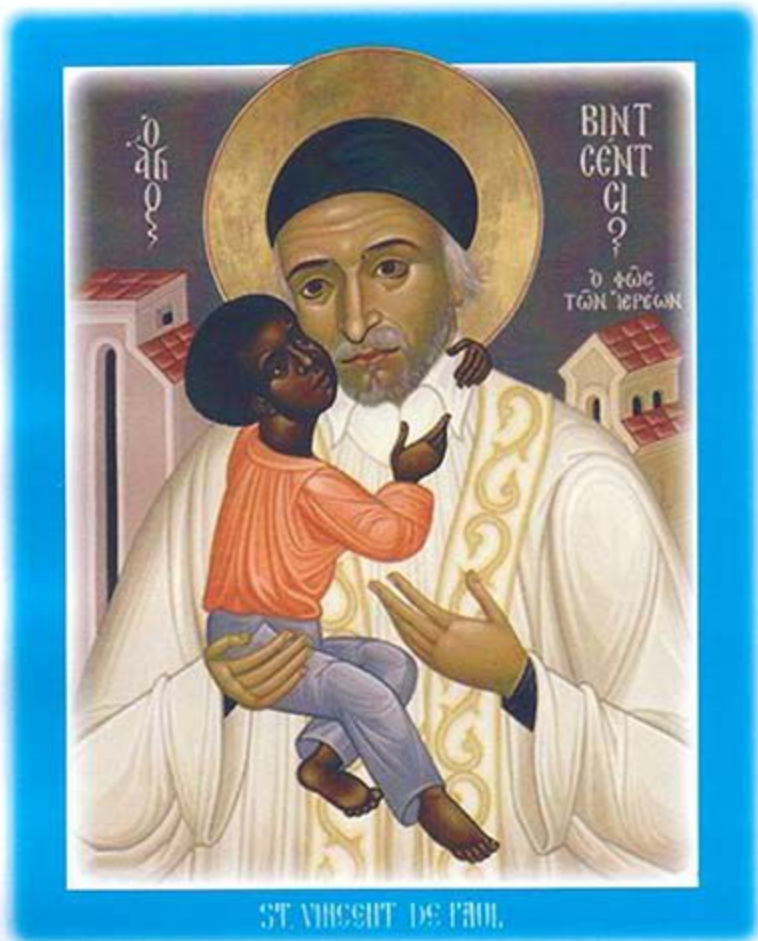


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CURIE GÉNÉRALICE

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RECIPIENTS OF THE MISSION AWARD, 2008

Rome, 30 July 2008

Feast of St. Justin de Jacobis

To the Members of the Congregation of the Mission

Dear Brothers,

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

On this the Feast of Saint Justin de Jacobis, a missionary *par excellence*, I announce to the worldwide Congregation the five projects that were granted the **Mission Award for 2008**. I want to thank the recipients of this award for their missionary creativity in their evangelization of the poor. I hope that all the projects presented will help to stimulate missionary creativity among confreres in other provinces.

Here is a brief description of each of the projects, as well as the goals and objectives proposed to make them realizable:

1. Province of Curitiba

Biblical, Pastoral, Social Formation and Animation of the Superagui Island and the neighboring islands

The Island of Superagui is a national reserve in the Atlantic Ocean in the southern part of Brazil. The areas that make up this national park were originally inhabited by the Tupiniquins and Carijós indians during Brazil's colonial period.

The region is formed by colonies of fishermen. There are approximately 1000 persons who reside on the Island; the majority of them are children. There are very few prospects for the future, because there are fewer and fewer fish and shrimp as larger fishing boats come from different places in Brazil to exploit the area.

During certain times of the year, many families suffer from hunger. There is a high rate of illiteracy and many people lack basic health care needs. There is no health system, either curative or preventive in place. There is no sport center for the children or young people who are often victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.

The missionary project intends to assist in, little by little, the restoration of the human dignity of the people of the island, helping them to articulate their faith and life, spirituality and action through biblical formation that is rooted in the reality of the island.

The missionary team is made up of four religious Sisters, two lay people and the pastor.

The project has two goals:

- Formation and enabling of faith leaders
- The biblical, pastoral and social animation of the inhabitants of the different islands.

The missionary team is aware that the process will be slow, but gradually they hope to involve the participation of the islanders and solicit the support of other persons of good will in the promotion that is possible and progressive.

Some of the objectives of the project are the following:

- To gain the confidence of the community
- To take initiatives to help recover the self-esteem of the leaders of the community
- To continue the formation, organization and capability of the islanders, especially the youth, children and other leaders
- To organize a plan of action that is participative at the social, economic, cultural and religious levels, to reveal the values, fears, needs and expectations of the youth of the community
- To provide spiritual, intellectual and professional formation for the youth in order to provide them with alternative ways of life to the way of drugs and violence which has a heavy presence in the islands
- To enable leaders for better actualization of the following pastorals: catechetical, liturgical and charity as well as financial administration

- To initiate the Children Missionaries in order that children might evangelize children
- To organize bible reflection groups for adults
- To organize a children's pastoral enabling volunteer leaders.

The missionary team responsible for this project is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Mission Award to provide the formation and animation that is biblical, pastoral and social and benefits above all those who are excluded and denied their basic human and therefore Christian rights.

2. Province of Chile

Rural Areas of the St. Luis Gonzaga Parish in Chile

The parish, founded July 1, 1892, was entrusted to the Congregation of the Mission in 1995. The areas where we wish to develop a pastoral plan are located in the northeast section of the parish and are the places farthest from the city of Collipulli. The closest community to the parish center is 50 km away and the furthest is 80 km. The parish has 14 rural communities. Each time the visits to these places are short because of the distance which has to be traveled, and because of the need to visit a number of communities at one time. The roads are in poor condition especially in the winter months. Many times the visits are interrupted because of the rain, snow, and the insecurity of the place.

The goals of the project are to evangelize, mission and animate in the Vincentian style the rural communities of the parish of St. Luis Gonzaga, Río Amargo, Santa Julia, Canadá and Niblinto.

The project intends:

- To form parish leaders and to build missionary teams in order to develop activities on the weekends
- To do home visits of each community in order to strengthen the catholic presence in the area
- To prepare the children and adults for the reception of the sacraments of Christian initiation
- To select and form leaders as animators of the faith community
- To evangelize and animate the faith of the people
- To coordinate spiritual and material help for the families most in need.

Objective #1 To recreate the family and community experience in mission places.

Lines of Action	Activities
<p>Celebrate what we believe and believe what we celebrate</p> <p>To live the mystery of the Incarnation by discovering the human being today.</p>	<p>Creating liturgical teams</p> <p>Holding formation meetings to strengthen the Christian Catholic identity,</p> <p>Providing workshops on human relations</p> <p>Creating opportunities for dialog, reflection and formation regarding conflicts and interfamily violence</p>

Objective #2 To deepen their belonging to and co-responsibility in the church.

Lines of Action	Activities
<p>That the experience of Christ give meaning to our life and lead us to a profound permanent personal conversion</p> <p>To revitalize with the spirit of the primitive Christian communities, the base Christian communities</p>	<p>Offering instruments for growth and development in one's prayer life.</p> <p>Doing a biblical catechesis: learning how to read, understand, and meditate and pray with the Sacred Scripture (Lectio Divina)</p> <p>Forming and preparing ministers of the word of God.</p> <p>Promoting an interchange of experiences and witnesses with other base Christian communities.</p>

Objective #3 To form pastoral agents in order to strengthen their missionary identity.

Lines of Action	Activities
To discover, strengthen and put forth our baptismal commitment as disciples and missionaries	Providing workshops on missionary formation
To strengthen the missionary identity of different parish groups.	Offering materials with a missionary content. Helping others to assume a missionary conscience.

3. International Mission of Papua New Guinea
Holy Name Parish New Evangelization Project

Holy Name Parish was entrusted to the Vincentian Community in November 2007. The parish has 14 outstations scattered in a large territory that includes rural villages, problematic settlements, a government prison, a correctional institution, an institution for the mentally handicapped, and other institutions.

The goal is the implementation of an integral plan of new evangelization at Holy Name Parish through popular missions in order to become a community of communities in a permanent state of mission.

There are a number of **objectives** that will be accomplished:

- To organize a mission program to train parish leaders to assume the task of the New Evangelization
- To renew the life of small Christian communities by conducting retreats in the small villages and settlements of the parish
- To do home visitation and to organize meetings of families so as to reach out to those who are not actively involved in the life of the parish
- To organize a yearly popular mission during the Christmas novena in order to renew Christian life in the parish
- To give material and spiritual assistance
- To promote the justice and peace group
- To acquire catechetical materials for the Parish
- To support the missionary work of confreres in Woitape parish and other new places.

The following realities pose a challenge to us, Vincentians, in the task of evangelization of the poor at Holy Name Parish.

- Youth drug-addiction, unemployment and crime
- Poverty
- Out-of-school children and youth
- Tuberculosis, malaria, skin diseases, pneumonia
- Increase in HIV-AIDS
- Government corruption
- Tribal fights
- Family violence, especially against women
- Lack of respect for nature and the environment
- Lack of adult catechesis and Catholics joining other churches/sects
- Lack of catechists and lay ministers
- Lack of active participation by the faithful in the parish.

There are three parts to the plan: evangelization, development, charity. Only the first part — Evangelization — is developed here.

Kerygmatic: Its aim is that people receive the kerygma of the first proclamation of the gospel through the renewal of one's Christian commitment in baptism and confirmation.

Koinonia: In this stage the community will learn how to grow and persevere in the Christian life (formation in being disciples to becoming apostles who are sent on mission).

Community: In this stage the community will grow in the new life of Christ through the Word of God, prayer and fellowship; to become the Body of Christ, a small community of witness and evangelization.

Missionary: In this level missionaries will be formed from among the community. These will help make the parish into a permanent mission and promote growth through continuing visitation, catechesis at all levels, and the formation of new communities.

At the end of this first part the community will further promote the process of evangelization by establishing various ministries: formation of small Christian communities, catechesis, faith formation seminars, liturgy and social action, as well as special ministries such as family life, youth, health, and rehabilitation.

4. Province of South India

Faith Formation and Spiritual Revival Programs

Invited by the Bishops of the Latin dioceses of Trivandrum, Quilon and Neyyattinkara, the South Indian Province of CM has taken up faith formation and spiritual revival programs. The Faithful of these dioceses consist mainly of fishermen and daily waged workers. There is indifference and apathy to faith and moral decadence among the people.

The bishops invited the CM confreres to do what they can for the revival of faith. Accordingly there is a team of 9 confreres working in the area. They form teams of priests, religious and lay ministers to preach missions, to catechize, to visit homes and to animate life in the parishes. The training of lay ministers and the preaching of renewal retreats are working together in these dioceses. The team of confreres also makes itself available for spiritual talks, retreats and guidance of the diocesan priests, seminarians and religious of the area. The methods used are mission preaching, family visits and guidance, catechizing, bible classes and guidance courses for the preachers and lay ministers, fostering of Marian devotion and formation and guidance of basic Christian communities.

The goals of the project are the formation and training of Popular Mission Teams consisting of priests, religious and lay ministers and faith formation and spiritual renewals in various parishes of the diocese.

The **objectives** are:

- To hold training sessions, consisting of two full days each, once every three months, for the lay ministers and volunteers who would preach and assist in mission preaching. (These session will consist of Bible classes, guidance in spiritual counseling, skills of listening and praying over sick people and homiletic skills).
- To hold popular missions in all the parishes of these dioceses in three years' time. (This will consist of preparation by family visits, actual preaching, counseling, family guidance, reconciliation services, etc., and follow up of the retreats by visits and motivational prayer guidance.)
- To have talks, retreats and guidance for the priests, seminarians and religious of the area.
- To spread Marian devotion through AMM in all the parishes.

5. Province of Slovenia

The Integral Access to Evangelization and to Apostolic Service. “The greatest of these is love”

Through this project we would like to work to decrease spiritual poverty present in our world, and we would like to fight the different types of dependencies.

Criteria

The program addresses students 12-14 years old and young people 15-30 who want to fight increasing spiritual poverty as well as different types of dependencies in the developed world. The young people lose themselves more and more in the world of consumerism and the lure of pleasure. This is why we have prepared for them a year-long program composed of different elements:

- Summer vacation for preschool children and secondary school children
- Groups for the Sacrament of Confirmation
- Groups of young people, students and animators.

While the children grow up and they still attend the catechism regularly, the Church has an exceptional chance for presenting to them a lifestyle different from what the world offers them. We try to educate these children and young people to love through the activities and in small groups. This program is aimed at children and youth of the whole deanery. The program aimed at children for Confirmation is based on making present the gospel of St. Luke, while the one for the youth and students is based on the Sunday gospels. This program entails the following:

- One week of vacation for the children — “Let’s draw the rainbow,” for 100 children with 25 young animators
- Meetings twice a month for the children for Confirmation in small groups (7-12 people) in the whole deanery (11 parishes), about 250 young people and 35 animators. Besides these regular meetings we prepare a meeting for all of them together with their parents. For these latter also, there is a program that invites them to deepen their relationship in marriage and to deepen their faith
- Meetings for young people and students twice a month
- Meeting for animators once a month
- A Mass for young people every month prepared by the young people of the deanery

- Prayer before the Blessed Sacrament once a month and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the young people of the deanery who prepare the liturgy
- A spiritual weekend for everyone according to their age range, where we build relationships on the chosen values in deepening the faith. Once a year we also invite the parents of the young people to the meeting.

The project responds to the following needs:

- The children, the young people and young couples need a clear spiritual orientation and an ongoing accompaniment, in order not to lose themselves in the mentality of a society of consumerism. The meetings and personal accompaniment correspond well to this need
- The young people lose themselves in consumerism if they are not in relation with those who share the same values
- The average age of the clergy in the deanery is 68. The Church cannot respond to these needs without new vocations. The formation of animators and of group leaders as well as working together meets this need
- There is a sufficient number of active young people; one must bring them together and give them an adequate formation, accompanying them and guiding them in working with the younger ones.

Through the insertion of young people and their parents in the program “the greatest thing is love,” the young people themselves and through them their families, change their outlook on the world. Materialism and consumerism give place to the Christian point of view. The need for prayer makes itself felt, family relations strengthen and they fall less often into different types of dependencies.

Through this program we try to break the harmful cycle of consumerism and individualism. The formation of relationships starts with the younger ones through the project “Let’s draw the rainbow,” which includes the young people and their parents and at a later time groups of students and animators. Through the interpersonal dialogs with the leader, the young people search for solutions to their problems and form themselves to be able to make serious decisions.

Being personally accompanied when living together helps them to build serious friendly bonds, that little by little become solid relationships as couples. In the group of students couples have formed who reflect on the seriousness of the union of marriage. We are convinced that these marriage unions will be more solid in the

future and that they will avoid the crises that often end up in a divorce.

In closing, I would like to remind all of you of the **object of the Mission Award**: “To acknowledge and support specific projects developed by individuals or groups of confreres that promote in a noteworthy way their missionary work.”

I pray that, through the intercession of St. Justin de Jacobis, God may give us the grace to continue to deepen our missionary spirit in the world where we are called to evangelize especially the most abandoned.

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 long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Superior General

CURIE GÉNÉRALICE

LES GAGNANTS DU PRIX MISSION 2008

Rome, le 30 juillet 2007
Fête de Saint Justin de Jacobis

À tous les membres de la Congrégation de la Mission

Chers Frères,

La Grâce et la Paix de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ demeurent en vos cœurs maintenant et à jamais !

En cette fête de saint Justin de Jacobis, missionnaire *par excellence*, j'annonce à la Congrégation tout entière les cinq projets gagnants du **Prix Mission pour 2008**. Je tiens à remercier les bénéficiaires de ce prix pour leur créativité missionnaire dans leur service d'évangélisation des pauvres. J'espère que les projets présentés aideront à stimuler la créativité missionnaire chez les confrères des autres Provinces.

Voici une brève description de chacun de ces projets, ainsi que les buts et les objectifs proposés pour leur réalisation.

1. PROVINCE DE CURITIBA : *Formation et Animation Biblique, Pastorale et sociale de l'île de Superagui et des îles avoisinantes*

L'île de Superagui, un parc national, est située dans l'Océan Atlantique au sud du Brésil. Pendant la période coloniale, les secteurs composant ce parc était, à l'origine, habités par les Indiens Tupiniquins et Carijós.

La région est formée de colonies de pêcheurs. Il y a environ 1000 personnes qui résident dans l'île, et la majorité d'entre elles sont des

enfants. Il y a très peu d'espoir pour l'avenir, parce qu'il y a de moins en moins de poissons et de crevettes, étant donné que de plus grands bateaux de pêche viennent de divers coins du Brésil pour exploiter le secteur.

Durant certaines périodes de l'année, beaucoup de familles souffrent de la faim. Le taux d'analphabétisme est élevé et beaucoup de personnes manquent de soins de base. Il n'y a aucun système de santé, ni curatif ni préventif en place. Il n'y a aucun centre sportif pour les enfants ou les jeunes qui sont souvent victimes de trafic et d'exploitation sexuelle.

Le projet missionnaire a l'intention d'aider progressivement la population de l'île à retrouver sa dignité humaine, en l'aidant à articuler foi et vie, spiritualité et action à travers la formation biblique qui est enracinée dans la réalité de l'île.

L'équipe missionnaire est composée de quatre religieuses, deux personnes laïques et du curé.

Le projet a deux buts :

- Formation et habilitation des leaders insulaires engagés.
- Animation biblique, pastorale et sociale des habitants des différentes îles.

L'équipe missionnaire est consciente que le processus sera lent, mais elle espère progressivement susciter la participation des insulaires et solliciter le soutien d'autres personnes de bonne volonté en faveur de la promotion qui est possible et progressive.

Voici certains objectifs du projet :

- Gagner la confiance de la communauté.
- Prendre des initiatives pour aider les leaders de la communauté à retrouver leur dignité personnelle.
- Continuer la formation, l'organisation et la conscientisation des insulaires, particulièrement des jeunes, des enfants et d'autres leaders, quant à leur capacité.
- Organiser un plan d'action au niveau social, économique, culturel et religieux, pour révéler les valeurs, les peurs, les besoins et les attentes des jeunes de la communauté.
- Donner aux jeunes une formation spirituelle, intellectuelle et professionnelle afin de leur offrir d'autres alternatives de la vie face à la drogue et à la violence qui sont bien présentes dans ces îles.
- Donner aux leaders la possibilité de mieux s'adapter aux services pastoraux suivants: catéchétique, liturgique et bienfaisance, ainsi que l'administration financière.

- Faire grandir l'Enfance Missionnaire afin que des enfants puissent évangéliser des enfants.
- Organiser des groupes de réflexion sur la Bible pour adultes.
- Organiser une pastorale d'enfants tout en formant des leaders volontaires.

L'équipe missionnaire responsable de ce projet est reconnaissante de l'occasion qui lui est donnée de se porter candidate au Prix Mission, lui permettant ainsi de réaliser un projet qui est avant tout au profit de ceux qui sont exclus et privés de leurs droits humains de base, et donc de droits chrétiens.

2. PROVINCE DU CHILI: *Régions rurales de la Paroisse st Louis de Gonzague au Chili*

La paroisse, fondée le 1^{er} juillet 1892, fut confiée à la Congrégation de la Mission en 1995. Les secteurs où nous voulons développer un plan pastoral sont situés dans la partie nord-est de la paroisse et sont les plus éloignés de la ville de Collipulli. La communauté la plus proche de la paroisse est à 50 km de distance, et la plus éloignée se trouve à 80 km. La paroisse a 14 communautés rurales. Les visites de ces lieux sont toujours brèves à cause de la distance à parcourir et du nombre de communautés qui doivent être visitées en même temps. Les infrastructures sont déplorables, particulièrement en hiver. Les visites sont très souvent interrompues à cause de la pluie, de la neige et de l'insécurité du lieu.

Les objectifs du projet sont d'évangéliser, missionner et animer à la manière vincentienne les communautés rurales des paroisses saint Louis de Gonzague, Rio Amargo, sainte Julie, Canadá et Niblinto.

Le projet a l'intention de :

- Former des responsables de paroisse et créer des équipes missionnaires en vue d'organiser des activités pendant le week-end.
- Faire des visites à domicile de chaque communauté afin de renforcer la présence catholique dans la région.
- Préparer les enfants et les adultes à la réception des sacrements de l'initiation chrétienne.
- Choisir et former des responsables comme animateurs de la communauté de foi.
- Évangéliser et revivifier la foi des gens.
- Coordonner l'aide spirituelle et matérielle pour les familles qui sont le plus dans le besoin.

1^{er} objectif : Recréer l'expérience de la famille et de la communauté dans les lieux de mission.

Lignes d'action	Activités
<p>Célébrer ce que nous croyons et croire en ce que nous célébrons.</p> <p>Vivre le mystère de l'Incarnation en découvrant l'être humain aujourd'hui.</p>	<p>Créer des équipes de liturgie.</p> <p>Organiser des sessions de formation pour renforcer l'identité catholique.</p> <p>Organiser des ateliers sur les relations humaines.</p> <p>Créer des occasions de dialogue, de réflexion et de formation par rapport aux conflits et à la violence interfamiliale.</p>

2^{ème} objectif : Approfondir leur appartenance à et leur coresponsabilité dans l'Église.

Lignes d'action	Activités
<p>Que l'expérience du Christ donne sens à notre vie et nous conduise vers une conversion personnelle profonde et permanente.</p> <p>Revitaliser les communautés chrétiennes de base avec l'esprit des premières communautés chrétiennes</p>	<p>Offrir des outils pour la croissance et le développement d'une vie de prière.</p> <p>Faire une catéchèse biblique : apprendre à lire, à comprendre, à méditer et à prier avec la Sainte Écriture (Lectio Divina).</p> <p>Former et préparer des ministres de la Parole de Dieu.</p> <p>Encourager des échanges d'expériences et de témoignages avec d'autres communautés chrétiennes de base.</p>

3^{ème} objectif : Former des agents pastoraux afin de renforcer leur identité missionnaire.

Lignes d'action	Activités
<p>Découvrir, affermir et vivre notre engagement baptismal comme disciples et missionnaires.</p> <p>Affermir l'identité missionnaire des divers groupes paroissiaux.</p>	<p>Organiser des ateliers de formation missionnaire.</p> <p>Offrir des matériaux avec un contenu missionnaire. Former d'autres acteurs à une conscience missionnaire.</p>

3. MISSION INTERNATIONALE DE LA PAPOUASIE-NOUVELLE-GUINÉE : *Projet de Nouvelle Évangélisation de la Paroisse du Saint Nom*

La Paroisse du Saint Nom a été confiée à la Communauté Vincennienne en novembre 2007. Elle a quatorze postes dispersés sur un grand territoire comprenant des villages ruraux, des établissements difficiles, une prison gouvernementale, une institution correctionnelle, une institution pour handicapés mentaux et d'autres institutions.

Le but est la mise en œuvre d'un grand projet de nouvelle évangélisation pour la Paroisse du Saint Nom au moyen des missions populaires, afin de devenir une communauté de communautés dans un état permanent de mission.

Objectifs à réaliser :

- Organiser un programme de missions en vue de former des leaders de paroisse pour la tâche de la Nouvelle Évangélisation.
- Raviver les petites communautés chrétiennes par des retraites dans les petits villages et organiser la paroisse.
- Faire des visites à domicile et organiser des rencontres de familles afin d'atteindre ceux qui ne sont pas activement impliqués dans la vie de la paroisse.
- Organiser une mission populaire annuelle pendant la neuvième semaine de Noël afin de renouveler la vie Chrétienne de la paroisse.
- Fournir de l'aide matérielle et spirituelle.
- Encourager le groupe Justice et Paix.
- Acquérir du matériel catéchétique pour la Paroisse.
- Soutenir le travail missionnaire des confrères de la Paroisse Woitape et d'autres nouveaux lieux.

Les réalités suivantes nous lancent un défi, à nous missionnaires, dans la tâche d'évangélisation des pauvres sur la paroisse du Saint Nom :

- La toxicomanie chez les jeunes, chômage et crime.
- La pauvreté.
- La déscolarisation des enfants et des jeunes.
- La tuberculose, le paludisme, la maladie de la peau, la pneumonie.
- L'augmentation des personnes séropositives et du Sida.
- La corruption dans le gouvernement.
- Guerre tribale.
- Violence familiale, particulièrement contre les femmes.
- Manque de respect pour la nature et l'environnement.
- Manque de catéchèse pour les adultes et les catholiques qui s'en vont vers d'autres confessions/sectes.
- Manque de catéchètes et de ministres laïcs.
- Manque de participation active de la part des paroissiens.

Le plan comprend trois parties : évangélisation, développement, charité. C'est seulement la première partie — Évangélisation — qui est développée ici.

Kérygmatique : Le but visé est que les gens reçoivent le kérygme de la première proclamation de l'évangile, à travers le renouvellement de leur engagement chrétien, dans le baptême et la confirmation.

Koinonia : Dans cette étape, la communauté apprendra à grandir et à persévérer dans la vie chrétienne (formation à être disciples du Christ pour devenir apôtres et être envoyés en mission).

Communauté : Dans cette étape, la communauté grandira dans la vie nouvelle du Christ à travers la Parole de Dieu, la prière et la fraternité pour devenir le Corps du Christ, une petite communauté de témoins et d'évangélisation.

Missionnaire : A ce niveau, des missionnaires seront formés parmi les membres de la communauté. Ils aideront à faire que la Paroisse soit en mission permanente et à promouvoir la croissance à travers les visites, la catéchèse à tous les niveaux, et la formation de nouvelles communautés.

A l'issue de cette première étape, la communauté encouragera encore le processus d'évangélisation en établissant divers ministères : formation de petites communautés Chrétiennes, catéchèse, séminaires de formation de foi, liturgie et action sociale, aussi bien que des ministères spéciaux, tels que la vie familiale, les jeunes, la santé et la réhabilitation.

4. PROVINCE DE L'INDE DU SUD : Programmes de formation de foi et de renouveau spirituel

Invitée par les Évêques des diocèses latins de Trivandrum, Quilon et Neyyattinkara, la Province de l'Inde du Sud de la Congrégation de la Mission a entrepris des programmes de formation de foi et de renouvellement spirituel. Les fidèles de ces diocèses sont composés principalement de pêcheurs et d'ouvriers journaliers. Dans le domaine de la foi, on note à la fois indifférence et apathie. Il y a aussi la décadence morale des gens.

Les évêques ont invité les confrères de la CM à faire ce qu'ils pourraient pour raviver la foi des fidèles. En conséquence, il y a une équipe de neuf confrères qui travaille dans le secteur. Ils forment des équipes de prêtres, des ministres religieux et laïcs pour prêcher des missions, catéchiser, visiter des maisons et animer les paroisses. Dans ces diocèses, la formation des laïcs et la prédication de retraites de renouvellement spirituel vont de pair. L'équipe de confrères se rend aussi disponible pour des conférences spirituelles, retraites et direction spirituelle des prêtres diocésains, des séminaristes et religieux du secteur. Les divers procédés sont : prêcher des missions, faire des visites à domicile et conseiller les familles, catéchiser, donner des cours de Bible et de direction aux prédicateurs et aux ministres laïcs, stimuler la dévotion mariale, ainsi que la formation et la direction des communautés chrétiennes de base.

La finalité du projet est la formation spirituelle et la formation des équipes de Mission Populaire composées de prêtres, de religieux et de laïcs ; formation de la foi et renouvellement spirituel de diverses paroisses du diocèse.

Les objectifs :

- Organiser, chaque trimestre, des sessions de formation de deux jours complets, pour les laïcs engagés et des volontaires qui pourraient aider à prêcher des missions. (Ces sessions comprennent des cours de Bible, de direction et d'accompagnement spirituel, des techniques pour l'écoute et la prière avec les malades, ainsi que pour les homélies).
- Prêcher des missions populaires dans toutes les paroisses de ces diocèses pendant trois ans. (Ceci comporte une préparation qui se fera à travers les visites à domicile, les prédications, la direction spirituelle, l'orientation des familles, les célébrations de la réconciliation, etc., et aussi en donnant une suite aux retraites par des visites et des orientations pour l'animation de la prière).

- Donner des conférences, des retraites et accompagner spirituellement les prêtres, les séminaristes et les religieux de la région.
- Répandre la dévotion mariale à travers l'AMM dans toutes les paroisses.

5. PROVINCE DE SLOVÉNIE : *L'accès intégral à l'évangélisation et au service apostolique – « Le plus important, c'est l'amour »*

Par ce projet, nous souhaitons travailler à la réduction de la pauvreté spirituelle présente dans notre monde développé et lutter contre les divers types de dépendances.

Critères

Le programme est destiné aux écoliers de 12-14 ans et aux jeunes de 15-30 ans, désirant lutter contre la pauvreté spirituelle croissante et les différents types de dépendances dans le monde développé. Les enfants et les jeunes s'égareront de plus en plus dans le monde de la consommation et du plaisir. C'est pourquoi nous avons préparé pour eux un programme pour toute l'année, composé de plusieurs éléments :

- activités — vacances d'été pour les enfants préscolaires et les enfants de l'école secondaire,
- les groupes du sacrement de Confirmation,
- les groupes de jeunes, d'étudiants et d'animateurs.

Alors que les enfants grandissent et que les jeunes suivent encore la catéchèse régulièrement, l'Église a une possibilité exceptionnelle de leur présenter une vie différente de celle que leur offre le monde. On essaie d'éduquer ces enfants et ces jeunes à l'amour à travers des activités et dans les petits groupes. Ce programme est destiné aux enfants et aux jeunes de tout le Doyenné. Le programme destiné aux enfants de la Confirmation est basé sur l'actualisation de l'Évangile de saint Luc, tandis que pour les jeunes et les étudiants il est basé sur les Évangiles de chaque dimanche. Ce programme comporte :

- Une semaine de vacances pour les enfants — Activité : « Dessinons l'arc-en-ciel », environ cent enfants et vingt-cinq jeunes animateurs y prennent part.
- Rencontres pour les enfants de la Confirmation en petits groupes (7 à 12 personnes) dans tout le Doyenné (onze paroisses) deux fois par mois, environ 250 jeunes et 35 animateurs au total. À part ces rencontres régulières qui ont lieu tous les quatorze jours, nous préparons une rencontre pour

eux tous ensemble avec leurs parents. Pour ces derniers aussi, il y a un programme qui les invite à l'approfondissement des relations dans le mariage et de leur foi.

- Rencontres des jeunes et des étudiants deux fois par mois.
- Rencontre des animateurs une fois par mois.
- Messe des jeunes chaque mois, préparée par les jeunes du Doyenné.
- Prière devant le Saint Sacrement une fois par mois, et possibilité de recevoir le sacrement de la Réconciliation pour les jeunes du Doyenné qui se chargent de la préparation.
- Le week-end spirituel pour tout le monde, par tranches d'âge, où, tout en approfondissant la foi, se construisent les relations sur les valeurs choisies. Une fois par an, nous invitons aussi les parents des jeunes à la rencontre.

Le projet répond aux besoins suivants :

- Les enfants, les jeunes et les jeunes couples ont besoin d'une bonne orientation spirituelle et d'un accompagnement permanent, afin de ne pas s'égarer dans la mentalité de la société de consommation. Les rencontres et l'accompagnement individualisé correspondent bien à ces besoins.
- Les jeunes se perdront dans la société de consommation s'ils ne sont pas en relation avec ceux qui partagent les mêmes valeurs.
- L'âge moyen des prêtres dans le Doyenné est de 68 ans. L'Église ne peut répondre à ces besoins sans de nouvelles vocations. La formation des animateurs et des responsables de groupes, ainsi que le travail réalisé ensemble, répondent à ce besoin.
- Il y a suffisamment de jeunes actifs, il faut les regrouper et leur donner la formation adéquate, les accompagner et les orienter à travailler avec les plus jeunes.

A travers l'insertion des jeunes et de leurs parents dans le Programme « le plus important, c'est l'amour », les jeunes eux-mêmes et à travers eux, leurs familles, changent leur regard sur le monde. Le matérialisme et la logique de la consommation font place à une vision plus chrétienne. Le besoin de prier se fait sentir, les relations familiales s'affermissent et ils tombent moins souvent dans les différents types de dépendances.

Par ce programme, nous essayons de rompre le cercle infernal de la consommation et de l'individualisme. Ainsi, la formation aux relations commence déjà chez les plus jeunes par l'activité « Dessinons l'arc-en-ciel » en y incluant en même temps les jeunes et leurs

parents, et plus tard également des groupes de jeunes, des étudiants et des animateurs. A travers les conversations interpersonnelles avec le responsable, les jeunes cherchent des solutions à leurs problèmes, et se forment pour pouvoir prendre des décisions sérieuses.

La vie de groupe et l'accompagnement individuel les aident à nouer des liens amicaux sérieux, qui peu à peu se transforment en de solides relations de couples. Dans le groupe des étudiants se sont formés plusieurs couples qui réfléchissent sur le sérieux de l'union contractée par le mariage. Nous sommes convaincus que ces unions matrimoniales seront plus solides à l'avenir, et que les crises qui se terminent souvent par le divorce pourront être évitées.

Pour terminer, j'aimerais vous rappeler **l'objectif du Prix Mission** : « Reconnaître et soutenir des projets spécifiques, réalisés par un confrère en particulier ou un groupe de confrères, qui soutiennent de manière résolue leur travail missionnaire ».

Je prie que, par l'intercession de st Justin de Jacobis, Dieu nous donne la grâce de continuer à faire grandir notre esprit missionnaire dans le monde où nous sommes appelés à évangéliser les plus abandonnés.

Votre frère en saint Vincent,

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

G. Gregory Gay, C.M.
Supérieur Général

FEATURE

Political Charity

Presentation

by Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.

Editor of "Vincentiana"

From 1-15 July 2007, the 1st Joint Meeting of CCC and APRF was held in Prigen (Indonesia). The CCC is the Commission of Vincentian Charism and Culture in the Asia-Pacific region that initiated in 2003. The chairman chosen by the Visitors of Asia-Pacific is Father Armada Riyanto, C.M. The APRF is the Asia-Pacific Regional Formators, a gathering of the formators founded by the Asia-Pacific Visitors in 1994. There were 54 Vincentian participants the first week; whereas the second week was particularly for CM formators. As the chronicler notes, for the first time there were participants from all the different countries in the Asia-Pacific region: North and South India, Vietnam, Thailand, Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Australia, and Indonesia. Some members of the Vincentian Family in Indonesia also participated. The topic was: Political Charity and Vincentian Formation. The readers may find abundant information about this meeting on <http://cmglobal.org>.

Vincentiana wants to collect some of the reflections from that meeting in this issue, for two principal motives: first of all, the importance of the topic itself, and secondly, the origin of the reflections.

From the time Saint Vincent wrote, in the *Regulations for the Charity of Women* (Châtillon-les-Dombes), that the poor suffered *more through a lack of organized assistance than from lack of charitable persons* (CCD 13b, 8), Vincentian reflection has not ceased turning to this successful intuition. When the Congregation of the Mission, which was destined to evangelize the poor, was born, it

heard from the lips of its founder that to preach the gospel is *to do what was foretold and prefigured by the prophets to make the gospel effective*. Its members could not be content with preaching from pulpits, but had to *preach by words and by works*, because that is what Our Lord practiced and that is what we have to practice (cf. SV XII, 84, 88).

Later, and in union with the whole Vincentian Family, the Congregation of the Mission tried to make the gospel effective with efficacious works of charity in order to respond to the authentic needs of the poor. It even committed itself to a long campaign to promote Systemic Change. These works demonstrate the genuineness of *God's love poured into our hearts by the Spirit who has been given us* (Rom 5:5). Our Christian and missionary vocation is animated by this Spirit of love and is lived as an expression of a love that liberates and dignifies the poor. We were urged to it by John Paul II who called on the missionaries gathered together in Assembly in 1986: *Search out, more than ever, with boldness, humility and skill, the causes of poverty and encourage short and long term solutions; adaptable and effective concrete solutions. By doing so, you will work for the credibility of the Gospel and of the Church* (Discourse to the 1986 General Assembly). And in 1997, to the Daughters of Charity, he said: *Indeed, love of the poor involves respect for their cultures, which demonstrates the soul of their human communities, as well as the recognition and acceptance of the values which constitute their wealth. Fraternal relations with everyone will develop from this attitude* (Letter to the Mother General at the 1997 General Assembly). Benedict XVI, in his first encyclical, *God is love*, mentioning Saint Vincent and Saint Louise among the saints who exercised charity in an exemplary way, spoke of *social charity for all people* (n. 40).

This issue of *Vincentiana* includes part of the reflection that is being done on the topic in a geographical zone of the world where the Congregation of the Mission is living out the response to its vocation to evangelize the poor with extraordinary strength and enthusiasm. Surely it would do us all well to reflect with these, our Asia-Pacific brothers, about a burning topic in our world today and that they live out with particular intensity. In the midst of the religions and cultures of the peoples they evangelize, they need to reread Saint Vincent in the context in which they live and in which they wish to interpret their Vincentian fidelity. There is not much meaning in asking what Saint Vincent would have done in this situation, because it is a hypothesis that will never be realized. But they are very right when they ask what Vincentians today would do in light of what Saint Vincent did in his time.

The Superior General, Father Gregory Gay, during his visit to Indonesia, spoke about political charity. He thinks that our candidates should not remain indifferent toward what is happening in contemporary society. They should be grounded in their own socio-political situation, be formed to analyze it critically, so that they can respond to its challenges more effectively. The term “political charity” does not appear in sociological and political science dictionaries. But, in the Vincentian tradition, charity can only exist “politically,” that is, in concrete works and social structures.

Finally *Vincentiana* carries on the memory of the Common Rules by reflecting, on this 350th anniversary of their presentation, on some of the values they indicated.

Translation: Sister ANN MARY DOUGHERTY, D.C.



Participants in the gathering at Prigen

DOSSIER

Charité Politique

Présentation

par Julio Suescun Olcoz, C.M.

Directeur de "Vincentiana"

La première rencontre mixte de CCC & APRF a été célébrée à Pri-gen, Indonésie, du 1^{er} au 15 juillet 2007. (CCC - la Commission pour le Charisme vincentien et la Culture d'Asie-Pacifique. Le groupe s'est formé en 2003. Le président choisi par les Visiteurs d'Asie-Pacifique est maintenant Armada Riyanto, C.M. APRF - Formateurs Régionaux d'Asie-Pacifique. C'est un rassemblement de formateurs fondé par les Visiteurs d'Asie-Pacifique en 1994). Les participants comptaient 54 missionnaires (la première semaine); tandis que la deuxième semaine était particulièrement consacrée aux formateurs de la CM. Pour la première fois les participants venant des divers pays d'Asie-Pacifique étaient au complet: Inde du Nord et Inde du Sud, Vietnam, Thaïlande, Philippines, PNG, Fiji, Iles Salomon, Australie et Indonésie. Il y avait aussi quelques membres de la Famille Vincentienne d'Indonésie. Le thème: CHARITÉ POLITIQUE et FORMATION VINCENTIENNE. Les lecteurs pourront trouver de nombreuses informations à ce sujet en consultant: <http://cmglobal.org>

VINCENTIANA veut rassembler dans ce numéro quelques unes des réflexions de cette rencontre, pour deux raisons principales. Tout d'abord, à cause de l'importance du thème en lui-même et ensuite, pour l'origine des réflexions.

Depuis que Saint Vincent a écrit dans le Règlement de la Confrérie de la Charité de Chatillon, que les « *les pauvres ont parfois beaucoup souffert, plutôt par faute d'ordre à les soulager que de personnes charitables* » (XIII, 423), la réflexion vincentienne n'a cessé d'approfondir cette remarquable intuition. Quand naît la Congrégation de la Mis-

sion, destinée à l'évangélisation des pauvres, elle entend des lèvres de son fondateur que prêcher l'Évangile *c'est rendre effectif les choses prédites et figurées par les prophètes*, et qu'elle ne peut pas se contenter de prêcher depuis les ambons, mais qu'elle doit *prêcher en paroles et en actes*, car c'est ce qu'a pratiqué notre Seigneur et ce que nous devons nous aussi pratiquer.

