of the poor; was that not the work of Our Lord and the great saints who not only commended the poor, but who consoled them themselves, brought relief and healing? Are not the poor the afflicted part of Our Lord? Are they not our brothers? **And if priests abandon them, who do you want to help them?** So, if there are any among us who are on mission to evangelize the poor and not to bring relief to them, to meet their temporal needs, I reply that **we must help them and help in every way, ourselves and others.... To do this is to evangelize by word and deed, and it is the more perfect, and it is also what Our Lord practised and what those who serve in his name and character must do, as priests**" (SV XII, 87-88; CCD XII, # 1951).*

CREATING THE EXPERIENCE OF GOD

That said, the most important thing for a priest, a missionary, is not so much to 'do things' and 'do a lot,' but to pay even more attention to the evangelistic quality of what we do; so that what we do might be read by men and women today as the 'Good News' of Jesus Christ.

In the Church, in our missionary communities, people do a lot of work, with great generosity and great good will, but it seems sometimes that what counts most is such and such a work or such and such a pastoral involvement. As a consequence, we begin to develop what could be called a faith that is only 'skin-deep', that is to say a Christianity without interiority. **It is certain, however, that even if we restructure, modernise, plan our different commitments, our communities will not have as much evangelising strength if they do not create this fundamental experience: the experience of God.**

It is in looking to Christ, in listening to him that we will be able to know the invisible God. The God of Jesus Christ reveals himself to us in the Gospel of St Luke and especially in the parables. In these parables, Jesus expresses the unfathomable love that God has for us. He describes it with profoundly human characteristics which speak of the heart of the Father, the heart of God. Throughout his life and in his teaching, Christ wanted to show us the love of God for us. And this is the most important experience that we might create in our life. It is from this experience that we will be able to understand the love that God has for us and communicate it to others. This experience is fundamental for a baptized person, a priest, a missionary, and it completely changes his heart and his life.

A little parable to understand the importance of this experience! After dinner in an English castle, a famous stage actor was entertaining the guests by reciting texts from Shakespeare. During the evening, he proposed that someone suggest other texts. A rather timid priest asked the actor if he knew Psalm 22. The actor replied, "Yes, I know it, but I am prepared to recite it on one condition: that you recite it yourself afterwards." The priest was a little embarrassed but he agreed. The actor gave a remarkable interpretation, with perfect diction: "*The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want....*" Then came the priest's turn, and he stood up and recited the same words of the psalm. When he finished, there was no applause this time only a deep silence and tears which appeared on some faces. The actor remained silent for a moment and then stood up and said: "*Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope you realize what happened tonight: I know the psalm but this man knows the shepherd!*"

The current crisis of certain images of God does not mean that the Christian faith is becoming impossible! No, it is up to us priests, missionaries, to communicate to our contemporaries the experience of a God who is Love. The new culture which prevails today is indifferent to an 'almighty' God. It is capable of looking at and listening to witnesses and seekers of a God with a new face. That is to say, of witnesses:

- to a God who loves — a friend to humanity
- to a humble servant of his creatures, those who come to us who are not to be served but to serve
- to a God who is able to sympathise, to understand and who welcomes everyone and accompanies each person in their unhappiness
- to a God who suffers in the bodies of those who are hungry and who are destitute in the world.

Today the world needs mystics, spiritual masters who, through their experience, call to and enlighten those who are searching. Pope Paul VI said, “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 41). And he added, “It is often said nowadays that the present century thirsts for authenticity. Especially in regard to young people it is said that they have a horror of the artificial or false and that they are searching above all for truth and honesty. These ‘signs of the times’ should find us vigilant. Either tacitly or aloud — but always forcefully — we are being asked:

- Do you really believe what you are proclaiming?
- Do you live what you believe?
- Do you really preach what you live?

The witness of life has become more than ever an essential condition for real effectiveness in preaching. Precisely because of this we are, to a certain extent, responsible for the progress of the Gospel that we proclaim” (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, no. 76). We, therefore, face a challenge! This is because, unfortunately, in the Church and in our communities, there are people who do many things for which we respect and admire them. But few appreciate their way of life. The Church is not an NGO, even if commitment to the poor is a necessary condition for giving witness to the Gospel! What was new about Christ was that he preached God himself, he looked for him, he experienced him, he lived him. That is why he fascinated and spoke to those who saw him alive. He was admired not only for what he did, but because people felt in harmony with what he was and what he lived. And that is what is most lacking perhaps in our Church and in our communities. **We lack people who are more than what they do and who inspire admiration in those around them and the desire to live like them. We lack mystics, prophets, witnesses!** In the Church today there are priests, administrators, lawyers, canonists, theologians, sociologists, specialists in this and that, and that’s great! There have to be! They may be an interesting

asset to the mission. One can also say, however, there are not only those who know and do but also people who radiate something, who communicate something, which gives hope and a desire to live. I believe our biggest mistake today is to want to replace what is inspired by the power of the Spirit with organization, work and activity. The Spirit that is asked for, welcomed, contemplated and prayed to in an authentic spiritual life. “The future of the mission — in Europe as well — depends largely on contemplation.” That is why it is so important today not to be naïve and to have discernment! Indeed, we can be justifiably ecstatic about the achievements of the modern world! But we must be aware that if our societies are creative and efficient, it is because, much of the time, they dispossess people. They take their souls emptying them of their interiority and their spirituality. And the trouble is we find lots of very busy and efficient people who have lost their individuality and their interior voice! **Now, a man who is not at home in himself becomes an outsider, a lost person, absent to the people around him, an unhappy man who makes others unhappy and who does not know how to communicate with others.**

These are some of the convictions that preoccupy me on the priests and missionaries that we should be today. These convictions have grown in me from my personal and community experience in different ministries in France and abroad. Now, to conclude, I would like to share with you again a text by Madeleine Delbrel on which I meditate often and which will help you as well, perhaps, to live your vocation as priests and missionaries better! This is my dearest wish! Madeleine Delbrel expects this from priests: the absence of a real priest is an indescribable distress in life. The greatest gift one can give, the greatest charity that one can offer is for a priest to be a good priest. It is the closest that we can come to realising the presence of Christ on earth. In Christ there is a human life and a divine life. In the priest, one also wants to find a truly human life and a truly divine life. The trouble is that many look like amputees, either one or the other. There are priests who seem never to have had a human life. They do not know how to weigh truly the difficulties of a lay person, of a father or a mother of a family. They do not realize that a man or woman’s life is really very hard. When lay Christians have just once met a priest who has understood them, who has entered their lives and their difficulties with a human heart, they never lose that memory. A condition of his blending his life with ours, is that he does not live just like us. For a long time priests treated lay people like children; today some go to the other extreme and become friends. One wishes they would remain Fathers. When a

father has seen his son grow, he still considers him his son, an adult son. We also need the priest to live a holy life. The priest, while living among us, must remain apart.

The signs that we expect of this divine presence:

- **Prayer:** there are priests whom one never sees praying (what is called prayer).
- **Joy:** rather than busy, anxious priests.
- **Strength:** the priest must be the one in control. He must be aware, vibrant, never in a state of collapse.
- **Liberty:** one would wish him free of all formulae, liberated from every prejudice.
- **Detachment:** one feels sometimes used by him, instead of him helping us fulfill our mission!
- **Discretion:** he must be the one who remains silent (one loses hope in the one in whom we place too much confidence)!
- **Truth:** that he would be the one who always tells the truth!
- **Poverty:** this is essential. Someone who is free with regard to money; who has felt the 'law of gravity' which leads him to the least, to the poor!
- **A Sense of the Church:** that he never speak thoughtlessly about the Church, and like an outsider. A son who allows himself to judge his mother is immediately judged himself.

Bur often a third life overcomes the first two and submerges them; the priest becomes the man of the ecclesiastical life, of the clerical milieu: his vocabulary, his lifestyle, his way of calling things, his taste for petty interests and for petty squabbles for influence. All of this makes a mask for him which sadly hides the priest from us, and which he has undoubtedly left behind.

**The absence of a true priest in a life
is an indescribable poverty;
it is the only poverty!**

Translation: PASCHAL SCALLON, C.M.

“Apostolic Men”

A Priest from the Perspective of Vincent de Paul’s Experience

by Corpus Juan Delgado Rubio, C.M.

Invited by the Church to deepen our understanding of priestly ministry during this year, we can once again draw closer to the way¹ that Vincent de Paul understood and lived priesthood. Vincent de Paul never wrote a program for priestly life but his experience and his ministry as he understood it and lived it can help us formulate some characteristics of priestly identity that will inspire us today.

¹ Cf. BENEDICT XVI, *Letter Proclaiming a Year of Priests on the 150th Anniversary of the birthday of the Curé de Ars* (June 19, 2009). Among some of the works on the priesthood as understood and lived by Saint Vincent we can cite: C. BRAGA, *Renovación de las formas de servicio al clero*, «Anales» (1983), 170-181; B. KOCH - CH. SENS - J.B. ROUANET, *El rostro del sacerdote según San Vincent de Paül*, Salamanca, Ceme, 2004; L. MEZZADRI, *Jesus-Christe, figure du prêtre missionnaire dan l’œuvre de Monsieur Vincent*, «Vincentiana» (1986), 323; L. MEZZADRI, *La espiritualidad sacerdotal*, «Anales» (1983), 627; L. NUOVO, *Sacerdocio. Diccionario de Espiritualidad Vicenciana*, Salamanca, Ceme, 1995, 550; J.M. ROMÁN, *La formación del clero en la tradición vicenciana*, «Anales» (1983), 182-200; L.G. COLUCCIA, *La vocazione sacerdotale di San Vincenzo de Paoli*, «Vincentiana» (1982), 38-43; A. TAMAYO, *El sacerdote según San Vicente de Paül*, «Vincentiana» (1987), 725-744; J.B. ROUANET - V. LANDERAS, *Vicente de Paül, sacerdote instrumento de Jesucristo*, «Anales» (1978), 265-336; J.M. ROMÁN, *The Priestly Journey of St. Vincent de Paul*, «Vincentiana» (2000), 201-217; R. FACÉLINA, *Vocation and Mission of the Priest According to St. Vincent de Paul*, *VINCENTIANA* (2000), 218-228; A. QUEVEDO, *St. Vincent, Priest of Charity at the Service of the Poor*, «Vincentiana» (2000), 239-249; R. MALONEY, *The Vincentian Priesthood, as Missionary*, «Vincentiana» (2000), 509-531. Cf. *Bibliography* in «Vincentiana» (2009) 435-436.

I.

A PRIEST IN THE TIME OF VINCENT DE PAUL

The New Testament provides us with evidence of a great diversity of ministries and ways of exercising ministry in order to serve the community. Only in the third century does the word "*priest*" appear and at first this word is applied to bishops and only later to clerics.²

The Patristic era offers a rich understanding of the ministerial priesthood with its wide range of dimensions that were emphasized in different regions:³ ministry destined to effectively proclaim the wonders of God and communicate the mysteries of salvation.

In the Middle Ages we see a progressive reduction of the priestly ministry to liturgical-ritual activity, to sacramental and canonical matters and this is in detriment to the priests' evangelizing mission.⁴ It is significant that the first statement of ecclesiastical teaching with regard to priestly ministry (the IV Lateran Council, 1215) is focused on this one dimension: *only the legitimately ordained priest, according to the power of the keys of the Church, is capacitated to celebrate the sacrament of the Eucharist.*⁵

The reflections of the Church during the last decades of the Lower Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern era will once again accentuate the institutional aspects of the priesthood as the church

² GERMAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *El ministerio sacerdotal*, Salamanca, Sigueme, 1972.

³ For example, in Alexandria the ministry of the Word was accentuated; the priest is presented primarily as a teacher and missionary. On the other hand, in Antioch the accent falls on the offering of sacrifice. The Judea-Christian communities and the Roman church highlight the primary task of the priest as one of governing the community. Nevertheless, in all these cases we are presented with a focus that is more or less strong and not with "images of the priest" in some absolute and exclusive character. Together with these focuses there appears from the beginning (cf. 1 Timothy 6:2.18; Titus 2:14, 3:18) a primordial obligation of the priest to assist and support the needy and outcasts, persons who are alone. Faithful to this demand we find the priest throughout history as a silent servant, continually giving of himself, fulfilling a critical role of service to society according to the concrete demands of each historical era and its corresponding social situation and according to the possibilities of ecclesial ministry. GERMAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *op. cit.*, 72.

⁴ In a world definitively Christianized the missionary impulse is lost and pastoral attention is concentrated preferably on already existing communities. The life of these communities is made to prosper through the service of worship. In general terms the missionary perspective of the "ministry of the Word" as an internal element of priesthood is lost and this is replaced by the administration of the sacraments understood in its strictest sense. GERMAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *op. cit.*, 74.

⁵ DS 802. The first explicit statement of the magisterium on priesthood.

confronts anti-hierarchy spiritual movements⁶ and the community movements that view the church as a “community of faithful.”⁷ This tendency will become even more pronounced as the Church confronts the statements of the Protestant Reform. In effect:

Protestantism discussed and denied all ecclesiastical mediation: magisterium, priesthood, sacraments, the authority of tradition and the role of the Church as teacher in matters of faith, the power of prelates, the dignity of bishops, the primacy of the Pope. Nothing remained of the institution. On the other hand, they proposed a notion of holy-church as the assembly of the faithful where the ecclesial reality is revealed in two aspects whose organic unity was unknown: on the one hand, the communion of saints (the true faithful, the predestined) who were the true Church but not visible and on the other hand, a visible organization, completely human, that in reality was not Church.⁸

The Council of Trent (1545-1563), as a response to the reformed Protestant Church, proposed to define the existence of the ministerial priesthood and ecclesiastical hierarchy in their distinct levels.⁹

- In the New Testament there exists a visible priesthood endowed with special spiritual powers that enable them to consecrate in the celebration of the Eucharist and to forgive sins in the sacrament of Reconciliation.
- This priesthood is communicated in the sacrament of Orders and the effect of the sacrament is an indelible sign (character).
- The sacrament of Orders joins the individual to the hierarchical structure of ecclesial ministry established by the command of

⁶ The anti-hierarchy movement is a reaction, spiritual in nature, provoked by the same situation that the Church is presently living, many times “overly secularized, that becomes another force in this world.”

⁷ A third factor that will influence the direction of the reflection on Church toward an insistence on its institutional aspects is represented by the discussion that extends over several centuries and that places in tension the pontifical monarchy and the Church as a gathering of faithful with the king. These statements will lead to different forms of Gallicanism which subordinates the authority of the Pope to that of the king or the head of state.

⁸ Yves M.J. CONGAR, *Jalones para una teología del laicado*, Barcelona, Estela, 1961, 61. For a study of this matter see, G. ALBERIGO, *L'Ecclesiologia del Concilio di Trento*, «Rivista della Chiesa in Italia» (1964), 227-242; A. ANTÓN, *El misterio de la Iglesia. Evolución histórica de las ideas eclesiológicas*, Madrid, Editorial Católica, 1986, t. 1 y 2, BAC maior, n. 26 y 30; J.J. HERNÁNDEZ ALONSO, *La nueva creación. Teología de la Iglesia del Señor*, Salamanca, Sigueme, 1976.

⁹ Cf. *Doctrina de Sacramento Ordinis*, session 23, July 15, 1563, DS 1764 f.

Christ and thus this same individual is sent by Christ (and therefore Orders cannot proceed from below).¹⁰

Aware of the objectivity of many of the accusations of the reformers and the spiritual movements concerning the irregularities in the life of the clerics, the Council of Trent put forth measures to insure a more adequate formation of priests and for the renewal of their customs.

The decrees of the Council of Trent were accepted as law in France very late¹¹ and as a result the disciplinary and pastoral measures offered by the Council for the renewal of ecclesiastical life began to produce fruit only toward the latter part of the XVII century. Nevertheless, the understanding of priestly ministry could be summed up by the following commonly accepted statements of catholic theology in the XVII century:

- Priestly ministry is a divine institution.
- Without denying the common priesthood of the faithful, priestly ministry is considered to be superior.
- Priesthood involves the exercise of special “powers.”
- The mission of the priest is fundamentally related to “the sacred,” to the ritual-sacramental dimension, to the sacrifice of the Mass.
- As occurs among the angels, so, too, in the hierarchy of the church there is a certain gradation, perfectly established by which one moves from one level to another.¹²

¹⁰ As a reaction against the Protestant position of restricting the priesthood to the universal priesthood of all the faithful and therefore, denying the existence of the hierarchical priesthood in the Church, Trent insisted on the hierarchical structures and gave them a clear predominance over the communal aspects. “With the priority attributed to the hierarchical conception of the Church, the separation between the faithful and the hierarchy is to be consolidated, replacing the unilateral movement of the center of gravity toward the pole of the hierarchy which for various centuries was able to impose a hegemony each day more encompassing of the hierarchical function over the laity in the ecclesiology of the Counter-Reformation.” A. ANTÓN, *o.c.*, t. 1, p. 753.