Par la suite, et en lien avec toute la Famille Vincentienne, la Congrégation de la Mission s'est efforcée de *rendre effectif l'Évangile* (XII, 84) avec des œuvres de charité efficaces en vue de répondre aux besoins authentiques des pauvres. Elle s'est aussi engagée dans une grande campagne pour promouvoir le Changement Systémique. Ces œuvres manifestent l'authenticité de l'amour de Dieu répandu dans nos cœurs par l'Esprit qui nous a été donné. Notre vocation chrétienne et missionnaire est animée par cet Esprit d'Amour et est vécue comme une expression d'amour qui libère et rend leur dignité aux pauvres. Jean Paul II nous encourageait en ce sens quand il demandait aux missionnaires réunis pour l'Assemblée de 1986 : *« Plus que jamais, avec audace, humilité et compétence, recherchez les causes de la pauvreté et encouragez les solutions à court et à long terme, des solutions concrètes, mobiles, efficaces. En agissant ainsi, vous coopérez à la crédibilité de l'Évangile et de l'Église »* (Discours à l'A.G. de 1986). Et en 1997, il disait aux Filles de la Charité : *« L'amour des pauvres comporte, en effet, le respect de leurs cultures, qui manifestent l'âme de leurs communautés humaines, ainsi que la reconnaissance et l'accueil des valeurs qui en font la richesse. De cette attitude naîtra avec tous une relation fraternelle »* (lettre à la Mère Générale, A.G de 1997). Benoît XVI, dans sa première encyclique *Dieu est Amour*, en citant Saint Vincent et Sainte Louise parmi les saints ayant exercé la charité de manière exemplaire, parle de *charité sociale envers tous les hommes* (N° 40).

VINCENTIANA rassemble aujourd'hui une partie de la réflexion en cours dans une zone géographique du monde où la Congrégation de la Mission répond aujourd'hui à sa vocation d'évangéliser les pauvres, avec beaucoup d'efforts et d'enthousiasme. Il est certain que cela nous fera le plus grand bien de partager la réflexion de ces confrères d'Asie Pacifique sur ce thème brûlant de notre actualité et qu'eux-mêmes vivent avec une particulière intensité. Au milieu des religions et des cultures des peuples qu'ils veulent évangéliser, il leur faut relire saint Vincent dans le contexte qui est le leur et dans lequel ils souhaitent mettre en œuvre leur fidélité vinctienne. Il n'est pas très sensé de se demander ce qu'aurait fait Saint Vincent dans cette situation, car c'est une hypothèse qui ne verra jamais le jour. Par contre, ils ont tout à fait raison quand ils se demandent ce que

devraient faire les vincentiens d'aujourd'hui à la lumière de ce que Saint Vincent a fait en son temps.

Vous vous en souvenez, le Supérieur Général, le Père Gregory Gay, lors de sa visite en Indonésie, a parlé de charité politique. Il pense que nos candidats ne devraient pas rester indifférents face à ce qui se vit dans notre société contemporaine. Ils doivent grandir dans leur propre situation sociopolitique et être formés pour l'analyser de manière critique de telle sorte qu'ils puissent répondre aux défis posés avec une plus grande efficacité. Le terme : « Charité politique » n'apparaît pas dans les dictionnaires des sciences politico-sociales. Mais dans la tradition vincentienne, la charité ne peut exister que « politiquement », c'est-à-dire par l'intermédiaire d'œuvres concrètes et de structures sociales.

Enfin, VINCENTIANA veut aussi faire mémoire des Règles Communes dont nous célébrons cette année le 350^{ème} anniversaire, en réfléchissant à certaines valeurs évoquées dans ces dernières.



Participants à la rencontre de Prigen

Political Charity in the Context of Inter-Religious Dialogue

by Paul A. Bharathi, C.M.*

Introduction

From time immemorial, India has been a land of religious tolerance and it has been rich in culture, language, tradition and wisdom. It is also known for its Philosophy. It had been receptive to various religions, such as, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Sikhism, Parsism and Jainism. For centuries, religious co-existence had been a hallmark of Indian tradition. All these religions co-existed in a perfect manner and the people of India grew as one nation and as one people in spite of their differences in religion. Hinduism which is an ancient religion, by its very nature is a religion of tolerance and the people also had the same nature. But over the years, the situation has changed. Hinduism has been redefined by a group of people and fundamentalism has crept into the minds of some people. The seed of fundamentalism has been sown in the soil of India and in some places it has already taken root and it is trying to take roots in some other places. As a whole the Hindu fundamentalism is very much alive and no doubt it is catching like a wild fire.

The rise of Hindu fundamentalism is the situation in which we live. Our formation should be context-based and the students should be formed based on the political, social and economical situation of today. In other words, our Vincentian formation should be based on political charity. Political charity implies three things; (1) to be aware of the political situation in which we live (2) to analyze it critically (3) to respond to that situation. Political charity demands that our formation should be well inserted into the socio-political situation of today. Hence, this paper makes an attempt to highlight the political situation of India, how we can respond to it theologically and finally how our Vincentian formation could be made effective in the light of the political situation of today.

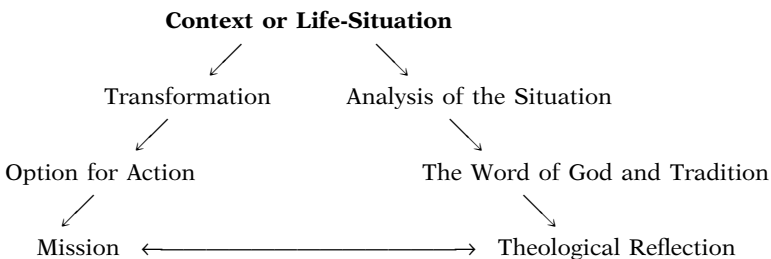
* Paul A. Bharathi, C.M., is a doctor in Biblical theology from the Gregorian University. He teaches Biblical theology in various seminaries in India, and is currently working in a parish. Doctor Bharathi belongs to India Southern Province.

Methodology

For our methodology, first and foremost the situation is the basis and foundation. Our theologizing, like the theologizing of the prophets, must be rooted in the concrete historical situation. This historical situation includes the political, social and religious situation. All theology of course implies an on-going dialogue between the theologian's situation and his text. But the starting point of this dialogue, if it to be fruitful, must be the situation not the text. In other words, it is a contextualization of theology. Contextualization is a response to a particular socio-political, religious and economic situation. It must be recognized that "Contextualization" is not simply a fad or a catchword but a theological necessity demanded by the incarnational nature of the word. "The word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn. 1:14) is the basis for our contextual theology. After taking into consideration the context, which is the base for our theological reflection, we study it in an analytical way. In other words, we analyze the situation in a critical and objective way without any prejudice and bias.

After analyzing the context, we have to take recourse to the word of God and tradition. In this process, we reflect over the context and situation in the light of the word of God and tradition. After careful reflection, certainly a new theology arises out of a particular context and situation. In this theological process, there is also an internal process that takes place. While reflecting over the situation in the light of the word of God and tradition, there is transformation of understanding. Transformation is from pre-understanding to understanding. A transformation is needed in our way of thinking and our attitude. We have the right thinking and attitude towards others, while getting rid of our biases and prejudices. It is not only that we remain at the thinking level, but also we involve ourselves in an action. Action is nothing but mission.

The following diagram will explain well our methodology.



Context: The emergence of Hindutva force in India

In simple terms Hindutva means Hinduism that is the total aspect of “Hinduness.” It is to revive the Hindu culture, tradition and religious practices of Hindu and to imbibe a spirit of Hinduism in the people of Hindu religion. Hindutva is commonly identified with the guiding ideology of the *Sangh Parivar* (Family of associations), a family of Hindu nationalist organizations. The first Hindutva organization formed was the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), founded in 1925. A prominent Indian political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is closely associated with a group of organizations that advocate Hindutva. They collectively refer to themselves as the “Sangh Parivar” or family of associations, which include the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Bajarang Dal and the Vishva Hindu Parishad. The major political wing is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which was in power in India’s central Government for six years from 1998 to 2004 and at present it is the main opposition party.

“One nation, one culture, one people and one leader” has become the dominant and fundamental slogan of the Sangh Parivar.¹ Their fundamental argument is that the Hindus are a majority and hence they should exercise authority, precedence and domination over others. The Sangh Parivar’s slogan is aiming at bringing Christians and Muslims under the domination of Hindus. Their one nation theory always takes recourse to history and warns the citizens that there are “hostile forces” or to state it in their own words “foreign hands” within and outside the country who are all out to destroy the national unity and pride. Hence, all should be united to face this threat. In this thought pattern the “other” the “enemy” is projected as ready to devour the entire nation, culture, economy and society and thus various segments are mobilized to face this ‘threat.’

Gleaning through historical records, one becomes aware of the fact that from 1980 onward the Sangh Parivar has come to occupy a specific space in the society and polity of India. Till 1980 the Sangh Parivar remained as an insignificant organization, being strong only in certain pockets of India, taking up some issues pertaining to Hindu culture and religion but without having a strong voice at a political level. From 1980 onwards, it started growing steadily. The peak moment of the Sangh Parivar was the demolition of the Mosque at Ayodhya in 1992. It took up the temple issue at Ayodhya and stirred up the religious sentiment of the Hindu People. The Ayodhya issue

¹ Family of associations.

was close to the heart of the Sangh Parivar. It took Ram to the people through symbols to which they could easily relate. Ram, Ayodya and the temple were thus brought close to the social and cultural life of the people. In doing so, what the fundamentalist group has achieved is to identify itself with the cultural life of the Hindus and to project itself as the champion of their religion. After the demolition of the Mosque at Ayodya, it won the hearts of Hindus in some parts of India and as a result the Sangh Parivar's political wing, namely the Bharatiya Janata Bharty (BJP) captured power in some states of India and eventually it captured power at the center in 1998. During their rule, they were executing their hidden agenda of promoting a Hindu nation by targeting the minorities, both Christians and Muslims.

Central Concepts of the Sangh Parivar

- The Indian Subcontinent is the homeland of the Hindus.
- "Hindus" are those who consider India to be their fatherland as well as their holy land.
- Emphasizing historical oppression of Hindus by invading forces like the Muslims and Christians and the call to "reverse" the influence resulting from these intrusions.
- Denunciation of British colonialism and communism alike for a perceived weakening of Hindus.
- The irredentist call for the establishment of a "Hindu nation" to protect Hindus and to revive Hindu culture.

Views on other Faiths

The advocates of Hindutva often use the term Pseudo-Secularism to refer to laws which they believe are very favorable toward minorities. They point to the different standards for Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Hence they want a uniform civil code. The subject of a uniform civil code, which would remove special religion-based provisions for different religions (Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc.) from the Indian constitution, is thus one of the main political planks of Hindutva. Hindutva followers question differential laws in terms of marriage and divorce and ask why in a secular democracy Muslims are allowed polygamy, but Hindus or Christians are prosecuted for doing the same. Christians are also given separate laws for divorce, which are more difficult for them than for Hindus. The followers of the Hindutva speak for the Hindu majority in India. They also often feel that secular democracy implies equal laws for all

religions, and want a uniform civil code passed for the same reason. One must also differentiate between the word “secularism” as used in the Western and Indian contexts. Secularism in the West implies “separation of church and state” whereas secularism in India means “equal respect for all religions.” Among the goals of the Hindutva organizations in modern India is a reversing of the invasions by conquerors. They include demands to convert disputed historical monuments into temples.

Implementation of Hindutva Policies

The Hindutva force started implementing their Hindutva policies in some states where they rule:

1. Introducing the “anti-conversion bill” which makes it difficult for both missionaries and for individuals to convert to Christianity from Hinduism. It is introduced to counter the menace of the proselytizing religions of Christianity and Islam. Since the Hindutva force believes in a religiously defined nationhood, the conversion of Hindus to foreign faiths is seen as a grave threat to Hindu nationhood.
2. Introducing the “anti-cow slaughter bill.” It is basically aiming at the formation of a Hindu nation. The Cow is a sacred animal for Hindus. By banning the slaughtering of cows, they have double motives. One is to make India as a Hindu nation and another motive is to target the Muslims and Christians who eat the cow meat.
3. Using education to spread the Hindutva ideology. Under this agenda, the content of education from the primary level to the higher education stage should be “Indianized,” nationalized and spiritualized. In some of their ruled states, they changed the syllabus and content of the subject in order to propagate the Hindutva ideology.
4. Appointing persons as government officials who are supporters of Hindutva ideology. In the BJP-ruled states, high ranking officials are the hand-pick of the Hindutva force who have an inclination towards their policies. Hence they could manipulate the government machineries for their end.
5. Intimidation of both Christians and Muslims in the states where the Hindutva force is ruling. Sustained attacks on Churches and Christian schools across the country. Physical attack on Christian missionaries and nuns are very common in the Hindutva ruled states. The intimidation aims at the curbing of activities of our missionaries.

Critical Analysis of the situation

When we look at the situation where the Hindutva force is becoming stronger, the present situation shows that for Christians, a great challenge is ahead of them. When we study it from a historical point of view, we, the Christian missionaries directly or indirectly contributed to the rise of Hindu fundamentalism. Of course, Muslims too played a role in that. First of all, the invaders both British and Muslim are to take a lion's share for being causes for the rise of Hindutva forces. The British and Muslim emperors had scant respect for Hinduism. They ridiculed the Hindu religion, saying that they are pagan gods and they also did not respect the holy places. The Muslim emperors converted a few temples into Mosques. Hence the negative attitude of the British and Muslims forced some Hindus to unite themselves under the banner of Rashtray Swayam Sevek (RSS) and ultimately it gave birth to different fundamental groups, including the political wing BJP.

Another factor which contributed to the rise of Hindutva force is our own theology and the activities of missionaries. Way back, India was filled with foreign missionaries who were very zealous in mass conversion. They were converting a lot of Dalits and Tribals to Christianity which the Hindutva force perceived as a threat to the Hindu religion. They thought that if they allowed the Christian missionaries to convert the Dalits² and Tribals, the Hindu religion would finally become extinct. Hence, they were up in arms against the Christian missionaries for their interest in conversion. The Hindutva force is against any conversion from Hinduism to Christianity. One of the main agenda items of the Hindutva force is to stop conversion.

Transformation: A change of attitude

The above-mentioned factors which directly or indirectly contributed to the rise of Hindutva force, now call for a change. A change is needed in our attitude, in our thinking and in our theology too. It is true that over the years the Church in India has been thinking seriously on the relationship with other religions, especially with Hinduism. We do have a positive attitude towards Hinduism; however, against the background of the past experience, the Hindutva forces are suspicious about us. They are suspicious about our educational institutions which they think are for

² A group of people belong to low caste in India.

converting people. They are suspicious about our social services which they think are aimed at converting people. Here, we need to have a change in our mission. We have to move from converting souls to converting persons. In other words, instead of increasing the number of Baptisms, we need to work for the welfare of humanity, society and the nation at large and through which we can certainly bear witness to Christ. Jesus, while he was on earth, had only twelve disciples and he was not obsessed with the increase of disciples. But he was more focused on his ministry rather than increasing his followers. Similarly our main focus should be ministry, i.e. doing good to humanity not the increase of the number of baptisms.

The Church teaching on other religions

In India in the context of different religions, particularly in the context of Hinduism, a lot of theological activities have been going on. Indeed the Second Vatican Council gave a boost to the theological movement in India. Almost all theological reflections in India began to situate themselves in the context of non-Christian religions, especially Hinduism. Since then, the church in India has been striving hard to better its relationship with the other religions.

One of the stumbling blocks for a relationship with Hinduism was the understanding of Salvation. Earlier missionaries were convinced that there was no salvation outside the church which was indeed a cause for animosity between Hinduism and Christianity. Now, the Vatican II recognizes the universal saving will of God (II Vatican, *Lumen Gentium*, 16). It is because of this universal saving will that there are workings of God in other religions. Although the workings of God in other religions are hidden, they are not totally unknown to the Church. In the ways of conduct and of the life of the people, and in the precepts and teachings of the religions, *Nostra Aetate* perceives the reflection of a ray of the truth, the Christ who enlightens all. John Paul II when he came to India and spoke on other religions, he said that in Christ God is working out the salvation in a way also through the different religions of the people. God makes himself “present in many ways, not only to individuals but also to entire peoples through their spiritual riches, of which their religions are the main and essential expression, even when they contain ‘gaps,’ insufficiencies and errors” (taken from speeches of John Paul II, when he visited India). The document stated that it may be the providence of God that the people belonging to the different religions, through the different very true religious efforts, may achieve salvation (II Vatican, *Ad Gentes*, 3, cf. also *Lumen Gentium*, 16).

As I mentioned earlier, one of the reasons for the rise of Hindu fundamentalism is our own attitude, a negative attitude of condemning other religions, saying that there is no salvation outside the church. This attitude did infuriate the Hindu fundamentalist and as a result they are against conversions in India. Now, our attitude has been changed and Vatican II clearly highlights the point that there is salvation outside the church. Hence, we need to acknowledge other religions and their way to attain salvation which may not be as fully revealed religion as our Christian religion. This thinking indeed helps the Hindutva force to get rid of their biases against Christianity especially with regard to our motivation of conversion.

Theological Reflection: Dialogue as Mission

Taking into consideration the pluralistic context of India and in the light of Vatican II, we need to rethink our mission. In a pluralistic context, inter-religious dialogue is part of the Church's evangelizing mission. The council calls for dialogue with the non-Christian religions. This dialogue has its roots in the very concept of Religion, which is a dialogue between Man and God (cf. Paul VI, ES 70). Hence dialogue should be a mission of every religion, especially for the catholic religion. Dialogue with other religions always aims at mutual respect and mutual understanding. To achieve this objective, first and foremost, the religions at dialogue should share their theological views and ideas. It is not to find fault or errors in theological understanding. Rather it is to understand each one's stand on theological issues and to respect each one's view point. It is not for an argumentation that we enter into theological discussion, but it is for enriching one another with rich theological thoughts. Earlier, Christian theologians were critical about the theology of the Hindu religion and its tradition. But now, dialogue helps us to accept their viewpoint and to appreciate it. The appreciation and acceptance of other's views, especially on the Hindu religion, will help the fundamentalist group to change their attitude. In fact, fundamentalism is a reaction to the negative attitude of Christians towards the Hindu. Our misconception and misunderstanding of the Hindu religion invited the wrath of the fundamentalist. Dialogue indeed helps us to have a better understanding with the fundamentalist group. Hence, dialogue is one of the means through which we can reach out to our Hindu brethren. In this process, each religion stands in its position and expresses its view without criticizing the other. We engage in dialogue to clarify and to remove misunderstandings between two religions. This will help us to have a better relationship with the other religions in a pluralistic context.

By sharing our theological views and ideas through dialogue, we also seek the truth. Pope John Paul II said in Madras, India, that “dialogue is a means of seeking after truth and sharing it with others” (taken from speeches of John Paul II, when he visited India). It is this truth that has come to unite all the people as one humankind in love. Every religion seeks after truth. If we accept this basic principle, we can somewhat mellow down the fundamentalism. Absolutism also leads religion to fundamentalism. Hindu fundamentalism is a reaction to our absolutism. But now, we accept that other religions also contain truth. “The Catholic church recognizes the truths that are contained in the religious traditions of India” (II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 3-4). Religions in India, especially Hinduism, are ardent seekers of truth. In this context “dialogue is a means of seeking after truth and sharing it with others.” *Dignitatis Humane* of Vatican II states that by dialogue people will be sharing “with each other the truth they have discovered, or are convinced they have discovered, in such a way that they help one another in the search for truth.” Today’s India has been experiencing division, hatred and disunity because of fundamentalism. By seeking truth in other religions, especially in Hinduism, the Catholic Church can bring unity and fellowship in the society. As Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, 1, says, “it is the truth that human beings have in common and on what promotes fellowship among them.”

Kingdom of God as mission

First of all, the Kingdom of God should not be identified with the Church. The Kingdom of God is a wider concept than the Church. The Church is a sign of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God can be understood in three ways. One way, we can understand the kingdom as the future of the Church. This interpretation leads us to rigidity and exclusiveness. The church is seen as the beginnings of the kingdom. Another way of understanding the kingdom is to insist that it is not merely a future, heavenly reality, but has to be realized here and now in history as a human community of freedom, fellowship and love. People would however agree that the kingdom is not merely an earthly reality and that while we must keep on striving for the realization of the kingdom in this sense in human society, its actual advent may be eschatological in or beyond history. In this interpretation, the kingdom is understood as both present and future reality. The problem with this interpretation is that it is very much limited to the church. It sees the church as kingdom which is both a present and future reality. This interpretation will not be applicable to a pluralistic society. A third way of understanding the kingdom

refers to its presence also in other religions and cultures as God's continuing activity. The kingdom in this sense transcends the Church. The concept of kingdom goes beyond religion and culture. The church is only a historically and culturally conditioned realization of it. In promoting and serving it the church is called to realize its limitations and open out to other cultures and religions in dialogue. Through dialogue we acknowledge the presence of the kingdom in other religions. This acknowledgment and acceptance of God's presence in the other religions will really open the doors for the Hindu religion. Our closed-door attitude is one of the reasons for the Hindu fundamentalist to nurture hatred and animosity towards us.

Our narrow way of interpreting the "Church" and the "Kingdom of God" leads one to the mission of "saving of souls." In the past there was an anxiety to baptize and save as many as possible from hell fire. Now that we believe that God is reaching out to every human person in ways unknown to us, we can afford to be less anxious and ask ourselves whether the meaning of mission is not so much the saving of souls, but of being a force for the transformation of societies in view of their final fulfillment. The reinterpretation of the "Kingdom of God," invites us to work for the transformation of the society, not for increasing the quantity of the Church members but for a qualitative change in the society. The Kingdom of God is to build a society based on the values of justice, love and truth. The Kingdom of God means to establish a community of fellowship, brotherhood and sisterhood. The mission of the church is to work towards establishing the kingdom here on earth. In order to spread the kingdom, we need to work with the other religions. God's Kingdom is a common platform where all the religions meet to bring about transformation in the society. The dialogue with the other religions will help us to come together to fight against all inhuman structures, and will enable us to bring a just society which the Kingdom of God envisages. In order to bring the Kingdom of God here on earth, we need to join hands with the other religions and fight against the anti-kingdom forces. According to John Paul II, in a multi-religious society like India, the inter-religious dialogue will help the people to work together for the defense of shared human and spiritual values, and for the promotion of integral development. The dialogue will be a catalytic agent for giving a sense of solidarity among all religions in their effort to fight against the militant religious fundamentalism which threatens the unity of the people of India. Finally, we could conclude saying that dialogue helps us to work with the other religions in bringing about transformation in the society and thus we can establish the Kingdom of God which is a community of fellowship, brotherhood and sisterhood which Jesus envisaged.

Conclusion

In the conclusion, I would like to give some concrete suggestions for our formation:

- Formation is to be rooted in the historical-social situation of people; in this sense, Formation is not to be away or secluded from the life-situation of people; rather it is to be with people and a student has to immerse himself in the situation of people.
- Students should be well exposed to fundamentalism.
- Students should be well informed about the faith of other religions and should have first-hand experience of other religions.
- Our formation should enable students to face the challenges of fundamentalism.

La Charité politique dans le contexte du dialogue interreligieux

par Paul A. Bharathi, C.M.*

Introduction

Depuis des temps immémoriaux, l'Inde a été une terre de tolérance religieuse, en plus de sa richesse de cultures, langues, traditions et sagesse. Elle a été également réputée pour sa philosophie, et réceptive à diverses religions, comme l'Islam, le Christianisme, le Bouddhisme, le Sikhisme, le Parsisme et le Jaïnisme. À longueur de siècles, la coexistence religieuse a été une marque authentique de la tradition indienne. Toutes ces religions coexistaient d'une manière parfaite, et la population indienne grandit comme une nation et comme un peuple, malgré leurs différences en matière de religion. L'Hindouisme, qui est une religion ancienne, est une religion de tolérance, et de même sont ses adeptes. Mais, par le passage des années, la situation a changé. L'Hindouisme a été redéfini par un groupe de personnes, et le fondamentalisme a envahi les cerveaux de quelques uns. La semence du fondamentalisme a été semée dans la terre indienne, et dans quelques lieux, a déjà des racines, et elle est en train d'étendre ses racines dans d'autres lieux. D'emblée, le fondamentalisme hindou est très vif, et sans le moindre doute, il se propage comme un feu sauvage.

La montée du fondamentalisme hindou est la situation dans laquelle nous vivons. Notre formation doit être bien enracinée dans son contexte ; et les étudiants doivent être formés à partir de la situation politique, sociale et économique d'aujourd'hui. En d'autres mots, notre formation vincentienne doit être basée sur la charité politique. Cette dernière implique trois exigences : premièrement, bien connaître la situation politique dans laquelle nous vivons ; deuxièmement, l'analyser avec un esprit critique ; et troisièmement, répondre à cette situation. La charité politique demande que notre formation doit être

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bien insérée dans la situation sociopolitique d'aujourd'hui. Par conséquent, cet écrit représente un essai de mettre en vedette la situation politique de l'Inde, comment pourrions-nous y répondre théologiquement, et enfin, comment notre formation vincentienne serait-elle efficace à la lumière de la situation politique actuelle.

Méthode

En ce qui concerne notre méthodologie, d'abord et avant tout, la situation est la base et le fondement. Quant à notre manière de faire la théologie, comme celle des prophètes, elle doit être enracinée dans la situation historique concrète dans ses dimensions politique, sociale et religieuse. Certes, toute théologie implique un va-et-vient entre la situation du théologien et son texte. Cependant, le point de départ de ce dialogue, s'il faut qu'il soit fructueux, doit être la situation et non pas le texte. En d'autres mots, il s'agit de la contextualisation de la théologie. La contextualisation est une réponse à une situation sociopolitique, religieuse et économique déterminée. Il faut reconnaître que "Contextualisation" n'est pas simplement un mot pâle ou péjoratif, mais bel et bien une nécessité théologique exigée par la nature incarnée du Verbe. Ce verset johannique « Le Verbe s'est fait chair et il a demeuré parmi nous » (Jn 1, 14), est la base de notre théologie contextuelle. Après avoir pris en considération le contexte, qui est la base de notre réflexion théologique, nous l'étudions d'une façon analytique. En d'autres mots, nous analysons d'une manière critique et objective, sans préjugé ni partialité.

Après l'analyse du contexte, nous aurons à recourir à la Parole de Dieu et la Tradition, à la lumière desquelles, dans ce processus, nous réfléchissons sur le contexte et la situation. Ainsi donc, suite à une attentive réflexion, une nouvelle théologie émergera, certainement, à partir d'un contexte et d'une situation déterminés. Dans ce processus théologique, il y a aussi un processus intérieur qui a lieu. En même temps que la réflexion sur la situation à la lumière de la Parole de Dieu et de la Tradition, il y a la transformation de compréhension. La transformation est une forme de précompréhension en vue de la compréhension ; elle est à la base de notre manière de penser et de notre attitude. Nous avons la juste réflexion et la bonne attitude à l'égard des autres quand nous nous débarrassons de nos partialités et préjugés. Cela ne nous regarde pas seulement au niveau de la réflexion, mais aussi nous fait nous impliquer nous-mêmes dans une action, laquelle n'est autre que la mission.

Le schéma suivant illustre bien notre méthodologie :

Glanant à travers les souvenirs historiques, on prend conscience du fait qu'à partir de 1980 et dorénavant, le *Sangh Parivar* en est venu jusqu'à occuper un certain espace dans la société et la politique de l'Inde. Jusqu'en 1980, le *Sangh Parivar*, est resté comme une organisation insignifiante, devenu fort seulement dans certaines poches de l'Inde, et relevant quelques thèmes appartenant à la culture et la religion hindoues, mais sans voix forte au niveau politique. Mais, à partir de 1980, il a commencé à croître fermement. L'apogée de *Sangh Parivar* était la destruction de la mosquée, à Ayodya, en 1992. En mettant à profit ce dossier du temple à Ayodya, *Sangh Parivar* enflamma le sentiment religieux du peuple hindou. Cette affaire d'Ayodya était très chère au cœur de *Sangh Parivar*. Bien plus, les forces de l'Hindutva ont popularisé l'un de leurs dieux, nommé Seigneur Ram, au peuple à travers des symboles auxquels il pourrait être facilement attaché. Ainsi, Ram, Ayodya et le temple étaient devenus proches de la vie sociale et culturelle du peuple. En agissant de la sorte, ce que le groupe fondamentaliste avait accompli est de s'identifier à la vie culturelle des Hindous, aussi bien que de se projeter comme champion de leur religion. Après la destruction de la mosquée, à Ayodya, ce groupe a gagné les cœurs des Hindous dans certaines régions de l'Inde, et comme résultat, l'aile politique de *Sangh Parivar*, c'est-à-dire le *Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)*, s'empara du pouvoir dans quelques états indiens, et éventuellement aussi au centre de l'Inde, en 1998. Pendant leur gouvernement, ces partisans exécutaient leur plan caché visant la promotion de la nation hindoue au détriment des minorités, chrétienne comme musulmane. En faisant cela, ce que le groupe fondamentaliste a accompli est de s'identifier à la vie culturelle des hindous, aussi bien que de se projeter comme le champion de leur religion. Après la destruction de la mosquée, à Ayodya, ce groupe gagna les cœurs des hindous quelques parts en Inde, et par voie de conséquence, s'est formée la politique de *Sangh Parivar* concernant les musulmans.

Les principaux concepts de *Sangh Parivar*

- Le subconscient indien est la patrie des Hindous,
- Les Hindous sont ceux qui considèrent l'Inde comme la terre de leurs pères, aussi bien que leur terre sainte,
- Mettre en relief l'oppression historique des Hindous par des forces d'invasion comme les Musulmans et les Chrétiens, et par conséquent, lancer l'appel à renverser l'influence due à ces intrusions,

- Dénoncer la colonisation britannique aussi bien que le communisme, responsables de l'affaiblissement des Hindous,
- L'appel pressant à l'établissement de la Nation Hindoue, pour protéger les Hindous et revivre la culture hindoue.

Regards sur d'autres croyances

Les avocats de l'Hindutva utilisent, souvent, le terme Pseudo-sécularisme pour désigner les lois qu'ils jugent favorables aux minorités. Ils indiquent les différents niveaux des Hindous, Musulmans et Chrétiens, et puis, ils veulent un code civil uniforme. Le sujet de ce code uniforme, qui devrait éliminer les dispositions religieuses spéciales, pour les différentes religions (Hindous, Musulmans, Chrétiens, Sikhs, etc.) dans les constitutions indiennes, est ainsi l'un des principaux éléments politiques du programme du parti. Ces partisans signalent la question des adeptes de l'Hindutva à propos des différences législatives en matière de mariage et divorce et demandent pourquoi, dans une démocratie laïque, la polygamie est autorisée pour les Musulmans, alors qu'elle est interdite aux Hindous et aux Chrétiens. À ces derniers aussi, il est accordé des lois séparées pour le divorce, qui sont plus difficiles que pour les Hindous. Les adeptes de Hindutva plaident pour la cause de la majorité hindoue en Inde. Mais, ils sentent aussi que la démocratie laïque implique des lois égales pour toutes les religions, et, par conséquent, veulent un code civil uniforme promulgué pour la même raison. L'on doit, aussi, distinguer, à propos du terme «sécularisme», entre son usage dans le contexte occidental et dans le contexte indien. Dans le premier cas, il implique «la séparation de l'Église et de l'Etat», alors que, en Inde, il signifie «le même respect pour toutes les religions». L'un des buts des organisations de l'Hindutva, dans l'Inde moderne, est de renverser les invasions des envahisseurs. Ils impliquent des demandes de convertir les monuments historiques disputés en temples.

La mise en œuvre des politiques de l'Hindutva

La force de l'Hindutva commença l'exécution de leur politique de l'Hindutva dans quelques états gouvernés par eux :

1. L'introduction de «la loi anti-conversion» qui rend difficile, pour les missionnaires aussi bien que pour les simples individus, de se convertir de l'Hindouisme au Christianisme. Cette loi a été introduite pour contrecarrer le danger du prosélytisme religieux exercé par le Christianisme et l'Islam. Et puisque la force Hindutva croit dans une nationalité religieusement défi-

- nie, la conversion des Hindous à une foi étrangère est vue comme une menace grave à la nationalité hindoue.
2. L'introduction de « la loi anti abattage de vaches ». Essentiellement, elle vise la formation de la nation hindoue. La vache est un animal sacré pour les Hindous. Ainsi, en interdisant l'abattage de vache, ils atteignent un double but ; d'abord, faire de l'Inde une nation hindoue, et stigmatiser les Musulmans et les Chrétiens qui mangent la viande de vaches.
 3. Utiliser l'éducation pour propager l'idéologie de l'Hindutva. Dans ce programme de travail, le contenu de l'éducation, du cycle primaire jusqu'à l'enseignement supérieur, doit être : « Indianisé, nationalisé et spiritualisé ». Dans certains états gouvernés par ces partisans, ces derniers ont changé et les programmes et le contenu du thème pour répandre l'idéologie de l'Hindutva.
 4. Nomination du personnel gouvernemental officiel parmi les partisans de l'idéologie de l'Hindutva. Dans les états gouvernés par le BJP, les officiers de haut rang sont les favoris de la force de l'Hindutva, ayant une inclination pour ses politiques. Ainsi, ils peuvent manipuler les rouages gouvernementaux pour réaliser leurs propres fins.
 5. L'intimidation des Chrétiens aussi bien que des Musulmans dans les états gouvernés par la force de l'Hindutva. Des attaques soutenues ont lieu sur les églises et les écoles chrétiennes à travers le pays ; des atteintes physiques, ayant pour cibles les missionnaires chrétiens et les religieuses sont très fréquentes dans ces états gouvernés par l'Hindutva. Cette intimidation n'a pour but que de refréner les activités de nos missionnaires.

L'Analyse critique de la situation

Quand nous regardons cette situation où la force Hindutva devient de plus en plus puissante, le contexte actuel montre que, pour les Chrétiens, un grand défi est à affronter. Quand nous l'étudions d'un point de vue historique, nous, les missionnaires chrétiens, directement ou indirectement, nous avons contribué à la montée du fondamentalisme hindou. Certainement, des Musulmans aussi y ont joué un certain rôle. Tout d'abord, des envahisseurs, aussi britanniques que musulmans, doivent avoir la part du lion dans la responsabilité de cette escalade des forces de l'Hindutva. Les empereurs britanniques et musulmans étaient peu respectueux de l'Hindouisme. Ils ont ridiculisé la religion hindoue, disant qu'elle était une religion païenne et ne respectant pas ses lieux sacrés. Ces empereurs musul-

mans ont transformé quelques temples en mosquées. Par conséquent, cette attitude négative, britannique et musulmane, a obligé quelques Hindous à s'unir sous la bannière de Rashtray Swayam Sevek (RSS), ce qui a, finalement, donné le jour aux différents groupements, l'aile politique BJP y comprise.

Un autre facteur, ayant contribué à la montée de la force de l'Hindutva, est notre théologie même comme nos activités missionnaires. Jadis, l'Inde était pleine de missionnaires étrangers qui ont été très zélés dans la conversion des masses, *dalits*¹ et tribus, au Christianisme ; ce qui a été perçu, par la force de l'Hindutva, comme menace pour la religion hindoue. Les adeptes de cette dernière ont pensé que, s'ils permettent aux missionnaires chrétiens de convertir *dalits* et tribus, la religion hindoue parviendrait, finalement, à l'extinction. Par conséquent, ils sont arrivés aux armes face aux missionnaires chrétiens à cause de leur intérêt pour la conversion. La force de l'Hindutva s'oppose à n'importe quelle conversion de l'Hindouisme au Christianisme. Ainsi, l'un des principaux points du programme de la force de l'Hindutva est de mettre fin à la conversion.

Transformation : un changement d'attitude

Ces mêmes facteurs que nous venons de mentionner, et qui ont contribué, directement ou indirectement à la montée de la force de l'Hindutva, appellent maintenant un à changement dont nous avons besoin : dans notre attitude, dans notre réflexion, comme aussi dans notre théologie. Il est vrai que, à travers les années, l'Église en Inde réfléchissait sérieusement sur la relation avec les autres religions, surtout l'Hindouisme. Certes, nous avons une attitude positive à l'égard de l'Hindouisme. Cependant, tenant compte de l'expérience passée, les forces de l'Hindutva sont soupçonneuses à notre égard dans plusieurs domaines. D'abord en ce qui concerne nos instructions éducatives, ils pensent que leur raison d'être c'est pour opérer la conversion. Ils suspectent également nos services sociaux, agissant, pensent-ils, pour la conversion. Ici, nous avons besoin d'un changement dans notre mission. Nous devons passer de la conversion des âmes à celle des personnes. En d'autres mots, au lieu d'augmenter le nombre des baptêmes, nous avons besoin de travailler pour le bien-être de l'humanité, de la société et de la nation au sens large, et à travers lesquelles nous pouvons, certainement, témoigner du Christ. Durant sa vie terrestre, Jésus avait seulement douze disciples ; il n'avait pas l'obsession de les augmenter. il insistait plutôt sur son

¹ Un groupe du peuple appartenant à la classe basse en Inde.

ministère que sur l'augmentation de ses adeptes. Pareillement, notre principal objectif devrait être notre ministère, c'est-à-dire faire du bien à l'humanité, et non pas accroître le nombre des baptêmes.

L'enseignement de l'Église sur les autres religions

En Inde, dans le contexte des différentes religions, surtout l'hindouisme, nombreuses activités théologiques sont en bonne marche. En effet, le Concile Vatican II a relancé le mouvement théologique en Inde. Presque toutes les réflexions théologiques en Inde commençaient à se situer dans le contexte des religions non-chrétiennes, surtout l'hindouisme. Depuis, l'Église en Inde s'efforce rigoureusement d'améliorer ses relations avec les autres religions.

L'une des pierres d'achoppement pour une relation avec l'hindouisme était la compréhension du salut. Les premiers missionnaires étaient persuadés qu'il n'y avait pas de salut en dehors de l'Église ; cela était une cause de l'animosité entre Hindouisme et Christianisme. Actuellement, le Concile Vatican II reconnaît l'universelle volonté salvifique de Dieu (*Lumen Gentium*, 16). C'est à cause de cette même volonté qu'il y a des œuvres de Dieu dans les autres religions. Bien que les œuvres divines dans les autres religions soient cachées, elles ne sont pas entièrement inconnues de l'Église. Dans les manières de se comporter et de vivre du peuple, comme dans les préceptes et les enseignements des religions, la Déclaration conciliaire *Nostra Aetate* perçoit le reflet d'un rayon de la vérité, c'est-à-dire du Christ qui illumine tous. En venant en Inde, et parlant des autres religions, Jean-Paul II a dit qu'en Christ Dieu accomplit le salut, même aussi d'une autre manière à travers les différentes religions du peuple. Dieu se fait « présent, de différentes manières, non seulement aux individus, mais aussi aux peuples entiers, à travers leur richesse spirituelle dont leurs religions sont la principale et l'essentielle expression, même quand elles contiennent des "trous", des insuffisances et des erreurs ». Le document publié conjointement par le Conseil Pontifical pour le dialogue interreligieux et la Congrégation pour l'Évangélisation des Peuples, rappelle, encore une fois, le Concile Vatican II. Ce document dit qu'il se peut par la providence divine les peuples appartenant à différentes religions, à travers divers vrais efforts religieux, parviennent au salut (II Vatican, *Ad Gentes*, 3, cf. aussi *Lumen Gentium*, 16).

Comme je l'ai dit plus haut, l'une des raisons de la montée du fondamentalisme hindou est notre propre attitude négative qui condamnait les autres religions, en disant que « hors de l'Église pas de salut ». Cette attitude exaspéra l'hindou fondamentaliste, et par voie de conséquence, les rendit hostiles aux conversions en Inde. Maintenant,

notre attitude a changé, et le Concile Vatican II a souligné clairement le fait qu'en dehors de l'Église il y aussi le salut. Par conséquent, nous avons besoin de reconnaître les autres religions et leur chemin pour atteindre le salut qui ne devrait pas être une religion révélée comme notre religion chrétienne. En effet, cette réflexion aide la force de l'Hindutva à se débarrasser de leur parti pris contre le Christianisme, surtout par rapport à notre motif de conversion.