¹¹ Cf. P. BLET, *Le clergé de France et la Monarchie. Etude sur les Assemblées Générales du Clergé de 1615 à 1666*, Rome, 1959, 2 voll.; R. TAVENEAUX, *Le catholicisme dans la France classique: 1610-1715*, Paris, 1980, 2 voll.

¹² Influence of the classification of angels according to Pseudo-Dionisio is then applied to the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

II.

VINCENT DE PAUL, PRIEST

1. The path toward the priesthood

The first biographers of Saint Vincent de Paul presented his life as an ascending path of holiness. Beginning in the middle of the twentieth century the studies on Saint Vincent de Paul have placed in relief the fact that there was a certain rupture, a true *conversion*,¹³ highlighting the fact that for some years Vincent de Paul saw the priesthood as a way of providing for himself and for his family. He dreamed of acquiring benefits from his priestly life and climbing with honors in the Church. Some of Vincent's words confirm this point of view. In 1610 he wrote his mother: ... *the prolonged sojourn which I must necessarily make in this city [Paris] in order to regain my chances for advancement (which my disasters took from me) grieves me, because I cannot come to render you the services I owe you. But I have such trust in God's grace that he will bless my efforts and will soon give me the means of an honorable retirement so that I may spend the rest of my days near you... let him reflect [referring to one of his brothers] that the present misfortune presupposes good luck in the future.*¹⁴

Following this logic of viewing the priesthood as a path to advancement we can understand the fact that Vincent was ordained when he was just twenty years old, on September 23, 1600 by the elderly bishop of Périgueux, François Bourdeilles. Should we see this fact as the expression of some ill-will on the part of Vincent since it could appear that he deceived an elderly blind bishop in order to be ordained? It seems to me that we cannot allow ourselves to be led in that direction by such exaggerations. True, Vincent was ordained at

¹³ Cf. L. ABELLY, *Vida del venerable siervo de Dios, Vicente de Paúl, fundador y primero superior general de la Congregación de la Misión*, Ceme, Salamanca, 1994; P. COSTE, *El gran santo del gran siglo, el señor Vicente*, Ceme, Salamanca, 1990, 3 voll.; A. DODIN, *San Vicente de Paúl y la caridad*, Ceme, Salamanca, 1977; J.M. ROMÁN, *San Vicente de Paúl. Biografía*, Ed. Católica, Madrid, 1981; J. CORERA, *La noche oscura del Señor Vicente*, in «Diez estudios vicencianos», Ceme, Salamanca, 1983, 13-40; L. MEZZADRI, *La conversión de San Vicente*, «Anales» (1978), 9-15.

¹⁴ CCD, I:15. All references to the works of Vincent de Paul are taken from *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, New York City Press, Hyde Park, New York. Future references will use the initials CCD followed by the volume and then the page. The only exception is the references to conferences which will simply state the conference and the date. I am in the process of obtaining volume XI which contains the early conferences of Saint Vincent, several of which are referred to in this text.

twenty years of age, four years younger than that prescribed by the Council of Trent, but the Council of Trent was received in France only in 1615. True, Vincent was ordained in the private chapel in the summer house of the elderly bishop of Périgue but he had “dimissorial” letters from his own diocese that were dated one year prior to his ordination.¹⁵ Exaggerating the facts might actually highlight the significance of his conversion but it seems to me more correct to affirm that Vincent de Paul’s ordination took place according to the common practice of that time: it is true that the priesthood was seen as a way of social advancement and Vincent and his family understood priesthood in this way. Yet he did not want to be a priest in whatever way possible and so he undertook university studies and went forward with seriousness and good practices even though this must also be put in the context of his time.

It is true that after his conversion, Vincent de Paul speaks about his own story and affirms: *As for myself, if I had known what it was when I had the temerity to enter it — as I have come to know since then — I would have preferred to toil the soil than to commit myself to such a formidable life.*¹⁶

These are the words of a missionary who has committed himself to follow the guidelines of the Council of Trent in order to assist the reform of the clergy.

2. Saint Vincent discovers what it means to be a priest

What happened to Vincent de Paul that now he speaks about *temerity* when before he dreamt about *an honorable retirement so that I might spend the rest of my days near my family*.

Vincent has discovered that to be a priest is *the most sublime state on earth, the very one Our Lord willed to assume and follow.*¹⁷ He refers to his experience and says *the older I get, the more convinced I am of this*. The Lord had guided him through the influence of good ecclesiastics (Pierre de Bérulle and André Duval) and above all through events. Through this process he not only discovers the great dignity of the priesthood but more importantly discovers the true identity of the priest.

¹⁵ Cf. J. DEFOS DU RAU, *La ordenación de San Vicente*, «Anales» (1982), 437-446; E. DIEBOLD, *La primera Misa de San Vicente (1600)*, «Anales» (1982), 324-326.

¹⁶ CCD, V:569.

¹⁷ CCD, V:569.

This was a long process in which Vincent was led by the Lord; and through the distinct experiences which Divine Providence had involved him in and through his attentive listening that enabled him to interpret these experiences, he slowly discovers what it means to be a priest.¹⁸

2.1. *Clichy*

Ordained a priest in September 1600 it would not be until 1612 when he is appointed pastor at Clichy that Saint Vincent discovers the joy of direct pastoral ministry and savors ministry for the first time. *Mon Dieu! How happy you are to have such good people! And I would add, I do not think the Pope himself is as happy as a Pastor in the midst of such good hearted people.*¹⁹

In Clichy we discover the priest, Vincent de Paul, enthusiastic about the well-prepared liturgical celebrations and with hymns sung with the people's participation.²⁰

Clichy offers him the opportunity to test the evangelizing potential of a small community of ecclesiastical aspirants animated by the Spirit of the Lord.²¹

2.2. *Faith tested*

A little later, at the beginning of 1613 as tutor in the de Gondi family he is offered the opportunity of establishing relationships with the families of high society. Would this be the beginning of his *honorable retirement*.

It is then that Vincent de Paul begins to vacillate in his faith. But the Lord helps him to discover that to be a priest is to work (years later he confesses this fact in the third person): *Since he neither preached nor catechized, he found himself assailed, in the peaceful state of life he then enjoyed, by a strong temptation against*

¹⁸ Cf. J. MORIN, *Historie d'un regard su le pauvre*, «Vincentiana» (1981), 160-190; AA.VV., *La experiencia espiritual del señor Vicente y la nuestra (estudios para la Asamblea General de la Congregación de la Misión, 1980)*, «Anales» (1977), 247-286; J. DELARUE, *Vicente de Paúl, la fe que dio sentido a su vida*, Salamanca, Ceme, 1974.

¹⁹ CCD, IX:507.

²⁰ CF. J.M. MUNETA, *San Vicente de Paúl, animador del culto*, Salamanca, Ceme, 1974.

²¹ The young Antoine Portail, a future companion and collaborator of Saint Vincent, was a member of this group.

*faith. This should teach us in passing, how dangerous it is to remain in a state of complete mental or bodily idleness for, just as land, however good it may be, if left for some time to be fallow, it will begin to produce a crop of weeds and thistles, so too, our soil cannot remain for long in a state of repose and idleness without experiencing certain passions or temptations which incline it to evil.*²²

2.3. Gannes-Folléville

1617 is a decisive year in the life of Vincent de Paul.²³ The experience of Gannes-Folléville leads him to discover the spiritual abandonment of the poor people in the rural areas. While he sought and found a comfortable and accommodating situation among the influential, the rural poor people lived and died without any priest to evangelize them or assist them.²⁴ Vincent de Paul feels God calling him to live his priesthood proclaiming the gospel to the poor people in the rural areas.

In this first missionary experience, Vincent de Paul discovers not only the spiritual misery of the people but also experiences the ignorance in which the majority of the clergy lived as well as their lack of preparation to exercise priestly ministry.

In Gannes-Folléville, Vincent de Paul discovers that the spiritual needs of the poor are not served and that the priests are primarily responsible for this situation. They are ill-prepared and have little enthusiasm for the ministry of evangelization. He listens to the Lord interpolate these events: are there no priests who will concern themselves with the evangelization of the poor rural people? Vincent sees that the popular mission, with general confession and catechesis, can create new priests for the necessary evangelization of the poor.

²² Extract from a conference “An account of a temptation against faith,” pp. 42-43.

²³ Cf. J.M. ROMÁN, *El año 1617 en la biografía de San Vicente de Paúl, «Vincentiana»* (1984), 443-456; M. SAGASTAGOITIA, *Vicente de Paúl y la Misión, Ceme*, Salamanca, 1974.

²⁴ J. MORIN, *o.c.*, 387. The experience of Folléville in Saint Vincent de Paul: CCD, IX:49-51; Extract from a conference, “On the Mission that was preached at Folléville in 1617,” pp. 18-20; Conference to the Missionaries, May 17, 1658, pp. 417-419.

2.4. *Châtillon-les-Dombes*

A few months later Vincent de Paul asked Father Bérulle's permission to leave Paris in order to minister among the poor rural people. Providence sent him to a small parish about five hundred kilometers from the capital. Vincent arrives in Châtillon-les-Dombes between March and April, 1617.²⁵ It is in Châtillon where Vincent discovers that priestly ministry among the poor cannot be limited to evangelization and the celebration of the sacraments, but must be complimented with organized charity that alleviates their corporeal miseries.²⁶

In Châtillon Vincent de Paul continues to listen to the interpolations of the Lord: the priest, evangelizer of the poor, cannot remain passive before the urgent needs of the poor and must utilize his best energies in order to organize material assistance. The laity, who are generous and well-animated by charity, are effective and indispensable agents of evangelization.

2.5. *Montmirail-Marchais*

At the end of 1617 Vincent de Paul returns to Paris and continues to serve as spiritual director to Madame de Gondi but is no longer tutor of her children. From this time on, his mission is focused on offering missions on the de Gondi estate and establishing confraternities of charity modeled on the foundation in Châtillon. Rural missions and confraternities to assist the sick poor will become the axes of his priestly ministry.

Between 1618-1625 his activity will move out from the rural areas and will include the galley slaves as he is appointed general-chaplain.²⁷

What occurred in Montmirail-Marchais confirmed his discoveries. While Vincent was preaching in Montmirail, Madame de Gondi sent him three Huguenots hoping that he would convince them to once again embrace the Catholic faith. A few days later, two of them asked to make a recantation while each day the third person presented new objections: he could not believe that the Catholic Church was guided by the Holy Spirit because the poor were not attended.²⁸ Only later,

²⁵ Cf. CCD, XIIIb:49 ff.

²⁶ Cf. CCD, IX:165-166; 192-193.

²⁷ Cf. L. ABELLY, *o.c.*, 77.

²⁸ Extract from a conference to the Missionaries, "On the conversion of a heretic" (undated), pp. 44-47.

when this individual was able to see the care and dedication of the missionaries as they instructed the poor in their faith did he come to Saint Vincent and confess. *I now see that the Holy Spirit guides the Roman Church, since such great care is taken to instruct and serve poor villagers. I am ready to enter the Church whenever you are pleased to receive me.*²⁹

This experience was engraved on the mind of Saint Vincent and appears to be implied in what he repeated to the priests of his Company: *How blessed are we, missionaries, to be able to demonstrate that the Holy Spirit guides his work, working as we work for the instruction and the sanctification of the poor.*³⁰

After the significant events in Folléville, Châtillon, the lived experience in Montmirail-Marchais confirmed that the poor are abandoned and that the Church could only reveal God to the degree that she returns to serve the poor. Priests are called to be concrete expressions of the Church and to be her effective voice with the poor.

2.6. Priests and missionaries for the poor

The Lord helped Saint Vincent by revealing himself to him in events and by revealing to him the meaning of priesthood. At forty years of age Vincent saw clearly that the Church that God desired had to concern itself primarily with the poor who were abandoned. It was also clear that the workers (ministers and priests) were not prepared to care for this field where the harvest was plentiful.

Until 1625 Vincent de Paul had personally given himself over to charitable and missionary labor, helped occasionally by some companions who were related to him to achieve some concrete and determined project, but after 1625 he would rely on *some priests who commit themselves and come together to devote themselves by way of the mission to catechize, preach and exhort poor country people to make a general confession.*³¹

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ The events at Marchais are reflected in the biographies of Vincent de Paul, all of which are based on the testimony of L. ABELLY, *o.c.*, 73-75; P. Coste has gathered this information together in Extract from a conference to the Missionaries, “On the conversion of a heretic” (undated), pp. 44-47.

³¹ CCD, XIIIb:222-223. On April 24, 1626 the Congregation of the Mission was approved by the Archbishop of Paris. In 1627 Saint Vincent requests approval for the Congregation from Pope Urban VII. On January 12, 1633 Pope Urban VII gives official approval to the Congregation of the Mission with the Bull *Salvatoris Nostris*.

III.

A PRIEST ACCORDING TO SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL

At the beginning of this study we stated that Vincent de Paul did not leave us any written manual about priestly life and thus we can identify what it means to be a good priest according to Saint Vincent de Paul only from his experience as he understood it and lived it.

There was a widespread movement of renewal in the Church during the years preceding and following the Council of Trent and as a result different proposals were put forth to cultivate priestly holiness — proposals that we once again put in relief on the occasion of this Year of the Priest 2009-2010.³²

Each one of these proposals focuses on one or another dimension of ministry and offers a plan of priestly life.³³ Vincent de Paul was aware of these proposals. Now I dare to formulate a few affirmations that we could call Vincentian proposals: priesthood according to Saint Vincent de Paul.

1. One can only be a priest if one has been called to this vocation by God

From a priest who was seeking a benefice to a priest following Jesus Christ, servant of the people and the poor: this great transformation that took place in the priest, Vincent de Paul, has been synthesized by J. Ibáñez Burgos: *from one seeking a benefice, Vincent de Paul was converted to one who unceasingly did the will of God.*³⁴

His personal experience as a priest is a determining factor that helps him discover the meaning of priesthood. One can only be a

³² All religious communities are publishing studies about the contribution of their Founders to the understanding of the holiness of the priesthood. I was able to see this as I visited several religious libraries in Rome at the beginning of January.

³³ Before the time of Vincent de Paul we find serious proposals on priestly holiness among the diverse groups of “clerics regular,” like the Teatinos (1524), the Barnabites (1530) or the Camillians (1582), who cultivated a form of apostolic life, living in fraternal communion with their eyes focused on the apostolate. Saint Ignatius Loyola († 1556) or Saint Philip Neri († 1595) gave origin to new forms of priestly life: a promptness to serve the Church and an intellectual preparedness within the Ignatian community; a virtuous life and simple affability in the Oratorians of Saint Philip Neri. Closer to the time of Vincent de Paul we see proposals put forth by P. Bérulle and the Oratorian communities of Olier, Bourdoise, Eudes, etc.

³⁴ Cf. J.M. IBÁÑEZ BURGOS, *Vicente de Paúl. Realismo y encarnación*, Sigüeme, Salamanca, 1982, 36.

priest if one has been called to this vocation by God, if one has received this gift which is the vocation of ministry. One cannot aspire to the priesthood for any other motivation or interest; *loss seems inevitable for those who dare to enter it without being called.*³⁵

It is this very personal experience that will lead him to exclaim: *if I was not already a priest, I never would become one. I have often said this to applicants and I have said it more than a hundred times when preaching to the country folk.*³⁶ Obviously we are not dealing with a lament that was evoked by some past mistake, but rather produced by the recognition and the persistence of one valid reason to become a priest: *It is a misfortune for those who enter it by the window of their own choice and not by the door of a legitimate vocation. Yet the number of the former is high because they consider the ecclesiastical state a soft way of life in which they seek rest rather than work. This has been the source of the scandalous havoc we see in the Church, for the ignorance, sin and heresies that devastate it are attributed to priests.*³⁷

It is a discovery laden with the vital density of his experience and the starting point of a new way of understanding ministry and his work for the renewal of the life of priests. The priest is not a priest for himself or for his own interests, but rather he is a priest for all people and like Jesus Christ, the servant of all people: *We have been chosen by God as instruments of His boundless and fatherly love which desires to be established in and to replenish souls.... Our vocation is to go... throughout the whole world... to enflame the hearts of men, to do what the Son of God did. He came to cast fire on the earth, to inflame it with his love.... It is true, then, that I am sent, not merely to love God but to have him loved. It is not enough for me to love God if my neighbor does not love Him.*³⁸

2. The necessary holiness in the life of the priest, like Jesus Christ-priest

Saint Vincent de Paul has no hesitation in referring to the priesthood as *the most sublime state on earth, the very one Our Lord willed to assume and follow.*³⁹ He sees the priests as *persons who have the power to cause bread to be changed into the Body of the Son of God;*

³⁵ CCD, V:570.