Une réflexion théologique : Le dialogue comme mission

Prenant en considération le contexte pluraliste de l'Inde, et à la lumière de Vatican II, nous devons repenser notre mission. Dans un contexte pluraliste, le dialogue interreligieux est une partie intégrante de la mission évangélicatrice de l'Église. Le Concile invite au dialogue avec les religions non-chrétiennes. Ce dialogue a ses racines dans le concept même de religion, laquelle est un dialogue entre l'homme et Dieu (cf. Paul VI, *ES*, 70). Il en découle que le dialogue devrait être une mission de chaque religion, surtout la religion catholique. Le dialogue avec une autre religion doit toujours viser le respect mutuel et la compréhension réciproque. Pour atteindre ce but, il faut, d'abord et avant tout, que les religions en dialogue partagent leurs points de vue théologiques aussi bien que leurs idées. L'objectif n'est pas de trouver fautes ou erreurs dans la compréhension théologique, mais plutôt, de comprendre la position de chacun dans les thématiques théologiques, comme de respecter chaque point de vue. Il n'est pas, non plus, pour une argumentation que nous entrons dans une discussion théologique, mais pour nous enrichir mutuellement avec des réflexions théologiques de valeur. Les premiers théologiens chrétiens étaient critiques par rapport à la théologie hindoue et sa tradition. Mais, actuellement, le dialogue nous aide à les accepter et les apprécier. L'acceptation et l'appréciation réciproques, surtout à propos de la religion hindoue, aideront le groupe fondamentaliste à changer leur attitude. En effet, le fondamentalisme est une réaction contre l'attitude négative du Chrétien vis-à-vis de l'Hindou. Notre concept et notre compréhension erronés de la religion hindoue ont provoqué la colère du fondamentaliste. Par contre, le vrai dialogue nous aide à avoir une meilleure compréhension de la part du groupe fondamentaliste. Donc, le dialogue est l'un des moyens par lesquels nous pouvons rejoindre nos frères hindous. Dans ce processus, chaque religion maintient sa position et exprime ses vues, mais sans critiquer les autres. Nous nous engageons dans le dialogue pour clarifier et éliminer les malentendus entre les deux religions. Cela va nous aider à avoir une meilleure relation avec l'autre religion dans un contexte pluraliste.

Par le partage de nos vues théologiques et nos idées, à travers le dialogue, nous cherchons aussi la vérité. A Madras, Inde, le pape Jean-Paul II a dit : « Le dialogue est un moyen pour chercher la vérité et la partager avec les autres ». C'est cette Vérité (Jésus-Christ) qui est venue pour rassembler tous les peuples, tout le genre humain, dans l'amour. Chaque religion cherche la vérité : si nous acceptons ce principe de base, nous pouvons, dans une certaine mesure, adoucir le fondamentalisme hindou, lequel est une réaction à notre absolutisme, car l'absolutisme aussi aboutit au fondamentalisme. Mais actuellement, nous acceptons que l'autre religion contient, elle aussi, de la vérité. L'Église catholique reconnaît les vérités incluses dans les traditions religieuses de l'Inde (cf. II Vatican, *Nostra Aetate*, 3-4). Les religions en Inde, surtout l'Hindouisme, sont des chercheurs zélés de la vérité. Dans ce contexte, le dialogue est un moyen pour la recherche de la vérité et la partager avec d'autres. La Déclaration conciliaire sur la liberté religieuse *Dignitatis Humanae*, 3, dit que, par le dialogue, les peuples seront en mesure de partager « la vérité qu'ils ont trouvée ou pensent avoir trouvée, afin de s'aider mutuellement dans la quête de la vérité ». L'Inde d'aujourd'hui avait expérimenté la division, la haine et la désunion, à cause du fondamentalisme. En cherchant la vérité dans une autre religion, surtout dans l'Hindouisme, l'Église catholique peut semer l'unité et la communion dans la société. C'est exactement ce qu'a dit le Concile Vatican II, *Nostra Aetate*, 1 : « Le genre humain devient de jour en jour plus étroitement uni, et [...] les relations entre les divers peuples augmentent ».

Le Royaume de Dieu comme Mission

Tout d'abord, le Royaume de Dieu n'est pas à être identifié à l'Église, car il est plus grand. L'Église est un signe du Royaume. Ce Royaume de Dieu peut être compris de trois manières. La première est de comprendre ce Royaume comme l'avenir de l'Église ; mais cette interprétation nous conduit à la rigidité et à l'exclusivisme. L'Église est perçue comme le début du Royaume. Une autre manière de comprendre le Royaume est d'insister sur le fait qu'il n'est pas un avenir à l'état pur, une réalité céleste, mais il doit être réalisé ici et maintenant dans l'histoire comme une communauté humaine de liberté, de communion et d'amour, certes. Cependant, l'on doit être d'accord sur le fait que le Royaume n'est pas, non plus, une simple réalité terrestre, et, alors que nous devons continuer l'effort pour la réalisation du Royaume dans ce sens dans la société humaine, son avènement complet doit être eschatologique dans/au-delà de l'histoire. Dans cette interprétation, le Royaume est compris comme une réalité actuelle et future, simultanément. L'inconvénient de cette

interprétation est qu'elle est trop limitée à l'Église. Elle montre l'Église comme un Royaume qui est une réalité à la fois présente et future. Cette interprétation ne serait pas appliquée dans une société pluraliste. Une troisième manière de comprendre le Royaume se réfère à sa présence aussi dans d'autres religions et cultures comme étant une activité continue de Dieu. Dans ce sens, le Royaume dépasse l'Église. Le concept du Royaume va au-delà de la religion et de la culture. L'Église est seulement une réalisation historique et culturelle du Royaume. En le promouvant et servant, l'Église est appelée à réaliser ses limites et s'ouvrir à d'autres cultures et religions en dialogue. À travers le dialogue, nous reconnaissons la présence du Royaume dans d'autres religions. Cette reconnaissance et acceptation de la présence de Dieu dans les autres religions va, réellement, ouvrir les portes pour la religion hindoue. Notre attitude de porte-fermée est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles le fondamentaliste hindou, nourrit la haine et l'animosité à notre égard.

Notre manière étroite d'interpréter « l'Église », et « le Royaume de Dieu » conduit à la mission du « salut des âmes ». Dans le passé, il y avait une anxiété pour baptiser et sauver du feu de l'enfer le plus grand nombre. Actuellement, puisque nous croyons que Dieu ne cesse d'atteindre chaque être humain par des manières inconnues pour nous, nous pouvons être en mesure d'être moins anxieux, et nous demander si le sens de la mission ne serait, non pas le salut des âmes, mais une force de transformation des sociétés en vue de leur accomplissement final. Cette réinterprétation du « Royaume de Dieu » nous invite à travailler pour la transformation de la société, et non pas pour augmenter la quantité des membres de l'Église, mais pour un changement qualitatif dans la société. Le Royaume de Dieu est de construire une société basée sur les valeurs de justice, d'amour et de vérité. Également, il signifie établir une communauté de communion, de fraternité. La mission de l'Église est de travailler en vue de l'établissement du Royaume ici sur la terre. En vue d'étendre le Royaume, nous avons besoin de travailler avec autres religions. Le Royaume de Dieu est la base commune où toutes les religions se rencontrent pour produire une transformation dans la société. Le dialogue avec d'autres religions nous aidera à travailler ensemble contre toutes les structures inhumaines, comme à avoir une société juste envisagée par le Royaume de Dieu. En vue de réaliser ce Royaume ici sur terre, nous avons besoin de cheminer la main dans la main avec l'autre religion et de combattre les forces anti-Royaume. Selon le Pape Jean Paul II, dans une société de multiples religions comme l'Inde, le dialogue interreligieux aidera le peuple à travailler ensemble pour défendre les valeurs humaines et spirituelles communes, aussi bien que pour la promotion d'un développement intégral. Le dialogue sera un

catalyseur pour donner sens à la solidarité entre toutes les religions dans leurs efforts pour combattre le fondamentalisme religieux militant qui menace l'unité du peuple de l'Inde. Finalement, nous pouvons conclure en disant que le dialogue nous aide à travailler avec l'autre religion pour effectuer une transformation dans la société, et ainsi, nous pouvons établir le Royaume de Dieu qui est une communauté de communion et de fraternité envisagées par Jésus.

Conclusion

En guise de conclusion, je voudrais donner quelques suggestions concrètes pour la formation des nôtres :

- La formation doit être enracinée dans la situation historico-sociale du peuple, c'est-à-dire que la formation ne doit pas être éloignée ou exclue de la situation vitale du peuple, mais plutôt elle doit être proche du peuple ; l'étudiant doit s'immerger dans la situation du peuple,
- Les étudiants devraient être exposés au fondamentalisme,
- Les étudiants devraient être bien informés au sujet de la foi de l'autre religion et devraient avoir une expérience personnelle des autres religions,
- Notre formation devrait aider les étudiants à faire face aux défis du fondamentalisme.

Traduction : MILAD ZAKHARY, C.M.

Poverty, Culture and Religiosity

To See Realities for Political Charity and Vincentian Formation

by Fransiscus Xaverius Eko Armada Riyanto, C.M.

INTRODUCTION¹

In his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, Pope Benedict XVI mentioned Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac among “the men and women of faith, hope and love” (art. 40) who have exemplified for us authentic Christian charity. Love, which proceeds from God, can only be real when it shows itself in concrete ‘charity’ for the neighbor; when it expresses itself in viable structures which alleviate hunger, loneliness and pain in society. All throughout this great letter, the Pope outlines how the Church has made the practice of charity its main responsibility. The ministry of charity is part of the Church’s nature, “an indispensable part of her very being” (*DCE*, 25). In fact, Benedict XVI asserts that it is only when we see charity effective in the structures of society that “we see the Trinity,” he quotes St. Augustine (*DCE*, 19).

St. Vincent already made the same assertion almost 400 years earlier when he told the sisters “to leave God for God.” He also once reminded the missionaries who wanted to abandon the ministry of charity in favor of preaching: “Are not the poor the suffering members of our Lord? Are they not our brothers? And if priests abandon them, who will be there to help them?” (SV XII, 87). Organized charity — that is — charity effectively working in the structures of the church and society is not only a work of the Company. It belongs to the deepest part of its identity.

It is within this tradition that Vincentian formators in Asia Pacific study ‘political charity.’ We think that our candidates should not remain indifferent towards what is happening in contemporary society. They should be grounded in their own socio-political

¹ *Introduction* to the first Joint Meeting of the Commission of Vincentian Charism and Culture and Asia Pacific Regional Formators at Prigen, Indonesia, July 1-15, 2007 drafted by Armada Riyanto, C.M., and Danny Pilario, C.M. (chair and co-chair of the CCC).

situations, be formed to analyze it critically so that they can respond to its challenges more effectively. The term ‘political charity’ does not appear in the sociological and political science dictionaries. But, in the Vincentian tradition, charity can only exist ‘politically,’ that is, in concrete works and social structures. As St. Vincent says: “Our work [for the poor] is the only proof of our love.” In the same conference, he continued: “Let us love God, my brethren, but let us love him with all our strength and in the sweat of our brow” (ABELLY, Bk. I, Ch. XIX, 81).

In the gathering of Vincentian formators and other members of the Vincentian family in July 2007 at Prigen, we have chosen the theme: “Political Charity and Vincentian Formation.” Our aim is to think of concrete ways with which to equip our candidates and members with critical sensibility to the movements of contemporary society — its joys and hopes, its ups and downs, its lights and shadows.

This paper offers a brief outline of “to see”² the realities of Asia Pacific as the first step of delving into the main topic, “Political Charity and Vincentian Formation.” The Asia Pacific region has been called the place in which poverty, culture, and religiosity are characteristically its three main pillars of existence.

1. POVERTY

Understanding Poverty. Before proclaiming the Gospel to the poor, Saint Vincent examined the poverty of his time by paying visits to the poor, listening to confessions, learning zeal by living a hard life. Following the example of the holy Founder, today it would be worthwhile to listen to what the poor people say about their understanding of poverty. In *India*, indigenous *women* (or ‘tribal women’ as they are called) describe how they view poverty. Poverty, to them, is not having enough food from the farm, little or no access to drinking water, low literacy, and being landless.³ Group discussions among migrant youths and children in *Vietnam* identify

² “There are three stages which should normally be followed in the reduction of social principles into practice. First, one reviews the concrete situation; secondly, one forms a judgment on it in the light of these same principles; thirdly, one decides what in the circumstances can and should be done to implement these principles. These are the three stages that are usually expressed in the three terms: observe, judge, act” (Pope JOHN XXIII, 1961, *Mater et Magistra*, 263).

³ The IFAD-funded Bihar-Madhya Pradesh Tribal Development Program, 1997.

specific situations that illustrate poverty to them: being pulled out of school because parents cannot afford the costs; schools being closed down; teachers beating or humiliating poorer pupils; fathers drinking and beating mothers, shouting and quarrelling in the household, neighborhood fights; drug addiction; being considered inferior by wealthier households, being beaten by richer children; unstable income, being hungry, having poor clothes; concern about mother's health and inability to afford good health care.⁴ In the *Philippines* the poor categorize themselves in status groups according to access to basic survival means: *Walang-wala* (have nothing or next to nothing, meaning no land to farm, scarcely any income, tiny houses and, worst of all, little food); *Sumasala sa oras* (missing meals); *Isang kahig, isang tuka* (living hand-to-mouth and eking out a living like a chicken scratching and pecking the ground); *Agaw-buhay* (hovering between life and death).⁵

In *Indonesia* the meaning of poverty can perhaps be defined as the life of the *indigenous* as those of Papua, Kalimantan, Sumatra, and many other parts of the archipelago of Indonesia. Their condition means *par-excellence* lacking good health service. There have been thousands of children, mostly poor ones, suffering from malnutrition, starvation or lacking of good quality of food that causes them to be sickly ones with big stomachs and "tiny" brains. These children are usually found in villages, remote places, uplands, coastlands, the inner part of forested lands. Poverty is also in connection with very limited conditions of basic infrastructures. This is the crucial problem of small islands or remote places in the big ones like Papua, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Flores where streets, schools, electricity, health services are not properly established. Or, if they have been set up, they have often been neglected. Consequently, poverty is just everyday life. People have difficulty in breaking up poverty and developing their quality of life.

Overall rural poverty. Some 1.2 billion people in the world are estimated to consume less than a 'standard' dollar a day and are therefore in 'dollar poverty.' More than two thirds of the world's poor are in Asia, and poverty is disproportionately concentrated in the rural areas of the region. Almost 75% of the poor live in the rural

⁴ Source: Save the Children Fund 1999.

⁵ Source: Kerkvliet 1990 as quoted in IFAD 2003. Cf. <http://www.ifad.org/> (Accessed on June 20, 2007). See also the meaning of poverty in the web "povertyNet" <http://web.worldbank.org> (Accessed on June 10, 2007) & in the web "a dollar a day" http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00282/over_what.htm (Accessed on June 10, 2007).

areas.⁶ In Asia Pacific countries there is a somewhat sluggish policy over rural development. Though Indonesia, for instance, is not yet categorized as an industrialized state, recently people have been desperately trying to abandon their lands. The government for sure recognizes the crucial problem of farmers, yet politically it remains paralyzed to resolve immense challenges of the so-called “globalization”. Assuming that developing countries have sometimes become victims rather than protagonists in the globalized world, I think the similar condition is happening in countries of Asia Pacific. The fact that poor people are those who live in rural areas is indeed true.⁷

Urban poverty. 700 million people in Asia and the Pacific live on less than US\$1 a day, 400 million of which are residing in urban areas. Each day a further 120,000 people are added to the populations of Asian cities due to rural-urban migration and job-mobility.⁸ Many Asian cities face deteriorating sanitation and environmental conditions, inadequate housing and infrastructure, and other problems.⁹ Urbanization, however, is also a chance for the poor to escape poverty though oftentimes they fall into another trap of poverty and marginalization.

Environmental poverty. Over the past decade, there has been a corresponding increase in the incidence of poverty that can be attributed to environmental causes. Floods, landslides, tsunami, gas volcano, declining natural resources productivity, droughts and urban pollution exert disproportionate impacts of poverty on the lives of people. The poor suffer more losses, illnesses, injuries and death as a result of resource degradation, natural disasters and pollution than the rest of the population, because they are more likely to be dependent upon natural systems for their livelihoods.

The Feminization of poverty. While nearly two thirds of the world’s poor are in the Asian and Pacific region, two thirds of the region’s poor are women. And poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural areas. The notion of ‘feminization of poverty’ was first used to imply that women are making up an ever increasing share of the world’s poor as a result of recession and cuts in public spending.¹⁰ The term has been used for any or all of the following situations:

⁶ ADB 2005 (Asian Development Bank). <http://www.abd.org/> (Accessed on May 20, 2007).

⁷ IFAD 2001. http://www.ifad.org/poverty/region/pi/PI_part1.pdf (Accessed on June 15, 2007).

⁸ ADB 2005.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Asian Development Bank 2005.

More women than men are poor; poor women suffer more from capability deprivation than poor men; the severity of poverty is higher for women; women face greater hardship in lifting themselves and their children out of the poverty trap; there are poor women even within non-poor families. Male migrants in search of work and consequent changes in household structures have placed additional burdens on women, especially those with several dependents. Improving the political, legal, cultural, economic, and social status of women is thus pivotal to escaping the poverty trap.

2. CULTURE

A common way of understanding culture is to see it as consisting of three elements that are “passed on from generation to generation by learning alone”: *values, norms, institutions*.¹¹ Values comprise ideas about what in life seems important. They guide the rest of the culture. Norms consist of expectations of how people will behave. They are concrete in what we may call “habitus,” the series of ethical customs and habits, including laws and sanctions enforced. Institutions are the structures of a society within which values and norms are transmitted. Institution is a part of culture as it is typical in different people of different places. It depicts symbolically some ideas of culture.

Culture as worldview. People started to understand culture as worldview in the time of ideology especially the Second World War. The notion of worldview implies ideas of the ways that people define their relationship with the world. It can be something traditional inherited by the ancestors from generation to generation such as rites, popular “liturgical” celebrations, values, and series of laws. But,

¹¹ “In its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions, symbols and beliefs... it is culture that gives (man) the ability to reflect on (himself and the world). It is culture that makes us specifically human, rational beings, endowed with critical judgement and a sense of moral commitment. It is through culture that we discern values and make choices. It is through culture that (man) expresses (himself), becomes aware of (himself), recognizes his incompleteness, questions his own achievements, seeks untiringly for new meanings and creates works through which he transcends his limitations.” HERVE CARRIER, “Understanding Culture: The Ultimate Challenge of the World-Church?,” in *The Church and Culture since Vatican II: The Experience of North and Latin America*, Edited by Joseph Gremillion, University of Notre Dame Press, 1985, 19.

worldview is also connected with ideological ideas that people live out and promote.¹²

Culture as phenomena of the everyday-life. Oftentimes we have heard people spontaneously saying “culture of violence,” “culture of death,” “culture of corruption,” “culture of harmony,” “culture of hedonism,” “culture of materialism,” “culture of feminism,” “culture of gender equality,” “culture of fear,” “culture of terror,” “culture of terrorism,” “culture of globalization,” “culture of instant mentality,” “culture of getting suddenly rich.”¹³ The way of understanding culture as indicated above is based upon what we may call concrete experiences of “everyday-life.” The terminology “everyday-life” is taken from the philosophy of Alfred Schutz whose book, *Phenomenology of the Social World*, became the emblematic line of phenomenological approach, the new mainstream of sociological research. Everyday-life is understood as the “province of reality which the wide-awake and normal adult simply takes for granted in the attitude of common sense.”¹⁴ In everyday life the style of lived experiences is wide-awakeness. For Alfred Schutz, “consciousness is itself under the greatest tension, which originates from the attitude of full attentiveness to life and its necessities. In acts and doings that are directed toward the surrounding world, the ego is fully interested in life and is therefore wide-awake.... It is the world from which we cannot escape as long as we are wide-awake, the world where stones hurt our toes, where desires demand satisfaction, where fears inhibit our freedom, where we encounter our fellows in the flesh and have to communicate with them.”¹⁵ So, when we hear people saying “culture of violence,” it indicates their awakening to the concrete world they live in. That saying of “culture of violence” does not refer statistically

¹² In Asia, Mao was the one who called the ideological revolution of the communists in Mainland China that of culture in 1949. In Indonesia, there is a national ideology called “Pancasila” (the five Principles). These five principles (1. belief in one Supreme God, 2. sovereignty of the people, 3. deliberation to arrive at consensus, 4. humanitarianism, and 5. social justice), are also understood as a set of values and common beliefs based on the cultural heritage of the Indonesian cosmic world-view.

¹³ Culture of being suddenly rich happens in our experience: to some candidates and their parents especially from middle class or poor economy, being a priest means being rich, since a priest has cars, an amount of money, a good relationship with the haves and business people, etc.

¹⁴ ALFRED SCHUTZ - THOMAS LUCKMANN, *The Structures of Life-World*, Volume II, Translated by Richard Zaner and David J. Parent, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1989, 3.

¹⁵ MARCELO MANIMTIM, C.M., *The Concept of Lifeworld in Jürgen Habermas*, Rome 1993, 49.

to objective facts of violence (though it can be so). The concrete world is given to us in the sense of experience.

Asia Pacific and Culture of Harmony. Being young in its zest for life, Asia Pacific is ancient in its own cultural heritage. It can be seen not just from plurality of cultures, cultural rituals and types of societies, models of economic practices, variations of technologies, arts, sciences, and philosophies. But, it can be clear from the most worthy one, that is “culture of harmony.” I underline the importance of “harmony” since Asia Pacific is granted with rich diversity of cultures. Diversity can be richness and challenge at the same time. It is richness, as diverse cultures indicate the beauty of differences. Yet, it is challenge as in many cases people of Asia Pacific have suffered cultural tensions, conflicts, or even civil wars.

Just take as an example, Indonesia has a population of around 210 million people (2001), including 500 ethnic groups speaking more than 600 languages (dialects). This ethnic diversity is understood as an asset of cultural riches supporting state unity, which is reflected in the national motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, unity in diversity. All these have also contributed to the complexities of life, to its agony and ecstasy. Yet, in Indonesia too, we observe the search for cultural and human as well as religious harmony, that vibrant dynamic totality attained by interacting with other pulsating and maybe conflicting parts. Harmony in a certain sense constitutes “the intellectual and affective, religious and artistic, personal and societal soul of both persons and institutions in Asia” (Fourth Bishops’ Institute for Interreligious Dialogue, BIRA IV, 1984).

Challenges to Culture of Harmony. Many situations in the Asian and Pacific reality have threatened and contradicted harmony. Financial crises hit Asia cruelly at the end of the ninetieth decade a few years ago. Indonesia was one among the most suffering countries. The death toll might not be countless. Yet, for nearly all of Indonesian people such a crisis brought a very bitter experience of living together. We saw conflicts between people everywhere around the regions. Moslems were against Christians, Buddhists, Hinduists and vice versa. Fundamentalist Moslems were against the moderate ones and vice versa. Human beings destroyed forests; and illegal logging was obviously uncontrolled. During the crisis, being far from promoting the worthy value of harmony, Indonesian people as well as others in Asia cultivated concretely a culture of violence. In time of violence people were against one another. There was somewhat *bellum omnium contra omnes* (war of all against all). In many cases women and children suffered most. There was no friendship as such. After the economic crisis people have started to enjoy an economic growth. Yet, according to the UN economic and social commission

for Asia and the Pacific, in its recent report, the improvement in living conditions and living standards has often been offset by new social problems like urbanization and the global crisis of energy and food.

3. RELIGIOSITY

Asia is the womb of ancient cultures as well as religiosities. Asia is also the birthplace of the world's great religions: Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Shintoism, Sikhism and Taoism. Despite the common Asian world-view which perceives reality as "one," and a widespread tolerance which subscribes to a basic equality among all religious convictions, Asian religious pluralism remains a problem. The problem is acute, because Asian religions still constitute a powerful force controlling the consciences of people and influencing every area of their social life. As such, they can serve to bring together peoples and nations in unity and harmony, or cause division and fragmentation. Sadly, to a large extent, the latter has been the concrete experience of the Asian peoples.

Fundamentalism. As there is a strong bond between religion and culture, fundamentalism has given rise to numerous conflicts and bloody violence. Such conflicts and violence, besides having disrupted harmony, have also resulted in the loss of human lives and the destruction of sacred temples, especially in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, all in the name of religious affiliation and cultural patrimony. In Sri Lanka, conflicts between ethnic and linguistic groups have been a cause of continual violence and bloodshed. The events surrounding the razing of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in December, 1992 have demonstrated how devastating the forces of religious fundamentalism can become. In the whole of the Indian subcontinent, there have been clashes between Moslems and Hindus, during which Hindus were chasing the Muslims in Bombay, and Muslims retaliating by persecuting Hindus and destroying their temples in Pakistan and Bangladesh. In Indonesia there were hundreds of Christian and Catholic churches burned down by fundamentalists; several houses of prayer that belonged to Buddhists, Hinduists, as well as Confucionists were destroyed; some mosques were hit by other fundamentalists. Terrorism has been one of the expressions likeable to fundamentalists. Fundamentalism in Indonesia usually comes from those people who underwent some kind of activities in the Middle East claimed as "jihad" (action to defend

God).¹⁶ In the case of Islamic fundamentalism, young people who had “jihad” experiences outside Indonesia become trouble makers in the Archipelago.

Religion and human freedom. Religion has also something worthy of human beings. Reflections on religiosity have led me to the following “spaces” for religion in society: *First*, religion brings completion to human freedom. Most, if not all, religions speak of freedom from oppression, from evil, pain, suffering and death. In the words of Pope John Paul II, “Freedom is the measure of man’s dignity and greatness. Living the freedom sought by individuals and peoples is a great challenge to man’s spiritual growth and to the moral vitality of nations.... Freedom is ordered to the truth, and is fulfilled in man’s quest for truth and in man’s living in the truth.” Religion speaks of the language of hope, the hope of total emancipation and fullness of freedom. *Second*, religion provides the rites and rituals for institutionalization of civil society. It is Through ritual, that beliefs, values and human ordering are invested with the aura of the sacred, at least in the sense of asserting a foundation beyond ourselves for inalienable rights and common horizons. Religious rite deepens the conviction of the human person-participants in civil society by embodying the source of authority in its institution. *Third*, religion sets the way of life of loving and caring, and laying the ground for a standard of ethical behavior. Religion, especially oriental religion, is a way of life, of living in harmony with nature and with others, through loving and caring for one another. Religion addresses the heart and speaks of the transcendent source and ultimate end of all values. Religion attests to the universality of values of peace, solidarity, justice and liberty. Civil society in its effort to build a civilization of love based on these universal values and in a culture of freedom needs religion as its impetus. Finally, religion founds the unity and diversity of peoples and cultures. We all belong to one family.

In Indonesia as well as India, for instance, one often hears simple people saying that all religions teach the same basic moral teachings that God is one and all have to reach Him in the end. People only take different paths to get there. The Catholic Church announced

¹⁶ The meaning of “jihad” has been somehow a confused one. The fundamentalists use the term “jihad” to encourage war against enemies of Islam. Yet, the term itself possesses a good notion indicating “an act of exerting best effort for the sake of Allah or in the way of Allah.” However it is indeed true that common people have often been more overwhelmed by the meaning of “jihad” proposed by the Islamic fundamentalists rather than by the moderate Moslems.

novel ideas through Vatican II, its historic council. It no longer spoke in harsh terms about pagans, or in a tone of self-complacency as if it alone had the monopoly to total truth about God. Vatican II documents in *Nostra Aetate* (1965) nos. 1 and 2 stated that in this age, with people drawing more closely together and the bonds of friendship between different peoples being strengthened, the Church examines with greater care her relation to non-Christian religions. Aware of her duty to foster unity and charity among individuals and among nations, the Church reflects on what people have in common and what tends to promote fellowship among them. *Nostra Aetate* further states that the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these (other) religions. She has a high regard for the manner of life and conduct, the precepts and doctrines which, although different in many ways from her own teaching, nevertheless often reflect that truth which enlightens all people. The Council brought this consciousness to many, and while some were struggling with these proclamations, it went a step ahead to instruct itself and its faithful in these words. The Church, therefore, urges her sons to enter with prudence and charity into discussion and collaboration with members of other religions. *Nostra Aetate* has given birth to what is called "inter-religious dialogue."

Religious tolerance and dialogue. Religious tolerance is considered as an expression of one's attitude towards other religions and to some specific religious situations. However, religious tolerance does not exist in a vacuum, but in definite concrete situations, and can vary according to the situation. This religious tolerance is studied in view of inter-religious dialogue. Religion is something that leads people to God, exhorts its followers to live good moral lives and calls people of God to be of one mind and heart; but the present state of affairs shows an inconsistency between preached and lived religion, its tenets and practices, and its doctrine and behavior. This causes an immense amount of dissonance, this time from the angle of religious beliefs. Religion here, instead of achieving its positive function of mutual love, understanding among peoples, unity, purity, etc. has in the end made them less tolerant. There is clearly an inconsistency. Tolerance goes hand in hand with intolerance. This inconsistency is one the major problems in religiosity.

4. CONTEMPORARY RESPONSES

Be ready to collaborate with people. Saint Vincent de Paul was never alone to give response to the needs of his time. He worked together with the *Ladies of Charity*, priests as well as religious reformers at that time. Poverty was not simply a matter of lacking

food or shelter. It was inhuman conditions. The way Saint Vincent responded to the demands was collaboration. Evangelizing of the poor was done in collaboration and partnership with the lay people, sisters as well as priests, or even with the poor themselves.

Today the call of collaboration is loud and urgent. *Pastores Dabo Vobis* emphasizes the demand that religious persons should be able to collaborate with one another and with people regardless of culture, nationality, religion or faith. Vincentians should learn and listen to other people about how the crucial problems of poverty, cultural problems and religious conflicts are to be responded to cooperatively.

The amazing phenomenon of contemporary responses to poverty in the world as well as in Asia Pacific regions has been defined as setting up the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) to be achieved together. MDGs are not just a series of common goals. They depict something deeper than just goals consented to by world leaders. Since creation human beings have been against one another. MDGs indicate a marvelous understanding of togetherness, of working together, of journeying together.¹⁷ The goals are: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, develop a global partnership for development.

Promote culture of harmony. The fact that Asia Pacific is the cradle of diverse cultures is clear from the everyday life that we concretely experience. Diversity is worthy but also can become a source of bitter conflicts. In some places of Indonesia, let us take a look at Sampit, a small town known as the place where conflicts between the Dayak and Madurese people began; diversity is indeed something crucial. We cannot say that diversity is simply worthwhile. We have to acknowledge that diversity is also a challenge to be responded to.

The picture of the Asian situation is not altogether “doom and gloom.” In Asian Pacific civilization, we observe how the “coincidence of opposites” has been all along a characteristic way of life and thought. In ancient Chinese thought, harmony requires the interplay of seemingly-antithetical elements such as human person and nature, *yin* and *yang*, benevolence and autocracy. The two components are regarded as mutually necessary, rather than irreconcilable; the antagonistic elements are interdependent partners without whose

¹⁷ See <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> and <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml> (Accessed on June 1, 2007).

joint activities a harmonious society would be impossible. Harmony is not the attainment of an absolute standard, but the happy outcome that can be achieved when one takes account of all circumstances.

The Javanese people of Indonesia think that everyday life cannot continue unless we cultivate the sense of harmony. Each Javanese is urged to live out harmony not just with one another but also with creatures, the world, and harmony within oneself. In such kind of wisdom, the sense of self in Javanese tradition is somewhat complex. The Javanese believes in *Manunggaling Kawulo Gusti* (unity of God within one's self). The sense of "unity" cannot be understood in Western notion. It says something about the harmonious presence of a human being within his/her self. And the source of harmony is nothing other than the presence of God within me (myself).

Promote culture of peace. As we can imagine easily people of Asia Pacific have often fallen into the trap of conflicts for many reasons such as economical crisis, socio-political disorder, or cultural rivalry. We need peacemakers. Saint Vincent did some exemplary actions of reconciling peoples who quarreled during popular mission activities. In today's condition, being Vincentian should also mean being a promoter of peace. "Peace" is not only a situation without physical conflict. It suggests a peaceful and conducive situation in which people may live in solidarity and collaboration, as well as dialogue.

Be perseverant to dialogue of life, of concrete collaboration, and of faith. In responding to the challenge of religiosity in Asia Pacific, inter-religious dialogue or inter-ideological/cultural dialogue is to be cultivated in any kind of circumstance. Far from being an easy task, inter-religious dialogue has often been frustrating and sweating. We ourselves cannot help but acknowledge that inter-religious dialogue seems to be more formal, artificial and pretending than a radical, genuine, and authentic movement. Those who involve themselves in and experience religious dialogue often fall into a dark corridor that they must go through. There have been so many studies, theological-philosophical-cultural reflections, countless appointments done, yet still there are vast stones, thorns and blocks. Karl Rahner conceives of "Christian Anonym"; Leonard Swidler proposes "the Dialogue Decalogue"¹⁸; C. Arrevalo suggests "indigenizing of theology";

¹⁸ **1st COMMANDMENT:** The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality, and then to act accordingly. **2nd:** Interreligious dialogue must be a two-sided project — within each religious or ideological community and between religious or ideological communities. **3rd:** Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity. **4th:** In interreligious dialogue we must not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather

Raimundo Pannikar offers the concept of “intra-religious dialogue”, and many more scholars. But, who would deny that inter-religious dialogue (at least of life and work)¹⁹ is still the most urgent and necessary action to cultivate our being together in everyday life within diverse cultural traditions and socio-political dynamism of Asia Pacific region?! Nevertheless, it is still to be expressed concretely again and again with great perseverance and diligence. Inter-religious dialogue is an unfinished project or, better expressed, an ongoing formation of life itself. Oh, we have just done a good response!²⁰

5. IMPLICATION FOR FORMATION: NEW SPIRIT, NEW EYES, NEW HEART

Learning from realities is the very first step of renewal in formation. Formandi, formators and those involving themselves in formation should keep on looking at realities around their everyday lives. Asia Pacific faces immense poverty. It is also blessed by great

our ideals with our partner’s ideals, our practice with our partner’s practice. **5th**: Each participant must define himself. **6th**: Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement are. Rather, each partner should not only listen to the other partner with openness and sympathy but also attempt to agree with the dialogue partner as far as is possible while still maintaining integrity with his own tradition. **7th**: Dialogue can take place only between equals, or *par cum pari* as the Second Vatican Council put it. Both must come to learn from each other. **8th**: Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust. **9th**: Persons entering into interreligious, interideological dialogue must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own religious or ideological traditions. **10th**: Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner’s religion or ideology “from within.” The “Dialogue Decalogue” was first published in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* in 1983 and has been translated into more than a dozen languages. It is presented here in a slightly revised and shortened version. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 20:1, Winter 1983 (September, 1984, *revision*). See also in <http://www.fiu.edu/~religion/Commandments.htm> (Accessed on June 2, 2007).

¹⁹ The Plenary Assembly of the FABC at Tokyo 1986 did speak of “the phenomenon of religious revivalism” with its tendencies “to religious dogmatism, fundamentalism and intolerance in precept and practice,” leading even to “violence and serious conflicts.” Fundamentalism appears as “a defense-reaction which gives religious belief a socio-cultural, and even political role of cohesion in the face of ‘anomie’ that threatens one’s identity. Irrational religious emotions offer a simplistic force of unity and self-defense,” and thus become a source of conflict. Religious revivalism poses its challenge to us Christians towards a deeper renewal of faith.

²⁰ It is in this light that one should listen to the assertion of Pope John Paul II that the action of the Holy Spirit is operative in the lives of non-Christians not in spite of their religious adherence, but rather at its essence and foundation. *Redemptor Hominis*, March 4, 1979, AAS 71 (1979): 275-276.

cultural and religious traditions. The last two things can be a set of richness but at the same time can also be reason for bitter and tiring conflicts. Now, Vincentians must renew “from within” setting up new eyes, new heart and new spirit as the very concrete aims of their formation program.

Shifts of formandi’s mentality:

- Way of thinking: from suspect to understanding.
- Creativity: from creating “one’s own world” to openness.
- Sensitivity: from indifference to concern.
- Commitment: from sluggish to perceiving “clear priorities.”
- Vocation: from tepid to radical.
- Prayer: from self-centered to beyond self-centered.
- Being Vincentian: from idle to genuine.
- End of formation program: from human maturity to cross/multi/pluri-cultural human maturity.

“New spirit” of formandi and formators implies:

- Growth in our experience of God and an on-going familiarity with the poor — their life and their spirit of love.
- New spirit of discernment as one community (formator and formandi are the subjects in formation; formator, be one of them!).

“New eyes” of formandi as well as formators involves taking on new ways of looking at and understanding reality and new paradigms in the world (Asia Pacific):

- Poverty – The emphasis is on poverty by unjust socio-political structure.
- Religion – The shift of emphasis (from a religion perceived as “self-serving” to a religion oriented towards the world, to the suffering people).
- Cultures – Today there is a greater awareness and appreciation of the richness inherent in different cultures. Currently the notion of multiculturalism is claiming more and more attention.
- Collaboration/partnership/networking – The emphasis has been on a more holistic (integral) understanding, i.e., touching on all aspects of life and on taking more seriously concrete contexts (contextualized), inviting others to service of *effective* love to the poor.

“New heart” demands that formandi be sensitive to “new values” in the Church and in the world:

- “New humility” of heart – Spending more time, attention, moment for others (confreres and people involved in apostolates and the poor).
- Partnership – Collaboration with various sectors in the Church and in the world — regardless of religion, race or gender.
- Discernment – In a world filled with a thousand voices all clamoring to be heard, discernment is indispensable for those who, following Christ, do charity.
- “Constant love” & “openness” – Cultivating a sense of love to others, being diligent and perseverant in rendering service for love.

Renewals in formandi and those in formation team:

- New optimism: “You can do that!”
- New enthusiasm: “Have courage and let down the nets again into deeper ocean!”
- New community: “More open... more love, unlock others’ potency.”
- New way of life: “Open to ongoing renewal of the Divine Providence.”
- New way of apostolate: “More involving others with new spirit of love and enthusiasm.”
- New way of being Vincentian: “More energizing others inspired by the spirit and charism of Saint Vincent.”

6. WORDS OF REFLECTION

Let me propose words as my modest concluding reflection hoping that a few of them may hint little inspirations to our aim of formation of our beloved candidates in connection with “political charity.”

The poor and us

We see them, the poor, surrounding us.

We watch them in streets, houses, villages, mountains, poor coasts, television, everywhere.

We talk to and with them. Occasionally.

We share with them. Rarely.

We mingle with them. Only if needed.
We visit them. For school activities or exposures.
We share with them. For research.
We count them. For project proposals.
We discuss and analyze them. For our own benefit and purpose.
Thus, they are but merely an object.
Do we really love them? Affectively? Effectively?

Who are they for us?

One who has a good experience of living with them, not just for research or exposure, would find that the poor have some amazing richness. I am not talking something material as we conceive such as money or good shirts or beautiful houses. In them we find true happiness, or what we may call, true happy detachment despite suffering and unfortunate everyday life.

In them we discover humility;

We learn simplicity;

We see meekness;

We know cheerfulness;

We learn true charity.

In them we meditate what we often call “mortification” and true fasting.

We perceive a true sense of being human;

We discern a true sense of being religious;

We discover true faith;

We learn true love;

We understand being men of hope;

We see human strength.

In them we find wisdom.

We learn true obedience to God;

We experience God’s presence in the world;

We learn true hunger and thirst for divine Truth;

We study to be God’s true disciple.

In their presence we find ourselves “poorer” than what we might think of.

In their poor presence we discover the richness of spiritual life.

But, do we really put into practice our learning from them?

When they get themselves in trouble, we must not close our eyes.

When they cry for help, we must not be idle and close our ears.

When they are voiceless, we must not keep silent.

When they are hungry, we must not be doubtful to haste relief.

When they are persecuted, we should dare to defend them in proper ways.

When they suffer injustice, we defend them and promote human rights.

In brief, we do what we can possibly do for them.

We do in collaboration, in working together with them in the best way possible.

Pauvreté, culture et religiosité

Observer les réalités pour une Charité Politique et une Formation Vincentienne

par Fransiscus Xaverius Eko Armada Riyanto, C.M.

INTRODUCTION¹

Dans sa première encyclique *Deus Caritas Est*, le Pape Benoît XVI a évoqué Vincent de Paul et Louise de Marillac parmi « les hommes et femmes de foi, d'espérance et d'amour » (art. 40) qui ont illustré pour nous la charité chrétienne authentique. L'amour, qui procède de Dieu, ne devient réel qu'il s'il prend la voie concrète de la « charité » pour le prochain ; lorsqu'il se traduit dans des structures efficaces qui soulagent la faim, la solitude et les situations sociales difficiles. Tout au long de sa grande lettre, le Pape souligne comment l'Église a fait de sa pratique de la charité son objet principal. Le service de la charité est une part de la nature de l'Église, « une part constitutive de son être profond » (DCE, 25). En fait, Benoît XVI, montre, en citant St Augustin, que c'est seulement lorsque nous pouvons voir la charité effective dans les structures sociales que nous « voyons la Trinité » (DCE, 19).