³⁶ CCD, VII:480.

³⁷ CCD, VII:479.

³⁸ Conference to the Missionaries, May 30, 1659.

³⁹ CCD, V:569.

*that by their ministry you are restored to God's grace; that from an enemy of God they make you His child; that God gives them authority for what they do with regard to sinners; and that they have the power to snatch a soul from the hands of the devil and restore it to God.*⁴⁰

With expressions filled with admiration and gratitude Saint Vincent exhorts the members of his Congregation *to have a high opinion of priests, whose sacred character is a participation in the eternal priesthood of the Son of God who has given them power to offer up his own Body in sacrifice and to distribute it as food so that those who eat of it may live forever.*⁴¹

The greatness of the vocation to the priesthood, a greatness that demands a holy life, is derived from its participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ: *The characteristic mark of priests is their participation in the priesthood of the Son of God who has given them the power to sacrifice his own Body to distribute it to others as food so that those who eat it shall live forever. It is an utterly divine and incomparable mark, this power over the Body of Jesus Christ, which fills the angels with awe. Divine, too, is the power to forgive the sins of people; and this also to the angels is a great reason for astonishment and gratitude. Is there anything greater or more wonderful? O gentlemen, how great is a good priest!*⁴²

With these convictions Vincent de Paul will work on behalf of the formation and holiness of priests. He will ask for himself and for other priests a participation in the priesthood of Jesus Christ: *O Lord, grant us the spirit of your priesthood in which the Apostles and the first priests who followed them participated. Grant us the true spirit of that sacred character which you did confer on poor sinners, on working-men, on poor men of those days, on whom, by your grace, you did bestow this great and divine spirit. For, Lord, we too are poor people, poor laboring men and peasants.*⁴³

3. The life of the priest is like that of Christ: reverence toward the Father, charity toward the neighbor

Participating in Christ's priesthood, priests prolong the mission of Christ. Vincent de Paul did not hesitate to call priests *instruments of God to save others,*⁴⁴ *instruments by which the Son of God continues to*

⁴⁰ CCD, IX:241.

⁴¹ Conference to the Missionaries, December 13, 1658.

⁴² Extract from a conference to the Missionaries (undated).

⁴³ Extract from a conference to the Missionaries, September 1655.

⁴⁴ CCD, V:566; CCD, VI:69.

do from heaven what he once did on earth.⁴⁵ Vincent de Paul highlights in the priest this characteristic of continuing, throughout the ages, the historical mission of Jesus Christ for the salvation of people, especially those who are poor.

L. Mezzadri has placed in relief the differences between the Vincentian vision of priesthood and the vision of Bérulle: *Bérulle had established a company to render perpetual homage to the sovereign priesthood of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, Vincent de Paul wanted his Congregation to render homage to the needs of Jesus Christ as contemplated mystically in the poor. For this reason he has left us a rule: we ought to run to attend to the spiritual needs of the neighbor as we would run to extinguish a fire. For Bérulle, a priest renounces himself, humbles himself in order to cling to Christ and thus accomplishes a most perfect glorification of the Father. For Vincent de Paul renunciation and clinging to Christ culminate in the service of souls. The priest belongs to the poor in the same way that he belongs to Christ. The encounter with people who are poor results in the memory of Jesus, fidelity to Jesus, and following Jesus.*⁴⁶

The expression *instrument* used by Saint Vincent to refer to priests cannot be taken in some material mechanical sense but rather should be seen as a dynamism that has its origin in Jesus Christ: *how indebted we are to God for having sent us, as He sent His eternal Son, for their salvation!*⁴⁷

At the time that he was encouraging a missionary in his work of priestly formation, Saint Vincent summarizes the mission of Jesus Christ in reference to the Father and on behalf of his sisters and brothers. Instruments of Jesus Christ and men who continue his mission, priests are *called to the most lofty ministry on earth, through which they must exercise the two great virtues of Jesus Christ, namely, reverence toward His Father and charity toward mankind.*⁴⁸

In order to prolong the mission of Jesus Christ, in order to be living instruments of Jesus Christ, priests must live like Jesus Christ: *Remember, Monsieur, we live in Jesus Christ through the death of Jesus Christ, and we must die in Jesus Christ through the life of Jesus Christ and our life must be hidden in Jesus Christ and filled with Jesus Christ, and in order to die as Jesus Christ, we must live as Jesus Christ.*⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Conference to the Missionaries, December 6, 1658.

⁴⁶ L. MEZZADRI, *Jesus-Christe, figure de prêtre missionnaire dan l'œuvre de Monsieur Vincent*, cit., 332.

⁴⁷ CCD, VIII:41.

⁴⁸ CCD, VI:413.

⁴⁹ CCD, 276.

4. Like Jesus Christ, priests are servants of the Word of God, servants of evangelization... missionary priesthood

We have entitled this study about the priesthood *Apostolic Men* and we began with Saint Vincent's experience. Without hesitation Saint Vincent affirms that what the Church needs are apostolic men, missionaries.

Contemplating the situation of the Church in Europe and after receiving news from missionaries who were to leave for Madagascar, Vincent de Paul insisted on the need that the Church had to have at her disposal missionaries, men who would continue the mission of Jesus Christ, true apostles. *Alas! the Church has enough solitaries, by His mercy, and too many useless ones, and even more who tear her apart. Her great need is evangelical men who work to purge, enlighten, and unite her to her Divine Spouse. This is what you are doing, through his Divine Goodness... to go and proclaim Jesus Christ to the poor people, and work at training priests. I beg you, Monsieur, let us labor at that with all our might, confident that Our Lord, who has called us to His manner of life, will give us a greater share in His Spirit and, in the end, in His glory.*⁵⁰

He remembers with emotion the apostolic labor of the missionaries in Barbary and in Madagascar: *What have our missionaries in Barbary, and those in Madagascar, not undertaken, executed, carried out and suffered?... In Madagascar the missionaries preach, hear confessions, and teach the catechism continually from four o'clock in the morning until ten, and then from two o'clock in the afternoon until nightfall; they spend the rest of the time in reciting their Office and visiting the sick. There are workers! There are true missionaries! May the divine Goodness be pleased to give us the spirit with which they are animated, a big heart, vast and ample!*⁵¹

Vincent is convinced that they are *blessed who cooperate in extending the Church elsewhere.*⁵² He is also convinced that we have been called *not to go to one parish, or even to one diocese, but throughout the whole world.*⁵³

In his arguments he has recourse to the authority of Monsieur Duval who highlights the fact that priests should be tireless ministers, apostolic men: *Monsieur Duval, a great doctor of the Church, used to say that an ecclesiastic should have more work to do*

⁵⁰ CCD, III:204-205.

⁵¹ Repetition of Prayer, July 24, 1655.

⁵² CCD, III:41.

⁵³ Conference to the Missionaries, May 30, 1659.

than he could get through, because as soon as sloth and idleness get a grip on an ecclesiastic, all the other vices pour in from every direction: temptations to impurity and many, many others! Shall I dare to say it?... I must think it over; perhaps another opportunity may arise. O Savior, O my dear Savior, may your divine goodness be pleased to deliver the Congregation of the Mission from the spirit of slothfulness, from the pursuit of comfort, and grant the Company an ardent zeal for your glory which will cause it to embrace all things with you and which will never allow it to let an opportunity go by of serving you.⁵⁴

5. Like Jesus Christ, priests to serve the poor, to assist them in their need... priests, servants of those who are poor

For Saint Vincent de Paul, the following of Jesus Christ involves service, attending to people who are poor. This dimension of following Jesus Christ can be foreign to the ministry of priests: *If priests devote themselves to the care of the poor, has not that been the office of Our Lord and of many great saints who have not only recommended the poor to others, but have themselves consoled, comforted and healed them? Are not the poor the afflicted members of Our Lord? Are they not our brothers? And if priests abandon them, who do you think will help them? So then, if there are any among us who think they are in the Congregation of the Mission to preach the Gospel to the poor but not to comfort them, to supply their spiritual but not their temporal wants, I reply that we ought to assist them and have them assisted in every way, by ourselves and by others.⁵⁵*

In the Church, the Congregation of the Mission, composed of priests and brothers, has as its mission the evangelization of the poor: the poor constitute its own portion, its delight: ... *God and his Church, inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit, esteem the charity that is shown towards the poor. O my Brothers, how happy are we to find ourselves in a Company which professes to run to the relief of our neighbor. Charity at home, charity abroad, by means of the missions, charity toward the poor! And I can say that, by the grace of God, no opportunity of helping the poor in their necessities has presented itself to the Company that has not been seized.⁵⁶*

Evangelization of the poor does not only involve the proclamation of the great truths of the faith, but as in Jesus' case, implies the fulfillment of the signs announced by the prophets as a way to

⁵⁴ Repetition of Prayer, July 24, 1655.

⁵⁵ Conference to the Missionaries, December 6, 1658.

⁵⁶ Repetition of Prayer, November 11, 1658.

recognize the Messiah of God: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the poor are evangelized.⁵⁷ It may be said that, by coming to evangelize the poor, we do not mean to come merely for their salvation, but also for accomplishing the predictions of the prophets and the figures of the Old Law and for the purpose of giving effect to the gospel.⁵⁸

Saint Vincent de Paul not only discovers that his priestly ministry ought to be a service to those who are poor but also realizes that this same reality was to be applied to all those who joined him in this missionary endeavor. *There is not in the Church of God a single Company which has the poor for its portion, and which gives itself so wholly to the poor as never to preach in large cities. This is what missionaries profess to do; it is their special characteristic to be, like Jesus Christ, devoted to the poor. Our vocation then is a continuation of His, or, at least, it is in harmony with His in its circumstances. Oh! What happiness, my brothers! But what obligations we are under to have an affection for it.*⁵⁹

The perfection of all Christians and the holiness that ought to characterize the life of the priest is found in charity — charity that leads one to follow Jesus Christ and give of oneself in service to people who are poor: *Oh! what a happiness for you to work at doing what He did! He came to bring the good news to the poor, and this is your lot and your occupation, too. If our perfection lies in charity, as is certain, there is none greater than to give oneself to save souls and to sacrifice oneself for them as Jesus Christ did. This is what you are called to do.*⁶⁰

Utilizing once again the word *instrument* to define the life of the priest, Saint Vincent states: *We have been chosen by God as instruments of His boundless and fatherly love which desires to be established in and to replenish souls.*⁶¹

6. Attentive to events, the place of God's revelation

Attention to events, especially events that involved the situation of poor people, was most important to Saint Vincent. Through events he came to an understanding of his own priestly ministry and so we cannot put aside this reality as we attempt to outline the identity of the priest from the perspective of a Vincentian experience.

⁵⁷ These are the signs that distinguish the mission of Jesus. Cf. Luke 4:18 ff.

⁵⁸ Conference to the Missionaries, December 6, 1658.

⁵⁹ Conference to the Missionaries, December 7, 1658.

⁶⁰ CCD, VII:356.

⁶¹ Conference to the Missionaries, May 30, 1659.

Events are the Vincentian place of theology.⁶² Through them the Lord has been leading Vincent de Paul to a conversion as a missionary priest dedicated in doing the will of God, dedicated like Jesus Christ, in evangelizing the poor.

Saint Vincent de Paul insists on the importance of attentiveness to events and highlights the verb *to see*. He writes to the Pope about the sufferings caused by the wars: *It is a small thing to hear and read these things; they must be seen and ascertained with one's own eyes.*⁶³ He also writes to the Brother responsible for distributing the materials that were collected to help these victims: *these poor people should be observed in their own homes so you can see for yourself who are the most needy and who are less so.*⁶⁴

As he became attentive to the events surrounding the life of the poor, Vincent de Paul, the priest, began to understand his ministry and was being formed for ministry.

7. The participation of the laity in the ministry of the apostles

The lived experience of Vincent de Paul in Châtillon, as we pointed out above, helped him discover the importance of the laity, and more specifically, the importance of women in the Church.⁶⁵ With the establishment of the Confraternities and the collaboration of Louise de Marillac and other women, with the foundation of the Daughters of Charity and the support of the Ladies of Charity, that first experience of lay participation became the ordinary way of understanding and living priestly ministry for Vincent de Paul and his followers.

Vincent de Paul refers to the women who were at Jesus' side and exercised an apostolic ministry: *Among those who were steadfast in following Our Lord, there were women as well as men, who followed Him even to the Cross. These women were not Apostles, but they formed a middle state, in which their duty was to feed the Apostles and contribute to their holy ministry.*⁶⁶

It should be noted that Vincent de Paul, when speaking about the participation of women in the activities of the group that surrounded

⁶² Cf. AA.VV., *La experiencia espiritual del señor Vicente y la nuestra*, cit., 162-163.

⁶³ CCD, IV:446.

⁶⁴ CCD, VI:388.

⁶⁵ Cf. A. DODIN, *San Vicente de Paúl y la mujer en la vida de la Iglesia*, in *Lecciones sobre vicencianismo*, Salamanca, Ceme, 1978, 161 ff.

⁶⁶ CCD, XIIIb:436.

Jesus, did not hesitate to use words that were traditionally reserved for priestly ministry: *contribute to the ministry of the Apostles.*

In a text, parallel to the one in which he describes the ministry of priests, Vincent de Paul explains the ministry of women: *In visiting those that are poor, you visit God Himself in them; and the service you render them is rendered to God himself.... You cause the goodness of God to be seen and felt through your own goodness to those persons, and have God glorified.... You cooperate with Jesus Christ in the salvation of those poor souls.... You edify the whole Church... and you edify one another.... You wipe out your past sins... and you go on gaining the merit of a good death... and you put yourself in the position of going before God at judgment with your head held high: "Come, blessed of my Father...."*⁶⁷

The ecclesiastic that Vincent de Paul was calls to mind the theology of his time but then enters into a discussion of possible objections with true genius: *You practice what widows of the primitive Church did, namely, to meet the material needs of the poor as they did, and even the spiritual needs of persons of their own sex, as they did. In this you will be released, as it were, from the prohibition placed upon you by Saint Paul in 1 Cor 14, "Women should keep silent in the churches; nor are they permitted to speak." And in 1 Tm 2, "I do not permit a woman to act as a teacher."*⁶⁸

Without the active participation of the laity it is impossible to understand or explain the priestly ministry of Vincent de Paul. The fundamental mission of the missionary priest and servant is the promotion of the laity as protagonists of the Apostolic ministry. The Eucharist, the center of priestly life, is equally the center of the life of the laity: *It is not only the priest who offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass but also those who are present at it.*⁶⁹

IV.

A PRIEST TODAY, LIKE VINCENT DE PAUL

To formulate a systematic proposal about the meaning of the life and ministry of the priest today, and to do this from the perspective of the experience of Saint Vincent de Paul, is beyond the scope of this work. But it would be opportune to open two paths of reflection for dialogue and study in our houses, particularly, in our seminaries.

⁶⁷ CCD, XIIIb:404-405.

⁶⁸ CCD, XIIb:380.

⁶⁹ CCD, IX:5.