St. Vincent faisait déjà la même remarque lorsque 400 ans plus tôt il demandait aux sœurs de « quitter Dieu pour Dieu ». Il rappelait aussi aux missionnaires qui voulaient abandonner le ministère de la charité au bénéfice de la prédication : « Les pauvres ne sont-ils pas les membres souffrants de notre Seigneur ? Ne sont-ils pas nos frères ? Et si les prêtres les abandonnent, qui prendra soin d'eux ? » (SV XX, 87). La charité organisée, la charité à l'œuvre dans les structures de l'Église et de la société, n'est pas seulement une activité de la Compagnie. C'est l'expression de son identité profonde.

C'est dans cette tradition que les Formateurs Vincentiens d'Asie-Pacifique ont étudié « la charité politique ». Nous pensons que nos candidats ne peuvent demeurer indifférents face à ce qui advient

¹ *Introduction* à la première Rencontre de la Commission du Charisme Vincentien et de la Culture et des Formateurs de la Région d'Asie-Pacifique à Prigen, Indonésie, 1^{er} au 15 juillet 2007, de Armada Riyanto, C.M., et Danny Pilario, C.M. (président et vice-président de la CCC).

dans la société contemporaine. Ils doivent être rejoints dans leurs propres situations sociopolitiques, formés pour analyser et critiquer et ainsi répondre plus efficacement à leurs défis. Le terme « charité politique » ne se rencontre pas dans les dictionnaires de sciences sociales et politiques. Mais, dans la tradition Vincentienne, la charité ne peut qu'exister « politiquement », c'est-à-dire, dans des activités concrètes et des structures sociales. Comme dit St. Vincent : « Notre travail [pour les pauvres] est l'unique preuve de notre amour ». Dans la même conférence, il poursuit : « Aimons Dieu, mes frères, aimons Dieu, mais que ce soit à la force de nos bras et à la sueur de nos fronts » (ABELLY, T 1, Ch. XIX, 81).

Dans la rencontre des Formateurs Vincentiens et des autres membres de la Famille Vincentienne en juillet 2007 à Prigen, nous avons choisi le thème : « Charité Politique et Formation Vincentienne ». Notre objectif était de réfléchir sur des voies concrètes pour donner à nos candidats et à nos membres une sensibilité face aux mouvements de la société contemporaine — ses joies, ses peines et ses espérances, ses avancées et ses reculs, ses ombres et ses lumières.

La contribution qui suit veut montrer un rapide panorama des réalités² d'Asie Pacifique comme première étape pour rejoindre notre idée directrice « La Charité Politique et la Formation Vincentienne ». La région Asie-Pacifique est regardée comme un espace où pauvreté, culture et religiosité sont les trois piliers caractéristiques de l'existence.

1. PAUVRETE

Comprendre la Pauvreté. Avant de proclamer l'Évangile aux pauvres, Saint Vincent a examiné la pauvreté de son époque en rendant visite aux pauvres, en les écoutant en confession, en apprenant le zèle de leurs vies dures. Suivant l'exemple du saint Fondateur, il vaudrait la peine aujourd'hui d'écouter le pauvre peuple livrer sa compréhension de la pauvreté. En *Inde*, les *femmes* indiennes (les « femmes des tribus » comme on les nomme) racontent comment elles voient la pauvreté. La pauvreté pour elle est de n'avoir pas assez de nourriture de leurs cultures, peu ou pas d'accès à l'eau potable, un bas niveau

² « Trois étapes devraient être normalement suivies pour la mise en œuvre des principes sociaux en pratique. D'abord, analyser la situation concrète ; en second lieu élaborer un jugement à la lumière de ces principes ; dans un troisième temps, décider ce qui dans la situation peut et devrait être fait pour mettre en exécution ces principes. Ce sont les trois étapes qui sont habituellement traduites en trois mots : voir, juger, agir » (Pape JEAN XXIII, 1961, *Mater et Magistra*, 263)ô

scolaire, et d'être sans terres³. Des groupes d'échanges parmi les jeunes migrants et les enfants au *Vietnam* décrivent des situations qui illustrent la pauvreté pour eux : être rejeté du système scolaire parce que leurs parents ne peuvent plus couvrir les frais de scolarité ; les portes se ferment pour eux ; les professeurs frappant ou humiliant les orphelins ; les pères qui boivent et battent leurs mères, les cris et les disputes dans les maisons, les bagarres du voisinage ; la drogue ; la sous considération par des personnes ayant meilleures conditions de vie, être frappés par des enfants plus riches ; les ressources irrégulières, la faim, les vêtements pauvres ; la préoccupation sur la santé des mères et l'impossibilité d'accéder à une bonne prise en charge sanitaire⁴. Aux *Philippines* les pauvres se classent eux-mêmes dans des groupes fondés sur leurs accès aux moyens de survie de base : *Walang-wala* (n'ont rien ou presque rien, c'est-à-dire pas de terres à cultiver, rarement d'argent, logement rudimentaire et le pire de tout, peu de nourriture) ; *Sumasala sa oras* (ceux qui sautent les repas) ; *Isang kahig, isang tuka* (ceux qui picorent économisant comme une poule becquetant le sol) ; *Agaw-buhay* (ceux se balancent entre la vie et la mort)⁵.

En *Indonésie* le sens de la pauvreté peut être aussi défini par la vie des indiens de Papouasie, Kalimantan, Sumatra, et de nombreuses autres lieux de l'archipel d'Indonésie. Leur situation est principalement l'absence de bons services de santé. On y rencontre des centaines d'enfants, la plupart d'entre eux pauvres, souffrant la malnutrition, la faim ou le manque de bonnes nourritures provoquant l'état maladif de certains, des ventres ballonnés et des développements cérébraux affectés. On rencontre ces enfants dans les villages, des lieux abandonnés, à l'intérieur des terres ou sur les côtes, dans l'intérieur des zones de forêts. La pauvreté est aussi liée aux conditions de vie limitées et aux infrastructures minimum dont ils bénéficient. C'est le problème crucial des petites îles ou des endroits les plus reculées de Papouasie, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Flores où les rues, les écoles, l'électricité, les services de santé ne sont pas encore établis. S'ils ont été déjà installés, les infrastructures n'ont pas été préservées, rendant

³ Le programme de Développement Communautaire d'investissements - IFAD Bihar-Madhya Pradesh, 1997.

⁴ *Source* : Fond pour l'Aide à l'Enfance 1999.

⁵ *Source* : Kerkvliet 1990 tel que le rapporte l'IFAD en 2003. Cf. <http://www.ifad.org/> (le 20 juin 2007). Voir aussi le sens de la pauvreté sur le site "povertyNet" <http://web.worldbank.org> (10 juin 2007) et sur le site "a dollar a day" http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00282/over_whatism.htm (au 10 juin 2007).

la pauvreté quotidienne. Les gens rencontrent des difficultés pour sortir de la pauvreté et développer une qualité de vie.

Par dessus tout, la pauvreté rurale. Plus 1, 2 milliard de personnes dans le monde ont moins d'un dollar par jour et donc sont dans la pauvreté économique. Plus des deux tiers des pauvres de la planète sont en Asie, et la pauvreté est quasi exclusivement concentrée dans les zones rurales. 75% des pauvres vivent dans les zones rurales⁶. Dans les pays d'Asie Pacifique, il y a des politiques de développement rural médiocres. L'Indonésie est maintenant considérée comme un pays industrialisé, les personnes ont récemment tenté par tous les moyens d'abandonner leurs terres. Le gouvernement reconnaît clairement le problème crucial des exploitants agricoles, mais reste bloqué au plan politique face aux solutions pour répondre à la « mondialisation » omniprésente. Prenant en compte que les pays en voie de développement sont souvent devenus davantage victimes que protagonistes dans la « monde global », ce phénomène est celui d'Asie Pacifique. Et l'on constate que le fait que les pauvres vivent dans les zones rurales est aussi vérifiable⁷.

La pauvreté urbaine. 700 millions de personnes de la zone Asie-Pacifique ont moins d'1\$ par jour, desquels 400 millions vivent dans des zones urbaines. Chaque jour environ 120 000 personnes rejoignent les populations des villes d'Asie suivant les migrations urbaines et la recherche du travail⁸. Beaucoup de villes asiatiques connaissent des conditions environnementales et sanitaires qui se détériorent, des conditions de logement inadéquates ainsi qu'un déficit d'infrastructures et de nombreux autres problèmes⁹. L'urbanisation est cependant une chance pour que les pauvres puissent échapper à la pauvreté tout en étant en même temps la voie de la chute dans d'autres voies de pauvreté et de marginalisation.

La pauvreté de l'Environnement. Les dix dernières années, il y a une augmentation des facteurs de pauvreté qui sont causés par les raisons environnementales. Inondations, glissements de terrains, tsunamis, irruptions volcaniques, diminution des ressources naturelles, sécheresses et pollution urbaine ont d'impressionnantes répercussions sur la vie des gens. Les pauvres souffrent davantage de pertes, de maladies, de blessures et de morts — résultat de la dégradation des ressources, des désastres naturels et de la pollution — que le

⁶ ADB 2005 (Banque Asiatique de Développement). <http://www.adb.org/> (le 20 mai 2007).

⁷ IFAD 2001. http://www.ifad.org/poverty/region/pi/PI_part1.pdf (le 15 juin 2007).

⁸ ADB 2005.

⁹ Ibid.

reste de la population, parce qu'ils sont plus dépendants de l'équilibre naturel dans leurs conditions de vie.

La Féminisation de la pauvreté. Alors qu'à peu près les deux tiers des pauvres de la terre sont dans la région d'Asie-pacifique, les deux tiers des pauvres de ces régions sont des femmes. Et la pauvreté est encore plus forte pour les femmes vivant dans les ères rurales. La notion de «féminisation de la pauvreté» a commencé à être évoqué pour se rendre compte du fait que les femmes se trouvent être les victimes de l'augmentation de la pauvreté de par le monde résultant de la récession et des reculs des dépenses publiques¹⁰. Le terme est employé pour presque toutes les situations suivantes: Les femmes sont plus pauvres que les hommes, les femmes pauvres souffrent davantage les conditions de vie précaires que les hommes; le niveau de pauvreté est plus fort pour les femmes; les femmes sont confrontées à une plus grande épreuve pour se tenir hors de la situation de pauvreté avec leurs enfants; on rencontre des femmes pauvres dans des familles qui ne le sont pas. Les hommes qui migrent à la recherche de travail avec les changements de résidence qui s'en suivent sont devenus un poids supplémentaire pour les femmes, spécialement ceux qui ont plusieurs personnes à charge. Une amélioration du statut politique, légal, culturel et économique de la femme est un point clef pour sortir du fossé de la pauvreté.

2. CULTURE

Une compréhension classique de la culture consiste à la regarder comme la passation de quatre éléments «passés de générations en générations par un apprentissage personnel»: de *valeurs, normes et institutions*¹¹. Les valeurs sont les idées qui décrivent ce qui dans la

¹⁰ Banque de Développement Asiatique, 2005.

¹¹ "Dans son acception commune, la culture aujourd'hui signifie l'ensemble des traits spirituels, matériels, intellectuels et émotionnels distinctifs qui caractérisent une société ou un groupe social. Elle comprend non seulement les arts et lettres, mais aussi les modes de vie, les droits fondamentaux de l'être humain, le système de valeurs, les traditions et les symboles et croyances... C'est la culture qui donne (à l'homme) la capacité de s'exprimer (lui-même et le monde). C'est la culture qui nous fait humain, qui fait de nous des êtres rationnels, capable de jugement et du sens de l'engagement moral. C'est à travers la culture que nous pouvons discerner les valeurs et faisons des choix. C'est par la culture que (l'homme) s'exprime (lui-même), reconnaît son incomplétude, met en question ses propres buts, en recherche perpétuelle de nouveaux sens et créant de nouvelles activités qui transcendent nos limites". HERVE CARRIER, "Comprendre la Culture: Le nouveau défi de l'Église Mondialisée?", dans *The Church and Culture since Vatican II: The Experience of North*

vie semble important. Elles guident le reste de la culture. Les normes consistent en la prévision de comportements des personnes. Elles sont des points concrets que nous nommons « habitus », ensemble de coutumes et habitudes morales, incluant les lois et sanctions encourues. Les Institutions sont les structures d'une société à l'intérieur de laquelle les valeurs et les normes sont transmises. L'institution est une part de la culture en tant que donné spécifique de groupes donnés et de lieux particuliers. Nous dessinons ainsi quelques traits symboliques des cultures.

Culture en tant que vision du monde. Les personnes comprennent la culture comme une vision du monde spécialement dans l'idéologie de la seconde guerre mondiale. La notion de vision du monde implique des idées sur les voies pour définir les relations des êtres avec le monde. Cela peut être quelque chose hérité par les ancêtres d'une génération à l'autre comme les rites, les célébrations de liturgie populaire, les valeurs, et l'ensemble de lois. Mais, la vue d'ensemble est aussi en lien avec le système idéologique que portent les gens et qu'ils mettent en œuvre¹².

Culture comme un phénomène de « la vie ordinaire ». Nous avons souvent entendu parler des personnes de « culture de violence », « culture de mort », « culture de corruption », « culture d'harmonie », « culture de l'hédonisme », « culture du matérialisme », « culture du féminisme », « culture de l'égalité des genres », « culture de la peur », « culture de la terreur », « culture du terrorisme », « culture de la mondialisation », « culture de l'instant », « culture des nouveaux riches »¹³. Autant de façon de comprendre la culture comme une expérience concrète de la vie ordinaire. Le terme « vie ordinaire » est extrait de la pensée d'Alfred Schutz dans son livre *Phénoménologie du Monde social*, maintenant outil d'une approche phénoménologique, des nouveaux courants de pensée de la recherche sociologique. « La vie ordi-

and Latin America, édité par Joseph Gremillion, Université de Notre Dame, Press, 1985, 19.

¹² En Asie, Mao a été celui qui a nommé la révolution idéologique communiste en Chine Continentale, révolution culturelle en 1949. En Indonésie, il y a l'idéologie nationale dénommée « Pancasila » (les cinq Principes). Ces cinq principes (1. La croyance en un Dieu unique, 2. Un peuple souverain, 3. Le dialogue pour parvenir au consensus, 4. Avoir préoccupation pour l'être humain, et 5. La justice sociale), sont aussi comprises comme un ensemble de valeurs et de croyances collectives basées sur l'héritage commun de la vision du monde indonésienne.

¹³ Nous rencontrons la culture des nouveaux riches dans l'expérience de certains de nos candidats et de leurs parents issus de la classe moyenne ou de milieu pauvres, pour qui devenir prêtre signifie devenir riche, car le prêtre possède une voiture, de l'argent, de bonnes relations bien placées et des personnes des milieux d'affaires, etc.

naire » est comprise comme « un domaine de la réalité qu'une large part d'adultes dans son ensemble prend pour acquise comme attitude de bon sens »¹⁴. Dans la vie quotidienne les expériences de vie sont très appréciées. Pour Alfred Schutz, « la conscience est elle-même sous tension, ancrée dans l'attitude d'attention totale à la vie et ses nécessités. Actes et réalisations qui sont directement orientés vers l'environnement direct, retient l'attention de la personne la gardant en éveil... C'est le monde duquel nous ne pouvons pas échapper tout le temps que nous restons attentifs, un monde où les pierres blessent nos pieds, où nos désirs exigent satisfaction, où les peurs inhibent notre liberté, où nous rencontrons physiquement ceux qui nous entourent et devons communiquer avec eux »¹⁵. Donc, lorsque nous entendons parler de « culture de violence » cela ne signifie pas que nous ayons à faire à des actes objectifs de violence (bien que cela puisse avoir lieu). Ce monde-ci est notre terrain d'expérience.

L'Asie Pacifique et la Culture de l'Harmonie. Jeune dans son dynamisme, L'Asie Pacifique est vieux dans son héritage culturel. Il ne peut pas être seulement vu dans sa diversité culturelle, ses rites et ses diverses sociétés, ses modèles économiques, ses nouvelles technologies, ses arts, ses sciences et ses philosophies. Mais il est clair que sa plus grande valeur est « la culture de l'harmonie ». Je souligne l'importance de « l'harmonie » depuis la diversité de cultures dont bénéficie l'Asie-Pacifique. La diversité peut être une richesse et un défi en même temps. C'est une richesse lorsque les cultures mettent en valeur la beauté des différences. Cela devient un défi, pour les nombreux peuples d'Asie-Pacifique qui ont souffert des tensions et conflits, et même des guerres civiles.

Prenons juste un exemple, l'Indonésie a une population d'environ 210 millions de personnes (2001), composée de 500 ethnies et plus de 600 langues ou dialectes. La diversité ethnique est perçue comme un atout : richesses culturelles qui cimentent l'unité de l'Etat et que reflète la devise nationale, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, l'unité dans la diversité. Tout ceci a aussi contribué à rendre la vie plus difficile, dans ses moments les plus douloureux comme dans ses plus grandes joies. Nous voyons aujourd'hui en Indonésie, la recherche d'une harmonie qu'elle soit culturelle, humaine et religieuse, que seule une dynamique résolue peut atteindre dans l'interaction des divers courants et parfois de ses franges conflictuelles. L'harmonie est en un certain

¹⁴ ALFRED SCHUTZ - THOMAS LUCKMANN, *The Structures of Life-World*, Volume II, Traduit par Richard Zaner and David J. Parent, Evanston : Northwestern University Press, 1989, 3.

¹⁵ MARCELO MANIMTIM, C.M., *The Concept of Lifeworld in Jürgen Habermas*, Rome 1993, 49.

sens « l'âme intellectuelle et affective, religieuse et artistique, personnelle et collective de toutes les personnes et institutions en Asie » (Quatrième rencontre de l'Institut épiscopal pour le Dialogue Inter-religieux, BIRA IV, 1984).

Les défis à la culture de l'Harmonie. De nombreuses situations de la réalité Asie-Pacifique ont effrayé et contredit l'harmonie. La crise monétaire a mis cruellement fin aux années quatre-vingt dix. L'Indonésie a été un des pays les plus affectés. L'œuvre de mort ne devrait pas être sans fin. Mais de nos jours, presque tous les Indonésiens ont vu cette crise les conduire à l'amère expérience du vivre ensemble. Nous avons vu naître des conflits un peu partout dans les régions. Les Musulmans contre les Chrétiens, les Bouddhistes et les Indouistes et vice-versa. Les musulmans fondamentalistes se retournaient contre les modérés et réciproquement. Les êtres humains ont détruit les forêts ; et l'urbanisation sauvage est naturellement hors de contrôle. Pendant la crise, loin de promouvoir la valeur indonésienne et de nombreux autres peuples d'Asie qui est l'harmonie, les personnes ont cultivé la culture de violence. Durant la période de violence, les gens se retrouvaient les uns contre les autres. Quelque chose de *bellum omnium contra omnes* (chacun contre tous). Souvent les femmes et les enfants en ont davantage souffert. Il n'y avait plus d'amitiés qui comptaient¹⁶. Avant la crise économique les personnes avaient commencé à apprécier la croissance. Maintenant, selon la commission de l'ONU pour l'Asie-Pacifique, dans son dernier rapport, l'amélioration des conditions de vie et d'habitat a été supplantée par de nouveaux problèmes sociaux tels que l'urbanisation et la crise générale de l'énergie et de l'alimentation.

3. RELIGIOSITÉ

L'Asie est le creuset des anciennes cultures et religiosités. L'Asie est aussi le centre de naissance des plus grandes religions du monde : le bouddhisme, le Christianisme, l'Hindouisme, l'Islam, le Shintoïsme, le Shikisme et le Taoïsme. Bien que la vision du monde asiatique, la plus habituelle, conçoive la réalité comme « une » et développe largement la tolérance, qui défend l'égalité entre toutes les religions du monde, le pluralisme religieux en Asie demeure problématique. Le problème est aigu, car les religions asiatiques continuent d'avoir une très forte influence sur les consciences des personnes et sont présentes dans tous les secteurs de la vie sociale. Elles peuvent donc apporter l'unité et l'harmonie entre les personnes et les peuples ou

¹⁶ *Levitique*, Chapitre XIII.

être à l'origine de divisions et de séparations. C'est avec tristesse que les peuples d'Asie en ont fait récemment largement expérience.

Le fondamentalisme. Etant donné le lien très fort entre religion et culture, le fondamentalisme a fait naître de nombreux conflits et connu des bains de sang. De tels conflits et violences, en plus d'avoir rompu l'harmonie, ont aussi entraîné la mort de personnes et la destruction de lieux sacrés, particulièrement en Inde, au Pakistan et au Bangladesh, et tout cela au nom des appartenances religieuses et des patrimoines culturels. Au Sri Lanka, les conflits ethniques et linguistiques sont la cause de la violence permanente et du sang versé. Les événements ayant entouré la destruction du Babri Masjid à Ayodhya en décembre 1992, ont montré combien les forces religieuses fondamentalistes peuvent devenir destructrices. Dans tout le sous-continent indien, il y a eu des affrontements entre Musulmans et Hindous, où les Hindous ont été chassés de Bombay par les musulmans, les musulmans poursuivant les Hindous et détruisant leurs temples au Pakistan et au Bengladesh. En Indonésie il y a eu des centaines de Chrétiens et d'églises catholiques brûlées et détruites par les fondamentalistes ; plusieurs lieux de prières bouddhistes, hindouistes et aussi confucianistes ont été détruits ; des mosquées ont été attaquées par d'autres fondamentalistes. Le terrorisme est devenu un des moyens de reconnaissance des fondamentalistes. Le fondamentalisme en Indonésie provient souvent de personnes qui mènent des activités dénommées au Moyen-Orient de « jihad » (défense de Dieu)¹⁷. Pour ce qui concerne le fondamentalisme islamique, des jeunes qui ont eu des expériences de « jihad » en dehors de l'Indonésie deviennent fauteurs de troubles dans l'Archipel.

Religion et liberté humaine. La religion est aussi une valeur pour l'être humain. Les réflexions sur la religiosité m'ont conduit à quelques conclusions sur la religion dans la société : *premièrement*, la religion achève la liberté humaine. La plupart des religions, même si toutes ne le font pas, parlent de libération de l'oppression, du mal, de la souffrance et de la mort. Avec les mots de Jean-Paul II : « La liberté est la mesure de la dignité humaine et de sa grandeur. Vivre la liberté que recherchent les personnes et les peuples est le grand défi de la croissance spirituelle de l'homme et la vitalité morale des nations... la liberté est ordonnée à la vérité, elle est atteinte dans la quête de

¹⁷ Le sens de « jihad » est confus en lui-même. Les fondamentalistes utilisent le terme « jihad » pour encourager la guerre contre les ennemis de l'Islam. Le terme a un sens qui signifie « le fait de tenter l'effort le plus grand pour l'honneur d'Allah ou sur le chemin d'Allah ». Il est cependant certain que la plupart des personnes ont été plus souvent tenues au courant du sens de « jihad » proposé par les fondamentalistes plus que par les musulmans modérés.

l'homme vers la vérité et dans la vie humaine déployée dans la vérité ». La religion parle le langage de l'espérance, l'espérance de l'émancipation totale et la plénitude de la liberté. *Deuxièmement*, la religion offre des rites et des rituels qui structurent la société civile. Par les rituels, les croyances, les valeurs et les actes humains sont investis d'une aura sacré, qui donnent les outils de fondations communes pour des droits inaliénables et des horizons communs. Les rites religieux approfondissent la conviction d'appartenance des membres de la société civile en fondant par leur autorité les principes de la société. *Troisièmement*, la religion assoie la façon de vivre l'amour, le soin de l'autre, offrant le ciment pour le comportement moral habituel. La religion, spécialement la religion orientale, est un art de vivre, de vivre en harmonie avec la nature, avec les autres, par l'amour et l'attention mutuelle. La religion parle au cœur et s'adresse aux sources transcendantes et à la fin dernière de toutes les valeurs. La religion atteste l'universalité des valeurs de paix, de solidarité, de justice et de liberté. La société civile dans son effort de construction d'une civilisation de l'amour basée sur les valeurs universelles et sur la culture de liberté a besoin de la religion pour la dynamiser. Finalement, la religion fonde l'unité et la diversité des peuples et des cultures. Nous n'appartenons tous qu'à une unique famille.

En Indonésie comme in Inde aussi, nous entendons souvent dire que toutes les religions enseignent le même discours moral que Dieu est unique et que tous le rejoindront à la fin. Les personnes ne font que prendre des voies différentes pour l'atteindre. L'Église Catholique a émis de nouvelles idées à Vatican II, son concile historique. Il ne parle plus des païens en terme dépréciatifs, ou en terme de condescendance comme si elle était la seule à avoir le monopole de la vérité totale sur Dieu. Le décret *Nostra Aetate* (1965), aux nn. 1 et 2 disait alors, qu'elle souhaitait marcher davantage avec ceux qui l'entouraient et était fortifiée par les liens d'amitié entre les diverses personnes, l'Église se trouve fortifiée par les liens d'amitié qu'elle cherche à développer avec tous, l'Église analyse avec attention ses relations avec les religions non-chrétiennes. Consciente de sa tâche pour atteindre l'unité et la charité entre les personnes et entre les nations, l'Église réfléchit sur ce que les personnes ont en commun et tend à promouvoir la fraternité entre eux. *Nostra Aetate* affirme plus loin que l'Église Catholique ne refuse rien de ce qui est vrai et saint dans ces (autres) religions. Elle considère avec un grand respect les styles de vie et les conduites, les préceptes et les doctrines qui, bien que différents de multiples manières de ses propres enseignements, n'en reflètent pas moins la vérité qui éclaire tous les hommes. Le Concile a partagé cette conviction à beaucoup, et pendant que certains se débattaient avec ces déclarations, le chemin s'est ouvert pour appren-

dre comment se mettre en route et comment former les croyants dans cette direction. L'Église invite donc ses enfants à ouvrir les dialogues avec prudence et charité et à collaborer avec les membres des autres religions. *Nostra Aetate* a donné naissance à ce qui allait s'appeler « le dialogue interreligieux ».

La tolérance religieuse et le dialogue. La tolérance religieuse est considérée comme une expression de son attitude propre envers les autres religions et face à certaines situations religieuses. La tolérance religieuse n'existe cependant pas dans un espace indéfini, mais dans des situations concrètes bien définies, et peut varier en fonction de la situation. La tolérance religieuse est étudiée dans la perspective du dialogue interreligieux. La religion est une chose qui conduit les personnes à Dieu, exhorte ses fidèles afin qu'ils aient des vies morales bonnes et demande aux peuples de Dieu d'avoir l'âme et le cœur unis ; mais l'état des affaires présentes montre l'inconsistance entre la religion prêchée et la religion vécue, ses dogmes et ses pratiques, ses doctrines et ses comportements. Ceci est la cause de dissonances monumentales, du point de vue des croyances religieuses cette fois-ci. La religion, dans ce cas, au lieu d'être un facteur d'achèvement en tant que fonction positive d'amour mutuel, de facteur de compréhension entre les personnes, d'unité, de pureté, etc. les rend finalement moins tolérants. Il y a une inconséquence manifeste. La tolérance arrive main dans la main avec l'intolérance. Cette incohérence est un des plus grands problèmes de la religiosité.

4. LES REPONSES CONTEMPORAINES

Etre prêts à collaborer avec les personnes. Saint Vincent de Paul n'était jamais seul pour répondre aux besoins de son temps. Il a travaillé avec les *Dames de la Charité*, les prêtres et les réformateurs religieux de son temps. La pauvreté n'était pas du seul fait le manque de nourriture ou de toit. C'étaient des conditions inhumaines. C'est par la collaboration que Saint Vincent a répondu à ces demandes. L'évangélisation des pauvres s'est faite en collaboration et partenariat avec les laïcs, les sœurs ainsi que les prêtres, ou les pauvres eux-mêmes.

Aujourd'hui l'appel à la collaboration est fort et très urgent. Pastores Da Vobis, insiste sur le fait que les religieux devraient être capables de collaborer entre eux et avec tout le monde sans être gênés par les cultures, les nationalités, la religion ou la foi. Les Vincentiens devraient apprendre ou écouter les autres sur la manière dont le problème crucial de la pauvreté peut être jugulé et solutionné.

Les formidables réponses contemporaines à la pauvreté dans le monde, ainsi qu'en Asie-Pacifique telles qu'elles ont été définies dans

les objectifs du millénaire pour le développement (Millennium Développement Goals) doivent être réalisées en même temps. Elles ne sont pas seulement des objectifs communs. Elles représentent bien plus que des objectifs acceptés par les grands responsables mondiaux. Depuis que les êtres humains se sont attelés ensemble sur l'un ou l'autre des objectifs (MDG) la compréhension de l'être ensemble, du travail de groupe, de cheminer ensemble a été renouvelée¹⁸. Les objectifs sont : Réduire l'extrême pauvreté et la faim, assurer l'éducation primaire pour tous, promouvoir l'égalité et l'autonomisation des femmes, réduire la mortalité infantile, améliorer la santé maternelle, combattre le VIH/sida, le paludisme et d'autres maladies, assurer un environnement durable, mettre en place un partenariat mondial pour le développement.

Promouvoir la culture de l'harmonie. C'est la vie quotidienne qui nous fait voir concrètement que l'Asie-Pacifique est le berceau de diverses cultures. La diversité est une richesse, mais elle peut devenir la source de douloureux conflits. Dans certaines parties de l'Indonésie, penchons-nous sur Sampit, une petite ville connue comme un lieu où les conflits entre les Dayak et le Madurese ont débuté, la diversité est devenue problématique. Nous ne pouvons pas seulement déclarer que la diversité en vaut la peine. Nous devons reconnaître que la diversité est un défi auquel nous devons répondre.

La vision de l'Asie n'est pas non plus une situation « noire et désespérée ». Dans la société de l'Asie-Pacifique nous observons combien « la coïncidence des opposés » a été tout au long de son histoire un mode de vie et de pensée caractéristique. Dans la pensée chinoise ancienne, l'harmonie nécessite l'interaction des similitudes dissemblances que sont les personnes et la nature, le yin et le yang, bienveillance et tyrannie. Les deux faces sont vues comme nécessaires, davantage qu'irréconciliables ; les éléments antagonistes sont des partenaires indépendants sans lesquels les activités d'édification d'une société harmonieuse seraient impossible. L'harmonie n'est pas la réalisation d'un modèle absolu, mais l'heureux résultat que l'on peut atteindre si toutes les circonstances sont prises en compte.

Les Javanais d'Indonésie pensent que la vie de chaque jour ne peut être vécue tant que nous ne cultivons pas le sens de l'harmonie. Chaque Javanais est poussé à vivre l'harmonie non seulement avec tout le monde mais aussi avec toutes les créatures, le monde, et l'harmonie en lui-même. Cette sorte de sagesse, le sens de soi des javanais est une tradition complexe. Le javanais croit en *Manunggaling Kawulo*

¹⁸ Voir <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> and <http://www.undp.org/mdg/basics.shtml> (le 1^{er} juin 2007).

Gusti (l'unité de Dieu en soi-même). Le sens de l'unité ne peut être compris comme notion occidentale. Il dit quelque chose de la présence harmonieuse de l'être humain (homme ou femme) en lui-même. Et la source de l'harmonie n'est rien d'autre que la présence de Dieu en moi (le soi).

Promouvoir la culture de paix. Comme nous pouvons facilement l'imaginer les personnes d'Asie-Pacifique sont souvent tombées dans l'impasse des conflits en raison de crises économiques, de désordres sociaux-politique, de rivalités culturelles, nous avons besoin d'artisans de paix. Saint Vincent nous a laissé l'exemple durant les missions populaires, d'actes de réconciliations entre personnes qui se querellaient. Dans les conditions actuelles, être vinentien devrait aussi signifier être promoteur de paix. « Paix » ne veut pas dire absence de conflits. Cela fait penser à une situation favorable et pacifique dans laquelle les personnes peuvent vivre la solidarité, la collaboration ainsi que le dialogue.

Etre persévérant pour le dialogue de la vie, la collaboration concrète, et la foi. Pour répondre au défi de la religiosité en Asie-Pacifique, le dialogue interreligieux ou le dialogue interculturel doit être développé en toutes circonstances. Loin d'être une tâche aisée, le dialogue interreligieux est souvent frustrant et épuisant. Nous ne pouvons pas aider, mais reconnaître que le dialogue interreligieux paraît plus formel, artificiel et plaqué davantage que radical, original et un authentique mouvement. Ceux qui y sont engagés et vivent des expériences de dialogue interreligieux entrent souvent dans le tunnel dont ils devraient voir l'issue. Il y a tant de programmes, de rencontres théologico-philosophico spirituelles, d'innombrables rencontres réalisées, il y a encore de nombreuses pierres, épines et rochers. Karl Rahner parle du « Chrétien anonyme » ; Léonard Swilder propose « le Dialogue Décalogue »¹⁹; C. Arrevalo suggère l'« indigénisation de la théo-

¹⁹ **1^{er} COMMANDEMENT** : le premier but du dialogue est d'apprendre, de changer et d'améliorer sa perception et sa compréhension de la réalité, et ensuite d'agir conformément à ce qui a été découvert. Le 2^{ème} : le dialogue interreligieux devrait être un projet bidirectionnel à l'intérieur de chaque communauté religieuse ou d'idées et entre les communautés religieuses ou d'idées. Le 3^{ème} : chaque participant doit entrer dans le dialogue honnêtement et avec sincérité. 4^{ème} : le dialogue interreligieux ne devrait pas comparer les idéaux entre les partenaires, mais nos idéaux avec nos partenaires idéaux, nos pratiques avec nos pratiques avec nos partenaires concrets. 5^{ème} : Chaque participant doit se définir lui-même. 6^{ème} : Chaque participant doit venir dialoguer sans convictions préétablies sur les points de désaccord. 7^{ème} : Le dialogue ne peut avoir lieu qu'en personnes égales ou *par cum pari* tel que le dit le Concile Vatican II. Chacun doit se présenter pour apprendre de l'autre. 8^{ème} : Le dialogue ne peut se déployer que sur la base d'une confiance mutuelle. 9^{ème} : Les personnes qui entreprennent le dialogue interreligieux, interidéologique doi-

logie » ; Raymond Pannikar offre le concept « de dialogue intra-religieux », et de nombreuses autres thèses... mais qui pourrait dénier que le dialogue interreligieux (au moins de vie et de travail)²⁰ est encore l'action la plus urgente et nécessaire pour cultiver notre être ensemble dans la vie quotidienne dans les différentes traditions culturelles et dans les dynamismes socio-politiques de la région Asie-Pacifique ? ! Cependant, cela reste encore à exprimer concrètement encore et encore avec persévérance et assiduité. Le dialogue interreligieux est un projet inachevé ou, en d'autres termes une formation permanente de la vie elle-même. Oh, nous n'avons fait que donner une bonne réponse !²¹.

5. LES CONSEQUENCES POUR LA FORMATION : ESPRIT NOUVEAU, REGARD NEUF, CŒUR NOUVEAU

Apprendre des réalités est la première étape du renouveau dans la formation. Eduqués, formateurs et tous ceux qui sont eux-mêmes impliqués dans la formation doivent garder un œil sur les réalités quotidiennes qui les entourent. L'Asie-Pacifique fait face à une grande pauvreté. Mais la région est aussi bénie par de grandes traditions culturelles et religieuses. Ces deux éléments peuvent être un ensemble de richesses mais en même temps le motif d'amère et d'épuisants

vent être au moins prêtes à l'autocritique d'elles-mêmes et de leurs traditions idéologiques et leurs traditions religieuses. 10^{ème} : Chaque participant doit essayer de faire l'expérience de la religion ou de l'idéologie du partenaire « de l'intérieur ». Le « Décalogue du dialogue » a été publié pour la première fois dans le *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* en 1983 et a été traduit dans plus d'une douzaine de langues. Il est ici présenté dans une version revue et résumée. *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, 20/1, Hiver 1983 (septembre, 1984, version revue). Voir aussi <http://www.fiu.edu/~religion/Commandments.htm> (le 2 juin 2007).

²⁰ L'Assemblée Plénière de la FABC à Tokyo en 1986 parla du « phénomène du relativisme religieux » avec ses tendances « au dogmatisme religieux, au fondamentalisme et à l'intolérance dans les enseignements et dans les pratiques », conduisant même à « la violence et à de sérieux conflits ». Le fondamentalisme apparaît comme « une auto-défense qui donne aux croyances religieuses un rôle socio-culturel et même politique de cohésion face à la perte d'identité qui effraie les identités propres. Les émotions irrationnelles religieuses offrent une force facile d'unité et d'auto-défense », et deviennent ainsi source de conflit. Le relativisme religieux nous pose à nous Chrétiens les défis d'un profond renouveau de la foi.

²¹ C'est à cette lumière que nous pouvons comprendre la remarque du Pape Jean-Paul II sur le fait que l'action de l'Esprit-Saint est à l'œuvre dans la vie des non-Chrétiens, non en dépit de leur appartenance religieuse, mais bien dans leur essence et leur fondation. *Redemptor Hominiis*, 4 mars 1979, AAS 71 (1979) : 275-276.

conflits. Aujourd'hui, les Vincentiens doivent renouveler « de l'intérieur » instaurant un nouveau regard, un cœur nouveau et un esprit nouveau comme principal objectif de leur programme de formation.

Changements de mentalité des formations :

- Mode de pensée : du soupçon à la compréhension
- La créativité : de la création « de son monde propre » à l'ouverture
- La sensibilité : de l'indifférence à l'attention
- L'engagement : de la paresse à la perception « de priorités claires »
- Vocation : de la tiédeur à la radicalité
- Prière : du centré sur soi à conduire au-delà
- Etre Vincentien : d'inutile à authentique
- But des programmes de formation : de la maturité humaine, mettre en œuvre une maturité humaine multi et pluriculturelle

« L'esprit nouveau » des éduqués et des formateurs impliqués :

- Développer notre expérience de Dieu et notre familiarité permanente avec les pauvres — leurs vies et leur esprit d'amour.
- Nouvel esprit de discernement en tant que communauté (formateurs et formés sont des sujets en formation ; les formateurs en sont un des termes).

« Nouveau regard » des formés aussi bien que des formateurs implique que soit choisies de nouvelles voies d'observations et d'analyse de la réalité et de nouveaux paradigmes dans le monde (Asie-Pacifique):

- La pauvreté – l'accent sur la pauvreté causée par des structures socio-politiques injustes.
- La religion – le changement d'insistance (d'une religion perçue comme « un self-service » à une religion pour le monde, pour les personnes en souffrance.
- Les cultures – il y a aujourd'hui une plus grande conscience et appréciation de la richesse des différentes cultures en elle-même. La notion de multiculturalité exige de façon habituelle toujours plus d'attention.
- La collaboration/le partenariat/le travail en réseau – l'accent est davantage mis sur la compréhension globale (intégrale), c'est-à-dire qui touche tous les aspects de la vie et dans la prise en compte sérieuse des contextes particuliers (contextualisation) ; en invitant tous au service *effectif* d'amour des pauvres.

« *Un Cœur nouveau* » exige que les formés soient sensibles aux « nouvelles valeurs » dans l'Église et dans la monde :

- « Nouvelle humilité » de cœur – avoir plus de temps, d'attention et de moments pour les autres (les confrères et les personnes engagés dans l'apostolat et les pauvres).
- Le partenariat – collaboration avec divers secteurs de l'Église et du monde — sans égard aux différences de religion, de race ou de genre.
- Le discernement – dans un monde empli de multiples voix qui réclament l'attention, le discernement, est indispensable pour ceux qui, à la suite du Christ, pratiquent la charité.
- « Un amour constant » et « une ouverture d'esprit » – en cultivant le sens de l'amour des autres, en étant zélé et persévérant dans le service de l'amour.

Renouveau des formés et des membres des équipes de formation :

- Un optimisme nouveau : « Vous pouvez le faire ! ».
- Un enthousiasme nouveau : « Courage et jetez de nouveau les filets en eaux profondes ! ».
- Des communautés nouvelles : « Plus ouvertes... aimantes, stimulant les potentialités de l'autre ».
- De nouvelles façons de vivre : « Ouvert à la nouveauté permanente de la Providence Divine ».
- Des apostolats renouvelés : « Impliquant davantage les autres dans un esprit d'amour et d'enthousiasme renouvelé ».
- De nouvelles façons d'être vincentien : « Revitaliser les autres inspirés de l'esprit et du charisme de Saint Vincent ».