1. The new ecclesial understanding of ministerial priesthood

The great shift in perspective in the understanding of priestly ministry has been marked out by the Second Vatican Council and has continued to be reflected in the teachings of the Church in the years following the Council as well as in the theological reflections of our time.⁷⁰

This new understanding has not consisted of simply rereading the affirmations of the Council of Trent and framing them in the tradition of the Church. The Second Vatican Council has opened new perspectives. Priestly ministry is presented in relation to the common priesthood of the faithful⁷¹ and as a service within the Church and a service to the world.⁷² *With this concept of ecclesial ministry the Council has taken a decisive step. The priest no longer appears on the first line as the “man of sacraments.” The priests’ multiple ministerial labor is understood from the point of view of one sent by Christ and this reality is the center and origin and fullness of ecclesial ministry. Thus the priest acquires an authentic participation in the realization of the apostolic salvific, pastoral, and charitable work in all its dimensions. Once again priests enter into close contact with the apostolic ministry in order to continue the work of the apostles and acquire a new participation in the government of the Church. Their powers are not simply powers of jurisdiction but are rooted in a deep Christology and bestowed upon them through the reception of the sacrament of Orders.*⁷³

One of the fruits of the new understanding of priestly ministry is its ecclesiastical recovery of and a more adequate relationship with the laity and with the world. The ordained priest is a member of the ecclesial community and participates in the mission of the Church in his own proper, but not exclusive, way. *Priests have a positive and helping relationship to the laity. Priests are there to serve the faith, hope and charity of the laity. They recognize and uphold, as brothers and friends, the dignity of the laity as children of God and help them to exercise fully their specific role in the overall context of the Church’s*

⁷⁰ Recent studies such as a complete Bibliography: AA.VV., *Diccionario del Sacerdocio*, Madrid, Editorial Católica, 2005 (prepared by Professors of the Theology Faculty of Burgos for the Library of Christian Authors). Cf. D. COZZENS, *La fe cambiante del sacerdocio*, Santander, Sal Terrae, 2004; J.M. URIARTE, *Seguidores y testigos*, San Sebastián, Idatz, 2003; I.M. URIARTE, *Ministerio presbiterial y espiritualidad*, San Sebastián, Idatz, 1999.

⁷¹ *Lumen Gentium*, 10; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2.

⁷² *Lumen Gentium*, 28; *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 2, 5.

⁷³ GERMAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *El ministerio sacerdotal*, cit., 86.

mission.⁷⁴ Furthermore, precisely because within the Church's life the priest is a man of communion, in his relations with all people he must be a man of mission and dialogue. Deeply rooted in the truth and charity of Christ, and impelled by the desire and imperative to proclaim Christ's salvation to all, the priest is called to witness in all his relationships to fraternity, service and a common quest for the truth, as well as a concern for the promotion of justice and peace.⁷⁵

A fruit of this new understanding is the focus on the missionary understanding of priestly ministry. *From the moment that the Church is constituted to provide not just for herself but to seek out, in Christ, all people and to transmit to them God's salvation, the priesthood of the Church is in essence, missionary. What Christ was for people at one time, what he is today and what he will continue to be tomorrow — the priest must be the one sent to the Church and to the whole world in service of the Lord.⁷⁶*

Another fruit of this new understanding is the concretion in his ministerial mission of the call to holiness, a call directed to all the baptized. *Priests will acquire holiness in their own distinctive way by exercising their functions sincerely and tirelessly in the Spirit of Christ.⁷⁷*

2. The present challenges to Vincentian ministerial priesthood

The Second Vatican Council opened new perspectives for understanding ministerial priesthood. As often occurs with the magisterial statements of the Church, diverse theological and pastoral sensitivities take hold of those aspects that support their specific proposals. Is it not possible that a specific way of understanding priestly ministry can be dominant in a specific place or time and thus cloud the rich Vincentian experience of being a priest and living priestly missionary ministry?

Today we live in a time of searching rather than a time of certainty. Are we indifferent to understanding and living priestly ministry from a theological and spiritual perspective that is far removed from Vincentian spirituality?

The pastoral reality of certain geographical areas in which we are present cries out for our involvement in new forms of apostolate. Are we successful at offering our ministry as a missionary ministry?

⁷⁴ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 17.

⁷⁵ John Paul II, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, 18.

⁷⁶ GERMAN EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE, *El ministerio sacerdotal*, cit., 88.

⁷⁷ *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 13; *Lumen Gentium*, 41.

The participation of the laity and the community understanding of ministry are two aspects that characterized our mission from the time of Saint Vincent de Paul. Are they also distinctive characteristics in our way of understanding and living Vincentian priestly ministry?

Pastoral weariness in light of a lack of answers and “the eclipse of God” in the life of the priest, are they also influencing our Vincentian ministerial priesthood?

Without a doubt the list of challenges could continue endlessly. But these challenges are an invitation to return to the experience of Vincent de Paul and to his discoveries about the essence of and the ways of living priestly ministry.

Conclusion

Saint Vincent de Paul understood that being a priest is living out the following of Jesus Christ and prolonging his mission of service to the poor. I am convinced that the Church and the poor continue to need, today as yesterday, apostolic men.

Translation: CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.

Vincent as Priest

A Personal Reflection

by Patrick J. Griffin, C.M.

Last year (2008-2009), we celebrated the “Year of Paul.” It was a wonderful opportunity for us — and for me — to come to know Paul better by reading his writings and reflecting upon his character and message for our time and place. This year, that same kind of opportunity is given to us with regard to Vincent and Louise, and our Vincentian Heritage. During the summer, I began my “Year of Vincent” and went back to start my reading (and re-reading) of his life and teaching. I have come to love Vincent more deeply already in this year. I am forming some different ideas about his character. I am seeing him in a new light which, admittedly, reveals as much about myself and my emphases as it does about Vincent. My hope is that at the end of this year, I will know him (and other members of the Vincentian family) much deeper, and be better for the journey.

Right now, however, I am privileged to have the opportunity to share some thoughts on Vincent as priest — which coincides nicely with Benedict’s “Year for Priests.” Our Provincial, Mike Carroll, gave me lots of latitude in the organization of this presentation. I have decided to offer a personal reflection on some aspects of Vincent’s priesthood and what it means for me and for us.

Some years ago, Bob Maloney wrote a compelling piece on Vincent’s priesthood for his (Vincent’s) 400th anniversary of ordination entitled: “Vincentian Priesthood as Missionary.” Bob speaks of how Bérulle, Olier, and John Eudes all influenced Vincent and of how they are very conscious of the “exalted” role of the priest. Vincent took a different path. After considering different models of priesthood as proposed by Avery Dulles, Rembert Weakland, Raymond Brown, and Karl Rahner, Bob concludes: “For Vincent, in his mature years, Jesus the priest is most of all *the missionary* of

[This talki was given in Philadelphia on October 8, 2009 at the Superiors’ Meeting of the confreres of the Eastern Province of the USA by Patrick J. Griffin, C.M., a priest of that province.]

the Father, the Evangelizer of the Poor.” And this model of priest as missionary is what characterizes the ministry of Vincent in Bob’s view. It is a reasoned and supported conclusion, and one which should nourish our idea of priesthood as Vincentians. I recommend this article, and I am not going to plow that ground again.

INTRODUCTION: Vincent and Priesthood

Vincent said some very interesting things about priests. On the one hand, he says:

“If there is a masterpiece in this world, it is the formation of good priests; nothing greater, nothing more important can be conceived” (CCD 12, # 181).

And on the other:

“The Church has no worse enemies than priests” (CCD 12, # 195).

He says:

“Oh, Messieurs! What a great thing a good priest is! What is there that a good priest cannot do and what conversions can he not obtain? Just look at that excellent priest M. Bourdoise; what is he not doing and what can he not do! The success of Christianity depends on priests; for, when good parishioners see a good member of the clergy, a charitable Pastor, they honor him, do what he says, and try to imitate him... the priesthood is something so lofty... it is... the most important ministry there is for the salvation of souls and the advancement of Christianity!” (CCD 11, # 4, p. 6).

And yet he says:

“My experience... causes me to advise those who ask my opinion about receiving it [priesthood], not to do so unless they have a genuine call from God and a pure intention of honoring O[ur] L[ord] by the practice of His virtues and the other sure signs that His Divine Goodness is calling them to it. I feel so strongly about this that, if I was not already a priest, I never would become one” (CCD 7, # 2792, pp. 479-480).

[Vincent identifies three elements (as recognized by ROMAN, p. 50) as important for carrying out the ministry of a priest: “A real vocation from God,” “a pure intention of honoring God,” and (Roman adds) an adequate pastoral preparation — something which Vincent placed at the heart of the formation retreats directed by the Congregation.]

People have noted, and I am in firm agreement, that at the center of Vincent's theology, his spirituality, his ministry, and, yes, his priesthood was the incarnation. We can see it in the way in which he describes the call to be a member of the Congregation, "the Spirit of the Lord has anointed me, he has sent me" — God's Spirit is incarnated in the missionary. The selection of the Conversion of St. Paul as the foundation day of the Congregation with the preaching of the first mission also has that incarnational character — being knocked to the ground, blinded, with the accusation of persecuting Jesus in the poor, and then sent on the road to preach the Gospel. Louise felt that same incarnational character in her spirituality, "the Charity of Christ urges us" and her selection for the renewal of vows on March 25 — the Incarnation — which holds the promise of bringing Christ to and finding Christ in the poor for one more year. The immediacy of God's presence in the world and in people and in Divine Providence was foremost in Vincent's thinking and acting — and all this points to the incarnation.

In this presentation, I would like to emphasize four points which characterize the incarnational priestly ministry of Vincent. These are: Penance, Preaching, Prayer, and the Poor. These elements capture something of the priesthood of Vincent as I appreciate it. [Interestingly — and without my intending it so — they also define the character of the Eucharist: Penance and the Penitential Rite; Preaching and the Liturgy of the Word, Prayer and the entering into the presence of God (to whom we are speaking), and the Poor to whom we are missioned.]

1. PENANCE

Let me begin with Penance.

We are all familiar with the story of Folleville in which Vincent hears the confession of a man on the de Gondi estate. This man then proclaims publicly that he would have been damned if he had not confessed his sin, and this causes Madame de Gondi to get worried because of the obligation which she feels toward those who live on her property. We know what happens next:

"In the month of January 1617, on the twenty-fifth, the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, that lady asked me to preach a sermon in the church of Folleville to urge the people to make a general confession, which I did, pointing out to them its importance and usefulness. Then I taught them how to make it properly; and God had such regard for the confidence and good faith of that lady — for the large number and enormity of my sins would have

hindered the success of this act — that he blessed what I said; and those good folk were so moved by God that they all came to make their general confession.... That was the first sermon of the Mission and the success that God gave it on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul” (CCD 11, # 2, pp. 3-4).

Vincent is moved by the enormous response. It is more than he can handle and help must be summoned from far and near to help the people go to confession. And thus begins Vincent’s responsibility to preach missions throughout the de Gondi holdings.

I wonder about the change which comes about in Vincent through this experience. It is not simply the man who confessed who is changed, Vincent is in the same moment. He realizes the responsibility which he has for the salvation of these people because of the call to priesthood, and he recognizes that he must carry out this mission. He discovers himself in the exercise of this ministry. It is no coincidence that this happens on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. Vincent, too, is converted in this moment. From now on, the responsibility of carrying out the priestly ministry of bringing the sacrament of penance to God’s people is high on his mind.

One does not have to look hard at the writings of Vincent to see how often he encourages his priests to give missions and call the people to repentance. The Ladies of Charity and the Daughters of Charity are all encouraged in the midst of their ministrations to prompt people into reflecting upon their need for this sacrament and to help them to prepare for it worthily. Vincent suggests how they can raise the question “subtly.” They can say things like: “*Well, brother, what are your thoughts about making the journey to the other world?*” Then to another, “*Well, my child, you wish to go and see our Lord, do you not?*” (MAYNARD [1961], p. 125).

One question which is raised for us as priests and Vincentians, then, is how we are called to invite people to take advantage of this sacrament. We can say all kinds of things about how no one wants to partake of this sacrament in these days, but that is not the only answer — and one which Vincent would find difficult to accept. How well do we speak about it, how well have we provided it, how well have we celebrated it? All good questions, and worthy of good answers in this year in which we celebrate priests and Vincent.

One could also add here the way in which Vincent is driven early to care for the reform of the clergy. This, too, flows from the experience of Penance. Mme. de Gondi notes that the priest who hears her confession does not know the words of absolution, and Vincent de Paul notices the same. And so begins his resolution to train priests who can better serve the needs of God’s people (CALVET, p. 56).

The other side of this question of Penance, of course, is Vincent's own participation in the sacrament. Reading his writings (or those of St. Louise) for any short period of time will reveal how often they speak about their own sinfulness. Even in the telling of the story of Folleville, notice how he attributes the success of his preaching not to his own eloquence (rather he points to the enormity of his sinfulness) but to the goodness of Mme. de Gondi. I sometimes have to laugh when I read some of Vincent's adventures. He may be offering a correction to a confrere, and immediately says that he has much greater faults; he tells someone what he is doing wrong, and confesses that it must be because of Vincent's own bad example; he wants to admonish the confreres who are leaving some doors open, but immediately admits that he undoubtedly does that more often than anyone else; someone assails him because they think that he is responsible for the high taxes, he falls to his knees and maintains that he has nothing to do with the taxes but he is a great sinner. The one which really amused me, however, was when he was reading the new rules to the Daughters. As he continues, one DC confesses that she has not kept the rule, then another, then another. And Vincent, in the midst of all this falls on his knees and confesses that he has never kept the rules of the Congregation. He cannot stand being out of the confession circle!

Vincent liked to go to confession daily, and when, as apparently was usual, his confessor admitted that he could not find sufficient matter for absolution, Vincent simply told him: *"Ah, sir, if you could see my soul as God makes me know myself, you would judge differently"* (MAYNARD [1961], p. 52).

Vincent had a profound sense of his own sinfulness and thus of his need for the sacrament. Either he is faking all this, or he really had such a sense of the closeness of God and his own unworthiness, that he could see how even his small peccadilloes (though he would not describe them as such) were offenses against God.

All this leads us to two considerations around the sacrament of Penance: first, how we are called to provide and encourage the sacrament for others; and secondly, how much we need to reverence and partake of it ourselves as a result of our awareness of our own sinfulness. In fact, our own experience of the sacrament could and should nourish the way in which we offer it to others.

We need to make this the year in which we promote and partake of the sacrament of penance better. And Vincent leads the way. It is an important part of his priesthood.

2. PREACHING

If the sacrament which gives rise to the foundation of the Congregation is Penance, then the context in which it makes a difference for the priest is preaching. Think of two of the most famous events in the early formation of Vincent. One, we have already considered: Folleville. Vincent preaches the first sermon of the Mission there and it makes a wonderful difference in people's lives.

But the second experience was Chatillon. Again, the story is very familiar to us. Vincent is the local pastor. He is preparing to celebrate mass when he is informed that there is a family in which everyone is sick and no one can care for anyone else. The family is in need of food and care. Vincent mentions this in his sermon, and then after mass — after he has made his thanksgiving and taken care of business — he heads to see the family. On his way there, he meets his parishioners who heard his message and went to serve the other. Again, it is the power of speaking God's word effectively to God's people.

A third familiar focus on preaching in the Congregation flows from the passage from Luke which becomes the motto of the Congregation: "He has sent me to preach the Gospel to the poor." Jesus speaks these words in a preaching context in Nazareth, and the call which he hears is to preach the Gospel to the people of his time. Vincent takes up this passage and this summons and refers back to it many times in his writings and conferences.

He speaks of how Missioners even at the end can celebrate these words: *"How happy will those be who, at the hour of death, can say these beautiful words of our Lord, Evangelizare pauperibus misit me Dominus"* (CCD 11, # 100, p. 122).

Vincent never saw himself (or a missionary) excused from this responsibility. I love the passage where he speaks about this:

"If I could not preach every day, eh bien, I would do it twice a week! If I could not give long sermons, I would try to give short ones; if, again, people did not understand me at those short ones, what would prevent me from speaking plainly and simply to those good people in the way I am speaking to you right now, gathering them around me, as you are?" (CCD 11, # 100, p. 123).

When I was in the Novitiate, I heard the story about Fr. Judge who was convinced to go to a movie theater by some friends; when the film broke, he asked his friends to introduce him and then he went up to the front of the theater and began to preach until the film had been repaired. There is a certain zeal which goes along with preaching. Or is it the weekly drag for us?

Preaching was important for Vincent, and it flowed as the fruit of one's prayer and meditation on the Word of God. Vincent noted: *"Prayer is a great book for a preacher: from it you will draw the divine truths of the Eternal Word, who is their source, and you in turn will pour them forth upon the people"* (CCD 7, # 2591, p. 171).

For Vincent, preaching, as so many other things, depended on simplicity. This was the way in which he knew Jesus to preach:

"Give yourself to God so that you will speak in the humble spirit of Jesus Christ, acknowledging that your doctrine is not your own, nor coming from you but from the Gospel. Imitate especially the simplicity of the words and comparisons Our Lord uses in Holy Scripture when he speaks to the people.... You see how plainly he speaks and how he uses familiar comparisons — a farmer, a wine grower, a field, a vineyard, a mustard seed. That is how you must speak if you want to make yourself understood by the people to whom you will be announcing God's word" (CCD 11, # 153, pp. 313-314).

This style of preaching was characterized by: simplicity of matter (one clear theme), simplicity of form (uncomplicated in presentation), simplicity of tone (no drama) (see COSTE II, p. 215).

Of course, Vincent recommends the "little method" for preaching. We know how this plays out: nature, motive, means — what you are talking about, why it is important, how to do it. And at the heart of this method was simplicity itself. Vincent was not attuned to the verbose style of preaching which characterized his time. He thought that people became too attached to their words and images and lost sight of the Gospel and the most important message for the people, and so Vincent preferred to use the "little method" which, in its simplicity, truly changed people's minds and hearts because people truly understood the point.

I was touched by a story about how when Vincent was sending some of his men on a mission around Paris, they observed that there was a great difference in giving a mission in a city like Paris and in the country — what succeeds with country folk would only excite ridicule and laughter in Paris. Vincent was not amused. He heard this as the "spirit of the world" inspired by human prudence and perhaps self-love. *"You go to combat the spirit of the world, which is a spirit of pride, and you will overcome it only by attacking it in the spirit of Jesus, which is a spirit of simplicity and humility"* (MAYNARD [1877], p. 236). Do you hear the call to preach simply and not as scholars or entertainers?

The responsibility to preach well was at the heart of the missions on which he sent his priests. And this preaching depended on

simplicity and reflection on God's word. Literary allusions and turns of phrase were not favored by Vincent. He simply wanted people to understand the message of the Gospels and be aided in how they might put it into practice. I have been surprised at how reading Vincent's writings now, I find them so peppered with scriptural allusions and illustrations. He knew the Word of God and he thought in Gospel terms. Look at the *Common Rules*. Vincent always begins a section by directing our attention to the life and teaching of Jesus. [I have wondered if his famous directive about "leaving God for God" flows from reflection on the Good Samaritan — but that is another talk.] In decision-making, he sought guidance in the words and example of Jesus, and he offered these to his followers.

And so the question arises as to how we as missionaries prepare ourselves to preach and how our preaching touches the hearts of people and invites them to change and be comforted. We are called to be good preachers. We can make this the year in which we meditate more deeply on the Gospels and allow the message to emerge for us and for others. Vincent did.

3. PRAYER

One of Vincent's most famous lines for us is probably: "*Give me a man of prayer, and he will be able to do anything*" (CCD 11, # 67, p. 76). And our Constitutions develops that theme:

"According to the mind of St. Vincent, prayer is the living source of the spiritual life of a missionary; through it he puts on Christ, becomes steeped in the teachings of the gospel, discerns things and events as before God, and remains always in God's love and mercy. In this way the Spirit of Christ will always make our words and actions effective" (Constitutions 41).

Our Constitutions also reminds us of the importance of liturgical prayer in the Eucharist, the sacrament of penance, the liturgy of the hours, and popular devotions — all in keeping with Vincent's own priorities.

Vincent's confidence in the power of prayer flows into eloquence as he exhorts his followers to be men of prayer. One can feel the energy of his words as he calls us to be pray-ers:

"Let us all of us really devote ourselves to this practice of meditation, since through it all good things come to us. If we persevere in our vocation, it is thanks to meditation; if we succeed in our works, it is thanks to meditation; if we do not fall into sin, it is thanks to meditation; if we remain in charity,

if we are saved, all that is thanks to God and to meditation. Just as God refuses nothing in meditation, so he grants almost nothing without meditation: Rogate Dominum messis; no, nothing; not even the spread of his Gospel and what concerns His glory the most. Rogate Dominum messis.... No matter! Rogate Dominum messis. So then, let us ask God very humbly to help us to adopt this practice” (CCD 11, # 168, p. 361).

It is difficult to imagine him speaking any clearer. Prayer and meditation are the means which we use to stay in touch with the Lord and through which God responds to our needs.

The teaching of Vincent about prayer which stands out most forcefully for me, however, is his insistence on the need to be attentive to the presence of God in one’s prayer and meditation. He teaches:

“So now, this is what we have to do; first of all, place ourselves in the presence of God, considering him either as he is in heaven, seated on the throne of his majesty, from where he looks on us and contemplates all things; or in his immensity, present everywhere, here and elsewhere, in the highest heavens and in the lowest part of the abyss, reading our hearts and penetrating even the most secret folds of our conscience; or in his presence in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar: ‘O Savior, here I am, a weak and miserable sinner, here I am at the foot of the altars on which you repose; O Savior may I do nothing unworthy of this holy presence’; or, lastly, within ourselves, pervading us entirely and dwelling in the depth of our hearts” (CCD 11, # 168, p. 359).

It is that awareness of God’s presence which gives power to my understanding of Vincent’s sense of his own sinfulness, of his surrender to Divine Providence, of his recognition of Christ in the poor, of his incarnational thinking. God is with us — in our prayers and people, in our work and words. And this directly impacts Vincent’s sense of priesthood because a priest is nothing if he is not one who can witness to the presence of God in our world and in each other.

And prayer leads to action:

“The Church is compared to a great harvest that requires workers, but hardworking ones. Nothing is more in conformity with the Gospel than to gather light and strength for our soul in meditation, reading and solitude on the one hand, and then to go out and share this spiritual nourishment with others. This is to do as Our Lord did, and his Apostles after him; it is to unite the office of Martha to that of Mary...” (CCD 11, # 25, p. 33).

Calvet says something interesting about the development of Vincent's spirituality. I am not familiar enough with Vincent's writings to pronounce on the conclusion, but it is something which sounds correct:

"From 1620 until 1640 — these are approximate dates — his spirituality has an active orientation, that is, the principles which he took from spiritual writers are turned in a different direction so that instead of leading to a contemplative life they become the basis of an active apostolate; after 1640, while maintaining increasingly remote contact with the authors who form his sources, his teaching takes on the appearance of a spirituality derived from action; its principles are conclusions, the fruit of his experience" (CALVET, p. 277).

What were in Bérulle premises of speculation and contemplation, in Vincent became the springboard for action. "Bérulle loves God in God, Vincent loves God in man." Vincent's experience among the poor in Clichy and Chatillon moved him away from the lofty theology of Bérulle to that more appropriate for the poor. Vincent's was a spirituality bred for action. "Prayer, then, is the source of love and of action; of action through love" (CALVET, pp. 278 and 283).

Vincent has a lot of things to say about prayer. (1) He promotes the practice of "repetition of prayer" because it reflects his appreciation that we can learn from each other on our spiritual journeys. (2) He would insist that "Making good resolutions is one of the most important parts — even the most important part — of meditation" (CCD 11, # 70, p. 79). Thus, meditation and prayer lead to change/action. (3) Vincent was a believer in common prayer. He loved to gather with the confreres. Even when he was sick or returned from a journey or was up late on the previous night, the stories tell us that he was the first one at common prayer in the morning. There is a lesson there.

And so, what can we say of what Vincent teaches us about prayer? Can we make this year one in which we are faithful to the opportunities of common prayer? One in which we take the presence of God seriously in our prayer and celebration? One in which we allow our actions to be informed by our prayer, and our prayer directed by our actions?

4. POOR

And now we come to that towards which all the above tends: the poor. The sacrament of penance, the preaching, the prayer, all of these drive us as Vincentians to the poor who are served by our ministry and to whom we are inextricably bound.

“Two men looked out through prison bars; one saw mud, and one saw stars.” Ordinarily when we hear this saying, it intends to make us think about a person’s point of view: how two people can be looking at the same scene, and one sees only the negative (the mud) while the other sees the positive (the stars). I have thought that a Vincentian might hear it in a different way. One person can look out and be taken up with the transcendent and “spiritual” side of things, and thus exalted, look up and see only the stars. Another can look down and see the reality of the human condition and be attentive to that which is made in the image and likeness of God from the mud of the earth. Vincent looked out and saw the mud and how God chose to come and play with us in the mud. He invites us to that same incarnational perspective.

When I was at Mary Immaculate Seminary before ordination, one of my teachers said something in class which touched me deeply. He said that to be a good priest, one must love the people whom one serves. In one way it sounds like the simplest and most mundane of statements, but it resonated with me on that day and has made me thoughtful on occasion when I consider my own ministry in light of that of Vincent. Vincentians must think of those we serve with respect and with a willingness to overlook faults. [One of the clear stories of the SS portrays the attitude of the Pharisees and Sadducees as disregarding their people — people who know nothing and are damned anyway.] I have found that Vincent taught this attitude of love for those served:

“Our Lord had to predispose with His love those whom He wished to have believe in Him. Do what we will, people will never believe in us if we do not show love and compassion to those whom we wish to believe in us” (CCD 1, # 197, pp. 276-277).

In the last line of the movie “Monsieur Vincent,” our Founder is portrayed as saying something similar to capture the attitude which should influence the service of others: “It is only with your love that the poor will forgive you for giving them bread.” Service should always be carried out with the dignity of others in mind. Again, Vincent is famous for saying *“Let us love God, brothers, let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arms and the sweat of our brow”* (CCD 1, # 25, p. 32).

Vincent believed deeply that:

“God loves the poor, consequently, he loves those who love the poor; for when we truly love someone, we have an affection for his friends and for his servants. Now, the Little Company of the Mission strives to devote itself ardently to serve persons who are poor, the well-beloved of God; in this way, we have good reason to hope that, for love of them, God will love us. Come then, my dear confreres, let us devote ourselves with renewed love to serve persons who are poor, and even to seek out those who are the poorest and most abandoned; let us acknowledge before God that they are our lords and masters and that we are unworthy of rendering them our little services” (CCD 11, # 164, p. 349).

Really, what does it mean to call the poor “our lords and masters”? Does it mean that they exercise jurisdiction over our time and efforts? That they control the way in which they are treated? That they need not be grateful for any care provided to them since we are only their servants? Does it mean that we depend upon them for our well-being? Does it mean that our salvation is intertwined with theirs — like the rich man’s was to Lazarus, or the one who fed (or did not feed others) was bound to the hungry, or the one who did not forgive the debt was bound to that of the debtor? If the poor are indeed our “lords and masters”, then our treatment of them as priests and Vincentians has eternal consequences for us.

Is there any topic about which Vincent speaks more frequently or stirringly or from more different angles than the poor?

“We live on the patrimony of Jesus Christ, on the sweat of poor people. When we go to the refectory, we must always think, ‘Have I earned the food that I am about to eat?’ I have often had this thought which puts me to shame: ‘Wretched man, have you earned the bread you are about to eat, that bread that comes to you from the labor of the poor?’ If we do not earn it like them, at least let us pray for their needs” (CCD 11, # 125, pp. 190-191).

Did anyone speak more honestly or frankly or pointedly about the poor:

“I must not judge a poor peasant man or woman by their appearance or their apparent intelligence, especially since very often they scarcely have the expression or the mind of rational persons, so crude and vulgar they are. But turn the medal, and you will see by the light of faith that the Son of God, who willed to be poor, is represented to us by these poor people.... He describes himself as the Evangelizer of the poor: Evangelizare pauperibus misit me” (CCD 11, # 19, p. 26).

And the experience of poverty was not just something for the other in Vincent's mind. It is good for us also and we are called to embrace it. Vincent writes:

"That is what poverty does; it makes us think of God and to raise our hearts to him, whereas, if we were comfortable, maybe we would forget God. That is why I am overjoyed that voluntary, real poverty is practiced in all our houses" (CCD 11, # 64a, p. 72).

Note how Vincent connects the presence of God with the experience of poverty.

At various times, I have been asked to justify the position of the "preferential option for the poor" as both a teaching of Vincent and a cornerstone of the social teaching of the Church. It seems unfair. Have you thought about why there is a preferential option for the poor? Yes, it is because it was there that Jesus said that he would be found. But why there? What is so bad about finding Jesus among the wealthy or the middle class? It seems to me that the answer is not that Jesus is not found in those places, but rather that among the poor we can find the meeting place of need and service, of receiving and giving, of obedience and purpose. Among the poor is where virtue can find expression. There is a line attributed to Willie Sutton, the famous bank robber. When asked: "Why do you rob banks?" his reply was the evident "because that is where the money is." If we were asked "why do you serve the poor?" our answer might well be "because that is where the need is." Without the poor, there would be no venue for virtue. We should be grateful for the poor and the needy and the helpless, because they put us in touch with that which is greatest and deepest within ourselves. And the fact that they do not always make it easy should add to the gratitude because if service and generosity were great pleasures, everyone would be doing it for their own enjoyment, and thus it would be self-serving.

Reflecting upon our Vincentian call as priests and brothers to serve the poor brings us back to the reflection on the incarnation. It is Christ present among the poor whom we seek and serve, and all our ministries need to have this as a focus. We are called not only to love the poor, but to be grateful to them for providing us with the opportunity to serve God in them. And we identify with them symbolically through our practice of poverty. It is the Vincentian way.

CONCLUSION

How else might we speak of Vincent as priest: as planner — community organizer — and pastor and partner, as one who dealt with people and situations in practical and personal terms, as one who relied upon divine Providence and valued perseverance (stability). We can speak of Vincent as priest in these and lots of other ways.

Clearly, Vincent grew into his priesthood. He had the possibility of being an ordinary priest who simply did what he needed to do to live a comfortable and reasonably faithful life. But he did not. He responded to the grace of God in an extraordinary way and was converted. It was not so much the grace which was extraordinary but his response. The spectacular character of the conversion of St. Paul and the way in which it led to his ministry offers a nice contrast to the conversion of St. Vincent de Paul which happens more gradually, but no less deeply.

In this year when we can celebrate Vincent as priest, we have the opportunity to be changed, to rediscover how we can live faithfully as priests and brothers in following Christ evangelizing the poor. Let us take advantage of it.

“C.M.: Put Out into the Deep” (“Duc in altum”)

Or the Creativity of the Congregation of the Mission
is not Exhausted in Its Mission of Forming the Clergy:
“Ecclesiasticos Adjuvare”

by Luis Vela Marrodán, C.M.

FOCUS

1. *A joyful intuition*

- I do not know who wrote the Pope’s message, but his final words had a noticeable echo in the General Assembly 2004. So much so that at the beginning and end of the final document of the General Assembly the words of the Pope are repeated: “*Duc in altum! Put out into the deep!*” (Lk 5:4). *Do not be afraid to venture forth, to put out the nets for a catch. The Lord himself will be your guide!*
- Even the FEAR of the Congregation of the Mission is an interesting fact that I will mention later.

2. *The discourse of the Pope offers us a FORMULA TO CONTINUE TO LIVE THE FULLNESS*

- This formula leads me to ponder the roman god Janus (the god who had two faces, who looked at the past and the future):
 - ◆ *Do not be afraid to venture forth.....*
 - ◆ *These two aspects* (evangelization of the poor and the formation of clergy) *continue to be central.*
- Boldness in creativity beginning with an unchangeable nucleus: this is the wonderful formula that I see in the message of the Pope: *Responding generously to the needs of the Church in his day, Saint Vincent de Paul placed the evangelization of the poor and the formation of the clergy at the centre of his vision for your Congregation. As you have grown in number and spread throughout the world, your apostolate has naturally taken on many new forms, but these two aspects remain central.*

3. A challenge for the future that WAS NOT STATED, in the final document of the General Assembly of 2004

- Even in the Pope's discourse there were three challenges which during a year and a half, through the initiative of the Preparatory Commission, the whole Congregation had been praising, and these were presented to the General Assembly, with the infinite variety of personal spirituality, geography and psychology of each missionary.
- With the title **HOPEFUL** (a hopeful look at the future) the commission that prepared the final document presents these three challenges to the General Assembly:
 1. **revitalize** our vocation,
 2. **strengthen** our apostolic work,
 3. **renew** our community life.
- And the **FORMATION OF THE CLERGY**:
 - ◆ which was so clearly presented to us in the Pope's message
 - ◆ as something that Saint Vincent PLACED in the CENTER of his vision for the Congregation and as something that continues to occupy a central place in the Congregation of the Mission is hardly mentioned in the final document when it very easily fit into any one of or even all three of the challenges.
- I hear the voice of the Pope as the crying out of the **COLLECTIVE CONSCIENCE** of the Congregation that shakes us and urges us TO TAKE UP ANEW the formation of the clergy as one of the bold CHALLENGES and to impregnate this challenge with the creativity that in the final document fills out the other face of the Congregation of the Mission: the evangelization of the poor.