6. QUELQUES MOTS POUR CONCLURE

Je proposerai quelques mots en guise de conclusion en espérant que certains d'entre vous y trouveront quelques sources d'inspirations dans notre tâche de formation de nos chers aspirants en lien avec « la charité politique ».

Les pauvres et nous

Nous les voyons, les pauvres, ils nous entourent.

Nous les voyons dans les rues, les maisons, les villages, les montagnes, à la télévision, partout.

Nous leur parlons et échangeons avec eux. De temps à autre.

Nous partageons avec eux. Rarement.

Nous nous associons avec eux uniquement si nous en avons besoin.
 Nous les visitons. Pour les activités scolaires ou les expositions.
 Nous partageons avec eux. Pour nos recherches.
 Nous comptons sur eux. Pour proposer des projets.
 Nous nous entretenons sur eux et les analysons. Pour notre bénéfique
 et nos objectifs.
 Ils sont en quelque sorte simplement notre objet.
 Les aimons-nous vraiment ? Affectivement ? Effectivement ?

Qui sont-ils pour nous ?

Une personne ayant une bonne expérience de vie avec eux, non seulement en vue de faire des recherches ou des présentations, se rendra compte que le pauvre possède d'extraordinaires richesses. Je ne parle pas de quelques biens matériels qui nous traversent spontanément l'esprit comme l'argent, des vêtements de luxe ou de belles maisons. Nous trouvons en eux la vraie joie, ou ce que nous pouvons nommer, le vrai détachement malgré leurs souffrances et la dure vie quotidienne.

En eux, nous découvrons l'humilité ;

Nous apprenons la simplicité ;

Nous voyons la tendresse ;

Nous connaissons la gaieté ;

Nous apprenons la vraie charité ;

En eux nous découvrons ce que nous appelons souvent la « mortification » et le vrai jeûne ;

Nous percevons le vrai sens d'être humain ;

Nous pouvons discerner ce que signifie être religieux ;

Nous découvrons la vraie foi ;

Nous apprenons l'amour vrai ;

Nous comprenons ce qu'est être un homme d'espérance ;

Nous voyons la force de l'homme ;

En eux, nous trouvons la sagesse ;

Nous apprenons la vraie obéissance à Dieu ;

Nous faisons l'expérience de la présence de Dieu dans le monde ;

Nous apprenons la vraie faim et la soif pour la vérité divine ;

Nous avons la voie pour être de vrais disciples de Dieu ;

En leur présence, nous nous découvrons plus « pauvres » que nous ne le pensions ;

En contact avec leur pauvreté nous découvrons la richesse de la vie spirituelle.

Mais, mettons-nous réellement en pratique ce que nous avons appris d'eux ?

Lorsqu'ils sont troublés, ne fermons pas les yeux.

Lorsqu'ils appellent au secours, nous ne devons pas rester les bras croisés et fermer les oreilles.

Lorsqu'ils sont sans voix, nous ne devons pas nous taire.

Lorsqu'ils ont faim, nous ne devons pas hésiter à soulager promptement.

Lorsqu'ils sont persécutés, nous devrions nous risquer à les défendre par de nouveaux moyens.

Lorsqu'ils sont victimes d'injustices, nous défendons et faisons la promotion des droits de l'homme.

Pour résumer, nous faisons ce que nous pouvons pour eux.

Nous le faisons en collaboration, en travaillant ensemble avec eux, de la meilleure façon qu'il soit.

Traduction : BERNARD MASSARINI, C.M.

Vincent de Paul: Patron and Client

by Guy Norman Hartcher, C.M.

To understand M. Vincent de Paul as evangeliser and worker for the poor we must understand the socio-political world in which he lived. He was a worker of political charity, both liberated by, and constrained by, the French political world of his time. His life and work supports the hypothesis that the Vincentian charism is revolutionary in its aims, but that its methods work within the existing social structures, aiming to transform them in the service of the poor. Two elements of Vincent's society delineate the world in which he lived. They are the fundamentally hierarchical nature of the culture, and the patronage system which provided that culture with an operating system to replace the by-then almost defunct feudalism.

A fundamentally hierarchical society

As with most hierarchical societies, birth was the prime social locator in Vincent's world. How an individual fitted into society was determined by who their parents were. No matter what an individual's achievements were, that person was branded permanently by their birth status. The branding worked in both directions. Noble families which had been discredited or lost lands and funds were still able to trade on their status for at least a couple of generations. Peasants who had managed to lift themselves by talent and luck into the higher reaches of society were a curiosity and could be subject to overt and covert hostility, criticism and discrimination. When Cardinal Mazarin¹ mocked Vincent for his shabby dress at court² he was doing several things at once. He was scoring points against a sometime opponent in the unending political games in pursuit of dominance. He was 'keeping in his place' someone who represented a consistent political vision which Mazarin

¹ For relations between Vincent and Cardinal Mazarin see JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, London 1999, pp. 537-540.

² *Ibid.*, p. 540.

only occasionally shared. But the underlying reality was that Vincent was a peasant — once a peasant always a peasant — and therefore a legitimate target. And of course Vincent not only admitted, but actively volunteered his peasant status.³

Part of the reason a peasant was a target was that society understood the social order as divinely ordained. The perception was that each person was placed by God in the place which would serve them best in their quest for Heaven. So each person had to work towards their salvation in the context in which God had placed them.⁴

The Patronage System

The Church operated within that politico-social structure which was both feudal and Christian. Bishops swore allegiance to kings and in turn had both ecclesiastical and secular vassals who swore to them. At the same time the Church's feudal structure ran in parallel to the civil one, and in this, its own sphere, that particular structure applied to spiritual as well as material elements. The Investiture crisis⁵ of the eleventh century had clarified both what was owed to Caesar and what was due to God — although there always existed the potential for flare-ups in clashes of competing interests. But broadly speaking the political pattern within the church and between church and secular society had been set by the end of that century.

But Vincent de Paul lived centuries later, in the middle of the transition period during which a dying feudalism was gradually displaced by the early modern state. France was the pioneering state within which that transformation first occurred. And the socio-political tool by which that transition was managed was the patron-client relationship.⁶ That patronage system is both a survival of, and a successor to, the feudal system. Within the feudal system

³ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 542-543 where to the Prince de Conde Vincent claims status as “son of a poor swineherd,” a lower status than his father actually occupied as a tenant farmer.

⁴ The best understanding of the social Ordo — GEORGES DUBY's classic *The Three Orders: Feudal Society Imagined*, Chicago 1980, especially pp. 66-75.

⁵ UTA-RENATE BLUMENTHAL, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century*, Philadelphia 1988, especially pp. 106-134.

⁶ A clear and specific example of the workings of that relationship is to be found in DAVID S. LUX, *Patronage and Royal Science in Seventeenth Century France*, Ithaca 1989, pp. 9-22.

every lord was also a vassal — at least in theory. Except at the very lowest level, every vassal had vassals.⁷ And of course the rights and duties were very clearly spelled out for all participants. As the balance shifted towards the centre and the king acquired more power, different mechanisms were required for the exercise of those powers. This was not new in Vincent's century. However the bureaucratisation necessary for the development of the early modern state had not yet evolved to the point that it could carry the load. So an interim management system was needed.

The patronage system filled that need. It is not an exaggeration to say that patrons and their clients ran all levels of French society. As the ancestors of the kings had had vassals to carry out their commands, so seventeenth century kings had clients who met their needs. The royal family had families of clients, as well as individual clients, who served in return for protection and advancement. Some such relationships lasted for generations as vassalage had done. In other cases a talented individual would be "adopted" as a client; that service might last a lifetime, but it might only last a short time.

Higher level clients of course became patrons to clients of their own, extending power and protection over their clients in return for service.⁸ A successful client, who might have begun in quite a lowly position, performing lowly tasks for the patron, might move up the ladder, acquiring position, wealth, gifts, power, and serving the patron in ever more significant ways. The rewards which the client received were also the tools by which that client could work for the patron's aims at a higher level. And of course if the client was unsuccessful, either his tasks for the patron were reduced to a level at which he could succeed (and his position with it) or he could be discarded in a way that the vassal could not have been. Clientage was a much less formal (and much less clear) status than vassalage had been. The obligations of the client were unwritten, and varied all the time.

The evolution of the patronage system throughout this period was rapid. The efforts of the crown, especially during the reign of Louis XIV, and those of a particularly able court, headed by Cardinal Mazarin, ensured that constant variations on the basic method

⁷ ROBERT BARTLETT, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonisation and Cultural Change 950-1350*, London 1994, pp. 45-47 and 50-55.

⁸ A good analysis of the workings of political clientism is SHARON KETTERING, "Patronage and Politics During the Fronde," in *French Historical Studies* 14, No. 3, 1986, pp. 409-441.

appeared. Gradually the basics of a bureaucracy emerged, and as this happened, the need for clientage lessened in proportion.⁹

Vincent de Paul's involvement in the patronage system as patron did not include kinship elements. He seems never to have promoted the interests of his family in this way. For all the hopes his family had in his early career, his convictions did not allow him to be of assistance to them by the time his career had developed to the point that he could have been of benefit to them. As client he was often the beneficiary of kin relationships among his various patrons — the de Gondis for example.¹⁰

Another aspect of the system which needs to be noted in terms of Vincent's involvement is the role of clientage in bridging the local and the national,¹¹ both economically and politically. Families and individuals who were quite powerful in their own provinces could still be lacking in influence at court. Indeed, regional nobility who were quite dominant in their own region could be lacking in influence at the more stratified levels of royal government. Securing such influence could be done in either direction. A regional noble could acquire a client in the royal administration who could act as his or her information conduit and who could exert influence on his or her behalf. Alternatively he or she could acquire a patron either in the person of the king, a member of the royal family, or one of the royal ministers. For someone in the further reaches of the kingdom to create the right connection could be difficult, so the role of broker became important.¹² The broker's task was twofold. He or she¹³ conveyed information both up and down the patronage ladder, and often more importantly, made recommendations both as to policy and personnel. A client who could recommend a policy action which turned out to be successful gained significantly both in influence,

⁹ SHARON KETTERING, "Patronage and Politics During the Fronde," p. 437 of *Patronage*. Note in the same place Lawrence Stone's assertion that a similar process was occurring in England at the same time.

¹⁰ Note that Vincent's tense relationship with Cardinal Mazarin arose from Mazarin's conflicts and rivalries with the faction which numbered the de Gondis among its adherents.

¹¹ The activities of the Comte d'Alais in acting through letters to secure aid for his clients and friends (note the imprecise terminology — "friend" and "client" both use "ami") who lacked influence at court — p. 140 in SHARON KETTERING, "Friendship and Clientage in Early Modern France," in *Patronage*.

¹² SHARON KETTERING, "The Historical Development of Political Clientelism," VII, 425-426 in KETTERING, *Patronage*.

¹³ And wives, mothers and sisters often acted as sponsors and brokers — and not only within the family. See SHARON KETTERING, "The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen," V, 817-841 in KETTERING, *Patronage*.

and often in the form of gifts and promotions. A client who recommended a candidate suitable for a particular post, and whose candidate did in fact work successfully, not only gained added influence with the patron. He or she also succeeded by having a protégé of theirs given the post. That new client of their shared patron owed a debt to the broker, a debt which the broker could reclaim in either information or other services at a later date. So the skill which in the modern world would be called “networking” was closely related to the skills needed by the successful broker in the clientage system.

Among the other roles played by the Council of Conscience was one of brokerage. The Council was advisory to the Queen, and it dealt with religious issues of general importance to her and to the realm. But the appointment of Bishops and Abbots and Abbesses was one of its most politically and religiously fraught responsibilities. Although Mazarin was the President of the Council and several Bishops were among its members, Vincent appears to have been among its most influential members, because of the regard the Queen had for him, her confessor. Vincent’s aim on the Council was to further the reform of the Church and the quality of its leadership. His was the innovation by which the Council adopted criteria according to which appointments could be made, such as the rule that a candidate for the episcopacy had to have been a priest for at least a year.¹⁴

It was not only Vincent’s spiritual stance which made him the Council’s most respected member. His connections around the kingdom, and the reports of his confreres who were involved in different Provinces with parish missions meant that he had knowledge, good and bad, of candidates from around the kingdom, rather than only those candidates whose families had court connections. His work on the Council also serves as an interesting example of the way in which the clientage system was gradually being transformed into a semi-permanent bureaucracy. The establishment of general criteria for appointment and the enforcement of those criteria are indicators of the growing professionalism of the government of the kingdom, and therefore of the passing of the client system.

Vincent’s involvement in the household of Queen Anne of Austria as a client of a female member of the royal family who had patronage to bestow, gave him a position of potential influence. The members of her household were both her servants and the doers of her will.

¹⁴ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, p. 544.

Through them she maintained a level of independence of the Cardinal and the King, Long involvement in the household of one of the great families, the de Gondis, placed him in a position to wield influence through them and through their relatives and allies.

Patronage in Vincent's life

It is particularly notable that clergy often began their careers in the households of noble women. Richelieu himself began his rise to power and prominence when he was appointed as grand almoner in the household of Anne of Austria.¹⁵ It took some time and considerable manoeuvring before he was able to parlay that appointment into one in the household of Marie de Medici, a position which placed him closer to the centres of power. Vincent de Paul began as one of the secretaries in the household of Marguerite de Valois, first wife of Henri IV.¹⁶ While Marguerite was no longer Queen, she was still a powerful figure in French social and political life, and Vincent's success in securing a position in her court was his first successful move onto the national stage. He secured the position through a broker, although there are disputes over who the broker was, either M. Antoine de Clerc de la Foret or, according to Abelly, M. Charles du Fresne, the Queen's secretary.¹⁷ This was a major step towards a significant career.

In the meantime Vincent had endured the crisis of faith which transformed his life, and had adopted Cardinal Pierre de Berulle as his guide and patron. Presumably it was the faith-transformation which led Vincent to transfer his clientage from Marguerite de Valois to the Cardinal. De Berulle was certainly one of the most significant spiritual figures of the French church; it can be argued that he was the father of the French school of spirituality through his writings, his introduction of the reformed Carmelites into France, the group of reform-minded clergy whom he gathered around himself, and his founding in Paris of the Oratory, a French version of Philip Neri's Italian Oratory.¹⁸

It was through his patron, the Cardinal, that Vincent became Parish Priest of the parish of Clichy-la-Garenne, a prosperous country town in which he exercised pastoral ministry for the first

¹⁵ ELIZABETH MARVICK, *The Young Richelieu*, 173-175

¹⁶ SHARON KETTERING, "The Patronage Power of Early Modern French Noblewomen," *op. cit.*, p. 830.

¹⁷ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹⁸ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98.

time. And then, barely a year later, again at the prompting of his patron, Vincent left the parish and became tutor to the children of Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi,¹⁹ Marquis of the Golden Isles, Count de Joigny, Baron de Montmirail, and General of the Galleys, and his wife Françoise Marguerite de Silly. For the rest of his life he remained a client of the de Gondi family. In the early years de Berulle continued to have influence on him, but quite quickly Vincent began to influence Mme de Gondi, and shortly thereafter her husband as well. Benefices were bestowed on him²⁰ — rewards for the successful client whose work is acknowledged by the patron. But by this time Vincent was a changed man. So much so that by the time he had his revelation at Folleville in 1617 his personal ambitions had been transformed into ambition for the Gospel. And of course it was not only Vincent who was stunned by the ignorance of people who risked damnation by not confessing their sins. Mme de Gondi was even more powerfully struck. So the famous mission sermon of January 25, 1617, from which date Vincent insisted the mission had begun, and in which he discovered his life goal of preaching the gospel to the rural poor, began the process out of which eight years later the Congregation of the Mission was founded. But this work of foundation was itself a work of his patrons. The founders of the Congregation legally were Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi and Mme Françoise Marguerite. The inspirations for the foundation were Mme de Gondi and Vincent. The contract and the funding, and the early opportunities were all provided by the de Gondis. While Vincent was director of the Congregation for life, he was still both tutor to the de Gondi children and later chaplain to the de Gondi family. This is a clear example of the way in which Vincent was to use the patronage system for the rest of his life. As the needs of the poor called him, so he would enlist his own patrons and other, auxiliary patrons in the service of those poor. The Duchess d'Aiguillon,²¹ the niece of Cardinal Richelieu, became a long-term secondary patron for the work of the Mission. Her funds and support were always available and frequently called upon as the work of the Mission spread through France in the 1630s and 1640s.

The de Gondi family²² themselves demonstrate the effective use of the patronage system. Italian in origin, Philippe Emmanuel's first French ancestor, his great-grandfather Antoine (Antonio), who had

¹⁹ PUJO, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-50.

²⁰ The parish of Gamaches in Rouen, and a canonry of Ecouis.

²¹ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-294.

²² ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-109.

begun life as a Florentine banker, secured the family fortunes when he was appointed Steward to the young Dauphin Henry III early in the sixteenth century. In doing so he became a client of Queen Catherine de Medici. His wife reinforced the relationship by becoming the royal governess. The careers of two of their sons indicate the skill with which their parents had served their patron, and the continuing development of the family through the next few generations indicates that the talents and judgement were inherited in the family.²³

Antoine's eldest grandson Albert became Marquis, General of the Galleys and Marshall of France, and later in his life Duke de Retz. At different times he was Governor of three different Provinces.²⁴ In a step towards the promotion of the family which is too symmetrical to be other than deliberate, Antoine's second grandson Pierre became Bishop of Langres, and later Bishop of Paris. Sufficiently involved in royal politics to become a confidant of Henri IV, he was entrusted with the King's negotiations with Pope Clement VIII to secure pardon for his sin of heresy. Later he negotiated Henri's annulment of his marriage to Marguerite de Valois. For his reward for this success he became Cardinal de Retz.

Albert had ten children. In a further upwardly mobile career his son Charles, the second Duke de Retz, married a member of the royal family, Marguerite d'Orleans. Philippe Emmanuel inherited the secondary titles of Marquis of the Golden Isles and Count de Joigny, as well as the military career and Generalate of the Galleys.

The ecclesiastical side of the family "business" was continued by Albert's other two sons. Henri became Coadjutor Bishop to his uncle Pierre in 1596, succeeded him, and later became the first Cardinal de Retz. His younger brother Jean Francois became a Capuchin and succeeded Henri as Bishop of Paris in 1623. He became the first Archbishop of Paris when the see was promoted to Metropolitan status.

By the time Vincent became a client of the General of the Galleys the de Gondi family ranked among the Grand Seigneurs of the kingdom. Even though Philippe Emmanuel joined de Berulle's Oratory in 1627 after the death of his wife, he continued to exert influence on behalf of the family, on behalf of his client Vincent de Paul, and on behalf of the Oratory of his Superior the Cardinal.

²³ For an excellent, and complete, five generation family tree of the de Gondi family see the endpapers of J.H.M. SALMON, *Cardinal de Retz: The Anatomy of a Conspirator*, London 1969.

²⁴ Provence, Metz and Nantes.

From Vincent's point of view, even after the death of Mme de Gondi and the retirement of Philippe Emmanuel, as a client of the family he could still exert influence. Of particular importance in terms of the development of the Congregation of the Mission, the Ladies of Charity and the Daughters of Charity was the influence he could exert within the Archdiocese of Paris. A stream of approvals for the different Rules and other legal documents were readily available from Jean Francois, and then from Jean-Francois Paul, the second Cardinal de Retz and Coadjutor Archbishop of Paris from 1643. Vincent had been tutor to him as to Philippe Emmanuel's other sons. Jean-Francois Paul may be regarded as one of Vincent's failures. His ambition, his political manoeuvrings and his sexual liaisons made him a prince-bishop in the old style rather than in the reformed style of the Council of Trent. Nevertheless, his family relationship with Vincent and Vincent's interest in him and efforts on his behalf ensured that the Archbishop continued to act as Vincent's patron and supported his works in return for Vincent's clientage.

Vincent's apostolate to the galley slaves was one of the noblest and most frustrating of his many apostolic initiatives. It was also one in which the workings of clientism are readily visible. Vincent himself was appointed Chaplain Royal to the Galleys in 1619 and he remained in the position for the rest of his life. The appointment was made directly by the General of the Galleys, who was of course Vincent's patron. The galleys were one of the principal arms of French military influence in the Mediterranean, and as the century wore on and conflicts with Spain and problems caused to Mediterranean trade by corsairs from North Africa grew, the importance of the galleys grew too. The rowers of the galleys were criminals who were sentenced to a term at the oar. As the needs of the fleet grew, sentences were lengthened, and applied to more classes of crime to ensure that the fleet had sufficient oarsmen. The conditions were so severe that service on the galleys was very often equivalent to a death sentence.

In his customary manner Vincent initially moved slowly and gradually until he had appraised the extent of the problem and devised his own solution. Before 1639 his efforts were fragmented and were aimed at the improvement of the worst of the situations facing the prisoners²⁵ so that his efforts simply added to the list of those working on behalf of the convicted.

²⁵ The Missioners conducted missions for the prisoners in Paris before they were sent south to the galleys; he attempted several negotiations to secure visits by different charitable groups, and twice he secured better quarters in Paris for those awaiting transfer to Marseilles.

Then in 1639 a large bequest (6000 livres) from the estate of M. Corneul, President of the Ministry of Finance, and intended for the alleviation of the conditions of the galley slaves, provided both initial resource and impetus for a major assault on the whole problem. First the Daughters of Charity were sent in to look after the material welfare of the convicts, and a dangerous and difficult work it was. Then a major mission for all the galleys at once was launched in Marseilles. Five Vincentians led by Vincent's faithful collaborator M. Francois du Coudray were assisted by Jesuits and Oratorians and the bishop and clergy of the diocese. But these were exercises in crisis management. The next stage, following Vincent's usual pattern, was to permanently improve the situation. So two construction projects occupied the first half of the 1640s — the construction of a hospital for the convicts in Marseilles, and the establishment of a house of the Mission to provide permanent spiritual care for the galley slaves, including quinquennial missions. The position of Chaplain Royal, with the right of appointment of chaplains for the galleys, was vested in perpetuity in the Superior of the Congregation of the Mission, and delegated by Vincent to the priest in charge of the house in Marseilles.²⁶ The work continued to be difficult and dangerous. Daughters of Charity and Vincentians and some of the clergy who assisted in the initial mission (including the Bishop of Marseilles) died of various plagues and diseases caught from the convicts.

So much for the problem. How did the patronage system bear upon it? Vincent's initial appointment was an act of direct patronage by Philippe Emmanuel, General of the Galleys. The continuing work of providing actual chaplains was a work of patronage also — Vincent as patron appointed clergy clients of his to the posts. Some were Vincentians, some were local parish clergy. A significant variation in the usual operation of the system occurred after the retirement of Philippe Emmanuel when the de Gondis lost the position of General of the Galleys to the opposing faction led by Cardinal Richelieu, who bestowed it upon his nephew the Duke de Richelieu. In the normal course of events the Chaplaincy Royal would have changed hands also, to a client of the Duke. But by this time Vincent had achieved sufficient status that he could claim connections on all sides of the political and patronal struggle. In the reconstruction of the facilities for the galley slaves and their care Vincent acted as co-ordinator, and enlisted the services of patrons from all sides of the aristocratic scene. Thus the queen supplied

²⁶ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 497-502.

funds as did the Duchess d'Aiguillon, and, probably through her agency, the Cardinal himself. With the crown, the King's chief minister, the Cardinal's party, and the opposition represented by Vincent himself and supported by Cardinal de Retz who had not yet begun to lose power, Vincent had enlisted all the major players in support of the great work. So Vincent once again took the prevailing model and reshaped it into a form which could achieve his hopes for it on behalf of the Gospel.

Writings about Vincent often seem to assume that he was an independent agent responsible only to Pope and King. But the examples I have cited (and they can be echoed in his other activities when they are closely analysed) show that he was enmeshed in a cooperative socio-political system. His skill in using the structural systems of government and society in support of his revolutionary goals is what made him so formidable. His spiritual sons and daughters need to learn his skills of cautious analysis and engagement in the equivalent political and social systems of the twenty-first century.

Vincent de Paul : Patron et Client

par Guy Norman Hartcher, C.M.

Pour comprendre Monsieur Vincent comme évangéliste et comme travailleur pour les pauvres, nous devons comprendre le monde sociopolitique dans lequel il vécut. Il était un travailleur de charité politique, à la fois libre à l'égard du monde politique et dépendant de ce même monde politique. Sa vie et son œuvre confortent l'hypothèse que le charisme de Vincent est révolutionnaire dans ses objectifs, mais que ses méthodes s'appliquent dans des structures sociales existantes, mais visent aussi à les transformer pour le service des pauvres. Deux faits de société caractérisent le monde dans lequel il vécut : la nature fondamentalement hiérarchique de la culture et le système de clientélisme issu de cette culture et remplaçant le système d'exploitation d'un féodalisme moribond.

Une société fondamentalement hiérarchisée

Comme c'est le cas dans beaucoup de sociétés hiérarchiques, la naissance est l'élément social primordial dans le monde de Vincent. La place d'un individu dans la société était déterminée par la position sociale des parents. Peu importe ce que faisait la personne, elle était marquée de façon indélébile par sa naissance. Le « marqueur » de la naissance valait pour les deux classes de la société : les familles nobles, discréditées ou ayant perdu des biens, pouvaient toujours monnayer leur statut durant quelques générations. Les paysans qui avaient réussi à s'élever dans la société, par leurs capacités ou par une bonne fortune, demeuraient une curiosité et pouvaient être en proie à une hostilité manifeste ou secrète, voire à une critique ou une discrimination. Quand le cardinal Mazarin¹, à la cour², se moqua de la robe usée de Vincent, il pointait plusieurs choses du doigt : il marquait des points contre son adversaire dans le domaine politique, suite à d'interminables joutes pour garder sa prédominance ; il remettait à sa place une personne représentant une vision politique cohé-

¹ Pour les relations entre Vincent de Paul et le Cardinal Mazarin, voir JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *Vincent de Paul : Biographie*, Londres 1999, pp. 537-540.

² *Ibid.*, p. 540.

rente, vision un temps partagée par Mazarin. Cependant, la réalité fondamentale était que Vincent était un paysan et que paysan il était et que paysan il demeurerait. Il était donc une cible légitime. Vincent, bien sûr, n'admettait pas cette situation, mais il en usait habilement³.

Une des raisons pour lesquelles le paysan était une cible était que la société comprenait l'ordre social comme venant de Dieu : la conception était que chaque personne avait été placée par Dieu là où elle servirait le mieux pour l'obtention de son Ciel. Ainsi, chaque personne avait à travailler pour son salut là où Dieu l'avait mise⁴.

Le système de patronage

L'Église fonctionnait dans cette structure politico-sociale qui était à la fois féodale et chrétienne. Les évêques juraient fidélité aux rois et à leur tour ils avaient à la fois des vassaux ecclésiastiques et séculiers qui leur prêtaient serment. En même temps, la structure féodale de l'Église fonctionnait en parallèle avec celle de la société civile et, dans ce domaine, sa propre sphère, cette structure particulière s'appliquait aussi bien à des éléments spirituels que matériels. La querelle des investitures⁵ du XI^{ème} siècle avait clarifié à la fois ce qui était dû à César et ce qui était dû à Dieu bien qu'il existât toujours la possibilité que des conflits d'intérêts concurrentiels se déclarent. Mais, d'une façon générale, le modèle politique dans l'Église et entre l'Église et la société séculière fut défini à la fin de ce siècle.

Mais Vincent de Paul vécut des siècles plus tard, au cœur d'une période de transition où un féodalisme moribond était progressivement remplacé par un début d'état moderne. La France fut un état pionnier dans lequel cette transformation se produisit en premier lieu. Et l'outil politico social par lequel cette transition fut menée était la relation patron-client⁶. Ce système de patronage est à la fois une survivance et un successeur du système féodal. Dans le système féodal, chaque seigneur était aussi un vassal — au moins en théo-

³ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 542-543 dans lequel Vincent affirme au Prince de Condé que son statut de porcher est bien inférieur à celui de métayer occupé en fait par son père.

⁴ Pour une bonne compréhension de l'ordre social — le classique de GEORGES DUBY, *Les trois ordres : la représentation de la société féodale*, Chicago 1980, spécialement pages 66-75.

⁵ UTA-RENATE BLUMENTHAL, *La querelle des investitures : Église et monarchie du 9^{ème} au 12^{ème} siècle*, Philadelphie 1988, spécialement pp. 106-134.

⁶ Un exemple clair et précis au sujet des travaux concernant ce type de relation peut être trouvé chez : DAVID S. LUX, *Patronage et Science Royale au XVII^{ème} siècle en France*, Ithaca 1989, pp. 9-22.

rie. Excepté au plus bas niveau, chaque vassal avait des vassaux⁷. Et bien sûr, les droits et les devoirs étaient très clairement spécifiés pour tous les participants. Tandis que l'équilibre se déplaçait vers le centre et que le roi prenait plus de pouvoir, différents mécanismes furent mis en place pour l'exercice de ces pouvoirs. Cela n'était pas nouveau au temps de St Vincent. Cependant la bureaucratisation nécessaire pour le développement du tout début de l'état moderne ne s'était pas encore développée au point de pouvoir porter la nouvelle charge. Ainsi, il a donc fallu mettre en place un système de gestion provisoire.

Le système de clientélisme a comblé ce besoin ; ce n'est pas une exagération de dire que les patrons et leurs clients se trouvaient à tous les niveaux de la société française. Comme les ancêtres des rois avaient eu des vassaux pour exécuter leurs ordres, au dix-septième siècle, les rois avaient des clients qui répondaient à leurs besoins. La famille royale avait des familles de clients, aussi bien que des clients individuels qui eurent protection et avancement en retour. De telles relations pouvaient durer pendant des générations comme cela existait dans la vassalité. Dans d'autres cas, une personne douée pouvait être adoptée comme client, ce qui pouvait durer une vie entière ou un temps beaucoup plus court.

Bien sûr, des clients d'un niveau plus élevé pouvaient devenir patrons pour leurs clients étendant leur pouvoir et leur protection sur leurs clients en retour⁸. Un client qui avait réussi, après avoir commencé au bas de l'échelle sociale, en exécutant des tâches viles pour son patron, pouvait gravir l'échelle sociale et acquérir position sociale et richesse, recevoir des dons, conquérir du pouvoir et servir le patron dans des domaines plus significatifs encore. Les récompenses que le client recevait étaient des moyens par lesquels le client pouvait travailler pour des objectifs patronaux plus nobles. Bien sûr, si le client ne réussissait pas, ou bien ses tâches pour le patron étaient ramenées à un niveau qu'il pouvait atteindre (et la position qui allait avec) ou bien il pouvait être rabaissé à un niveau auquel le vassal n'avait pu prétendre. Le clientélisme était un statut beaucoup moins clair et moins précis que la vassalité. Les obligations du client n'étaient pas écrites et variaient souvent.

L'évolution du système de patronage a été rapide à cette époque. Les efforts de la couronne, surtout pendant le règne de Louis XIV, et

⁷ ROBERT BARTLETT, *La construction de l'Europe : conquête, colonisation, et changements culturels entre 950 et 1350*, Londres 1994, pp. 45-47 et 50-55.

⁸ Une bonne analyse des travaux du clientélisme politique est SHARON KETTERING, « Patronage et politique pendant la Fronde », dans *Etudes historiques françaises* 14, n° 3, 1986, pp. 409-441.

ceux d'une cour particulièrement apte et dirigée par le Cardinal Mazarin permirent ces variations constantes concernant la méthode de base. Peu à peu, les bases d'une bureaucratie émergèrent et le besoin de clientélisme diminua proportionnellement⁹.

L'implication de Vincent dans le système de patronage comme patron n'incluait pas les éléments de parenté. Cependant il ne semble jamais avoir promu les intérêts de sa famille de cette façon : en effet tous les espoirs que sa famille avait mis en lui au début de sa carrière, ses convictions ne lui permirent pas de les concrétiser, au moment même où sa carrière s'était développée au point de pouvoir le faire. Comme client, il était souvent le bénéficiaire de relations de parenté parmi ses différents patrons ; les de Gondi par l'exemple¹⁰.

Un autre aspect du système qu'il faut noter en termes d'implication de Vincent dans le rôle de clientèle est le lien entre le national¹¹ et le local, à la fois économiquement et politiquement. Des familles ou des personnes, très puissantes dans leur province, pouvaient ne pas avoir d'influence à la cour. De fait, une noblesse fort influente dans sa propre région pouvait manquer d'influence à des niveaux plus élevés du gouvernement royal. Préserver une telle influence pouvait se faire dans un sens ou un autre : un noble, important dans sa région pouvait avoir un client dans l'administration royale qui pouvait agir pour la conduite de son information et qui pouvait exercer son influence pour lui. Tour à tour, il ou elle pouvait avoir un patron soit en la personne du roi ou en un membre de la famille royale soit un ministre royal. En effet, pour quelqu'un qui dans le Royaume voulait étendre ses relations, l'opération était difficile ; le rôle du courtier devenait donc important¹². La tâche du courtier était double : il ou elle¹³ transmettait l'information de la base au sommet et vice versa et

⁹ SHARRON KETTERING, « Patronage et politique durant la Fronde », p. 437 de *Patronage*. Notez pour le même sujet ce que dit Lawrence Stone à savoir qu'un processus similaire se mettait en place en Angleterre au même moment.

¹⁰ Notez que les relations tendues de Vincent avec le cardinal Mazarin provenaient des rivalités et des conflits de Mazarin avec la faction qui comptait les de Gondi parmi ses membres.

¹¹ Les activités du comte d'Alais, qui manquait d'influence à la cour, à travers ses lettres pour renforcer l'aide pour ses clients et amis (notez la terminologie imprécise — « ami » et « client » les deux utilisent « ami ») — p. 140 dans SHARRON KETTERING, « Relations amicales et clientélisme au début du monde moderne en France », dans *Patronage*.

¹² SHARRON KETTERING, « Le développement historique du clientélisme politique » VII, 425-426 dans *Patronage*.

¹³ Et les femmes, mères et sœurs agissaient souvent comme courtiers — et non seulement dans la famille. Voir SHARRON KETTERING, « Le pouvoir du patronage chez les dames nobles au début du monde moderne français » V, 817-841 dans *Patronage*.

souvent — ce qui était le plus important il conseillait les deux niveaux tant sur le plan politique que personnel : ainsi un client qui donnait un conseil politique fructueux obtenait une influence considérable en bas et en haut de la société, souvent sous forme de dons ou de promotion. Un client qui recommandait un candidat approprié pour un poste particulier, en cas de réussite, gagnait de l'influence dans la société, mais aussi aux yeux de son patron ; ce nouveau client avait une dette envers le courtier qui pouvait lui réclamer une information ou d'autres services ultérieurs. Ainsi ce que l'on appelle aujourd'hui réseau relationnel était étroitement lié aux aptitudes nécessaires du courtier pour établir des relations dans le système de clientèle.

Parmi les autres rôles joués par le Conseil de Conscience il y avait le rôle de courtage. Ce Conseil avait un rôle consultatif face à la reine et il traitait de questions religieuses importantes pour elle et pour le royaume. Les réunions d'évêques, d'Abbés et d'Abbeses comportaient à la fois des responsabilités à caractère politique et à caractère religieux important. Bien que Mazarin en fût le président et que plusieurs évêques en furent membres, Vincent sembla en avoir été un des membres les plus influents, à cause des égards que la reine avait pour lui, puisqu'il était son confesseur. L'objectif de Vincent concernant ce Conseil visait surtout à la réforme de l'Église et à la qualité de sa direction. La principale innovation adoptée par le Conseil fut l'établissement de critères pour les nominations : un candidat à la nomination épiscopale devait être prêtre depuis au moins un an¹⁴, par exemple.

La position spirituelle de Vincent faisait de lui un des membres du Conseil les plus respectés : ses relations dans le royaume et les rapports de ses confrères impliqués dans les différentes provinces grâce à leur mission en paroisse lui permettaient de connaître les bons et mauvais candidats et non pas seulement les candidats qui avaient des relations avec la cour. Son travail dans le Conseil présente aussi un exemple de la transformation progressive du système de clientélisme en une bureaucratie semi permanente. L'établissement de critères généraux pour les nominations et l'exécution de ces critères étaient des indicateurs du professionnalisme croissant du gouvernement du royaume ; c'est ainsi que le clientélisme se transforma.

L'implication de Vincent, comme client, dans la gestion de la maison de la reine Anne d'Autriche¹⁵, c'est-à-dire un membre féminin de la famille royale, lui accordait une position de possible influence ; les

¹⁴ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, p. 544.

¹⁵ ELIZABETH MARVICK, *Le jeune Richelieu*, 173-175.

membres de la maison étaient les serviteurs et les exécuteurs de sa volonté ; à travers eux, elle gardait une certaine indépendance vis-à-vis du cardinal et du roi. Une longue implication au sein d'une grande famille — les Gondi — le mettait dans une position qui lui permettait d'exercer une influence à travers eux, leurs familles et leurs alliés.

Le patronage dans la vie de Vincent

Il est à remarquer que le clergé a souvent commencé sa carrière dans les maisons de femmes nobles. Richelieu a débuté son ascension et sa prise de pouvoir quand il a été nommé grand assistant dans la maison d'Anne d'Autriche. Pour cela, il lui a fallu du temps pour faire fructifier cet acquis dans la maison de Marie de Médicis, une position qui l'a placé plus près du centre du pouvoir. Vincent de Paul a commencé comme un des secrétaires dans la maison de Marguerite de Valois, la première femme d'Henry IV¹⁶. Tandis que Marguerite n'était plus reine, elle était encore une figure puissante dans la vie française, sociale et politique et le succès de Vincent en assurant une position dans sa cour fut le premier pas du succès vers l'étape nationale. Il a renforcé sa position par un courtier, bien qu'il y ait des querelles pour connaître son identité : Antoine de Clerc de la Forêt ou, selon Abelly, Charles du Fresne, le secrétaire¹⁷ de la reine. Ce fut là une étape majeure dans une carrière importante.

Entre temps, Vincent vécut une crise de la foi qui a transformé sa vie ; c'est alors qu'il prit le cardinal Pierre de Bérulle comme guide et comme patron. Vraisemblablement, c'est la transformation de sa foi qui a amené Vincent à transférer son clientélisme de Marguerite de Valois au Cardinal de Bérulle, certainement une des figures spirituelles les plus significatives de l'Église française ; on peut affirmer qu'il était le père de l'école française de spiritualité en raison des ses écrits, de son introduction des Carmélites réformées en France, le groupe du clergé ouvert à la réforme qu'il rassembla autour de lui, sa création de l'Oratoire à Paris, une version française de l'Oratoire italien de Philippe Néri¹⁸.

C'est grâce à son patron, le Cardinal, que Vincent devient prêtre de la paroisse de Clichy la Garenne, un bourg prospère dans lequel il exerça pour la première fois le ministère pastoral. A peine une

¹⁶ SHARRON KETTERING, « Le pouvoir du patronage chez les dames nobles au début du monde moderne français », *op. cit.*, p. 830.

¹⁷ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

¹⁸ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98.

année après, c'est encore sur les conseils de Bérulle que Vincent quittait la paroisse et devenait le tuteur des enfants de Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi¹⁹, marquis des îlots dorés, comte de Joigny, baron de Montmirail, général des galères et sa femme Françoise Marguerite de Silly. Pour le reste de sa vie, il est demeuré client de la famille de Gondi. Dans les premières années, de Bérulle a continué à avoir de l'influence sur lui, mais très rapidement Vincent a commencé à influencer Madame de Gondi et par la suite, son mari. Des bénéfices lui étaient attribués²⁰, des récompenses étaient octroyées au client qui avait réussi son travail. A cette époque, Vincent avait radicalement changé : c'est à Folleville en 1617 qu'il eut sa révélation : ses ambitions personnelles devinrent des ambitions pour l'Évangile. Ce ne fut pas seulement Vincent qui fut touché de voir l'ignorance des gens qui risquaient la damnation en ne confessant pas leurs fautes, Madame de Gondi le fut plus fortement encore. Dans le célèbre sermon du 25 janvier 1617, Vincent a insisté pour dire que c'est à cette date que sa mission avait commencé et qu'il avait découvert que son objectif de vie était de prêcher l'Évangile aux pauvres gens des champs. C'est à ce moment qu'a commencé le processus par lequel 8 ans plus tard fut fondée la Congrégation de la Mission ; mais ce travail de fondation était lui-même un travail de ses patrons. Les fondateurs de la Congrégation étaient légalement Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi et Madame Françoise Marguerite. Les inspirateurs de la fondation étaient Madame de Gondi et Vincent. Le contrat, la fondation et les premières occasions ont tous été fournis par les de Gondi. Tandis que Vincent était le directeur de la Congrégation pour la vie, il était toujours précepteur des enfants de Gondi et plus tard aumônier de la famille de Gondi. C'est ici un exemple qui illustre clairement la façon dont Vincent utilisa le système de clientèle pour le reste de sa vie. Tandis que les besoins des pauvres l'ont appelé, il enrôlerait ses propres patrons et d'autres clients auxiliaires au service de ses pauvres : ainsi la duchesse d'Aiguillon²¹, la nièce du Cardinal de Richelieu est devenue une patronne secondaire et durable à long terme pour le travail de la Mission. Ses fonds et son soutien étaient toujours disponibles et fréquemment sollicités tandis que le travail de la Mission se répandait à travers la France entre les années 1630-1640.