4. As a sign of my faith in the fact that the creativity of the Congregation of the Mission continues to live as it fulfills the end that was given to it by its founder ("ecclesiásticos adjuvare") I present this study in three parts

1. **Tensions from the time of birth**
2. **Tensions at the present time: change of eras**
3. **Welcome the changes... as long as we do not lose the way**

I will end with a CONCLUSION: Always be missionaries: nothing more, nothing less.

1. TENSIONS FROM THE TIME OF BIRTH

● *Despite the wise foresight of M. Vincent*

- ◆ Our Founder not only made very clear what the only end of the Congregation was and its three inseparable dimension: 1) seek our own perfection, 2) evangelize the poor, 3) assist ecclesiastics (Common Rules 1:1).
- ◆ In the same first chapter of the Common Rules Saint Vincent establishes what are the works that the Congregation of the Mission (composed of clerics and lay members) must be engaged in to fulfill the ONE end which he had just mentioned.
 - He mentions EIGHT tasks (munus):
 1. traveling around through towns and villages (oppida et pagos), as Christ and the disciples did, sharing with them, the little ones, the bread of the divine word, preaching and catechizing;
 2. urging and hearing (suadere et excipere) the general confessions of their entire lives;
 3. settling quarrels and disputes (jurgia et lites);
 4. establishing Confraternities of Charity;
 5. staffing seminaries which have been set up in our houses for diocesan clergy and teaching in these seminaries;
 6. giving retreats;
 7. organizing meetings (apud nos) of priests in our houses;
 8. including any other ministry which is supportive of those mentioned.
 - The laity have only one task: to ASSIST the ecclesiastics in all the ministries mentioned.
- ◆ I believe that the task pointed out in no. 8 to the ecclesiastics encompasses a formula that is meant to prevent conflicts:
 - The Congregation of the Mission can engage in other works (alia munia).
 - That are supportive of and in conformity with (deservientia et coinformia) those mentioned.
 - These other works should be done in passing (obire), that is, we should not install ourselves in these works as though dealing with something that is substantial for the Congregation. N.B. I believe that here there is a light that can heal the obsessive-compulsive need of the Congregation with regard to DIRECT SERVICE of the poor.

- ◆ There still exists a way to resolve the tensions in the community, a way that was contemplated by Saint Vincent.
 - Here we are dealing with the PERMISSION OF THE SUPERIOR.
 - Not even the eight tasks mentioned in the Common Rules 1:2, for example the third task, settling disputes and quarrels, none of these can be done without the permission of the superior “so that charity is well ordered through obedience.”
- ***An explicit tension and a pragmatic solution***
- ◆ Despite so many cautions, the tension was present and Saint Vincent addresses this in the Common rules 11:12:
 - ministries toward ecclesiastics...
 - or missions.
- ◆ By the language of no. 12 it seems that the MISSIONS are BEING JOINED to the other domestic ministries.
- ◆ The Founder is uncompromising in putting things in their place: *Confreres, individually and collectively (omnes et singuli) are to understand that the plea of missions should not mean neglect (negligi) of the ministry to clergy.*
 - He settles the question citing the wisdom of the millennium: “Haec oportet facere et illa non omittere” (it is necessary to do this without omitting that).
 - If someone has a hidden resentment (perhaps he himself is unconscious of this) he adds: *Though our preference is for missions, giving them should not mean omitting (fere aequaliter) our work for the clergy.*
- ◆ Is it sound thinking when there is an obvious negligence with regard to the formation of the clergy in the final document of the General Assembly of 2004, and the absence of the phrase “haec oportet facer et illa non omittere”?

2. TENSIONS AT THE PRESENT TIME: CHANGE OF ERAS

● ***An impressive and bold CREATIVITY***

- ◆ The final document of the General Assembly of 2004 is impressive and bold in its creativity when confronting the challenge of being “evangelizers of the poor”:

- for example, to engage in the mission together with the Vincentian Family, to accept a new style of community life in function of the mission and to do this with the laity.
- What is placed before us as questions could pass, I believe, as a beautiful utopia.
- ◆ But the challenge of **FORMATION OF THE CLERGY** is almost absent. In the document it seems to me as though it is a tourist lost on a strange road.
- ◆ Really,
 - Was the creativity of the Congregation of the Mission exhausted when it assumed the challenge of the evangelization of the poor and therefore there was no creativity left for anything else?
 - In reality, has the Church no need for us in our mission as formators of the clergy?
 - Or is it that we ourselves do not believe in the words that the Pope reminded us about: *Saint Vincent de Paul placed the evangelization of the poor and the formation of the clergy at the centre of his vision for your Congregation?*
 - Why does the Congregation refuse to look directly at this part of its history and life and its very reason for existing in the Church?
 - Is it so difficult for the Congregation to project into the twentieth century that which it did at the time of its birth, for example, offer its houses and its missionaries to the diocesan clergy in order to assist the local church in their need, even if this is simply a fraternal acceptance in critical moments, moments that so frequently are experienced by the diocesan priests today?
 - Is it impossible for a province or a region to create an organization of assistance to the diocesan clergy, to offer this assistance to the bishops of a nation or region, with ourselves accepting financial responsibility for such projects as we are doing for example with the international missions?
 - What has happened to the Congregation of the Mission and this legacy of its founder to form the clergy?
- ***Do not be AFRAID***
- ◆ The fear of the Congregation of the Mission, which is referred to in the Pope's discourse has not come about by some mysterious chance.

- ◆ Rather we are dealing with a real fear that is within us.
 - But, what is our FEAR?
 - What is the root of this fear within us that the Pope himself asks us not to live in function of this fear but rather to take risks despite the fear?
 - Is it so risky for the Congregation of the Mission to create NEW FORMS of assisting the clergy, without leaving aside the traditional forms of ministering in diocesan seminaries, as we have done since the time of our foundation?
 - Are we afraid of our own lack of preparation in attempting something new in the Congregation of the Mission?
 - But are we so lacking in such a specialized formation, for example, preaching retreats to the clergy, that we cannot even assume to take on this work?
 - Or has the self-esteem of the group become so diminished that we begin to think that the Church does not need us in the area of formation of the clergy?
 - Is it more risky to create new ways of helping the clergy than to carry out our ministry of evangelizing the poor?
 - Or are we afraid to fail believing that to preach to priests, hear confessions of women religions, etc. is an impossible mission?
 - Or are we only attracted by that which will give us a good image in the present world, for example, living in function of the poor, “adore the poor as if they were a god, as the in-thing in the first world?”
- ◆ In any case there is a reason why, at the same time, we have looked for a catharsis of our fear and the Papal “excorism,” duc in altum.

3. WELCOME THE CHANGES... AS LONG AS WE DO NOT LOSE THE WAY

- *Renew yourself or die*
- ◆ At Vatican II the Catholic Church became aware of this primary law of evolution that applies to all living things... from this reality the strength of renewal was derived and for us was crystallized in the new Constitutions of 1980, a renewal that continues to the present time.
- ◆ The final document of the 2004 General Assembly has taken up the invitation to continue the process of renewal, without which life cannot continue. For example:

- In the third section of the final document (“A hopeful look toward the future”), number 2 (“Strengthen our apostolic work”), it is stated: *Faithful to our vocation we are called to use the criteria set down in our Constitution 2 and 12 to review our existing works, to begin new ones, to leave those not in accord with the above criteria and to give new vigor to our present ones.*
 - In the same section, number 3 (“Renew our community life”) this will be concretized by CLAPVI in the following way: *Develop a sense of identification, of belonging and of commitment to the Vincentian ideal in our communities.*
 - In the conclusion of the final document it is stated: *The challenges in this document, framed in faithfulness to our charism are put forward by the General Assembly to be made more concrete in the provinces, vice-provinces and local communities. There are many who have lived that charism fully; their witness spurs us on to the task that lies ahead.*
- ◆ I have highlighted a detail in each of the above references that I will now comment on:
- It is stated that we will initiate other works using as our criteria no. 2 and 12 of our Constitutions
 - From the time that the Constitutions of 1980 removed formation of the clergy from the ends of the Congregation of the Mission (where they had been placed by Saint Vincent), the future of this ministry is ambiguous in the Constitutions.
 - In fact neither no. 2 nor no. 12 of the Constitutions expressly mentions the formation of the clergy... and that is a problem... but formation of the clergy is not excluded... and no. 2 if read with a certain benevolence, could seem then to include formation of the clergy.
 - But if the Congregation of the Mission refuses to initiate new works that involve the formation of the clergy.... I believe that the Congregation would be distancing itself from its reason to exist as established by Saint Vincent. This I believe.
 - I highlight fidelity to the Vincentian ideal or fidelity to our charism
 - Do these words include renewal with regard to the formation of the clergy... or are these empty words... fidelity to the Vincentian ideal and fidelity to our charism.
 - Let us not forget the words of the Pope: *Saint Vincent de Paul places the evangelization of the poor and the formation of the clergy at the center of his vision for your Congregation.*

- ***The CREATIVITY of the Congregation of the Mission, in its mission of “formation of the clergy” IS NOT EXHAUSTED***
- ◆ Some time ago I wrote of study for the students of the Province of Venezuela with the following focus: What future option does the Province of Venezuela want to take with regard to the formation of the clergy?
- ◆ The key statement is this: “The diocesan clergy of Venezuela suffer a special form of psycho-spiritual poverty which the sons of Vincent de Paul, who have committed their lives to the evangelization of the poor, cannot ignore
- ◆ Obviously we are not attempting to describe an epidemic which involves every member of the clergy in the country. This psycho-spiritual poverty in the clergy of Venezuela can be summed up in these six matrices:
 1. intellectual poverty;
 2. the poverty of toxic loneliness;
 3. a poor contemplative dimension;
 4. the poverty of boredom;
 5. the poverty of guilt;
 6. the poverty of interior brokenness.
- ◆ In the same study it was seen that the Province of Venezuela was in a situation in which it could offer (at least for a while) assistance to the clergy who experience the poverty described above:
 1. offer directed retreats in some of our houses;
 2. offer hospitality;
 3. offer spiritual assistance;
 4. offer the use of our libraries, reading rooms, internet and offer at the same time the guidance of one of the missionaries in these different areas;
 5. offer missionaries, especially those who are prepared, to provide retreats, cursillos, workshops, conferences, etc, thus providing a type of formation;
 6. offer formal psychotherapy.
- ◆ In supporting this project our students involved in this study mentioned no. 13 of our Constitutions. There it is stated that
 - the PROVINCES must decide the forms of apostolate that they will assume and
 - it is the provinces, and not necessarily the whole Congregation, that will decide whether a form of providing formation for the clergy is adequate or not for a particular province.

- ◆ It continues to be curious that the final document of the General Assembly of 2004 DOES NOT MAKE REFERENCE to no. 13 of our Constitutions when presenting CRITERIA to review our existing works, to begin new ones, to leave those works not in accord with the criteria and to give new vigor to our present ones.
- ◆ It is clear to me that the CREATIVITY of the Congregation of the Mission with regard to renewing its ministry of formation of the clergy is not exhausted and even less so in the scheme that is presented to us in the Final Document of the 2004 General Assembly.
 - As I remember, this document concludes by mentioning these very precise details: *The challenges in this document, framed in faithfulness to our charism, are put forward by the General Assembly to be made more concrete in provinces, vice-provinces and local communities.*
 - I believe that, at the very least, we are faced with a recommendation in which creativity **has not been exhausted**. Rather there is an **urgency** to continue to be creative in the provinces and the local communities in all of that which pertains to the ministry of formation of the clergy which by nature and the expressed will of Saint Vincent belongs to us as part of our mission.

CONCLUSION: TO ALWAYS BE MISSIONARIES, NOTHING MORE, NOTHING LESS

1. *“What the legislator wanted to say, he said” (“quidquid legislator voluit dicere, dixit”) is a fundamental principle of law*
- When we read in an official document of the Congregation of the Mission, such as the final document of the General Assembly of 2004: FAITHFUL to our vocation WE are CALLED to develop in our ministry new ways to INTEGRATE the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the Sacraments with the DIRECT service of the poor;
 - ◆ Something within me protests and cries out: “Saint Vincent is not here”.
 - ◆ Yes, I see Saint Vincent in his demand as stated in the Common Rules (1,2) which I mentioned before: *Their work also includes any other ministry which is supportive of those mentioned.*
 - ◆ But that WE are all CALLED to INTEGRATE the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments with DIRECT

service to the poor... and this is a sign of fidelity to our vocation.

- This is not only something that Vincent did not think but in fact
 - I believe the Saint would be scandalized with such a proposal: How could it enter Saint Vincent's mind that the general confession that he heard or the sacramental absolution that he gave so that an individual would not be condemned was a service to the poor but not a DIRECT SERVICE.
- If Saint Vincent had wanted the Congregation of the Mission to be a masculine branch of the Daughters of Charity he would have stated this clearly to us in the Common Rules, a work that matured, a work that went on for thirty-three years because the importance of this work demanded such time.

2. **COMMERCIALISM in conscience**

- E. Fromm states (Ethics and Psychoanalysis) that the great disgrace of our culture is:
 - ◆ "where there is no demand there is no value" as proclaimed by commercialism in the world of buying and selling.
 - ◆ with this interjection in the conscience we have destroyed all the ethical values of our world, for example, if truthfulness has no demand then it is so because it has no value, if justice has no demand then it is so because it has no value, if fidelity has no demand then it is so because it has no value, if the human person has no demand then it is so because it has no value.
 - ◆ The great concern of the final document, which I comment on in another study, is to make our values more credible but
 - ◆ If the proclamation of the word and the celebration of the sacraments ARE NOT a DIRECT service to the poor, does this not mean that there is a noticeable disbelief, on our part, in these missionary values.
- John 20:21 is a good summary of the whole theology of the MISSION that appears in the gospel: *As the Father has sent me, so I sent you.*
- Saint Thomas offers us the same reality but with more pronounced matrices: *Contemplate the divine things and give to all other things that which is contemplated* ("divina contemplari et

contemplata allis tradere”). This is a synthesis of the whole mission of the Church.

- The great disgrace for the people of Israel was the lack of priests and prophets, but we recite the prophets and the psalms most frequently.

- What does this people need?

Is lack of health more important (more acute) than a lack of purpose in life?

Is providing food to those who are hungry a more **direct** service than administering the sacraments of Baptism, Eucharist, the Anointing of the Sick, proclaiming the Word of God?

Is having good priests not so much an issue as having good sanitary assistance?

What would Saint Vincent say?

What has happened to the Congregation of the Mission that it has such serious doubts about this, that it has almost forgotten that it is part of the Church to form the clergy?

Translation: CHARLES T. PLOCK, C.M.

STUDY

VINCENTIANA 1957-2009

by Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.

At the request of the Superior General, in a letter dated March 12, 2009, Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M., presented at Tempo Forte of the 22-26 June 2009 the following study, prepared from a review of the extant material in the VINCENTIANA storeroom in the General Curia in Rome.

The Council has asked Julio to include this documented report in one of the issues of VINCENTIANA because of its interest and historical value (cf. Circular Letter of the Superior General, 9 July 2009).

I. EVOLUTION OF VINCENTIANA

VINCENTIANA was born with the purpose of being a means of transmitting news of the Congregation to all the provinces. It responds to a desire of the 1955 General Assembly in the Decree: *“Conficiatur Commentarium Congregationis latine exaratum, in quo edantur documenta et artículos de disciplina nostra, de historia et de ministeriis Congregationis nostrae, de vita spirituali et his similibus”* (Sessio VII, *Conventus Generalis XXXII*, 30 Junii - 14 Julii, 1955).

**1st Stage: 1957-1958 - Rome, Leonine College
Fr. Annibale Bugnini**

In January of 1957, Fr. A. Bugnini, from the Leonine College, begins the publication of *VINCENTIANA* which was subtitled simply "Nuntia Congregationis Missionis." In the following issue, February 1957, a letter from Fr. Slattery to Fr. Bugnini is included affirming that the publication responds to the wish of the last General Assembly; in the letter he wishes *VINCENTIANA* success and asks for collaborators for the new undertaking.

From the year 1957 we have 9 volumes¹ distributed thusly: 1 volume for every month from January to June (6 volumes); 1 volume from August marked as no. 7, and which continues the numeration from vol. 6 (which means there was no publication in July). There is a volume corresponding to October, marked as numbers 9-10, but following the numeration of vol. 7 (which means no. 8 does not exist), and a volume from December marked as vols. 11-12. Thus a total of 9 volumes containing 12 issues or their equivalents.

The magazine is arranged in three more or less defined sections. There is an Official part, which appeared with that name only in the volume of May 1957 and which contains communications from the Holy See; a second part which contains news of the General Curia, and another third part which contains news of the provinces, generally grouped by continents.

It seems that the wish of the General Assembly of 1955 was to have a means of communication less voluminous than *Annales* of the Mother House in Paris, with a crisper style, which would reach the confreres with greater frequency than the traditional annual communication of news attached as a second part to the Superior General's letter at the beginning of the year.

The volumes appeared without binding in the same format as today's *VINCENTIANA*, and contained about 10 pages each without regard to the issues included.

Three volumes with these same characteristics appeared in 1958 corresponding to the months of January, February and March, and marked as issues 1, 2 and 3 corresponding to volumes 10, 11, and 12.

It is worth noting that at the end of 1957 a four page index appeared referring to the 156 pages published that year — a sure sign that *VINCENTIANA* was considered as an archive easily accessible to all the houses.

¹We give the name "volume" to a group of pages stapled together, even without a binding, in which one or several issues of the new publication are included.

2nd Stage: 1958-1963 - Paris, Mother House - Fr. Jean Gonthier

Volume 13 of VINCENTIANA appears with numbers 4, 5, 6 and 7 and has 16 pages. Without doubt it was printed in June of 1958 with the intention of covering the period up to August because it announces as upcoming the anniversaries to be celebrated in July and August. This volume marks the beginning of a new stage of VINCENTIANA and has some noteworthy characteristics:

1. A letter from Fr. Slattery explains the lateness in the publication of VINCENTIANA due to the change of its director. Fr. Jean Gonthier, who resides in the Mother House in Paris, will take the place of Fr. Bugnini who, because of his many commitments, has offered his resignation to Fr. Slattery.
2. VINCENTIANA will no longer come from the Leonine in Rome, but rather from the Mother House in Paris.
3. The sub-title of VINCENTIANA will no longer be "Nuntia Congregationis Missionis," but "Commentarium Congregationis Missionis", more in conformity with the aforementioned Decree of the General Assembly.
4. The magazine has two parts: the Official Part which takes in the Documents of the Holy See referring to the C.M. and the decisions of the Curia of the Congregation; and an Unofficial Part, so named for the first time in this volume 13, which contains news of the provinces, of some books written by the missionaries, and asks that books written in the future be sent to the Mother House so as to form a Library of Our Own Confreres. It is the first step taken by VINCENTIANA towards having a section on Studies.
5. The number of pages is increased to 16. Some pages have photographs of houses and some distinguished missionaries, but the number of pages remains at 16.
6. Starting with volume 14 of 1958, the titles of all the news articles published in the previous stage (vols. 1-12) are printed on the backs of the covers which are now in a different color paper from the interior pages.
7. The year 1958 ends with one more volume, no. 15. It is the third volume published from Paris which, with the three already published by Fr. Bugnini from Rome, makes a total of 6 volumes for 1958.
8. In volume 17, the second of 1959, a Section called Vincentian Studies is inaugurated. It is a very brief section with, at the most, one or two two-page articles on topics such as the place which

the Missionaries and the Daughters of Charity occupy in the church or whether we should be called Vincentians or Vincencians. But starting with this vol. 17 the magazine will now have three sections: Acta Vincentiana which includes documents of the Holy See and the General Curia, Vincentian Studies and Nuntia Vincentiana. In this volume the name of the Director: J. GONTHIER appears for the first time on the back cover.

9. Starting with vol. 16 the Commentarium, which is VINCENTIANA, begins to call itself a "monthly." But it is difficult to understand what the Director means by that designation. In 1959, 7 volumes are published, from 16 to 22, which does not correspond to monthly issues. More or less the same thing happens in the following years.
10. For the Tercentenary Year of the death of St. Vincent and St. Louise, VINCENTIANA gets much fancier. Volumes 21 and 22, still in 1959, and volumes 23-28 in 1960 have full color covers and images related to the founders. The number of pages of each volume increases slightly, due more to the included photographs than to the text, even though the Studies section, reduced to one article, is sometimes a little longer. In the course of 1960, 6 volumes are published which, with the two from the previous year, with full color covers, make a total of 8 volumes which recall the Tercentenary Year.
11. With identical characteristics, but without the full color covers and with a slightly thicker cover, volumes 29-39 are issued — a total of 11 covering the years 1961-1962. With no. 36 from the year 1962, Commentarium stops calling itself a monthly. And so ends the period of Fr. Gonthier who in six years filled 560 pages.

3rd Stage: 1964-1973 - Rome, General Curia in the Leonine Fr. Angelo Coppo

It is now Fr. A. Coppo's time and it includes from the first number of 1964 to numbers 4 and 5 of 1973 when Fr. Emilio Cid takes over. This period is distinguished as follows:

1. VINCENTIANA is once again published in Rome, in the General Curia, located at that time in the Leonine College, 21 Via Pompeo Magno.
2. VINCENTIANA is issued bi-monthly on a regular basis, as its cover indicates. The covers are now made of heavier white cardboard as will continue to be the case until 1994 when the

color of the cover is changed. It is only from 1998 onward that a full color photograph will grace the cover. Each volume will normally contain some 30 pages, making a total of 170 to 180 pages a year.

3. The first number, January-February 1964, is dedicated to the 33rd General Assembly. The only novelty is the greater number of photographs due, no doubt, to the audience Pope Paul VI granted to the members of the Assembly, and which raises the number of pages to 44.
4. Up until 1967 the Annual Letter of the Superior General was included as an issue, with the two traditional parts: the first, doctrinal-exhortative and the second with news about the situation of the Congregation in the different provinces.
5. It should be pointed out that the news section is notably expanded, written by correspondents from the same place as the news and almost always in their own language, leaving Latin, the language in which VINCENTIANA was born, for official communications.
6. The growth of the news section has a price — the suppression of the small section on studies that appeared in earlier times. It is certainly true that at this time important official communications were issued, as much from the church as from the Congregation, which generally found their way into VINCENTIANA. It was the time of the final session of the Council and of the General Assembly of 1968-1969. VINCENTIANA takes shape at this time, above all as an archive of official documents and as a news bulletin about the Congregation in the different provinces, usually written in the language of the correspondent who sent the news.
7. Fr. Angelo Coppo dies in Rome on August 9, 1973.

4th Stage: 1973-1979 - Fr. Emilio Cid († February 14, 1980)

From the 6th issue of 1973 Fr. Giuseppe Tamagnone acts as interim director; and only in the final issue of 1974 is it stated that *everything referring to the edition and administration of VINCENTIANA should be directed to Emilio Cid who has the job of editor-in-chief.*

Already in issues 4 and 5 of 1973 Fr. Emilio Cid introduced himself, saying that *as yet he has no formal plan, but rather a few very rudimentary ideas to orient myself in my new job.* These “rudimentary” ideas can be classified as follows:

1. Fr. Cid begins by asking that Provincial newsletters be sent to him, saying he is willing to publicize the news items that seem to have the greatest interest for the whole Vincentian family. Once again, the informative character of *VINCENTIANA* is emphasized.
2. He seeks to place the official information in a minimum of space. The magazine may contain official documents of the Curia, documents of the Holy See of special interest to us, assignments, the necrology with notes on the missionaries who die. Other documents of the Holy See can better be found in publications specializing in that information.
3. The major part will be dedicated to information and internal dialogue as well as Vincentian studies. The Superior General, says Fr. Cid, wants the magazine to be, besides being an organ for official information, an instrument for dialogue and reflection for the whole Congregation. *I hope that any confrere from any part of the world and any mentality may feel free to express his points of view in the pages of VINCENTIANA.*
4. The issues which Fr. Cid directed follow this route. Already in the first volume, nos. 4-5 of 1973, the whole thing revolves around the problem of vocations and the formation of our own. It can be considered a foretaste of the later practice of grouping the major part of the collaborations into dossiers. But equally important, Fr. Cid remains faithful to his concern about dialogue and about everyone's participation in the news that *VINCENTIANA* circulates. Thus, in this volume we find information about how the formation is going in many of our provinces.
5. Continuing his concern for dialogue and the interchange of opinions, in the second issue Fr. Cid poses a challenging question to the ten members of the Preparatory Commission for the 1980 General Assembly: In your opinion, what are the five most important problems that the Congregation faces today? Eight of the ten Commission members responded and their responses appeared in an organized form. Fr. Cid closes with this reflection: *Our problem is not one of principles, which we all know; we all need a personal conversion. We can all contribute to the creation of a new Vincentian spirit. We urgently need to resolve the problem of vocations so as not to break our continuity. We need programs of action and the means to carry them out.*
6. In the following issues this method is applied to different topics: communication in the C.M. (no. 3, 1974), the evaluation of the Declarations of the General Assembly, the revision of the Provinces (which covers several issues), popular missions

- (no. 5, 1975 and nos. 1-2, 1976). Translations are not a problem. Each one writes in the language he knows. A few times, short summaries are included in other languages, including Latin. At other times the titles are in Latin or one of the vernacular languages and the body of the article in another language.
7. The archival function of the magazine obliged Fr. Cid to dedicate the final issues of 1974 to the General Assembly and its documents: no. 4 to the labors of the Preparatory Commission; no. 5 to the Declarations of the 1974 General Assembly; the text of the Constitutions and Statutes approved by the 1968 Assembly and revised by the 1974 Assembly; the Common Rules of the C.M.; no. 6 to the Chronicle and commentaries of the 1974 Assembly. As an interesting note, the back cover of no. 5 (Declarations, Constitutions and Common Rules) states: *2,000 copies of this issue were printed, of which 1,000 remain in the VINCENTIANA storeroom for those missionaries who wish to buy them at 1,500 lira each.*
 8. In general terms we can say that in this stage the concern for reflection and dialogue grew. The participation did not always respond to the Director's scheduling. I cannot resist copying this commentary of Fr. José Oriol Baylac, Fr. Cid's successor. A few days before Fr. Cid's death, the two were talking about a notebook Fr. Cid had written for his successor. Fr. Baylac assures us he was listening intently: *Get in into your head that VINCENTIANA is not a bulletin for supplying recent news, but rather one for leaving a record of the official news of the Congregation and of those news items of a general character that might stimulate the confreres. There are other channels for finding out things quickly: circular letters, provincial newsletter of different kinds....* But how about the correspondents, I asked. *God help you. When I first got here, I asked around. According to the answers I received from the provinces, everything would be just fine. The reality was quite different. You will have to get other resources. And the lead articles? Be very careful about those. It will take a lot of work to get the ones you want, if you get them. And there will no shortage of unpublishable articles. You are going to find yourself in some uncomfortable situations.*
 9. The magazine has now reached 100 pages in length for ordinary issues and the number will not become shorter.

5th Stage: 1980-1989 - Fr. José Oriol Baylac

Fr. Cid died on February 14, 1980. Fr. José Oriol Baylac, a Catalan from the Province of Peru, succeeds him in the first issue of that year. Fr. Baylac will bear the responsibility for *VINCENTIANA* for nine years, a period characterized by:

1. Greater attention to and extension of news items coming from the provinces, written in the language of their author
2. A large number of tables and statistical studies, usually the work of Fr. Baylac himself, on the different duties of the General Curia, on the Visitors, on the C.M., on ministries, etc.
3. In 1982 only three volumes of two issues each are published. One of these volumes is the index of volumes XVIII to XXIV. The total number of pages published that year was 288. In the following years, the events of the C.M. will provide sufficient material.
4. In the face of an apparent lack of studious articles in the ordinary issues, special issues dedicated to official documents, study months and important events in the Congregation stand out. The Colloquium on the Christ of St. Vincent organized by SIEV in 1986 and two of the Vincentian months prepared by SIEV belong to this period. In the same way the *Ratio Formationis* for the Internal Seminary was published. The General Assembly of 1986, with its Work Documents, realization and documents, as well as the 350th anniversary of the Foundation of the Daughters of Charity provided material for other valuable issues.
5. In the Studies section of the first issue of *VINCENTIANA* for 1988, its director Fr. José Oriol Baylac, C.M., publishes an article titled "VINCENTIANA celebrates 31 years at the service of the C.M." The article relates in minute detail the situation prior to the birth of *VINCENTIANA*. It meticulously describes the changes there have been in its history up until 1988 and recognizes the work of the five directors up until that time, with special attention to his own time in that office and that of Fr. Cid whom he knew personally. This can be read to confirm and complement what is written here.
6. The index of *VINCENTIANA* published by Fr. John de los Rios in 1993 covering the years 1981 to 1990, almost coincidental with Fr. Baylac's term as Director, offers a good systematization of the studies and documents published at that time, and constitutes a considerable corpus of Vincentian doctrine. No less than 300 articles from the Studies section are listed in the above cited index.

7. In this period comes the birth of NUNTIA as a newsletter. In a letter to the Visitors dated February 11, 1982, the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, the Superior General, Fr. McCullen presents NUNTIA as an informal newsletter he hopes to be able to send to the Visitors a few times a year, asking each Visitor to make copies for all the communities of his Province. It is a way of distributing news that Fr. McCullen says he takes from St. Vincent himself. In his letters to some missionaries Vincent used to include news he had received from others, and so tried to get the whole Congregation interested in everyone's work.
8. Today, NUNTIA, *The Newsletter of the General Curia of the C.M.*, is sent out every month, and since 2006 only by e-mail, to all the provinces and vice-provinces, as well as to all the members of the General Curia and to interested parties who ask for it personally. It is published by the Curia, from its inception, in the three official languages. But we know that today, in some provinces, NUNTIA is translated into the language of the missionaries of the province, such as Italian, Polish, Slovak.... Since May of 2007 it can also be found in the three languages at <http://cmglobal.org>

6th Stage: 1989-1994 - Fr. John de los Ríos

Fr. John de los Rios begins his term on August 11, 1989 and finishes in 1994 with the publication of the indexes for the years 1981-1990. In the presentation of these indexes, the *raison d'être* for the magazine that informed Fr. De los Rios' period as Director becomes clear.

1. As a magazine more for archival purposes than for general reading, *because it has some internal conditions, he says, that do not permit it to be issued when other newsletters or magazines have come out first with the news, it needs very complete indexes of its contents.*
2. In the indexes, he goes on, *perhaps what least interests are the assignments and confirmations, which, in any case, can be found in the catalogues and other archives of the Curia. For this reason I have not acceded to Fr. Baylac's suggestion of working above all on the names of the confreres, working from the conviction that these data are incomplete and needless besides.*
3. And so, according to his testimony, he organized the indexes according to the Sections already familiar to readers of the magazine: *Acta Sancta Sedis, Studia, Spiritualitas, Vitae Congregationis, In Memoriam, Bibliographica*, with the modifications that the task of indexing require.

7th Stage: 1994 - Transition - Fr. Emeric Amyot D'Inville

The first volume of 1994, a double issue of 104 pages, opens with a thank you note to Fr. John de los Rios, signed by the Editorial Staff, the same one that had assisted him in his work, and now, presided over by Fr. Emeric Amyot D'Inville, the Secretary General. He commits himself to *“following the invitation of the Superior General and his council, continue the Section of VINCENTIANA, in the official part of Documents and that of Studies and News items of the greatest international interest.”*

1. VINCENTIANA, he goes on to say, is published in alternate months. This year only four volumes are published, two of them double issues, with a total of 480 pages. The color of the cardboard covering written pages changes; it will no longer be white.
2. The classification of the work follows the already well established pattern used by Fr. John de los Rios in the 1981-1990 index: Curia, Statistics, Studies, Spirituality, Life of the Congregation, In Memoriam, Bibliography.
3. The articles appear in the language in which they were originally written.
4. Starting with no. 2 of this year, 1994, VINCENTIANA, which was formerly printed in Arti Grafiche Filli Palombi, Roma, Via dei Gracchi 183, begins to be printed in Tipografia Ugo Detti, Roma, Via Girolamo Savonarola 1. The magazine is still printed there today.
5. From 1990, when Fr. John de los Rios' index ends, up to the moment in which VINCENTIANA is published in three languages, 59 articles are published on topics referring to the history, life and mission of the Congregation. The following special issues also date from this period:
 - 5.1. XXXVIII General Assembly 1992 (4-5/1992).
 - 5.2. Vincentian Month 1993: “Nouvelle Evangelisation, Hommes Nouveaux, Communautés Renouvelles” (4-5/1993).
 - 5.3. The Document from the General Council “Brothers for the Mission” (2/1991).