Les de Gondi²² eux-mêmes démontraient l'utilisation effective du système de patronage. Italien d'origine, le premier ancêtre français de

¹⁹ PUJO, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-50.

²⁰ La paroisse de Gamaches dans le diocèse de Rouen et une charge de chanoine à Ecouis.

²¹ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 292-294.

²² ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-109.

Philippe Emmanuel, son grand père Antoine, qui avait commencé sa vie comme banquier à Florence, protégea les biens de famille quand il fut nommé intendant pour le jeune Dauphin Henry III au début du XVI^{ème} siècle ; ce faisant, il devint un client de la reine Catherine de Médicis. Sa femme renforça la relation en devenant la gouvernante royale. Les carrières de deux de ses fils montrent l'aptitude avec laquelle leurs parents avaient servi leur patron et le développement continu de la famille à travers les quelques générations suivantes, tout cela indique que les talents et le jugement étaient héréditaires dans la famille²³.

Le petit fils aîné d'Antoine, Albert, devint marquis, général des galères, maréchal de France et plus tard, duc de Retz. A plusieurs reprises, il fut gouverneur de 3 provinces²⁴ différentes. Dans la marche pour la promotion de la famille, qui est trop régulière pour être autre que voulue, le second petit fils d'Antoine, Pierre, devint évêque de Langres et ensuite de Paris ; suffisamment impliqué dans la politique royale pour devenir confident d'Henry IV, il fut mêlé aux négociations du roi avec le Pape Clément VIII pour garantir le pardon de son péché d'hérésie ; plus tard, il négocia l'annulation du mariage d'Henry avec Marguerite de Valois. En récompense de ce succès, il fut nommé Cardinal de Retz.

Albert eut dix enfants. Son fils Charles, le second duc de Retz, se maria avec un membre de la famille royale, Marguerite d'Orléans. Philippe Emmanuel hérita des titres secondaires de marquis des îles dorées, de comte de Joigny, d'une carrière militaire et du généralat des galères.

Le côté ecclésiastique du travail de la famille fut continué par les deux autres fils d'Albert : Henry devint évêque coadjuteur pour son oncle Pierre en 1596, lui succéda et plus tard fut le premier Cardinal de Retz. Son plus jeune frère Jean François devint capucin et succéda à Henry comme évêque de Paris en 1623. Il devint le premier archevêque de Paris quand le siège fut promu au statut de métropolitain.

Avec le temps, Vincent devenu un client du général des galères — la famille de Gondi — a été classée parmi les grands seigneurs du Royaume. Bien que Philippe Emmanuel rejoignit l'Oratoire de Bérulle en 1627 après la mort de sa femme, il a continué à exercer de l'influence au nom de sa famille, au nom de son client Vincent de Paul, au nom de l'Oratoire de son supérieur, le Cardinal de Bérulle.

²³ Pour un excellent arbre généalogique des de Gondi, se reporter aux documents écrits de J.H.M. SALMON, *Cardinal de Retz, portrait d'un conspirateur*, Londres 1969.

²⁴ Provence, Metz, Nantes.

Du point de vue de Vincent, après la mort de Madame de Gondi et la retraite de Philippe Emmanuel, comme client de la famille, il pouvait encore avoir de l'influence. Particulièrement importante en termes de développement de la Congrégation de la Mission et des Dames de la Charité et des Filles de la Charité était l'influence de Vincent dans l'archidiocèse de Paris. Un courant d'approbation pour les différentes règles et autres documents légaux émanait de Jean François et de Jean François Paul, le second Cardinal de Retz, archevêque coadjuteur de Paris à partir de 1643. Vincent a été son tuteur comme pour les autres fils de Philippe Emmanuel. Jean François Paul peut être considéré comme une des erreurs de Vincent. Son ambition, ses manœuvres politiques et ses liaisons sexuelles ont fait de lui un évêque-prince de l'ancienne école plutôt qu'un évêque dans la lignée du style réformé émanant du concile de Trente. Toutefois, sa relation de famille avec Vincent, l'intérêt de Vincent pour lui et les efforts en sa faveur garantirent le fait que l'archevêque put continuer à agir comme patron de Vincent et à l'aider dans ses travaux en retour pour le clientélisme de Vincent.

L'apostolat de Vincent auprès des galériens était un des plus nobles et des plus déprimants travaux parmi ses nombreuses initiatives apostoliques. C'était aussi un des apostolats dans lesquels les mécanismes de clientélisme étaient facilement identifiables. Vincent lui-même était nommé aumônier royal des galères en 1619 et il le demeura sa vie durant. La nomination était faite directement par le général des galères qui, bien sûr, était le patron de Vincent. Les galères étaient une des principales armes de l'influence militaire française en Méditerranée et, avec le temps, les conflits avec l'Espagne et les problèmes causés au commerce méditerranéen par les corsaires du nord de l'Afrique grandissaient, de la même façon l'importance des galères grandissait également. Les rameurs sur les galères étaient des criminels qui étaient condamnés à terme. Comme les besoins de la flotte augmentaient, les peines étaient allongées et s'appliquaient à des classes de crimes différents afin de garantir un effectif de rameurs suffisant. Les conditions sur les galères étaient si difficiles que cette condition équivalait souvent à une peine de mort.

La façon de faire de Vincent a lentement évolué au début et progressivement jusqu'à ce qu'il évalue l'étendue du problème et conçoit sa propre solution. Avant 1639, ses efforts ont été morcelés et ont visé à l'amélioration des situations les plus dures pour les prisonniers²⁵ et

²⁵ Les missionnaires ayant fait des missions dans Paris pour les prisonniers avant d'être envoyés au sud dans les galères ; Vincent tenta plusieurs négociations pour assurer des visites par différents groupes charitables et par deux

ainsi ses efforts s'ajoutaient simplement à la liste de ceux travaillant en faveur des détenus.

Ensuite, en 1639, un legs conséquent (6000 livres) venant des propriétés de Monsieur de Corneul, président du ministère des finances et destiné à soulager la condition des galériens fournit à la fois la ressource initiale et l'impulsion pour une meilleure prise en compte de tout le problème. En premier lieu, les Filles de la Charité furent envoyées pour prendre soin du bien-être matériel des prisonniers, ce qui était un travail à la fois dangereux et difficile. Puis une mission d'importance majeure pour tous les galériens fut lancée à Marseille. Cinq Vincentiens emmenés par le fidèle collaborateur de Monsieur Vincent, Monsieur François du Coudray, furent aidés par des Jésuites et des Oratoriens ainsi que par l'évêque et le clergé du diocèse. Mais il s'agissait d'exercices pour gérer la crise. L'étape ultérieure, en prenant le modèle habituel de Vincent, consistait à améliorer constamment la situation. Ainsi, deux projets de construction occupaient la première moitié de l'année 1640 : la construction d'un hôpital pour les détenus à Marseille et la mise en place d'une maison de mission en vue de fournir des aides spirituelles permanentes pour les galériens avec des missions quinquennales. La position d'aumônier royal avec le pouvoir de nommer les aumôniers pour les galères était confiée à perpétuité au supérieur de la Congrégation et déléguée par Vincent au prêtre qui avait en charge la maison de Marseille²⁶. Le travail continua à être difficile et dangereux. Les Filles de la Charité et les Vincentiens, ainsi que quelques membres du clergé qui donnaient un coup de main dans les premières missions (dont l'évêque de Marseille) moururent de diverses maladies qu'ils avaient contractées auprès des détenus.

Voilà le problème. Comment le système de patronage pouvait-il servir la cause des prisonniers ? La première nomination de Vincent était un acte de patronage direct par Philippe Emmanuel, général des galères. Le travail qui consistait à fournir de vrais aumôniers était aussi un travail de patronage. Vincent comme patron a nommé de ses clients ecclésiastiques à divers postes. Certains étaient des Vincentiens (Lazaristes), d'autres du clergé paroissial local. Un changement significatif dans la manière habituelle du système se produisit après le départ de Philippe Emmanuel lorsque les de Gondi perdirent le poste de général des galères face à l'opposition menée par le cardinal Richelieu qui le confia à son neveu, le duc de Richelieu. Dans le cours normal des événements, l'aumônerie royale aurait changé de

fois il renforça sa présence à Paris pour ceux qui attendaient leur départ pour Marseille.

²⁶ ROMÁN, *op. cit.*, pp. 497-502.

main pour un client du duc. Mais à ce moment, Vincent avait acquis une position suffisante pour pouvoir réclamer de l'entregent de tous bords politiques et patronaux, parfois rivaux. Dans la reconstruction des équipements matériels pour les galériens et leurs soins, Vincent a agi comme le coordinateur et a utilisé les services des patrons de tous les bords de la scène aristocratique. Ainsi la reine fournit des fonds (comme le fit la duchesse d'Aiguillon) sans doute par l'entremise du cardinal lui-même. Avec la couronne, le premier ministre du roi, le parti du cardinal et l'opposition représentée par Vincent lui-même, avec l'aide du cardinal de Retz qui n'avait pas encore commencé à perdre du pouvoir, Vincent avait enrôlé tous les acteurs majeurs pour l'aider dans son immense tâche. Ainsi, Vincent, une fois de plus, prit le modèle qui prévalait et l'adopta, le réforma d'une manière qui lui permettait de mener à bien ses espoirs pour la cause de l'Évangile.

Des écrits se rapportant à St Vincent semblent souvent supposer qu'il est un agent indépendant, responsable seulement envers le Pape et le roi. Cependant, les exemples que j'ai cités (et ils peuvent se retrouver dans ses autres activités lorsqu'on les analyse de près) montrent qu'il s'était empêtré dans un système socio politique coopératif. Son habileté dans l'utilisation des systèmes de structures de gouvernement et de société pour aider à mener à bien ses idées révolutionnaires est ce qui l'a rendu si redoutable. Ses fils et ses filles spirituels ont besoin d'apprendre ses talents d'analyse prudente et d'engagements dans les systèmes politiques et sociaux équivalents au XXI^{ème} siècle.

Traduction : NOËL KIEKEN, C.M.

Political Charity and Vincentian Spirituality Today

by Charles Pan, C.M.

INTRODUCTION: THE STORY OF MY VINCENTIAN VOCATION

Before I get into my topic, I would like to first share with all of you some of my own life experience. It was not until the last year of my Senior High School that I first came to know something about the Catholic Church. Fr. Hermans (a Dutch Vincentian priest working in Taiwan) was the one who brought and lead me to really know Jesus Christ. It was because of this Jesus crucified that I was attracted to want to be close to the altar and which inevitably led me to become interested the Priesthood.

Because of my relationship with Fr. Hermans, I chose to enter the Vincentians. And during my years as a seminarian preparing for the Priesthood I often asked myself the question: "Why has God called me to enter the Priesthood as a Vincentian?" For a long time, I prayed about this as I continued my studies. And still I was unable to really meet the Heart of Jesus. It was not until my 2nd year of Theology — during the summer — when I was sent to a local hospital to take part in a CPE (CLINICAL PASTORAL EDUCATION) program — that I began to see the light. In the hospital where I worked, I came in contact with some of the poorest of the poor in Taiwan. It was in their presence that I lost the security of all my studies. Why? Because no one of these poor souls in this situation understood anything about the Theology I was professing. It was here I lost the safe and secure identity that I once possessed because in this situation no one really knew who I was. It was here that I lost my own sense of dignity because no one respected me simply because of the title I held. Finally, it was after I was rejected by a patient in that hospital 12 times that I saw myself as a big failure. And as I sat in the big lobby of that hospital 'licking my own wounds' and feeling sorry for myself I surprisingly discovered that in meeting many homeless people sleeping in the park or out on the street I was no different than they were. It was in this situation that I really experienced for the first time my own deep poverty. This kind of

poverty caused me to feel very uncomfortable, uneasy, and helpless. Although in my own reasoning I clearly knew that Jesus became one of us and was incarnated in the most useless and worthless of human beings, still in my own heart it was difficult to understand and fully comprehend why Jesus would incarnate Himself in these people. Every cell in my body was reacting against all that Jesus did in accepting the most pitiable of people. Helping or reaching out to these kinds of people, I can easily do. But accepting the reality that I am one of these rejected people and the poorest of the poor and that Jesus came to save and show compassion to me too was literally impossible for me to fathom and accept. Yet Jesus had chosen this way to show me how to reach out with love to others.

THE POLITICAL CHARITY OF JESUS CHRIST

As an Apostle of Charity, Jesus Christ was the rule of the life of Vincent de Paul, and was considered as the center of his life and his whole activity. Jesus Christ is a model of perfect charity.

Jesus Christ is the sacrament of God the Father. The filial union of Jesus with the Father is expressed in the perfect love which he also made the principal commandment of the Gospel: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment" (Mt 22:37-38). As we know, to this commandment Jesus attached a second, "like the first," that of love of one's neighbor (cf. Mt 22:39). He proposed himself as a model of this love: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34). He taught and gave his followers a love patterned on his own model.¹

Jesus did not live on his own behalf, but so that the world might be saved and the Kingdom of God might come. He said: "I came that men may have life, and have it abundantly" (Jn 10:10). Christ Jesus, "who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross." He was God's servant, certainly, but at the same time servant to his brothers and sisters, to give them life and to fulfill the kingdom of God among them by showing them the love of God.

¹ Cf. JOHN PAUL II, *Jesus Christ Is a Model of Perfect Love*, General Audience, August 31, 1988.

In a foundational text from St. Luke's gospel (4:16-21), we witness Jesus on a Sabbath day in his hometown Nazareth. "As he usually did," Jesus came to the synagogue for worship and he was invited to read. He took the scroll of Isaiah the prophet, searched out its mighty missionary text (61:1-2) and proclaimed: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, for he has anointed me to bring the good news to the afflicted. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives, sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord." Then, after a dramatic pause, Jesus made the astonishing announcement: "This text is being fulfilled today even while you are listening" (Luke 4:18-21).

As Superior General, Fr. Gregory Gay comments about this text: Here we have a passionate social justice text, which Jesus deliberately chose to launch his work. So passionate was Jesus about justice and God's Kingdom, that he wanted the heavenly harvest to begin right here on earth, in and through him. The Kingdom of God is what life would be like on earth if God were in charge. It is God's dream, God's passion. Jesus was so passionate about fulfilling God's dream that he lived and died for it. It is the dream for this earth of Vincent de Paul's and of ours.

APOSTLE OF CHARITY: THE WAY OF VINCENT DE PAUL

1. *The beginning:*²

Before the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission in 1625, in spite of the wonderful interior journey and fruitful work, Vincent's life was defined in relationship to Bérulle and the Gondi family and temporary appointments arising from these relationships, such as his position as chaplain and almoner to Henry IV's former wife, Queen Marguerite de Valois; his service in the parishes of Clichy, Folleville, and Châtillon-les-Dombes; and his role as chaplain general to the galleys and missions on the Gondi estates. His one lasting initiative, prior to the founding of the Mission, was the establishment of the Confraternities of Charity beginning at Châtillon in 1617. With the founding of the Mission and the care of the Confraternities of Charity before him, his life's work was in place.

² H.F. O'DONNELL, *Vincent de Paul: His Life and Way*, in F. RAYN - J.E. RYBOLT, ed., *Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1995, pp. 24-25.

2. *The foundation of the congregation of the mission:*³

Once Vincent had gotten the aid from the Gondis to found the Congregation of the Mission, all his efforts went into obtaining official recognition. The archbishop of Paris recognized the new community on 24 April 1626. Seven years later, after considerable negotiation and a number of difficulties, the Congregation of the Mission received papal approval. The congregation grew slowly at first. In the early years of the congregation they had to rely on their neighbors to keep an eye on their residence, the Collège des Bons Enfants. By 1632 seven priests formed the congregation and they moved to larger quarters, the immense priory of Saint Lazare.

3. *The Response of new situation:*⁴

During these years, the development of the Confraternities of Charity occupied a place of primacy along with the development of the mission. From their beginning at Châtillon, the charities were organized at the local level and, consequently had the flexibility to respond to new situation as they arose. Beyond caring for the sick poor, as they had been founded to do, they began to respond to the needs of beggars, then of prisoners and galley convicts, and eventually of young indigent couples and victims of famine and war.

4. *The expansion of the work:*⁵

In 1628, when the bishop of Beauvais decided to have a few days of retreat for priesthood candidates to prepare them for ordination, he had come to this decision in conversation with Vincent, whom he then asked to take responsibility for the retreat. This was a great innovation at the time. In 1633, in collaboration with some priests of Paris, Vincent established the Tuesday Conferences. Vincent chaired the meetings, and after a period of prayer the priests shared their thoughts and convictions about what it meant to be a priest. Their interaction was mutually encouraging; on leaving these meetings, all felt charged with renewed zeal. The Tuesday Conferences bore great fruit in promoting high ideals of priesthood and in fostering mutual support among the priests. Many future bishops attended

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ H.F. O'DONNELL, *Vincent de Paul: His Life and Way*, in F. RAYN - J.E. RYBOLT, ed., *Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1995, p. 26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

the conferences, which gave Vincent an opportunity to become acquainted with them firsthand as it gave them an opportunity to deepen and purify their priestly commitments.

5. *The foundation of the Daughters of Charity:*⁶

In the work of charity what was needed was a heart, a soul, and an unconditional fidelity. In response to this need, Louis de Marillac recognized her mission and eventually, with Vincent, founded the Daughters of Charity. Vincent and Louise became father and mother to the Daughters of Charity.

6. *The new and Urgent Work:*⁷

In 1638, Vincent undertook the care of abandoned children. In the beginning Vincent entrusted some of the children to Louise, and before long Vincent and Louise embraced the entire work. A dozen Daughters of Charity were assigned to this work and thirteen houses were built to receive the children.

7. *The first great crusade of charity:*⁸

At the beginning of 1639, Vincent became aware of the extreme distress of the province of Lorraine, ravaged by war, famine and plague. He appealed to the Ladies of Charity, and during the next ten years he did not stop sending help. Centers of assistance were set up and funded to provide food and shelter for the hungry and homeless and to nurse the sick. From St. Lazare, Vincent exhorted, consoled, advised, and begged all to be patient. He organized missions for the refugees, received young women in danger, and mobilized assistance for the impoverished nobility of Lorraine. He also took advantage of his contacts with the prime minister, Cardinal Richelieu, and other influential people to plead for peace.

8. *The significant influence on Church and the royal family:*⁹

In 1643, Vincent undertook an entirely new set of responsibilities. After the death of her husband, Louis XIII, and during the minority of Louis XIV, Queen Anne of Austria formed the Council of

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷ H.F. O'DONNELL, *Vincent de Paul: His Life and Way*, in F. RAYN - J.E. RYBOLT, ed., *Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: Rules, Conferences, and Writings*, New York: Paulist Press, 1995, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

Ecclesiastical Affairs, to which she immediately appointed Vincent. In these meetings Vincent exercised significant influence on the selection of good and worthy bishops, oversaw the renewal of monastic life, dealt with Jansenism, and was able to keep the plight of the people and the poor before the government of France.

After following the footprint of the charitable way of Vincent de Paul, we know that Vincent did a great deal of charitable work for the poor. One could say the entire basis of Vincent's spirit was to recognize in the poor the face of Christ, and to serve in the poor our Lord Jesus Christ. But we often neglect another aspect of his legacy. St. Vincent, however, has left us a particularly beautiful gift. That is his creativity which resulted in a methodology adapted to the times in which he lived, and which is still relevant in our time.

Vincent's zeal for the service of the poor was such that he appreciated the need to create sustainable ways of serving the poor. To do this, he had to humbly invite the collaboration of others. He had to inspire them through his spirituality and release in them their own creativity and talent for the service of the poor.

Not only this, he brought together all available resources for the service of the poor, old and young, men and women, clerics and laity, royal family and peasants, wealthy and poor, etc. All are mobilized to his task.

Vincent recognized the potential both of the laity and of women and their role in creating a just world. This is a new concept which emerges in him, at a time when there were few expectations of the laity, and women had an inferior place in society.

Vincent by these means planted a seed. In his lifetime this seed was already a flourishing sapling. He was himself very influential. Today that plant is a mature tree. There are 260 religious communities or lay organizations which bear his mark. In fact, one can see that much of the contemporary service of the poor in the Church is heavily influenced by this 17th century French Saint.

In the poor, Vincent saw and tried to console Christ himself. The message of Vincent has a source, a strength, and an unmistakable focal point which is specifically theological: it is born of Christ, it is nourished by the thirst for Christ, it tends towards Christ. Union with Jesus Christ: this is the goal of the untiring and insatiable search seen in the existential trajectory of Vincent de Paul. He is a man who always searches for the will of God and pays attention to it, and lives a Christocentric vocation in the Holy Spirit.

COMING ALIVE TODAY

Vincent de Paul makes the perennial timeliness of the Gospel come alive. Each one is like a living parable of that phrase in the Letter to the Hebrews: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever" (Heb 13:8). Today, just as two thousand years ago on the roads of Palestine, Christ is walking at our side and calling us: "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me" (Mt 19:21). Today, as then, each and every person can rest his head on Jesus' breast and listen to the heartbeat of God's love for his creatures (cf. Jn 13:25). Now, let us see one concrete example, St. Anne's home which is alive with the spirit of political charity.

Father G. Beunen, C.M., came to Taiwan in 1951 from Holland. He took the post of Head of the Communications Department of the Vatican Embassy to Taiwan and head of the Dutch Vincentian Mission in Taiwan. He established the Catholic Parish of Shipai in 1962 and actively developed pastoral work at the Veteran's Hospital. When preaching around Taiwan, he saw many handicapped children living without proper care. The idea of setting up a nursing home just popped out of his head. However, there was not enough financial support in Taiwan. Father Beunen therefore came back to Holland to raise more funds. Finally, with more contributions from the churches and the kind-hearted people in Holland, Father Beunen built St. Anne's Home faithfully in 1972 in Taiwan.

Over these decades, the children receiving St. Anne's help increases. St. Anne's Home keeps facing the problem of insufficient financial and human resources. To congregate more resources from our society, St. Anne's Home officially registered in March of 1998.

The current Supervisor of St. Anne's Home, Father Van Aert, has followed the spirit Father Beunen insisted on, Jesus' words: "Whenever you did this to these little ones who are my brothers and sisters, you did it to me." He continues to provide a loving "home" where the seriously retarded children are well taken care of, where the children share the warmth of a family. In order for us to be of more service to the handicapped, we have established the Beunen Foundation.

In fact, St. Anne's Home was founded in the 70s in Taiwan precisely because the local people and government were neglecting the plight of the handicapped in the Taiwanese society. With the presence of St. Anne's Home, there was a clear sign of the presence of the Kingdom of God. St. Anne's Home has become a kind of teacher and a conscience for the government and the local people and continually reminds both the government and the society of the welfare and immediate needs of the handicapped in Taiwan.

CONCLUSION

In his Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Benedict XVI encourages us who repeat at every Mass: “Give us this day our daily bread,” “to do everything possible, in cooperation with international, state and private institutions, to end or at least reduce the scandal of hunger and malnutrition afflicting so many millions of people in our world, especially in developing countries. In a particular way, the Christian laity, formed at the school of the Eucharist, are called to assume their specific political and social responsibilities. To do so, they need to be adequately prepared through practical education in charity and justice.”¹⁰

Moreover, Pope Benedict XVI addressed the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean in Aparecida, Brazil, 13 May 2007, “The Church is the advocate of justice and of the poor, precisely because she does not identify with politicians nor with partisan interests. Only by remaining independent can she teach the great criteria and inalienable values, guide consciences and offer a life choice that goes beyond the political sphere. To form consciences, to be the advocate of justice and truth, to educate in individual and political virtues: that is the fundamental vocation of the Church in this area.”

As Vincentians, we are sure that the contempt that some people have for local no-hopers, for those unable to cope, is present also on a global scale: contempt for the vast poor in Mainland China, many people and families in recent tsunami incidents in Asia, AIDS sufferers all over the world and many millions of others. Someone has to speak for them, in the name of Christ, and this is part of our vocation. If necessary someone has to be a countersign to the modern pattern of thought which says ‘If they are not useful, if they do not produce anything, then they do not count.’ We cannot see how this can any longer be an optional extra to our proclamation of the Gospel; any gospel we proclaim which does not have this cry for justice somewhere in it, will be faulty, defective.

“Hate evil, love good, let justice reign at the city gate.”

(Amos 5:15)

“Be compassionate just as your Father is compassionate.”

(Lk 6:36)

¹⁰ BENEDICT XIV, *Sacramentum caritatis*, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Città del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007, no. 91.

These invitations of God always give Vincentians a big challenge and help them to imitate Jesus Christ as Saint John Gabriel Perboyre prayed:

O my Divine Saviour
Transform me into Yourself.
May my hands be the hands of Jesus.
May my tongue be the tongue of Jesus.

Grant that every faculty of my body
May serve only to glorify you.

Above all,
Transform my soul and all its powers
So that my memory, will and affections
May be the memory, will and affections
Of Jesus.

I pray to you
To destroy in me
All that is not of you.

Grant that I may live
But in You, by You and for You,
So that I may truly say with St. Paul,
“I live now, not I,
But Christ lives in me.”

Charité politique et spiritualité vinentienne d'aujourd'hui

par Charles Pan, C.M.

INTRODUCTION : L'HISTOIRE DE MA VOCATION DANS LA CONGRÉGATION DE LA MISSION

Avant d'entrer dans le vif du sujet, j'aimerais partager avec vous un peu de ma propre expérience de vie. Tout d'abord, c'est au cours de ma dernière année de collège que j'ai commencé à connaître un peu l'Église catholique. Grâce au Père Hermans (un Prêtre de la Mission hollandaise qui travaillait à Taiwan), j'ai été amené à connaître Jésus Christ. Ce Jésus crucifié m'a fasciné et mon désir de m'approcher davantage de l'autel m'a inévitablement attiré au sacerdoce.

Parce que je connaissais le Père Hermans, j'ai choisi d'entrer dans la Congrégation de la Mission. Durant mes années de séminaire, je me suis souvent interrogé : « Pourquoi Dieu m'a-t-il appelé à devenir prêtre dans la Congrégation ? ». Tout en poursuivant mes études, je priais pour être éclairé. Mais je n'arrivais pas vraiment à rencontrer le Cœur de Jésus. Ce n'est qu'à partir de ma deuxième année de théologie, lorsqu'à l'été on m'a envoyé participer à un programme d'éducation en pastorale des malades dans un hôpital, que j'ai commencé à voir la lumière. À l'hôpital où je travaillais, j'ai rencontré les plus pauvres des pauvres de Taiwan. En leur présence, j'ai perdu la sécurité acquise par mes études. Pourquoi ? Parce que la théologie que je professais, aucun de ces pauvres ne la connaissaient. C'est là que j'ai perdu l'identité sûre et la confiance que je possédais auparavant, car personne n'avait la moindre idée de qui j'étais. C'est là aussi que j'ai perdu mon sens de la dignité, puisque personne ne me respectait en raison du titre que je détenais. Finalement, lorsqu'un patient de cet hôpital m'a rejeté pour la douzième fois, je me suis vu comme un raté. Assis dans la grande entrée de l'hôpital, j'essayais de « panser ma blessure » et alors, chose étonnante, tout en m'apitoyant sur mon sort j'ai soudain réalisé que je n'étais pas différent des sans-abri qui dormaient dans le parc ou dans la rue. Pour la première fois, j'expérimentais véritablement ma pauvreté profonde. Cette sorte de pau-

vreté provoquait chez moi un malaise, un inconfort, un sentiment d'impuissance. Dans mon raisonnement, je savais clairement que Jésus est devenu l'un des nôtres en s'incarnant comme le moindre des êtres humains, et pourtant, dans mon cœur, j'éprouvais de la difficulté à comprendre et à admettre que Jésus s'incarnait dans ces personnes. Chaque cellule de mon corps s'opposait à ce que Jésus ait accepté une condition aussi pitoyable. Rencontrer et aider ces personnes étaient facile pour moi. Mais réaliser que j'étais l'un de ceux-là, parmi les plus rejetés et les plus pauvres des pauvres, admettre que Jésus soit venu me sauver et me manifester sa compassion, m'apparaissait impossible à saisir et à accepter. Pourtant, Jésus avait choisi ce moyen de me montrer comment aller vers les autres avec amour.

LA CHARITÉ POLITIQUE DE JÉSUS CHRIST

Pour Vincent de Paul, cet apôtre de la charité, Jésus Christ est la règle de sa vie et le centre de tout son agir, le parfait modèle de la charité.

Jésus Christ est le sacrement de Dieu le Père. L'union filiale de Jésus avec son Père s'exprime dans l'amour parfait dont il a fait le commandement principal de l'Évangile : « Aime le Seigneur ton Dieu. De tout ton cœur, aime-le. De toute ta vie. De tout ton esprit. Premier précepte » (Mt 22, 37-38). Jésus, nous le savons, lui en a rattaché un second qui ressemble au premier : « Aime ton prochain comme toi-même » (cf. Mt 22, 39). Il s'est proposé lui-même comme le modèle de cet amour : « Je vous donne un nouveau commandement : ayez de l'amour les uns pour les autres, aimez-vous de l'amour dont je vous ai aimés » (Jn 13, 34). Il enseigne et lègue à ses disciples un modèle d'amour basé sur son propre modèle¹.

Jésus n'a pas vécu pour lui-même, mais afin que le monde soit sauvé et que le règne de Dieu arrive. Il dira : « Moi je viens pour qu'on vive, qu'on ait la vie en abondance » (Jn 10, 10). Jésus Christ « Lui de condition divine, ne retint jalousement le rang qui l'égalait à Dieu. Mais il s'anéantit lui-même, prenant la condition d'esclave, et devenant semblable aux hommes. S'étant comporté comme un homme, il s'humilia plus encore, obéissant jusqu'à la mort, et à la mort sur une croix » (Ph 2, 6-9). Serviteur de Dieu, il était en même temps serviteur de ses frères et sœurs, afin de leur donner la vie et bâtir le royaume de Dieu parmi eux en leur montrant l'amour de Dieu.

¹ Cf. JEAN-PAUL II, *Jésus Christ est le modèle de l'amour parfait*, Audience générale, 31 août 1988.

Dans un texte fondamental de l'Évangile de saint Luc (4, 16-21), nous voyons Jésus, un jour de sabbat, à Nazareth où il avait été élevé. « Selon son habitude », Jésus entre dans la synagogue pour prier, et on lui demande de faire la lecture. Il prend le livre et, en le déroulant, il tombe sur le magnifique texte missionnaire du prophète Isaïe (61, 1-2) et proclame : « L'Esprit du Seigneur est sur moi, parce qu'il m'a consacré par l'onction. Il m'a envoyé porter la bonne nouvelle aux pauvres, annoncer aux captifs la délivrance et aux aveugles le retour à la vue, rendre la liberté aux opprimés, proclamer une année de grâce du Seigneur » (Lc 4, 18-21).

Le Père Gregory Gay, Supérieur général, commente ainsi ce texte : « Nous avons ici un texte passionnant sur la justice sociale, que Jésus a délibérément choisi pour lancer sa mission. Jésus était si passionné pour la justice et le royaume de Dieu qu'il espérait que la récolte céleste commence ici-même sur la terre, avec lui et en lui ». Le royaume de Dieu est ce que serait la vie sur la terre si Dieu était en charge. C'est le rêve de Dieu et sa passion. Jésus s'est tellement passionné pour réaliser le rêve de Dieu qu'il a vécu et donné sa vie pour l'atteindre. C'est aussi le rêve de Vincent de Paul et le nôtre pour cette terre.

Apôtre de la charité : Le chemin de Vincent de Paul

1. Les débuts² :

Avant la fondation de la Congrégation de la Mission en 1625, et malgré son extraordinaire cheminement intérieur et son travail fructueux, la vie de Vincent se résumait dans sa relation avec Bérulle et la famille Gondi et dans les affectations ponctuelles qui en découlaient : par exemple, sa désignation comme directeur de conscience de la première femme d'Henri IV, la reine Marguerite de Valois ; son service dans les paroisses de Clichy, Folleville et Châtillon-les-Dombes ; sa fonction d'aumônier général des galères ; ses missions sur les terres des Gondi. Sa dernière initiative, qui remonte avant la fondation de la Mission et qui se perpétuera, c'est l'établissement des confréries de charité commencé à Châtillon en 1617. Avec la fondation de la Mission et l'instauration des confréries de charité, l'œuvre de sa vie est toute tracée.

² H.F. O'DONNELL, *Vincent de Paul: His Life and Way*, in F. RAYN - J.E. RYBOLT, ed., *Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac : Rules, Conferences, and Writings*, New York : Paulist Press, 1995, pp. 24-25.

2. La fondation de la Congrégation de la Mission³:

Après avoir reçu l'aide des Gondi pour fonder la Congrégation de la Mission, tous ses efforts seront dirigés vers la reconnaissance officielle. L'archevêque de Paris reconnaît la nouvelle communauté le 24 avril 1626. Sept ans plus tard, après d'intenses négociations et de nombreuses difficultés, la Congrégation reçoit l'approbation papale. Au début, l'expansion de la Congrégation se fait lentement. Dans les premières années, la Congrégation doit se fier au voisinage pour surveiller la résidence, le collège des Bons-Enfants. Vers 1632, sept prêtres forment la Congrégation, et ils doivent déménager dans les locaux plus spacieux de l'immense prieuré de Saint-Lazare.

3. La réponse devant la nouvelle situation⁴:

Au fil des années, l'expansion des confréries de charité occupe la première place dans la mission. Depuis leurs débuts à Châtillon, les charités s'organisent au plan local et elles possèdent alors la souplesse nécessaire pour faire face aux situations qui se présentent. À part le soin des pauvres malades pour qui elles ont été fondées, elles commencent à s'occuper des mendiants, puis des prisonniers et des galériens, et ensuite des jeunes couples défavorisés et des victimes de la famine et de la guerre.

4. L'expansion de l'œuvre⁵:

En 1628, l'évêque de Beauvais décide de donner quelques jours de retraite à des candidats au sacerdoce pour les préparer à l'ordination. Il en vient à cette décision après en avoir parlé avec Vincent, à qui il demande de prendre la responsabilité de la retraite. Grande innovation à cette époque ! Puis en 1633, en collaboration avec des prêtres à Paris, Vincent établit les Conférences des mardis. Vincent préside les rencontres et, après un temps de prière, les prêtres partagent leurs idées et convictions sur ce que signifie pour eux devenir prêtre. L'interaction est stimulante : tous repartent de ces rencontres avec un zèle nouveau. Les Conférences des mardis ont porté beaucoup de fruit en promouvant un grand idéal de la prêtrise et en apportant du soutien aux prêtres. Plusieurs futurs évêques participaient aux conférences, ce qui leur donnait la chance d'approfondir et de purifier leurs engagements sacerdotaux, tout en permettant à Vincent de les connaître directement.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

5. La fondation des Filles de la Charité⁶:

L'œuvre de charité nécessitait un cœur, une âme et une fidélité inconditionnelle. Dans ce but, Louise de Marillac reconnaîtra sa mission et, avec Vincent, elle fondera les Filles de la Charité. Vincent et Louise devenaient père et mère des Filles de la Charité.

6. L'urgence de la nouvelle œuvre⁷:

En 1638, Vincent entreprend le soin des enfants abandonnées. Au début, Vincent confie les enfants à Louise mais, avant longtemps, Vincent et Louise assumeront toute la tâche. Douze Filles de la Charité seront assignées à l'œuvre et treize maisons seront construites pour recevoir les enfants.

7. Le première grande croisade de charité⁸:

Au début de 1639, Vincent constate l'extrême détresse de la province de Lorraine, ravagée par la guerre, la famine et les épidémies. Il fait appel aux Dames de la Charité et, pendant une dizaine d'années, il ne cessera d'envoyer de l'aide. Des centres de secours sont ouverts et parrainés afin de fournir la nourriture aux affamés, le logement aux sans-abri et prendre soin des malades. De Saint-Lazare, Vincent exhorte, console, informe et demande à tous d'être patients. Il organise des missions pour les réfugiés, reçoit des jeunes femmes en danger et mobilise l'aide pour la population appauvrie de la Lorraine. Il prend aussi avantage de ses contacts avec le premier ministre, le cardinal de Richelieu, et autres personnes influentes pour plaider en faveur de la paix.

8. L'influence significative de l'Église et de la famille royale⁹:

En 1643, Vincent prend des responsabilités tout à fait nouvelles. La reine Anne d'Autriche, après la mort de son mari, Louis XIII, et pendant la minorité de Louis XIV, forme le Conseil des affaires ecclésiastiques et nomme immédiatement Vincent. Au cours de ces rencontres, Vincent exerce une influence significative sur la sélection d'évêques généreux et compétents, voit au renouveau de la vie monastique, fait face au jansénisme, et prend partie pour la population et les pauvres auprès du gouvernement français.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

En suivant les traces de la vie charitable de Vincent de Paul, nous constatons jusqu'à quel point il a travaillé pour les pauvres. Incontestablement, tout le fondement de l'esprit de Vincent est de reconnaître le visage du Christ dans le pauvre et de servir le Seigneur Jésus dans le pauvre. Mais nous négligeons un autre aspect extraordinaire de cet héritage que nous a laissé saint Vincent. C'est la créativité qui résulte d'une méthodologie adaptée à son temps et qui est encore pertinente de nos jours.

Le zèle de Vincent pour le service des pauvres est tel qu'il comprend les besoins et crée des moyens durables pour les combler. Pour atteindre ses objectifs, il invite humblement des collaborateurs. Il les inspire par sa spiritualité et les laisse agir selon leur propre créativité et talent pour le service des pauvres.

Aussi regroupe-t-il toutes les ressources humaines disponibles au service des pauvres : jeunes et vieux, hommes et femmes, clercs et laïcs, famille royale ou paysans, riches et pauvres, etc. Tous sont mobilisés dans cette tâche.

Vincent reconnaît le potentiel des laïcs et des femmes, de même que leur rôle dans la création d'un monde juste. C'est un nouveau concept qui émerge de lui, dans une époque où on attendait peu des laïcs et où les femmes tenaient une place inférieure dans la société.

Par ces moyens, Vincent plantait la semence, et cette semence germait déjà de son vivant. Il influençait incroyablement. Aujourd'hui, l'arbrisseau est devenu un arbre en pleine maturité. Pas moins de 260 communautés religieuses ou organisations laïques portent sa marque. Le service actuel des pauvres dans l'Église, comme on peut le constater, a grandement été influencé par ce saint français du dix-septième siècle.

Vincent voyait le Christ lui-même dans les pauvres et il essayait de le consoler. Le message de Vincent contient une source, une force, et un indéniable point de focalisation spécifiquement théologique : il est né du Christ, nourri de la soif du Christ, et orienté vers le Christ. L'union à Jésus Christ est le but de la recherche inlassable et insatiable que l'on observe dans le parcours existentiel de Vincent de Paul : un homme toujours à la recherche et attentif à la volonté de Dieu, et qui vit une vocation christocentrique dans l'Esprit Saint.

S'ANIMER AUJOURD'HUI

Vincent de Paul permet que l'intemporalité de l'Évangile s'anime. Chaque personne est une parabole vivante de la parole contenue dans la Lettre aux Hébreux : « Hier, aujourd'hui, à jamais, Jésus Christ demeure le même » (He 13, 8). De nos jours, tout comme il y a

deux mille ans sur les routes de la Palestine, le Christ marche à nos côtés et nous appelle : « Pour être tout à fait accompli, pars, vends tous tes biens et donne l'argent aux pauvres. Tu amasseras ainsi une fortune dans le ciel. Puis reviens me voir et suis-moi ! » (Mt 19, 21). Aujourd'hui comme autrefois, chaque personne peut reposer sa tête sur la poitrine de Jésus et écouter le battement du cœur de l'amour de Jésus pour nous tous (cf. Jn 13, 25). Examinons maintenant l'exemple concret d'un esprit de charité politique : *St. Anne's Home*.