8th Stage: 1995-2009 - VINCENTIANA, Bi-monthly in three languages

1. In the first issue of VINCENTIANA in 1995 a Prologue appears signed by the Director, Fr. Amyot D'Inville, in which we can highlight the following:

- 1.1. By being tri-lingual the magazine aims at directly reaching 70% of the missionaries. Practical difficulties which were deemed impossible to overcome, especially rising costs, have prevented increasing the number of languages. It is noted that if an article arrives written in a language different from the three official ones, a copy of it will be included in the issues of the magazine sent to the countries that speak that language. It is not clear whether this was actually done. It does seem strange that an author, an Italian for example, has to read his article in VINCENTIANA, translated into a language that is not his own.
 - 1.2. There is an expressed aim to produce content *“closer to the life of the Congregation,” “an intellectual and spiritual nourishment that may be really useful to the confreres.”* But the only novelty we find in the sections, which are almost identical to the ones the readers already know, is the one referring to the “dossier” (notebook) — *“that is, an important matter for our life and mission which will be approached under different aspects in various articles.”*
 - 1.3. The editorial board of the magazine continues to be made up of three missionaries from the Curia: the Director, P. Amyot D’Inville; the Secretary General, Fr. Ignacio Fernandez H. de Mendoza and Fr. Thomas Davitt, the Curial Archivist. About Fr. Davitt it is said that *“he gives the magazine its orientation, decides which articles should be asked for, or the publication of those which arrive to the Curia directly and those which are to be translated.”* He is the de facto executive director.
2. During the fourteen years of tri-lingualism five directors have passed in review: Amyot D’Inville (Thomas Davitt) (1995-1999); José Ma. Nieto Varas (1999-2000); Orlando Escobar (2001-2004); Alfredo Becerra (2005-2006); Julio Suescum (2007-2009). Bearing in mind that in the 38 previous years there had been only six directors, it turns out that in the tri-lingual era, the directors last for less than half the time, an average of 3 years as opposed to the 6.3 years of the previous era.
 3. The titles of the “dossiers” reflect a wide range of the history, life and action of the Congregation of the Mission.

1995-1999:

- 01. The C.M. in the hour of the African Synod (1/1995)
- 02. The C.M. in the formerly Communist European countries (2/1995)

- 03. The C.M. and Islam (3/1995)
- 04. Vincentian Laity (4-5/1995)
- 05. Serving the Poor Spiritually and Corporally (6/1995)
- 06. John Gabriel Perboyre (2/1996)
- 07. The Mission “Ad Gentes” (3/1996)
- 08. The Canonization of John Gabriel Perboyre (6/1996)
- 09. Formators of the Clergy (1/1997)
- 10. The Formation of our Own (2/1997)
- 11. Frederick Ozanam (3/1997)
- 12. The Beatification of Frederick Ozanam (6/1997)
- 13. Echoes of the Vincentian Family (1/1998)
- 14. Six Common Projects of the Vincentian Family (1/1998)
- 15. Mission in Latin America (3/1998)
- 16. Vincentian Perspectives in Asia (6/1998)
- 17. The Martyrs of the Vincentian Family in the 20th Century (1/1999)

1999-2000:

- 18. Associating Groups and Persons with the Congregation (1/1999)
- 19. The Challenges issued by the 1998 General Assembly (2/1999)
- 20. The Great Jubilee of 2000 (3/1999)
- 21. Evangelizing Europe (1/2000)
- 22. The Challenge of Formation (2/2000)
- 23. St. Vincent, Priest (3/2000)
- 24. St. Justin de Jacobis (4/2000)

2001-2004:

- 25. St. Francis Regis Clet (1/2001)
- 26. The C.M. in the United States (3/2001)
- 27. The Bishop, Servant of the Gospel of Jesus Christ for the Hope of the World (6/2001)
- 28. Experiences of Charism of the C.M. Today (2/2002)
- 29. Visitors’ Meeting: Animation of Local Communities (3/2002)
- 30. John Gabriel Perboyre (5/2002)
- 31. Meeting of Provincial Treasurers (1/2003)
- 32. Blessed Marco Antonio Durando (2/2003)
- 33. The Visitors’ Conferences of the C.M. (3/2003)
- 34. Vincentian Shrines and Mission (4/2003)

- 35. Guillaume Pouget (1/2004)
- 36. Experiences of the Apostolate among the Poor (2/2004)
- 37. "New Missions" of the C.M. (3/2004)
- 38. Some "lesser known" confreres (I) (6/2004)

2005-2006:

- 39. A Vincentian Reflection on the Eucharist (1/2005)
- 40. Ongoing Vincentian Formation (2/2005)
- 41. Echoes of the General Assembly of 2004 (3/2005)
- 42. The Five Vincentian Virtues (4-6/2005)
- 43. The Encyclical Letter "Deus Caritas Est" and the Vincentian Charism (1-2/2006)
- 44. Directory for the Provincial Director of the Daughters of Charity (3/2006)
- 45. The Vincentian Family (II) (4/2004)
- 46. Some less known Confreres (II) (5/2006)

2007-2008:

- 47. Supporting the Fidelity of the Missionaries on every Occasion (1-2/2007)
- 48. The Ongoing Formation of the Missionary Today (Mexico 2007) (3/2007)
- 49. Inculturation of the Vincentian Charism in the World (4/2007)
- 50. The Vincentian Missions (5/2007)
- 51. The Great Vincentian Family (6/2007)
- 52. Vincentian Solidarity (1-2/2008)
- 53. The Persistence of the Common Rules (3/2008)
- 54. Political Charity (4/2008)
- 55. Social Doctrine (5/2009)
- 56. The Fruits of the Mission (6/2008)

2009:

- 57. SIEV Colloquium (For Young Vincentian Researchers) (1-2/2009)
- 58. Paul of Tarsus-Vincent de Paul in the 2000th Anniversary of the Birth of St. Paul (3/2009)
- 59. Authority and Obedience (4/2009)
- 60. Vincent de Paul – Louise de Marillac, 350th Anniversary of their Deaths (5/2009)
- 61. The Association of the Miraculous Medal, Centenary of its Pontifical Approbation (6/2009)

4. In this period (1995-2009), more than 50 studies referring to the life, spirituality and mission of the C.M. have been published apart from the dossier of the corresponding issue. Fr. Amyor D'Inville published in a supplement to no. 6 of 1998 the General Index of the years 1991-1998. Beginning in 1999 the General Index of the year is published in the final issue of each year.
5. Also in this period thirteen special issues have been published. Normally these take up two issues of the magazine and so have a greater number of pages:
 - 01. The Vincentian Family, Supplement to no. 6/1995
 - 02. Instruction on Stability, Chastity, Poverty and Obedience in the C.M. (1/1996)
 - 03. Meeting of Visitors, Salamanca (4-5/1996)
 - 04. Vincentian Month: The Popular Mission (4-5/1997)
 - 05. XXXIX General Assembly (4-5/1998)
 - 06. The Martyrs of the Vincentian Family in the 20th Century (1/1999)
 - 07. Our Apostolate in the Islamic World (4-5/1999)
 - 08. The New Constitutions: 20 Years Later (4-5/2000)
 - 09. Vincentian Month: Directors of the Daughters of Charity (4-5/2001)
 - 10. Ratio Missionum (1/2001)
 - 11. Vincentian Month: Advisors of the Vincentian Family (4-5/2002)
 - 12. Guide for the Local Superior (4/2003)
 - 13. XL General Assembly (4-5/2004)

II. SOME NOTES REGARDING THIS EXPOSITION

1. Without doubt, VINCENTIANA has been the most serious and orderly collective instrument for reflection and study in the Congregation of the Mission throughout its history.
2. Its archival function has been maintained up to the present time, even though we can see that many things which at one time received meticulous attention, little by little have been dropped in favor of more efficient and quicker archival procedures. For example, the assignments, necrologies and biographies of individuals are now kept in a data base in the Secretariat of the C.M. or in the Bulletins of the respective provinces.
3. The mission of being a news bulletin, to the same degree other means of communication have been developed, has also lost

ground. The appearance of NUNTIA in 1982 shows that VINCENTIANA did not have enough agility to be a timely vehicle for the transmission of news of general interest to the whole Congregation.

4. The idea of including in every issue a dossier composed of various articles about one theme, without losing the section on varied studies, which was so clear in the first years in the stage when this idea was born, also faded out little by little. Even when this title (dossier) is maintained, there is a clear impression that the different directors grouped the articles together, nominally around one title, but without the clear distinction between what responds to a dossier, normally indicated in the title, and the other study articles. Thus in the first four years 17 dossiers and 26 studies outside of the dossiers are published, while in the following nine years, a period more than twice as long, 39 dossiers and only 24 studies outside of the dossiers are published.
5. The practice of having dossiers has the advantage of being able to program the issues well ahead of time; but it also has the disadvantage that, with almost all the pages filled with commissioned articles, there is no room for spontaneous collaborations. This can cause their publication to be delayed or even eliminated, unless some pages are left available which in the end may end up not being filled. This may have contributed to the idea and the practice that in VINCENTIANA only those who have been asked write articles.
6. "Tri-lingualism" has certainly multiplied the work load. Has the number of readers multiplied to the same degree? We lack a scientific instrument which would show that we have approached the 70% of the missionaries which was the intended target. But we do know, as we have pointed out earlier, that the Directors do not last as long in their jobs.
7. It cannot be said that "tri-lingualism" has enriched the participation, neither in the number nor the quality of the writers. Perhaps one would have to place the highest level of participation in the post-Conciliar years of "aggiornamento" particularly in the special issues dedicated to the most salient events in the life of the Congregation or to the Vincentian study sessions.
8. Neither can it be lightly affirmed that the content (of VINCENTIANA) is any more *close to the life of the Congregation* or an *intellectual and spiritual nourishment that is truly useful to the confreres* than in previous stages as was pointed out in the prologue to the first issue of this stage.

III. CURRENT SITUATION

1. VINCENTIANA publishes six issues a year, in five volumes, with a total of approximately 500 pages annually. It is printed in three languages: 430 copies in Spanish, 370 in English and 330 in French.
2. VINCENTIANA continues to maintain its archival function with regard to documents emanating from the Curia of the Congregation of the Mission. Since several years ago, the publication of material referring to assignments and necrology has been transferred to NUNTIA because this newsletter comes out more frequently than VINCENTIANA.
3. The section on Studies has been maintained as much in the bi-monthly dossiers as in the accompanying studies if there are any. Preference is given to events in the Congregation which have universal repercussion: Assemblies, Visitors' Meetings, study sessions, etc. At the end of the year a bibliographical list is published of all the studies done in the Congregation and which have come to the attention of the Curia.
4. The function of being a newsletter has practically disappeared. The time span between issues does not permit it to compete with more agile means of communication already in use in the Congregation. This was already evident, as has been said, in the time of Fr. Cid and more so in the time of Fr. John de los Rios.
5. Today VINCENTIANA no longer responds to the need which brought it into being, nor is it necessary that it do so. For information and the exchange of news today we have more efficient and rapid means. VINCENTIANA has come to be practically a magazine of Vincentian studies. It did not have this characteristic at its birth; it has evolved into it throughout its history.
6. The publication of VINCENTIANA has cost in the past year of 2008, according to its final accounting and including shipping costs, a total of \$ 54,587.74 (€ 37,294.87). Whether this is a lot or a little will depend on how one judges its utility.
7. The subscriptions to VINCENTIANA are distributed as follows:

Automatic Payment	=	726
Individual subscriptions	=	107 (Priests, Sisters, Lay persons)
Free	=	65
8. Although finding authors for the studies is hard enough, the real problem comes in the translations. They call for repeated messages and many times living with the uncertainty of what may have happened to messages that were sent or if one will have the translations on time.

9. Many of the Vincentian writers who contributed to VINCEN-
TIANA have disappeared. And we can say almost the same thing
about the translators who performed this service. Those who
remain have more good will than free time. We have not come to
understand, in practice, that this is a service, like many others,
by which in obedience one contributes to the end of the
Congregation.

IV. LOOKING AHEAD

The preceding report was accompanied by a series of suggestions by the Director and the Editorial Board. After receiving them and showing their gratitude for them, the Superior General and his Council have determined:

1. To continue VINCENTIANA as a way of stimulating and reflecting on the Vincentian charism
2. To prepare special issues which may affect the whole Congregation of the Mission or one of the Conferences of Visitors.
3. To change the frequency of VINCENTIANA from six to four times a year. The price of a subscription will have to be adjusted to the real costs of production.
4. VINCENTIANA will be published in the three official languages of the C.M. We encourage possible translators to volunteer for this work.
5. Besides the printed version, VINCENTIANA will continue to be published on the Internet.

(Cf. Circular Letter of the Superior General, 9 July 2009)

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2009 ANNUAL STATISTICS - CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

M I N I S T R I E S

Number of confreres involved in the ministries listed below. Each confrere is counted only once, considered under his principal ministry, as of 31 December 2009.

	BISHOPS	PRIESTS	DEACONS	BROTHERS	STUDENTS
1. Parish (popular) Missions to the faithful		87		4	
2. Missionary parishes or districts	3	217	4	3	5
3. Parishes	5	855	7	21	2
4. Pilgrimage sanctuaries		45		3	
5. Seminaries and clerical formation	1	123	2	3	4
6. Formation of our own exclusively	1	154	6	5	2
7. Missions Ad Gentes	2	153		3	
8. Daughters of Charity (Director, chaplain)		139			
9. Schools (primary, secondary, superior, professional)		170		17	3
10. Social Communications (publications, radio, television)		21		3	
11. Special studies		75	25	4	24
12. Chaplains (military, immigrants, hospital, associations)		120		1	
13. Chaplains (Vincentian Lay Groups)		75	2		
14. Direct Service of the Poor		48		13	
15. Manual work				26	
16. Administration	6	135		11	
17. Retired, ill, convalescing	4	314		30	
18. Other	8	95	14	9	2
19. Absence from the Congregation		173	9	1	2
T O T A L	30	2999	69	157	44

France - Paris	21	146	2	10	8	166	29	2	31			12	12
France - Toulouse	9	52	2	7		61		1	1				0
Germany	3	16		2	1	19			0	1			1
Holland	3	42				42			0				0
Hungary	3	9	1			10			0			1	1
Ireland	11	58				58			0	1			1
Italy - Naples	11	42	1	2		47	2		2			2	2
Italy - Rome	9	44		1	2	48	1		1				0
Italy - Turin	13	64		2		68	3		3			1	1
Poland	27	258	1	5	4	271	23	3	26				0
Portugal	11	49				50			0			4	4
Slovakia	6	33		4		37	6		6	3			3
Slovenia	8	48		2		52	4		4	2			2
Spain - Barcelona	8	39		2		42	1		1	6			6
Spain - Madrid	16	99		13	1	113	1		1				0
Spain - Salamanca	16	80		9		89			0	5			5
Spain - Zaragoza	19	114		2		116	4		4				0
SS. Cyril and Methodius	6	22			2	25	7		7				0
OCEANIA	6	0	46	0	4	1	51	6	1	0	0	0	0
Australia	6	46		4	1	51	6	1	7			1	1
TOTAL	516	30	2999	65	4	157	44	3299	509	19	2	0	530
										397	5	216	0
											147	7	772

CP = Candidates to the Priesthood; CB = Candidates to the Brotherhood; P = Priests; PD = Permanent Deacons; P*/PD* = Priests/Permanent Deacons coming from a diocese or another Institute; AP = Aspirants to the Priesthood; AB = Aspirants to the Brotherhood.