Le Père G. Beunen, C.M., part de la Hollande et arrive à Taiwan en 1951. Il prend le poste de chef du département des communications de l'ambassade du Vatican à Taiwan et de la mission vinctienne hollandaise de Taiwan. Il établit la paroisse catholique de Shipai en 1962 et répand activement le travail pastoral à l'hôpital des Vétérans. Lors de ses prédications autour de Taiwan, il rencontre des enfants handicapés qui ne reçoivent pas les soins appropriés. L'idée lui vient soudainement d'établir une clinique. Cependant, il n'y a pas suffisamment de ressources pécuniaires à Taiwan. Le Père Beunen retourne alors en Hollande pour recueillir des fonds. Avec ces contributions venant de paroisses et de Hollandais au cœur généreux, le Père Beunen fait construire *St. Anne's Home* à Taiwan en 1972.

Depuis ce temps, de plus en plus d'enfants reçoivent l'aide de *St. Anne's Home*, qui doit toujours faire face à l'insuffisance de fonds et de ressources humaines. Pour obtenir davantage de ressources de la société, *St. Anne's Home* est enregistrée officiellement depuis mars 1998.

Le directeur actuel de *St. Anne's Home*, le Père Van Aert, poursuit l'œuvre dans l'esprit du Père Beunen qui insistait sur la parole de Jésus : « Tout ce que vous faites à l'un de ces petits qui sont mes frères, c'est à moi que vous le faites ». Il continue de fournir un « foyer » aimant où les enfants atteints d'un retard mental sont bien soignés et partagent la chaleur d'une famille. Afin de servir un plus grand nombre d'enfants handicapés, nous avons établi la Fondation Beunen.

St. Anne's Home a pris naissance dans les années 70 à Taiwan, justement parce que la population locale et le gouvernement négligeaient la situation des handicapés de la société taïwanaise. La présence de *St. Anne's Home* est un signe éloquent de la présence du Royaume de Dieu, et elle devient en quelque sorte un exemple et une conscience vis-à-vis du gouvernement et de la population locale de Taiwan, leur rappelant continuellement les besoins et le bien-être des personnes handicapées.

CONCLUSION

Dans son exhortation apostolique post-synodale, le Pape Benoît XVI nous incite tous ainsi : « La prière que nous reprenons à chaque Messe : “Donne-nous notre pain de ce jour”, nous oblige à faire tout notre possible, en collaboration avec les institutions internationales, publiques et privées, pour que cesse ou au moins pour que diminue dans le monde le scandale de la faim et de la sous-alimentation dont souffrent des millions de personnes, surtout dans les pays en voie de développement. Le chrétien laïc en particulier, formé à l'école de l'Eucharistie, est appelé à assumer directement sa responsabilité politique et sociale. Pour qu'il puisse accomplir ses tâches d'une manière appropriée, il convient de le préparer par une éducation concrète à la charité et à la justice. C'est pourquoi, comme le Synode l'a demandé, il est nécessaire que, dans les diocèses et dans les communautés chrétiennes, on fasse connaître et on promeuve la doctrine sociale de l'Église »¹⁰.

Le Pape Benoît XVI, lors de la V^e Conférence des évêques de l'Amérique latine et des Caraïbes à Aparecida au Brésil, le 13 mai, s'exprimait ainsi : « L'Église est l'avocate de la justice et des pauvres, précisément parce qu'elle ne s'identifie pas avec les hommes politiques ni avec les intérêts de parti. C'est uniquement en étant indépendante qu'elle peut enseigner les grands critères et les valeurs indispensables, orienter les consciences et offrir une option de vie qui va au-delà du domaine politique. Former les consciences, être l'avocate de la justice et de la vérité, éduquer aux vertus individuelles et politiques, est la vocation fondamentale de l'Église dans ce secteur ».

Comme vincentiens, nous savons que le mépris de certains envers les personnes ignorantes ou incapables existe à l'échelle mondiale. Mépris envers les pauvres de la Chine continentale, mépris envers la population victime du tsunami en Asie, mépris envers les victimes du sida partout dans le monde et mépris envers des millions d'autres. Quelqu'un doit plaider en leur faveur au nom du Christ : cela fait partie de notre vocation. S'il le faut, quelqu'un doit s'élever contre l'affirmation de cette pensée : « Ceux qui ne sont ni utiles ni productifs ne comptent pas ». Désormais, nous ne pouvons tolérer que cela soit une option dans notre proclamation de l'Évangile, car tout évangile proclamé qui ne contiendra pas un cri pour la justice sonnera faux et insensé.

¹⁰ BENOÎT XVI, *Sacramentum caritatis*, Exhortation apostolique post-synodale, Città del Vaticano : Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007, no. 91.

« Haïssez le mal, aimez le bien, et faites régner le droit à la Porte de la ville ».

(Am 5, 15)

« Soyez donc miséricordieux comme votre Père est miséricordieux ».

(Lc 6, 36)

Ces invitations de Dieu représentent toujours un défi pour les vincentiens et les aident à imiter Jésus Christ, tout comme saint Jean-Gabriel Perboyre dans sa prière :

O mon divin Sauveur,
Faites par votre toute puissance et votre miséricorde infinie,
Que je sois changé et tout transformé en Vous.
Que mes mains soient les mains de Jésus !
Que ma langue soit la langue de Jésus !

Que tous mes sens et mon corps
ne servent qu'à Vous glorifier !

Mais surtout transformez mon âme et toutes ses puissances :
Que ma mémoire, mon intelligence, mon cœur,
Soient la mémoire, l'intelligence et le cœur de Jésus !

Que mes opérations, mes sentiments,
Soient semblables à vos opérations, à vos sentiments,

Et que de même que votre Père disait de vous,
Je vous ai engendré aujourd'hui,
Vous puissiez le dire de moi, et ajouter aussi
Comme votre Père céleste :
*Voici mon Fils bien aimé, l'objet de mes complaisances !*¹¹.

Traduction : Madame RAYMONDE DUBOIS

¹¹ ANDRÉ SYLVESTRE, C.M., *Jean-Gabriel Perboyre, Prêtre de la Mission, Martyr en Chine*, 1994, pp. 102-103.

Vincent de Paul and the Court

Responding to the Politics of Power

by Daniel Franklin Pilario Estepa, C.M.*

1. Introduction

When I joined the community in the early 1980s, the Philippines found itself in a crucial political turmoil. The dictator Marcos was asserting his military power and resistance to his Martial rule was growing among the citizenry. People were divided. So was the Vincentian community. On the one hand, many confreres were allies of the Marcoses and their cronies. Some were even present at many palace functions. On the other hand, there were many confreres who found themselves in street demonstrations or worked behind the scenes to help topple down the repressive regime. What amazed me was that both sides used St. Vincent to support their stand. One side rhetorically asks: Was Vincent not friends of those in power? Did he not bridge the gap between the rich and the poor? The rich also are persons. They are also poor — emotionally, morally, and spiritually. Did St. Vincent not call us to serve them too, as he himself did? Those on the other side ask: When we dine with them, ask them to donate to our projects or celebrate Mass in their gatherings, are we not condoning their injustices? Each side was not convinced of the response of the other.

Today, even as we find ourselves in a different context, the substance of the questions remains. How should Vincentians deal with the politics of power? This paper intends to do three things: (1) to investigate the contemporary theories and discourses on power especially in socio-political contexts; (2) to inquire how Vincent de Paul dealt with the politics of power in his own context; (3) to explore its implications to contemporary Vincentian life and the formation process.

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In order to situate our discussion, it is our methodological option to start with contemporary issues and questions. How does contemporary social science see political ‘power’? It is through this lens that we intend to read Vincent’s politics in the hope that we begin to discern for our own times how to concretely negotiate with power and do ‘charity’ in political contexts.¹

2. Theorizing Power: Contemporary Theories

How crucial is the question of power to the contemporary mind? Just to get a sense of it, I tried to do a google search on the term ‘power’ and I got 785M hits in 0.17 seconds; in the yahoo search engine, it was higher. I got 1.24B in 0.31 seconds.² Since this might include electric or mechanical power and the like, I narrowed my search down to the term ‘political power’ and I got 228M hits in 0.07 seconds for google and 116M in 0.28 seconds in yahoo. Considering this data, the question of power must be a relevant concern in today’s society.

Contemporary social science discourses provide us a wide range with which the notion of power is understood. Let me go through some of these uses: (a) power as domination; (b) power as empowerment and resistance; and (c) power as solidarity.

2.1. *Domination: Power Over*

In a classic study in political theory, Steven Lukes points to the three ways in which power as domination is theorized in political contexts.³ The ‘one-dimensional view’ takes the individualist perspective. Domination is “power of A over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.” In other

¹ For this methodology, see my articles: “Inculturing Congregational Charisms: A Methodological Proposal for the Vincentian Family,” *Hapag: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Theological Research* 2 (2005): 169-207; “Inculturing Vincentian Charism and Ministry in the Asia-Pacific Contexts: A Methodological Proposal,” in *Formation for Mission: In Search of Contextualization of Vincentian Formation and Charism in Asia Pacific*, ed. Armada Riyanto (Malang, Indonesia: Widya Sasana Publication, 2005), 139-173; reprinted in *Vincentiana* 51, No. 4 (July-August 2007): 287-315.

² Just for the sake of curiosity, I compared it to the word ‘sex’. ‘Sex’ sites were very much lower — 397M/.07 seconds in google and 554M/.10 seconds in yahoo. Can we say that contemporary minds are more concerned with ‘power’ than with ‘sex’?

³ For this, see STEVEN LUKES, *Power: A Radical View* (New York: Palgrave, 1974). This work was revised and expanded in 2005.

words, power is seen to reside in the actor(s) who can exercise overt and visible dominance in situations where there is conflict of interests. In the 'two-dimensional view', the conflict need not necessarily be overt; it can also be covert and concealed. It is not necessary that the dominant group make open decisions against the minority. It is enough that they keep quiet on certain issues, thus, in effect preventing that specific issue to surface in open discussion. This view thinks that dominance can be exercised over others by one's capacity to control the political agenda. Beyond the first two types, there is a 'three-dimensional view' or radical view to which Lukes subscribes. For Lukes, the previous two conceptions are too individualistic, i.e., too faithful to the tradition started by Max Weber who viewed power as residing in individuals realizing their wills despite the resistance of others. The two views are also conflict-centered — be it overt or covert conflicts. Beyond individual action (i.e., power of A over B), Lukes contends that power also includes "socially structured and culturally patterned behavior of groups and practices of institutions."⁴ Beyond actual observable conflict, power is also present in manipulated social consensus. In other words, the dominant system can in fact influence, shape and determine — through media, schools, churches — what its people should like and want. And through everyday formation processes — or what sociology also calls 'socialization' — the hegemonic agenda begins to be accepted as legitimate, normal and natural. There is no observable conflict since the interests of the dominant order have been imposed on and seemingly consented to by those it tries to exclude. Social consensus, thus, is both voluntarily concurred but also subconsciously imposed.⁵

The radical view of power in Lukes is influenced by the notion of 'hegemony' by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). For Gramsci, political legitimacy is gained in two ways: force and consent. The first approach is through the use of coercion and force (e.g., police, courts, prisons, etc.). But since this is not always effective as it creates widespread protests, the dominant power also uses persuasion (others also call this 'brainwashing') through media, educational system, churches and other institutions in order to convince the people of its own legitimacy. In other words, the

⁴ STEVEN LUKES, *Power*, 22.

⁵ The radical view of power in Lukes is influenced by the notion of 'hegemony' by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). For Gramsci's discussion on hegemony, see JOSEPH FEMIA, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

dominant goes about ‘manufacturing consent’, to use a phrase of a famous philosopher and political activist, Noam Chomsky. In both cases, the dominant order exercises power over the dominated. However, the dominated also participates in such a construction — as they no longer voice their dissent. On the surface, hegemony, therefore, is the ‘whole lived social reality’ which is artificial as it is manufactured but which people also take for granted as natural and legitimate.

In recent times, however, there is one view of power which goes beyond the radical view of Lukes and Gramsci. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) — a French philosopher famous among the postmodern writers — conceives of power as ‘governmentality’. First, against the previous three views, power is neither a possession of individuals nor of institutions; sovereignty does not reside in the monarch nor in the people; it is all over. “Power must be analyzed as something that circulates,” he states. “It is never localized here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as commodity or piece of wealth.”⁶ Second, power is not only repressive; it is also productive and reproductive. It is a set of practices, technology or strategy dispersed throughout the whole system so that bodies of subjects are rendered docile to its logic and functioning. In effect, bodies can be effectively ‘governed’, thus also acquiring the capacity to reproduce themselves and the whole system. This is what he calls the ‘micro-physics of power’.

What is the bottom-line assertion in the above theoretical discussion? Regardless of their differences, the theories of power from Lukes to Gramsci to Foucault agree on one thing. Power is “power over”. It consists of individual acts, everyday practices, institutions, technology, strategies or embodied micro-practices of domination over known or unknown others.

2.2. Empowerment and Resistance: Power To

Beyond domination, however, there is another tradition of conceiving power in terms of positive capacity. Power is not just ‘power over’; it is also ‘power to’. As the Latin *posse* suggests, power is ability, capacity, strength actually put forth, effectiveness. Beyond domination, power is a transformative capacity, an act of empowerment. In the context of a powerful dominant power at the center, what capacity do the margins possess? True, the hegemonic

⁶ MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 98.

power is all-pervasive. But there can never be a “dominant social order, and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy and human intention.”⁷ There is always a dimension of our human and social existence, which the dominant social order “neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize.”⁸ It is this dimension which puts into question, threatens or exerts pressure on the hegemonic. Raymond Williams, a British neo-Marxist philosopher, identifies this sphere as the locus of alternative, oppositional and emergent voices of the excluded, the locus of resistance among those marginalized by the system. Michel de Certeau, another contemporary French philosopher, calls this the ‘tactics of the weak’. While *strategy* refers to calculated action of powerful institutions whose possession of a ‘territory’ needed to regroup or recharge for the next moves places it in an advantageous position, *tactic* is the scheme of resistance available to the weak. Bereft of place, the ‘weak’ can only play within the terrain of the ‘strong’. It has no time to strategize and its attacks depend only on the possibilities afforded by cracks and fissures along the structure of its powerful adversary. “It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse.”⁹ It thus turns its own smallness into gain and cunningly transforms the enemy’s size and visibility into utter disadvantage.¹⁰

2.3. *Solidarity: Power With*

For some contemporary feminists, however, the military metaphors of tactics and strategies, of dominance (power over) and resistance (power to) are all masculine notions. They argue that the

⁷ RAYMOND WILLIAMS, *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 125.

⁸ RAYMOND WILLIAMS, *Marxism and Literature*, 126.

⁹ MICHEL DE CERTEAU, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹⁰ This reminds us of the Greek *metis* — a sense of cunning intelligence valuable to the Pre-Socratics but came to be suppressed by the dominant Greek narrative from Plato onwards. In certain activities like navigation, medicine or hunting, the Greeks value a type of intelligence which combines “flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills and experiences acquired over the years” as they are made to bear upon the “transient, shifting, disconcerting and ambiguous situations.” In front of such an overwhelming power, this type of oblique resistance is the only way to survive. See DANIEL FRANKLIN PILARIO, *Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu* (Leuven: Leuven University Press / Peeters, 2005), 21-25, 249-250, 534-535.

experience of women ushers in a totally new conception of power: “power with”. Virginia Held, a feminist author, suggests that “the capacity to give birth, and to nurture and empower could be the basis for new and more humanly promising conceptions than the ones that now prevail of power, empowerment and growth.”¹¹ Another feminist, Jean Baker Miller says: “There is enormous validity in women’s not wanting to use power as it is presently conceived and used. Rather, women may want to be powerful in ways that simultaneously enhance, rather than, diminish, the power of others.”¹² Yet as early as the 1920s, Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933) already advanced the notion of ‘power with’. “Genuine power can only be grown,” she argues, “it will slip from every arbitrary hand that grasps it; for genuine power is not coercive control, but coactive control.... ‘Power-with’ is what democracy should mean in politics or industry.”¹³ But this is not a monopoly of feminists alone. The notion of power as solidarity already finds its echo in the writings of the political philosopher, Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) who argues that “power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert.”¹⁴ What is envisioned by these different discourses is a nurturing, affective power, not controlling power; power of creative solidarity not of aggressive domination; power that gives of itself not one that oppresses.

3. Reading Vincent’s Responses to the Politics of Power

From the lens of the above theoretical discourse on power, we now ask how did St. Vincent deal with political power in his own context? Some might ask if this method is not anachronistic. Are we not asking questions which Vincent himself had not asked? Are we not projecting our prejudices and biases into Vincent’s world? The answer to all of these questions is probably yes. And we should not be guilty of doing so! For as Hans-Georg Gadamer also says: “Prejudices are the biases of our openness to the world. They are simply the conditions whereby we experience something — whereby what we encounter says something

¹¹ VIRGINIA HELD, *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society and Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 137.

¹² Jean Baker Miller (1992) as quoted in “Feminist Perspectives on Power,” in <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/> (accessed 06.24.2007).

¹³ MARY PARKER FOLLETT, *Creative Experience* (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1924), xiii, 187.

¹⁴ HANNAH ARENDT, *On Violence* (London: Penguin, 1970), 44.

to us.¹⁵ In other words, thanks to our questions, prejudices and biases, Vincent de Paul comes alive for us. It is only through them that we can read him.

3.1. *“A true servant of God and of the Prince”: Was Vincent Co-opted?*

How did Vincent deal with elite political power? One way of looking at it is that he was co-opted by it. In this view, Vincent was a willing collaborator of the absolutist *Ancien Régime*. He served as the monarch’s spiritual director, adviser, companion, friend. From the Marxist perspective, he provided a theological and ecclesiastical legitimization to the oppressive regime. Read from the prism of Gramsci, he had unwittingly made the Congregation and the church as a whole to be institutions at the service of monarchical hegemonic dominance.

This is the way the famous contemporary philosopher, Michel Foucault, read Vincent de Paul in a classic philosophical and sociological study of mendicancy and madness in 17th century France. According to Foucault, the Church played a great part in the “great confinement”, the royal edict of 1656. This decree establishes the General Hospital to house all the beggars, the poor, the sick, the insane all together. Foucault contends that the program to control and contain the misfits of society — those who did not fit the new standards of the Age of Reason — was even started earlier as signaled by Vincent’s taking over of St. Lazare. Foucault writes: “Vincent de Paul reorganized Saint-Lazare, the most important of the former lazar houses of Paris; on January 7, 1632, he signed a contract in the name of the Congregationists of the Mission with the ‘Priory’ of Saint-Lazare, which was now to receive ‘persons detained by the order of His Majesty’.”¹⁶ Foucault, therefore, insinuates that Vincent unwittingly placed himself at the disposal of a system that reproduces itself by violently rounding up and incarcerating the poor.¹⁷

¹⁵ H.-G. GADAMER, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 9. See also *Truth and Method* 2nd revised edition, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998), 269-277.

¹⁶ MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. R. Howard (New Pantheon, 1965), 42.

¹⁷ This generalized allegation by Foucault needs to be nuanced. The everyday life details in Saint-Lazare give us another impression. Saint-Lazare was a big institution of all sorts — from halfway house for the poor to temporary lodging of bishops, lay people and religious. It served as the mother house of the missionaries (that is why we came to be called ‘Lazarists’). But it was also a training institution for seminarians and priests.

But how far did Vincent really collaborate with monarchical political powers? Quite much, that is, if we also listen to some of his contemporaries! This is how Louis Abelly described Vincent in a section of his now famous biography: “Monsieur Vincent preserved always an inviolable fidelity to the king and a constant devotion to his service even during the most perilous and difficult times” (Chapter 13, Section 10).¹⁸ In this section, Abelly points out that Vincent de Paul risked his personal life, material welfare, and that of his Congregation in order to be of service to the King since, for Vincent, “the measure of the affection and fidelity to one’s prince is found in one’s attachment to God.”¹⁹ Vincent was a man of his times. Like his contemporaries, he also believed that to be faithful to the will of the king is also to obey the will of God. Vincent’s close and personal dealings with the palace are well known. To be called to the deathbed of Louis XIII is a sign of a trustful relationship. At one point in those deathbed conversations, the king said: “M. Vincent, if I recover my health, I will see that all the bishops spend three years in your house.”²⁰ But Vincent was much closer to the Queen. She is a key person in Vincent’s works of charity. There was even a plan to found a Confraternity of Charity in the court and the head of which is “the sacred person of the Queen”.²¹ This is how Vincent regarded

The Tuesday conferences were done here and Vincent was a regular attendee. There was also a church where liturgy was celebrated daily and a place where soup and bread were served for those who cared to come. So, it was not just some sort of prison — an impression which Foucault wanted to give. It is true that there were inmates with mental handicaps and young persons who were voluntarily sent there by their parents (with the permission of the magistrates) for purposes of reform. But this arrangement is no different from what we now call institution of ‘rehabilitation’, and in their case, with the confreres as equivalent to present-day spiritual directors, counselors or psychiatrists. Vincent insisted that these ‘inmates’ be called ‘boarders’. They were not prisoners of His Majesty as Foucault insinuated. They were in fact ‘paying boarders’, thus, they are served exactly the same food — if not better — as the community had. Those who recovered went home, got decent positions in society, lived normal — if not — exemplary lives. Abelly had this to say: “It is extraordinary that several had almost a complete change of heart when they were sent to Saint Lazare. The charitable care they experienced enabled them to leave in an entirely different frame of mind, as good as new.” LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 265.

¹⁸ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, Book II (New York: New City Press, 1993), 395.

¹⁹ L. ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 396.

²⁰ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, trans. Joyce Howard (London: Melisende, 1999), 531.

²¹ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 529.

her to which the Queen also returned the same, if not more, esteem and admiration. One day, a nobleman commented to Queen Anne of Austria: "There are few persons, like Monsieur Vincent, attached to the service of the King and state with such a sincere, constant and disinterested fidelity." "You are right," the Queen replied, "Monsieur Vincent is a true servant of God and of the Prince."²² She chose him to be a member of the Council of Conscience — the present counterpart of which is the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Though it was Mazarin who acted as the President of the Council, he admits that Vincent had more influence with the Queen than he had. "Even I who know more about her Majesty's intentions than anyone, dare not intervene until M. Vincent has studied the matter as much as he wishes," Mazarin confessed.²³ Vincent was not only known by Cardinal Mazarin but also by Cardinal Richelieu before him. One incident can tell us how concerned Vincent can be with his image among those who hold power. He once heard of being accused of acting against Richelieu's interests. He wasted no time to clear his name. "My Lord," he explained, "here is the miscreant that people are accusing of acting against Your Eminence's interests. I have come here in person so that you may dispose of me and all the congregation in what way you please."²⁴

These and many other stories, of which we have no space to mention here, tells us that Vincent was frequently walking in the corridors of power and hob-knobbing with those who wield it — Kings and Queens, Ministers and the nobility, their wives and children.

3.2. "Throw yourself to the sea": Humble Pleas and Open Defiance

Despite his close affinity with the authorities, Vincent did deliberately oppose government policies and articulated them. One of these incidents happened in the disaster wrought by the protracted war in Lorraine (1635-1643). Famine and disease abound. The

²² ABBÉ MAYNARD, *Virtues and Spiritual Doctrine of St. Vincent de Paul* (Niagara: Niagara Index Publishing House, 1877), 216.

²³ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 543. The French minister and a friend of Mazarin, Le Tellier knows that as in the case of French benefices, the Queen only relies on the opinion of Monsieur Vincent: "As for M. Vincent, she feels obliged to follow his advice that if the cardinal nominated as bishop somebody that M. Vincent thought was unsuitable, then she would accept the latter's decision and neither the recommendation of His Eminence nor of anybody else would prevail over M. Vincent's decision." *Ibid.*

²⁴ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 526.

reports spoke of men competing with animals to eat grass. In the midst of this unimaginable suffering, Vincent easily identified the root cause: Cardinal Richelieu's foreign policy. Together with the extensive fund-raising, the heroic work of the missionaries on the ground and the acts of penance done in the communities, Vincent never wasted time and confronted the dominant powers. He thought it helpful to visit Richelieu. He knelt down on his knees to plead: "My Lord, give us peace. Have pity on us. Give peace to France!" After giving him a sigh, the Cardinal Minister replied: "Ah! Monsieur Vincent, I desire peace just as much as you; but peace does not depend on me alone."²⁵ Was Richelieu sincere? Or was it mere rhetoric? Shrewd politician that he is, did he say this just to placate his sincere guest? For, in reality, was he not bent to pursue his political plans of French political expansion regardless of the collateral damage? On second thought, maybe Richelieu's reply was a keener assessment of the situation. Vincent's 'one-dimensional view' of power tells him that Richelieu is the single root cause. He might have thought that the Prime Minister's unilateral decision is powerful enough to let the troubles come to an end. But Richelieu is a more perceptive politician. He knew that power is not a game of an individual alone. Once the hegemonic political machinery has been set in motion (through its policies, functionaries, systems of execution, penal processes, etc.), there is no way for it to stop. The powerful system of the absolutist regime has gained a life of its own — and not even its very creators have the power of control.

A parallel event happened in the War of the Fronde (1648-1653) — a civil war between the old aristocratic nobility, the Parlement, and an absolutist monarchy. During these troubles, the poor are the unwilling victims. As the popular saying goes, "When the elephants play, the grass dies." Out of concern for the victims, Vincent placed his life on the line once more. He knew the root of the problem: the person of Mazarin, the Queen's Prime Minister. At the early dawn of January 14, 1649, Vincent set out early in the morning accompanied by Brother Docournau to Saint-Germain where the royal household moved to escape from the people's ire. The trip proved to be full of dangers but he suffered it all. He was also apprehensive that the Queen might not be receptive to his pleadings as she is heard to send away people who criticized her Prime Minister. When admitted to her presence, Vincent told the Queen that Mazarin should go. "Peace! Peace! Give us peace. Your Majesty, pray send him away for a while."

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 369-370. There is no specific date for this incident. Coste calculated it happened sometime between 1639 and 1642.

While the Queen listened, she also did not like to confront Mazarin. So she instructed him to talk to Mazarin himself. “Your Eminence,” Vincent told the Cardinal, “sacrifice yourself, withdraw from the country to save France.”²⁶ “Submit to the present state of affairs. Throw yourself into the sea to appease the storm.”²⁷ Vincent did not succeed. Mazarin became more influential on the Queen who also needed him more than ever. But Vincent pursued his efforts for peace. He continued to dialogue with both sides — the royal power and the nobles. When the negotiations broke down, he even wrote the Pope to intercede. And in one daring political move, on September 11, 1652, he wrote the Cardinal to refrain from going together with the young King and the Queen mother as they enter Paris in order to talk with the people. He did this for, in his mind, Mazarin is the real problem. This did not please Mazarin. As a consequence, Vincent was dismissed from the Council of Conscience.²⁸ It was the price he paid for his act of open defiance to dominant power.

3.3. “If we use force we could be going against God’s will”: *Oblique Resistance*

Let me go back to the project of the General Hospital. The royal edict of April 27, 1656 seeks to prohibit begging and idleness which pose as social ills of the city. Around ten buildings all over Paris were allotted for this: *La Salpêtrière*, *La Pitié*, *Le Refuge*, *La Scipion*, *La Savonnerie*, *Bicêtre*, etc. The ‘archers of the hospital’ — some sort of ‘policemen of the poor’ — were also organized to round up beggars and bring them to any of these institutions. Edicts of the subsequent years prohibited begging all throughout the city “under the pain of being whipped for the first offense, and for the second, condemned to the galleys if men and boys, and banished if women and girls.”²⁹ This is what Foucault calls the “Great Confinement”. The General Hospital was not a medical but a ‘police’ institution. It is a semijudicial

²⁶ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, trans. Joseph Leonard (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1952), 92.

²⁷ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 2, 448.

²⁸ Roman says that we do not know the specific date of Vincent’s dismissal from the Council. But when Alain de Solminihac — the bishop of Cahors — wrote him on October 2, 1652, he congratulated him for having been relieved of the job though it was also a great loss of the Church. Thus, the retirement document must have been issued before October 1652, that is, right after the September 11 letter.

²⁹ M. FOUCAULT, *Madness and Civilization*, 49.

structure with “quasi-absolute sovereignty, jurisdiction without appeal, a writ of execution against which nothing can prevail — the *Hôpital Général* is a strange power that the King establishes between the police and the courts, at the limits of the law: a third order of repression.”³⁰ The directors for life possess administrative, police, corrective and penal powers over all of the poor in Paris — both inside and outside the General Hospital. They have access to “stakes, irons, prisons, and dungeons” inside the hospital in order to execute their mission. It was noted that within a few years after the edict was issued, the General Hospital already housed 6000 persons, a good 1% of the total population.

What is Vincent’s involvement in this project? Years before the royal edict, in 1653, the Ladies of Charity, all aristocratic influential women, already presented to Vincent the idea of organizing all the beggars of the city. They wanted Vincent to undertake the work since he was well known for institutions of this type. They assured him of sufficient money allotted for the project. Even *La Salpêtrière* was given by the Queen for their use. But Vincent tempered their haste. He wanted them to discern more. “The works of God,” he counsels, “come into being little by little, by degrees, and progressively.”³¹ The Ladies were quite annoyed by his slowness. But this may be his way of circumventing something he did not like in the whole idea: the use of coercion and force. The Ladies wanted it on a big scale; thus, the need to forcefully compel the beggars. Vincent wanted to accept only those who came voluntarily. Force should not be used to bring them in. “If we use force,” he says, “we could be going against God’s will.”³² As the Ladies were waiting in discernment, the Royal Edict came out and was promulgated. The work went to the men assigned by the Parlement following the conditions that Foucault described above. It was to Vincent’s great relief that the work was not given to him and his community. In a way, his discerning slowness prevented him from undertaking a work which he thinks is repressive. It is this discerning slowness that also served as a skillful dilatory tactic. But also, the same ‘slowness’ averted a possible clash with his long time generous collaborators, the Ladies of Charity, especially the Duchesse d’Aiguillon who was hell bent to pursue the project. As we say today, he had hit two birds with one stone. Within the Vincentian spiritual tradition, Vincent’s slowness has always been interpreted as a sign of his sensitivity to the voice of Providence. In this specific context, it

³⁰ M. FOUCAULT, *Madness and Civilization*, 40.

³¹ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, 302.

³² JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 637.

also proves to be a ingenious and cunning tactic of oblique resistance to overarching dominant power.

But Vincent's problems were not yet over. Not long after the 'Great Confinement' had taken off, he came to know that it was stipulated in the royal decree that the priests of the mission serve as chaplains. Around 20 of them were requested. How could Vincent defy the King? He met with his community and denied the request on the pretext of "its many community commitments."³³ That sounds to be a lame excuse. If Vincent were convinced, he could have re-channeled personnel as he did with his other projects like, for instance, his strong resolve on the Madagascar mission. But even as Vincent refused the King's wishes, he instituted some ways which, on the surface, appear to conform to the Royal program. This was done maybe in order not to appear openly defiant against so great a power. First, he also endorsed other priests who might be available for the work — one of them, Louis Abelly, who served there for only five months. Second, he suspended the soup kitchen at Saint-Lazare in deference to the program. One day, a beggar confronted Vincent at the door of Saint-Lazare: "Father, did not God command that alms be given to the poor?" "That's quite true, my friend," he replied, "but he also commanded us to obey the magistrates."³⁴ Traditional interpretation sees in this event an example of Vincent's unconditional obedience to authority. But given the context, I could see the sarcasm in his face or a wink in his eyes as he said these words. For, right after, Saint-Lazare also resumed the distribution of soup and bread! Vincent was totally unconvinced that the poor be incarcerated; neither should begging, a work of mercy dear to the heart of the Christian tradition, be totally abolished. One day, a beggar told Vincent: "Father, everyone in Paris is abusing you because they think you are the cause of the poor people being shut up in the big hospital." "Oh, very well," Vincent replied, "I will pray for them."³⁵

While official propaganda praised the "Great Confinement" as the 'greatest charitable enterprise of the century', Vincent consciously

³³ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 638. At around March 1657, Vincent wrote to one of his friends about the Chaplaincy of the General Hospital: "They [the King and the Parlement] have appointed the priests of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity to serve the poor under the authority of the archbishop of Paris. *We have not yet undertaken the actual work for we do not yet know for sure if it is the will of God for us. If we do begin this work it will at first be an experiment to see how it goes.*" LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book I, 229.

³⁴ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 302.

³⁵ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 301.

distanced from it not in open defiance but through what I call ‘oblique resistance’, a tactic available to the weak in the face of so great a power. As the court wanted to eliminate its social eyesores through superficial window-dressing in confinement, Vincent did all he could to respond to the deeper causes of people’s misery as he also tried to mitigate its impact in their lives. Foucault’s structural analysis of history might be helpful to see the greater dynamics at work in hegemonic politics, but it is unable to perceive the oblique resistances present in the everyday life and decisions of actual persons on the ground, in this case, Vincent de Paul. A late 19th century author described Vincent this way: “We may compare him to that remarkable mechanical invention known as the screw. It works its way through without fret or noise; it does not split or spoil the material, but slowly, peacefully, progressively and steadily bores through wood, stone or even steel, for nothing can hinder its progress.”³⁶

3.4. “Look at how M. Vincent comes dressed to court”: Embodied Dissent

In the now classic study on French aristocratic life, *The Court Society*, Norbert Elias (1897-1990) argues that cultivation of outward appearances is crucial to the reproduction of court life.³⁷ Etiquette, for instance, is not just a matter of ceremonial; it is symbol and instrument of power. “If power exists but is not visible in the appearance of the ruler, the people will not believe. They must see in order to believe.”³⁸ Rank existed in its everyday outward representation; specific etiquette marks the status and position of an individual courtier. This position granted by the monarch had to be defended on two fronts. One needs to demonstrate subservience to those higher in the monarchial ladder and a sense of superiority to those below him. Those above need to be appeased in order to be always showered with their graces; and those below should be kept in their proper places so as not to disrupt the structure’s functioning. This status needs to be defended at all times by the careful cultivation of one’s etiquette: manner of dressing, speaking, walking,

³⁶ ABBÉ BOUDIGNON, *Saint Vincent de Paul. Modèle des hommes d'action et d'œuvres* (Paris, 1886), 75, quoted in *Ibid.*, 335.

³⁷ “An elaborate cultivation of outward appearances as an instrument of social differentiation, the display of rank through outward form, is characteristic not only of the houses but of the whole shaping of court life.” NORBERT ELIAS, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 62-63.

³⁸ NORBERT ELIAS, *The Court Society*, 128.

etc. “To exist in luster of aloofness and prestige, that is, to exist as a court person, is, for a court person, an end in itself.”³⁹

Vincent de Paul finds himself in this Court often. Was this courtly status his major concern? Not at all! A very famous encounter with Mazarin illustrates my point. Cardinal Mazarin has considered Monsieur Vincent as a threat to his political ambitions.⁴⁰ Thus, to put him down in matters of courtly etiquette might temporarily placate the Cardinal’s political insecurities. With Vincent’s simplicity of life, he is content to come to court in clean but simple attire — or, to use the words of Abelly, in “his good manners which were both simple and humble.”⁴¹ But one day, Vincent came with a raveled girdle. Mazarin seized this opportunity to mock him: “Look how Monsieur Vincent comes dressed to Court and what a beautiful girdle he wears.”⁴² Vincent was quiet and did not respond to his tirades. Traditional interpretation reads in this incident a sign of Vincent’s humility and detachment.⁴³ I propose to see this event from the perspective of systemic power analysis. Beyond an act of individual virtue (like humility), Vincent’s non-conventional ‘courtly’ etiquette was an act of resistance to the seemingly formidable dominant power that reproduces itself even in courtly bodies. In other words, Vincent’s embodied ‘habitus’ (to use Bourdieu’s famous sociological category)⁴⁴ does not at all share in the ‘aristocratic habitus’ nor intends to entrench itself there. Thus, unlike Mazarin’s, it is not preoccupied to conform to the discipline of courtly bodies. In effect, its self-assured presence unwittingly poses itself as a threat to others who compete for this highly contested space, in particular, the court of *Le Roi Soleil*.⁴⁵ Vincent’s presence becomes an embodied dissent to

³⁹ NORBERT ELIAS, *The Court Society*, 156.

⁴⁰ For a balanced interpretation of the relationship between Mazarin and Vincent de Paul, see JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 538-540.

⁴¹ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book III, Chapter 13, Section I, 210.

⁴² LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book III, Chapter 18, 274.

⁴³ For instance, after quoting this, Pierre Coste remarks: “He was indifferent to the marks of deference shown him. A man’s character is often changed when he attains a prominent position, but his remained the same. ‘M. Vincent is always M. Vincent’, a bishop remarked, and nothing was truer.” PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, 88.

⁴⁴ See PIERRE BOURDIEU, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52-79.

⁴⁵ There are also incidents of other nobles making fun of Vincent. While he was riding on his horse from Saint Denis, a group of noblemen pursued him and fired their guns in his direction saying that when the danger is gone, he

the highly charged contest of power. If you prefer a more religious language, his simplicity poses itself as a prophetic challenge to the power-hungry and position-conscious environment around him.

3.5. “*These are my burden and my sorrow*”: *Solidarity*

Vincent did a thousand and one things: kneel down at the feet of Cardinal Ministers or Queens, risk his good name or the resources of his community, etc. What motivated Vincent to place his life on the line in danger of being crushed by dominant political power? There is no other reason, but the passion of his life: solidarity with the person of the poor. He played with dominant power (power over) and mobilized all sources of resistance to it (power to) — all in the name of solidarity with those who are marginalized by the system (power with). The whole political machinery works against their favor, from fiscal policy to international relations (Alsace and Lorraine), the fight among nobles and royalty (the Fronde) to courtly extravagance. Vincent stood up against this powerful machine because he knows the poor are helpless. They have nowhere else to go. “The poor people who do not know where to go and what to do, they are suffering and their numbers increase every day — these are my burden and my sorrow.”⁴⁶ For the system to which they were told to belong has outrightly excluded them.

Of course, Vincent was not a naïve romantic. He does not idealize the poor. Sensitive as he is to power dynamics among the ruling élite, he is not also a stranger to power games among the poor and others whom he serves. In one of the scenes in the movie *Monsieur Vincent*, there was a beggar who created trouble because he was not given help during the distribution. Vincent took him aside and told him to stop begging and that he needed to work. In another instance, Vincent was happy that one ungrateful poor person would not come back to see him again.⁴⁷

will first go to a church to thank God for the protection against the robbers. Vincent actually did, as they guessed. PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, 88-89.

⁴⁶ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 559.

⁴⁷ He wrote to the community of the Daughters of Charity in Valpuiseaux: “That poor man came yesterday morning to collect his things at the door without either coming in or speaking to anyone except the porter. You can rest assured, Sisters, that you will never see him down there again with my consent; and if he is so unthinking as to go back, I ask you to let me know immediately so that I can see to his removal. I do not think he will ever come to see me again, for which I will be very grateful.” PIERRE COSTE (ed.), *Saint Vincent de Paul: Conférences, Entretiens, Documents*, Vol. V (Paris: 1920-1926),

Thanks to this down-to-earth appraisal of the poor, we are sure that his concern for them is grounded and realistic. Despite all their failings, his heart still goes out to them. When he talks about them, he speaks with the language of his heart — in all care, love and tenderness. “God loves the poor, and thus surely he must love those who love and serve them. When we also love someone, we love his friends and servants. The little Company of the Mission strives to serve the poor tenderly. God loves them so much, and so we have reason to hope that because of them God will love us as well. We then have, my brothers, a new reason to serve them. We should seek out the poorest and most abandoned. We must recognize before God that they are our lords and masters, and that we are unworthy to render them our small favors.”⁴⁸ What comes to mind is the third notion of power as solidarity. Beyond ‘power over’ which Vincent acutely analyzed and responded to, or ‘power to’ whose sources of resistance he powerfully deployed, the feminist sensibility of a ‘power with’ — one that nurtures and cares, one that empowers and connects — is quite alive in Vincent. “When we go to the poor,” he tells the missionaries, “we should so identify with them that we share their sufferings.... We must open our hearts so that they become responsive to the sufferings and miseries of the neighbor.”⁴⁹ Such a spirit of compassion has to fill our hearts, our attitudes, our language, and lastly, our actions: “We must help them as much as we can to bring about a partial or complete end to their sufferings, for the hand must be directed as much as possible by the heart.”⁵⁰ Such a solidarity is not only ‘affective’ but also ‘effective’, to use one of Vincent’s famous distinctions.

4. Repercussions to Vincentian Mission and Formation

What follows are my initial attempts to enumerate some repercussions of the above reflections in contemporary Vincentian mission and formation. Far from being exhaustive, these reflections are provisional.

594 quoted in THOMAS DAVITT, “Less Publicised Facets of Saint Vincent,” *Colloque* 17. Henceforth, SV.

⁴⁸ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book III, 117.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

4.1. *The Need for an Analytic of Power*

If charity is to be effective in socio-economic and political contexts as the theme of this whole Conference wants us to consider,⁵¹ then, it is in need of a viable analytic of power. Socio-political contexts are so charged with power that, without a practicable framework to analyze these dynamics, we will end up with ‘pious’ works without real impact in society or ideologically motivated programs that ironically end up oppressing the poor whom we intend to help in the first place. A well-grounded and, hopefully, effective response can only come from a realistic assessment of the situation. In his work for the poor, Vincent did not have just the bible in hand and a good heart. He had all the analytical resources that came from his experience and his knowledge of human nature but also advice coming from all persons whom he thinks can be of help. Furthermore, society has quite changed from the reign of Louis XIII to the present reign of global capitalism. If there is anything significant, the mechanisms of oppression and exclusion have become more systematic and flexible. All the more should the analytic of power becomes necessary.

What are the characteristics of such an analytic? (1) First, it needs to be responsive to the sensibilities of the poor. It should bear out an analysis from the perspective of the victims of the system. Those holding political and economic power have their own analysis; the IMF-World Bank also presents another; as well as those who make ‘culture’ their main business (media moguls, lifestyle gurus, fashion designers, etc.). Our analysis should have a specific bias — not the bias of the powerful but of those excluded from power. The bottom-line question is: “What do the poor say when we analyze society this way? Is this their perspective as well?” (2) Second, the analytical framework needs to be critical. Since we intend to unmask the complex mechanisms of power, the analytic must be judicious and critical. (3) Third, it must be scientific. We need all the resources that the present human and social sciences can give us in order to understand poverty, the systemic mechanism of exclusion that causes it, uncover its hidden dynamics, and search for more effective ways towards helping the victims. (4) It must also be effective and practicable. Our analytic of power should not stop on the level of analysis (and paralysis). It should also provide a way to think of practical actions in order to alleviate the suffering of the victims. The poor are not so much interested in our theoretical discourses. They always ask the practical question: “So, what shall we do now?”

⁵¹ See Call for Papers to the Indonesian Joint Meeting.

What consequences have this practical analytic to our way of dealing with those in power? For one, it is about time to do away with a simplistic reply common among Vincentians: that we should make the poor and the rich come together — so that the rich may share their abundance with the poor and the poor become rich in the eyes of God! As we have seen, it is not that simple. On the one hand, sharing out of one's abundance can sometimes be a legitimization of a mechanism that keeps the poor at their places and poses permanent hindrance for their liberation. It can serve as an act of 'sprinkling holy water' on their injustices, to use a phrase from Marx. On the other hand, we have also seen that the poor are not 'saints'. Critical analysis of power makes us see where in society God already works and where the Good News still needs to be preached.

4.2. Openness to Multiple Responses

As we have seen, Vincent was open to multiple and flexible responses. He can talk with the King or prostrate in front of the Queen or her Ministers. If these do not work, he can tell them directly to resign since they are the root of the problem or write them letters suggesting courses of action that can pacify or mitigate the impact of their presence. In all these multiple lines of actions, there was just one guiding principle: the response should be able to help alleviate the suffering of the poor.

This tells us that it is salutary to integrate helpful aspects from different, even opposite perspectives. One does not have to rely on one direction alone. The Spirit of God blows where S/he wills. Some recent frameworks of social analysis — either from the left or the right — have become quite dogmatic and doctrinaire. When theories and systems become fixed, they will become idols. Idols demand unquestioning obedience and wholehearted worship. Such uncritical stance has produced the Gulag or Auschwitz, Cambodian killing fields and Philippine Martial Law, the 9/11 event and 'axis of evil' discourse. 'Flexibility' has always been a crucial political virtue — and a Vincentian virtue as well.

4.3. The Centrality of the Concrete Person

Beyond all efforts to come to a practical and strategic analysis, what still proves crucial to Vincent is the concrete human person in front of him — his/her actual needs, his/her specific concerns. All theories must be able to advance the well-being of the concrete person. This is the lacuna of Foucault's analysis. Even as he is

sensitive to macro-micro dynamics of the hegemonic system, he also neglects the fact that there are relatively free agents — concrete persons — who can exert some acts of resistance. This point challenges us to put a concrete face to our analysis. A concrete name, a concrete need, a concrete face is always a reliable check on the effectiveness of our analysis.

For all his many works — from the world of the court to ecclesiastical circles, from visiting his foundations in far-flung places to taking care of the Daughters or the confreres — Vincent never failed to do one crucial thing. He made it a point to personally serve or have some time to listen to the raw complaints or actual stories of poor persons in the gates of Saint Lazare every time he comes home from a trip. For him, the concrete person is the endpoint of all our strivings. There is one side-note that catches my attention in Roman's biography of St. Vincent. After having convinced the Ladies of Charity that the work of the Foundlings had to continue, the Daughters had to distribute them to the houses of different foster mothers all over Paris since they could not be accommodated in one house. Louise de Marillac, who was directly in-charge, kept a register of the different placements of children. And Roman wrote: "Vincent checked this register and (a touching detail) signed it with his own hand."⁵² This means that Vincent did know where each individual child went, who the foster mothers were, and their concrete whereabouts. It was a 'detail' but it was crucial for him. Vincent did not serve the 'universal poor' or an 'abstract humanity'. Each concrete child, each concrete beggar, the concrete sick person — was the reason to all his numerous undertakings.

4.4. The Reality of Power and the Formation of our Candidates

There are two things I want to stress with regard to the issue of power in the formation of our candidates. First, our students need to be acquainted with recent trends in social analysis and apply them to their contexts. They need to be critical to the social, economic, political and cultural movements of our times and how these impact on their lives and those of the poor. They need to be taught how to read newspapers or listen to TV news critically. We should not only train seminarians to faithfully read their breviaries and pray their rosaries. For, as we have seen, even religion and spirituality can become institutions of hegemonic oppression. The dominant power is so inventive that it penetrates all aspects of contemporary life. And

⁵² JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 489.

if we listen to St. Vincent, charity (that is, political charity) — if it is to counter such a flexible oppressive machine — it also needs to be inventive unto infinity.

Beyond critical social analysis, however, there is also a need to learn how to discern power at work in our own lives. It is only when one is self-reflective that s/he can critically discern the power dynamics at work outside, i.e., in the socio-political spheres. A famous psychologist, Rollo May,⁵³ outlines five levels of power at work in the life of a person: (1) 'exploitative power': a type of power as force which is resorted to in extreme inequality between two peoples or groups; (2) manipulative power: a desire to control beyond brute force and is done through manipulation, exploitation or trickery; (3) competitive power: impulse to either crush the opponent or excel in one's potential, thus, it is ambivalent; (4) nutrient power: power used for the benefit of the other though not to one's equal; (5) integrative power: a power with the other person as equal, one which is characterized by mutuality and respect. Formators shall help the students to discern their location in the above continuum of power leading them out of their experience of exploitative compulsions towards nurturing and integrative power or, to go back to our framework, from the ambivalent fields of 'power over' to the empowering horizons of 'power with'.

⁵³ ROLLO MAY, *Power and Innocence* (New York: Norton, 1972).

Note de la Rédaction

Par décision du Conseil de Rédaction de VINCENTIANA, et avec le consentement du Conseil Général de la Congrégation de la Mission, cet article est publié dans la langue originale où elle a été écrite, parce que en date du 23 décembre 2008, la traduction française, demandée et acceptée depuis le 9 mai de la même année, ne nous est pas parvenue.

Vincent de Paul and the Court

Responding to the Politics of Power

by Daniel Franklin Pilario Estepa, C.M.*

1. Introduction

When I joined the community in the early 1980s, the Philippines found itself in a crucial political turmoil. The dictator Marcos was asserting his military power and resistance to his Martial rule was growing among the citizenry. People were divided. So was the Vincentian community. On the one hand, many confreres were allies of the Marcoses and their cronies. Some were even present at many palace functions. On the other hand, there were many confreres who found themselves in street demonstrations or worked behind the scenes to help topple down the repressive regime. What amazed me was that both sides used St. Vincent to support their stand. One side rhetorically asks: Was Vincent not friends of those in power? Did he not bridge the gap between the rich and the poor? The rich also are persons. They are also poor — emotionally, morally, and spiritually. Did St. Vincent not call us to serve them too, as he himself did? Those on the other side ask: When we dine with them, ask them to donate to our projects or celebrate Mass in their gatherings, are we not condoning their injustices? Each side was not convinced of the response of the other.

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Today, even as we find ourselves in a different context, the substance of the questions remains. How should Vincentians deal with the politics of power? This paper intends to do three things: (1) to investigate the contemporary theories and discourses on power especially in socio-political contexts; (2) to inquire how Vincent de Paul dealt with the politics of power in his own context; (3) to explore its implications to contemporary Vincentian life and the formation process.

In order to situate our discussion, it is our methodological option to start with contemporary issues and questions. How does contemporary social science see political 'power'? It is through this lens that we intend to read Vincent's politics in the hope that we begin to discern for our own times how to concretely negotiate with power and do 'charity' in political contexts.¹

2. Theorizing Power: Contemporary Theories

How crucial is the question of power to the contemporary mind? Just to get a sense of it, I tried to do a google search on the term 'power' and I got 785M hits in 0.17 seconds; in the yahoo search engine, it was higher. I got 1.24B in 0.31 seconds.² Since this might include electric or mechanical power and the like, I narrowed my search down to the term 'political power' and I got 228M hits in 0.07 seconds for google and 116M in 0.28 seconds in yahoo. Considering this data, the question of power must be a relevant concern in today's society.

Contemporary social science discourses provide us a wide range with which the notion of power is understood. Let me go through some of these uses: (a) power as domination; (b) power as empowerment and resistance; and (c) power as solidarity.

¹ For this methodology, see my articles: "Inculturating Congregational Charisms: A Methodological Proposal for the Vincentian Family," *Hapag: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Theological Research* 2 (2005): 169-207; "Inculturating Vincentian Charism and Ministry in the Asia-Pacific Contexts: A Methodological Proposal," in *Formation for Mission: In Search of Contextualization of Vincentian Formation and Charism in Asia Pacific*, ed. Armada Riyanto (Malang, Indonesia: Widya Sasana Publication, 2005), 139-173; reprinted in *Vincentiana* 51, No. 4 (July-August 2007): 287-315.

² Just for the sake of curiosity, I compared it to the word 'sex'. 'Sex' sites were very much lower — 397M/.07 seconds in google and 554M/.10 seconds in yahoo. Can we say that contemporary minds are more concerned with 'power' than with 'sex'?

2.1. *Domination: Power Over*

In a classic study in political theory, Steven Lukes points to the three ways in which power as domination is theorized in political contexts.³ The ‘one-dimensional view’ takes the individualist perspective. Domination is “power of A over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do.” In other words, power is seen to reside in the actor(s) who can exercise overt and visible dominance in situations where there is conflict of interests. In the ‘two-dimensional view’, the conflict need not necessarily be overt; it can also be covert and concealed. It is not necessary that the dominant group make open decisions against the minority. It is enough that they keep quiet on certain issues, thus, in effect preventing that specific issue to surface in open discussion. This view thinks that dominance can be exercised over others by one’s capacity to control the political agenda. Beyond the first two types, there is a ‘three-dimensional view’ or radical view to which Lukes subscribes. For Lukes, the previous two conceptions are too individualistic, i.e., too faithful to the tradition started by Max Weber who viewed power as residing in individuals realizing their wills despite the resistance of others. The two views are also conflict-centered — be it overt or covert conflicts. Beyond individual action (i.e., power of A over B), Lukes contends that power also includes “socially structured and culturally patterned behavior of groups and practices of institutions.”⁴ Beyond actual observable conflict, power is also present in manipulated social consensus. In other words, the dominant system can in fact influence, shape and determine — through media, schools, churches — what its people should like and want. And through everyday formation processes — or what sociology also calls ‘socialization’ — the hegemonic agenda begins to be accepted as legitimate, normal and natural. There is no observable conflict since the interests of the dominant order have been imposed on and seemingly consented to by those it tries to exclude. Social consensus, thus, is both voluntarily concurred but also subconsciously imposed.⁵

³ For this, see STEVEN LUKES, *Power: A Radical View* (New York: Palgrave, 1974). This work was revised and expanded in 2005.

⁴ STEVEN LUKES, *Power*, 22.

⁵ The radical view of power in Lukes is influenced by the notion of ‘hegemony’ by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). For Gramsci’s discussion on hegemony, see JOSEPH FEMIA, *Gramsci’s Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

The radical view of power in Lukes is influenced by the notion of 'hegemony' by the Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). For Gramsci, political legitimacy is gained in two ways: force and consent. The first approach is through the use of coercion and force (e.g., police, courts, prisons, etc.). But since this is not always effective as it creates widespread protests, the dominant power also uses persuasion (others also call this 'brainwashing') through media, educational system, churches and other institutions in order to convince the people of its own legitimacy. In other words, the dominant goes about 'manufacturing consent', to use a phrase of a famous philosopher and political activist, Noam Chomsky. In both cases, the dominant order exercises power over the dominated. However, the dominated also participates in such a construction — as they no longer voice their dissent. On the surface, hegemony, therefore, is the 'whole lived social reality' which is artificial as it is manufactured but which people also take for granted as natural and legitimate.

In recent times, however, there is one view of power which goes beyond the radical view of Lukes and Gramsci. Michel Foucault (1926-1984) — a French philosopher famous among the postmodern writers — conceives of power as 'governmentality'. First, against the previous three views, power is neither a possession of individuals nor of institutions; sovereignty does not reside in the monarch nor in the people; it is all over. "Power must be analyzed as something that circulates," he states. "It is never localized here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as commodity or piece of wealth."⁶ Second, power is not only repressive; it is also productive and reproductive. It is a set of practices, technology or strategy dispersed throughout the whole system so that bodies of subjects are rendered docile to its logic and functioning. In effect, bodies can be effectively 'governed', thus also acquiring the capacity to reproduce themselves and the whole system. This is what he calls the 'micro-physics of power'.

What is the bottom-line assertion in the above theoretical discussion? Regardless of their differences, the theories of power from Lukes to Gramsci to Foucault agree on one thing. Power is "power over". It consists of individual acts, everyday practices, institutions, technology, strategies or embodied micro-practices of domination over known or unknown others.

⁶ MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 98.

2.2. *Empowerment and Resistance: Power To*

Beyond domination, however, there is another tradition of conceiving power in terms of positive capacity. Power is not just ‘power over’; it is also ‘power to’. As the Latin *posse* suggests, power is ability, capacity, strength actually put forth, effectiveness. Beyond domination, power is a transformative capacity, an act of empowerment. In the context of a powerful dominant power at the center, what capacity do the margins possess? True, the hegemonic power is all-pervasive. But there can never be a “dominant social order, and therefore no dominant culture ever in reality includes or exhausts all human practice, human energy and human intention.”⁷ There is always a dimension of our human and social existence, which the dominant social order “neglects, excludes, represses, or simply fails to recognize.”⁸ It is this dimension which puts into question, threatens or exerts pressure on the hegemonic. Raymond Williams, a British neo-Marxist philosopher, identifies this sphere as the locus of alternative, oppositional and emergent voices of the excluded, the locus of resistance among those marginalized by the system. Michel de Certeau, another contemporary French philosopher, calls this the ‘tactics of the weak’. While *strategy* refers to calculated action of powerful institutions whose possession of a ‘territory’ needed to regroup or recharge for the next moves places it in an advantageous position, *tactic* is the scheme of resistance available to the weak. Bereft of place, the ‘weak’ can only play within the terrain of the ‘strong’. It has no time to strategize and its attacks depend only on the possibilities afforded by cracks and fissures along the structure of its powerful adversary. “It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse.”⁹ It thus turns its own smallness into gain and cunningly transforms the enemy’s size and visibility into utter disadvantage.¹⁰

⁷ RAYMOND WILLIAMS, *Marxism and Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 125.

⁸ RAYMOND WILLIAMS, *Marxism and Literature*, 126.

⁹ MICHEL DE CERTEAU, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹⁰ This reminds us of the Greek *metis* — a sense of cunning intelligence valuable to the Pre-Socratics but came to be suppressed by the dominant Greek narrative from Plato onwards. In certain activities like navigation, medicine or hunting, the Greeks value a type of intelligence which combines “flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, resourcefulness, vigilance, opportunism, various skills and experiences acquired over the years” as they are made to bear upon the “transient, shifting, disconcerting and ambiguous situations.” In front of such an overwhelming power, this type of oblique resistance is the only way to survive. See DANIEL FRANKLIN PILARIO,

2.3. *Solidarity: Power With*

For some contemporary feminists, however, the military metaphors of tactics and strategies, of dominance (power over) and resistance (power to) are all masculine notions. They argue that the experience of women ushers in a totally new conception of power: “power with”. Virginia Held, a feminist author, suggests that “the capacity to give birth, and to nurture and empower could be the basis for new and more humanly promising conceptions than the ones that now prevail of power, empowerment and growth.”¹¹ Another feminist, Jean Baker Miller says: “There is enormous validity in women’s not wanting to use power as it is presently conceived and used. Rather, women may want to be powerful in ways that simultaneously enhance, rather than, diminish, the power of others.”¹² Yet as early as the 1920s, Mary Parker Follett (1868-1933) already advanced the notion of ‘power with’. “Genuine power can only be grown,” she argues, “it will slip from every arbitrary hand that grasps it; for genuine power is not coercive control, but coactive control.... ‘Power-with’ is what democracy should mean in politics or industry.”¹³ But this is not a monopoly of feminists alone. The notion of power as solidarity already finds its echo in the writings of the political philosopher, Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) who argues that “power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert.”¹⁴ What is envisioned by these different discourses is a nurturing, affective power, not controlling power; power of creative solidarity not of aggressive domination; power that gives of itself not one that oppresses.

3. Reading Vincent’s Responses to the Politics of Power

From the lens of the above theoretical discourse on power, we now ask how did St. Vincent deal with political power in his own context? Some might ask if this method is not anachronistic.

Back to the Rough Grounds of Praxis: Exploring Theological Method with Pierre Bourdieu (Leuven: Leuven University Press / Peeters, 2005), 21-25, 249-250, 534-535.

¹¹ VIRGINIA HELD, *Feminist Morality: Transforming Culture, Society and Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1993), 137.

¹² Jean Baker Miller (1992) as quoted in “Feminist Perspectives on Power,” in <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminist-power/> (accessed 06.24.2007).

¹³ MARY PARKER FOLLETT, *Creative Experience* (New York: Longmans Green and Co., 1924), xiii, 187.

¹⁴ HANNAH ARENDT, *On Violence* (London: Penguin, 1970), 44.

Are we not asking questions which Vincent himself had not asked? Are we not projecting our prejudices and biases into Vincent's world? The answer to all of these questions is probably yes. And we should not be guilty of doing so! For as Hans-Georg Gadamer also says: "Prejudices are the biases of our openness to the world. They are simply the conditions whereby we experience something — whereby what we encounter says something to us."¹⁵ In other words, thanks to our questions, prejudices and biases, Vincent de Paul comes alive for us. It is only through them that we can read him.

3.1. "A true servant of God and of the Prince": Was Vincent Co-opted?

How did Vincent deal with elite political power? One way of looking at it is that he was co-opted by it. In this view, Vincent was a willing collaborator of the absolutist *Ancien Régime*. He served as the monarch's spiritual director, adviser, companion, friend. From the Marxist perspective, he provided a theological and ecclesiastical legitimization to the oppressive regime. Read from the prism of Gramsci, he had unwittingly made the Congregation and the church as a whole to be institutions at the service of monarchical hegemonic dominance.

This is the way the famous contemporary philosopher, Michel Foucault, read Vincent de Paul in a classic philosophical and sociological study of mendicancy and madness in 17th century France. According to Foucault, the Church played a great part in the "great confinement", the royal edict of 1656. This decree establishes the General Hospital to house all the beggars, the poor, the sick, the insane all together. Foucault contends that the program to control and contain the misfits of society — those who did not fit the new standards of the Age of Reason — was even started earlier as signaled by Vincent's taking over of St. Lazare. Foucault writes: "Vincent de Paul reorganized Saint-Lazare, the most important of the former lazar houses of Paris; on January 7, 1632, he signed a contract in the name of the Congregationists of the Mission with the 'Priory' of Saint-Lazare, which was now to receive 'persons detained by the order of His Majesty'."¹⁶ Foucault, therefore, insinuates that Vincent

¹⁵ H.-G. GADAMER, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1977), 9. See also *Truth and Method* 2nd revised edition, trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 1998), 269-277.

¹⁶ MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Madness and Civilization*, trans. R. Howard (New Pantheon, 1965), 42.

unwittingly placed himself at the disposal of a system that reproduces itself by violently rounding up and incarcerating the poor.¹⁷

But how far did Vincent really collaborate with monarchical political powers? Quite much, that is, if we also listen to some of his contemporaries! This is how Louis Abelly described Vincent in a section of his now famous biography: “Monsieur Vincent preserved always an inviolable fidelity to the king and a constant devotion to his service even during the most perilous and difficult times” (Chapter 13, Section 10).¹⁸ In this section, Abelly points out that Vincent de Paul risked his personal life, material welfare, and that of his Congregation in order to be of service to the King since, for Vincent, “the measure of the affection and fidelity to one’s prince is found in one’s attachment to God.”¹⁹ Vincent was a man of his times. Like his contemporaries, he also believed that to be faithful to the will of the king is also to obey the will of God. Vincent’s close and personal dealings with the palace are well known. To be called to the deathbed of Louis XIII is a sign of a trustful relationship. At one point in those deathbed conversations, the king said: “M. Vincent, if

¹⁷ This generalized allegation by Foucault needs to be nuanced. The everyday life details in Saint-Lazare give us another impression. Saint-Lazare was a big institution of all sorts — from halfway house for the poor to temporary lodging of bishops, lay people and religious. It served as the mother house of the missionaries (that is why we came to be called ‘Lazarists’). But it was also a training institution for seminarians and priests. The Tuesday conferences were done here and Vincent was a regular attendee. There was also a church where liturgy was celebrated daily and a place where soup and bread were served for those who cared to come. So, it was not just some sort of prison — an impression which Foucault wanted to give. It is true that there were inmates with mental handicaps and young persons who were voluntarily sent there by their parents (with the permission of the magistrates) for purposes of reform. But this arrangement is no different from what we now call institution of ‘rehabilitation’, and in their case, with the conferes as equivalent to present-day spiritual directors, counselors or psychiatrists. Vincent insisted that these ‘inmates’ be called ‘boarders’. They were not prisoners of His Majesty as Foucault insinuated. They were in fact ‘paying boarders’, thus, they are served exactly the same food — if not better — as the community had. Those who recovered went home, got decent positions in society, lived normal — if not — exemplary lives. Abelly had this to say: “It is extraordinary that several had almost a complete change of heart when they were sent to Saint Lazare. The charitable care they experienced enabled them to leave in an entirely different frame of mind, as good as new.” LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 265.

¹⁸ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, Book II (New York: New City Press, 1993), 395.

¹⁹ L. ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 396.

I recover my health, I will see that all the bishops spend three years in your house.”²⁰ But Vincent was much closer to the Queen. She is a key person in Vincent’s works of charity. There was even a plan to found a Confraternity of Charity in the court and the head of which is “the sacred person of the Queen”.²¹ This is how Vincent regarded her to which the Queen also returned the same, if not more, esteem and admiration. One day, a nobleman commented to Queen Anne of Austria: “There are few persons, like Monsieur Vincent, attached to the service of the King and state with such a sincere, constant and disinterested fidelity.” “You are right,” the Queen replied, “Monsieur Vincent is a true servant of God and of the Prince.”²² She chose him to be a member of the Council of Conscience — the present counterpart of which is the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Though it was Mazarin who acted as the President of the Council, he admits that Vincent had more influence with the Queen than he had. “Even I who know more about her Majesty’s intentions than anyone, dare not intervene until M. Vincent has studied the matter as much as he wishes,” Mazarin confessed.²³ Vincent was not only known by Cardinal Mazarin but also by Cardinal Richelieu before him. One incident can tell us how concerned Vincent can be with his image among those who hold power. He once heard of being accused of acting against Richelieu’s interests. He wasted no time to clear his name. “My Lord,” he explained, “here is the miscreant that people are accusing of acting against Your Eminence’s interests. I have come here in person so that you may dispose of me and all the congregation in what way you please.”²⁴

These and many other stories, of which we have no space to mention here, tells us that Vincent was frequently walking in the corridors of power and hob-knobbing with those who wield it — Kings and Queens, Ministers and the nobility, their wives and children.

²⁰ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, trans, Joyce Howard (London: Melisende, 1999), 531.

²¹ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 529.

²² ABBÉ MAYNARD, *Virtues and Spiritual Doctrine of St. Vincent de Paul* (Niagara: Niagara Index Publishing House, 1877), 216.

²³ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 543. The French minister and a friend of Mazarin, Le Tellier knows that as in the case of French benefices, the Queen only relies on the opinion of Monsieur Vincent: “As for M. Vincent, she feels obliged to follow his advice that if the cardinal nominated as bishop somebody that M. Vincent thought was unsuitable, then she would accept the latter’s decision and neither the recommendation of His Eminence nor of anybody else would prevail over M. Vincent’s decision.” *Ibid.*

²⁴ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 526.

3.2. *“Throw yourself to the sea”: Humble Pleas and Open Defiance*

Despite his close affinity with the authorities, Vincent did deliberately oppose government policies and articulated them. One of these incidents happened in the disaster wrought by the protracted war in Lorraine (1635-1643). Famine and disease abound. The reports spoke of men competing with animals to eat grass. In the midst of this unimaginable suffering, Vincent easily identified the root cause: Cardinal Richelieu's foreign policy. Together with the extensive fund-raising, the heroic work of the missionaries on the ground and the acts of penance done in the communities, Vincent never wasted time and confronted the dominant powers. He thought it helpful to visit Richelieu. He knelt down on his knees to plead: "My Lord, give us peace. Have pity on us. Give peace to France!" After giving him a sigh, the Cardinal Minister replied: "Ah! Monsieur Vincent, I desire peace just as much as you; but peace does not depend on me alone."²⁵ Was Richelieu sincere? Or was it mere rhetoric? Shrewd politician that he is, did he say this just to placate his sincere guest? For, in reality, was he not bent to pursue his political plans of French political expansion regardless of the collateral damage? On second thought, maybe Richelieu's reply was a keener assessment of the situation. Vincent's 'one-dimensional view' of power tells him that Richelieu is the single root cause. He might have thought that the Prime Minister's unilateral decision is powerful enough to let the troubles come to an end. But Richelieu is a more perceptive politician. He knew that power is not a game of an individual alone. Once the hegemonic political machinery has been set in motion (through its policies, functionaries, systems of execution, penal processes, etc.), there is no way for it to stop. The powerful system of the absolutist regime has gained a life of its own — and not even its very creators have the power of control.

A parallel event happened in the War of the Fronde (1648-1653) — a civil war between the old aristocratic nobility, the Parlement, and an absolutist monarchy. During these troubles, the poor are the unwilling victims. As the popular saying goes, "When the elephants play, the grass dies." Out of concern for the victims, Vincent placed his life on the line once more. He knew the root of the problem: the person of Mazarin, the Queen's Prime Minister. At the early dawn of January 14, 1649, Vincent set out early in the morning accompanied by Brother Docournau to Saint-Germain where the royal household

²⁵ Ibid, 369-370. There is no specific date for this incident. Coste calculated it happened sometime between 1639 and 1642.

moved to escape from the people's ire. The trip proved to be full of dangers but he suffered it all. He was also apprehensive that the Queen might not be receptive to his pleadings as she is heard to send away people who criticized her Prime Minister. When admitted to her presence, Vincent told the Queen that Mazarin should go. "Peace! Peace! Give us peace. Your Majesty, pray send him away for a while." While the Queen listened, she also did not like to confront Mazarin. So she instructed him to talk to Mazarin himself. "Your Eminence," Vincent told the Cardinal, "sacrifice yourself, withdraw from the country to save France."²⁶ "Submit to the present state of affairs. Throw yourself into the sea to appease the storm."²⁷ Vincent did not succeed. Mazarin became more influential on the Queen who also needed him more than ever. But Vincent pursued his efforts for peace. He continued to dialogue with both sides — the royal power and the nobles. When the negotiations broke down, he even wrote the Pope to intercede. And in one daring political move, on September 11, 1652, he wrote the Cardinal to refrain from going together with the young King and the Queen mother as they enter Paris in order to talk with the people. He did this for, in his mind, Mazarin is the real problem. This did not please Mazarin. As a consequence, Vincent was dismissed from the Council of Conscience.²⁸ It was the price he paid for his act of open defiance to dominant power.

3.3. "If we use force we could be going against God's will": *Oblique Resistance*

Let me go back to the project of the General Hospital. The royal edict of April 27, 1656 seeks to prohibit begging and idleness which pose as social ills of the city. Around ten buildings all over Paris were allotted for this: *La Salpêtrière*, *La Pitié*, *Le Refuge*, *La Scipion*, *La Savonnerie*, *Bicêtre*, etc. The 'archers of the hospital' — some sort of 'policemen of the poor' — were also organized to round up beggars and bring them to any of these institutions. Edicts of the subsequent

²⁶ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, trans. Joseph Leonard (Westminster, Maryland: Newman Press, 1952), 92.

²⁷ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 2, 448.

²⁸ Roman says that we do not know the specific date of Vincent's dismissal from the Council. But when Alain de Solminihac — the bishop of Cahors — wrote him on October 2, 1652, he congratulated him for having been relieved of the job though it was also a great loss of the Church. Thus, the retirement document must have been issued before October 1652, that is, right after the September 11 letter.

years prohibited begging all throughout the city “under the pain of being whipped for the first offense, and for the second, condemned to the galleys if men and boys, and banished if women and girls.”²⁹ This is what Foucault calls the “Great Confinement”. The General Hospital was not a medical but a ‘police’ institution. It is a semijudicial structure with “quasi-absolute sovereignty, jurisdiction without appeal, a writ of execution against which nothing can prevail — the *Hôpital Général* is a strange power that the King establishes between the police and the courts, at the limits of the law: a third order of repression.”³⁰ The directors for life possess administrative, police, corrective and penal powers over all of the poor in Paris — both inside and outside the General Hospital. They have access to “stakes, irons, prisons, and dungeons” inside the hospital in order to execute their mission. It was noted that within a few years after the edict was issued, the General Hospital already housed 6000 persons, a good 1% of the total population.

What is Vincent’s involvement in this project? Years before the royal edict, in 1653, the Ladies of Charity, all aristocratic influential women, already presented to Vincent the idea of organizing all the beggars of the city. They wanted Vincent to undertake the work since he was well known for institutions of this type. They assured him of sufficient money allotted for the project. Even *La Salpêtrière* was given by the Queen for their use. But Vincent tempered their haste. He wanted them to discern more. “The works of God,” he counsels, “come into being little by little, by degrees, and progressively.”³¹ The Ladies were quite annoyed by his slowness. But this may be his way of circumventing something he did not like in the whole idea: the use of coercion and force. The Ladies wanted it on a big scale; thus, the need to forcefully compel the beggars. Vincent wanted to accept only those who came voluntarily. Force should not be used to bring them in. “If we use force,” he says, “we could be going against God’s will.”³² As the Ladies were waiting in discernment, the Royal Edict came out and was promulgated. The work went to the men assigned by the Parlement following the conditions that Foucault described above. It was to Vincent’s great relief that the work was not given to him and his community. In a way, his discerning slowness prevented him from undertaking a work which he thinks is repressive. It is this discerning slowness that also served as a skillful dilatory tactic. But

²⁹ M. FOUCAULT, *Madness and Civilization*, 49.

³⁰ M. FOUCAULT, *Madness and Civilization*, 40.

³¹ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, 302.

³² JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 637.

also, the same ‘slowness’ averted a possible clash with his long time generous collaborators, the Ladies of Charity, especially the Duchesse d’Aiguillon who was hell bent to pursue the project. As we say today, he had hit two birds with one stone. Within the Vincentian spiritual tradition, Vincent’s slowness has always been interpreted as a sign of his sensitivity to the voice of Providence. In this specific context, it also proves to be a ingenious and cunning tactic of oblique resistance to overarching dominant power.

But Vincent’s problems were not yet over. Not long after the ‘Great Confinement’ had taken off, he came to know that it was stipulated in the royal decree that the priests of the mission serve as chaplains. Around 20 of them were requested. How could Vincent defy the King? He met with his community and denied the request on the pretext of “its many community commitments.”³³ That sounds to be a lame excuse. If Vincent were convinced, he could have re-channeled personnel as he did with his other projects like, for instance, his strong resolve on the Madagascar mission. But even as Vincent refused the King’s wishes, he instituted some ways which, on the surface, appear to conform to the Royal program. This was done maybe in order not to appear openly defiant against so great a power. First, he also endorsed other priests who might be available for the work — one of them, Louis Abelly, who served there for only five months. Second, he suspended the soup kitchen at Saint-Lazare in deference to the program. One day, a beggar confronted Vincent at the door of Saint-Lazare: “Father, did not God command that alms be given to the poor?” “That’s quite true, my friend,” he replied, “but he also commanded us to obey the magistrates.”³⁴ Traditional interpretation sees in this event an example of Vincent’s unconditional obedience to authority. But given the context, I could see the sarcasm in his face or a wink in his eyes as he said these words. For, right after, Saint-Lazare also resumed the distribution of soup and bread! Vincent was totally unconvinced that the poor be incarcerated; neither should begging, a work of mercy dear to the heart of the Christian tradition, be totally abolished. One day, a beggar told

³³ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 638. At around March 1657, Vincent wrote to one of his friends about the Chaplaincy of the General Hospital: “They [the King and the Parlement] have appointed the priests of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity to serve the poor under the authority of the archbishop of Paris. *We have not yet undertaken the actual work for we do not yet know for sure if it is the will of God for us. If we do begin this work it will at first be an experiment to see how it goes.*” LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book I, 229.

³⁴ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 302.

Vincent: "Father, everyone in Paris is abusing you because they think you are the cause of the poor people being shut up in the big hospital." "Oh, very well," Vincent replied, "I will pray for them."³⁵

While official propaganda praised the "Great Confinement" as the 'greatest charitable enterprise of the century', Vincent consciously distanced from it not in open defiance but through what I call 'oblique resistance', a tactic available to the weak in the face of so great a power. As the court wanted to eliminate its social eyesores through superficial window-dressing in confinement, Vincent did all he could to respond to the deeper causes of people's misery as he also tried to mitigate its impact in their lives. Foucault's structural analysis of history might be helpful to see the greater dynamics at work in hegemonic politics, but it is unable to perceive the oblique resistances present in the everyday life and decisions of actual persons on the ground, in this case, Vincent de Paul. A late 19th century author described Vincent this way: "We may compare him to that remarkable mechanical invention known as the screw. It works its way through without fret or noise; it does not split or spoil the material, but slowly, peacefully, progressively and steadily bores through wood, stone or even steel, for nothing can hinder its progress."³⁶

3.4. "Look at how M. Vincent comes dressed to court": Embodied Dissent

In the now classic study on French aristocratic life, *The Court Society*, Norbert Elias (1897-1990) argues that cultivation of outward appearances is crucial to the reproduction of court life.³⁷ Etiquette, for instance, is not just a matter of ceremonial; it is symbol and instrument of power. "If power exists but is not visible in the appearance of the ruler, the people will not believe. They must see in order to believe."³⁸ Rank existed in its everyday outward representation; specific etiquette marks the status and position of an individual courtier. This position granted by the monarch had to be

³⁵ PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Book II, 301.

³⁶ ABBÉ BOUDIGNON, *Saint Vincent de Paul. Modèle des hommes d'action et d'œuvres* (Paris, 1886), 75, quoted in *Ibid.*, 335.

³⁷ "An elaborate cultivation of outward appearances as an instrument of social differentiation, the display of rank through outward form, is characteristic not only of the houses but of the whole shaping of court life." NORBERT ELIAS, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 62-63.

³⁸ NORBERT ELIAS, *The Court Society*, 128.

defended on two fronts. One needs to demonstrate subservience to those higher in the monarchical ladder and a sense of superiority to those below him. Those above need to be appeased in order to be always showered with their graces; and those below should be kept in their proper places so as not to disrupt the structure's functioning. This status needs to be defended at all times by the careful cultivation of one's etiquette: manner of dressing, speaking, walking, etc. "To exist in luster of aloofness and prestige, that is, to exist as a court person, is, for a court person, an end in itself."³⁹

Vincent de Paul finds himself in this Court often. Was this courtly status his major concern? Not at all! A very famous encounter with Mazarin illustrates my point. Cardinal Mazarin has considered Monsieur Vincent as a threat to his political ambitions.⁴⁰ Thus, to put him down in matters of courtly etiquette might temporarily placate the Cardinal's political insecurities. With Vincent's simplicity of life, he is content to come to court in clean but simple attire — or, to use the words of Abelly, in "his good manners which were both simple and humble."⁴¹ But one day, Vincent came with a raveled girdle. Mazarin seized this opportunity to mock him: "Look how Monsieur Vincent comes dressed to Court and what a beautiful girdle he wears."⁴² Vincent was quiet and did not respond to his tirades. Traditional interpretation reads in this incident a sign of Vincent's humility and detachment.⁴³ I propose to see this event from the perspective of systemic power analysis. Beyond an act of individual virtue (like humility), Vincent's non-conventional 'courtly' etiquette was an act of resistance to the seemingly formidable dominant power that reproduces itself even in courtly bodies. In other words, Vincent's embodied 'habitus' (to use Bourdieu's famous sociological category)⁴⁴ does not at all share in the 'aristocratic habitus' nor

³⁹ NORBERT ELIAS, *The Court Society*, 156.

⁴⁰ For a balanced interpretation of the relationship between Mazarin and Vincent de Paul, see JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 538-540.

⁴¹ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book III, Chapter 13, Section I, 210.

⁴² LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book III, Chapter 18, 274.

⁴³ For instance, after quoting this, Pierre Coste remarks: "He was indifferent to the marks of deference shown him. A man's character is often changed when he attains a prominent position, but his remained the same. 'M. Vincent is always M. Vincent', a bishop remarked, and nothing was truer." PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, 88.

⁴⁴ See PIERRE BOURDIEU, *The Logic of Practice* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1990), 52-79.

intends to entrench itself there. Thus, unlike Mazarin's, it is not preoccupied to conform to the discipline of courtly bodies. In effect, its self-assured presence unwittingly poses itself as a threat to others who compete for this highly contested space, in particular, the court of *Le Roi Soleil*.⁴⁵ Vincent's presence becomes an embodied dissent to the highly charged contest of power. If you prefer a more religious language, his simplicity poses itself as a prophetic challenge to the power-hungry and position-conscious environment around him.

3.5. "These are my burden and my sorrow": Solidarity

Vincent did a thousand and one things: kneel down at the feet of Cardinal Ministers or Queens, risk his good name or the resources of his community, etc. What motivated Vincent to place his life on the line in danger of being crushed by dominant political power? There is no other reason, but the passion of his life: solidarity with the person of the poor. He played with dominant power (power over) and mobilized all sources of resistance to it (power to) — all in the name of solidarity with those who are marginalized by the system (power with). The whole political machinery works against their favor, from fiscal policy to international relations (Alsace and Lorraine), the fight among nobles and royalty (the Fronde) to courtly extravagance. Vincent stood up against this powerful machine because he knows the poor are helpless. They have nowhere else to go. "The poor people who do not know where to go and what to do, they are suffering and their numbers increase every day — these are my burden and my sorrow."⁴⁶ For the system to which they were told to belong has outrightly excluded them.

Of course, Vincent was not a naïve romantic. He does not idealize the poor. Sensitive as he is to power dynamics among the ruling élite, he is not also a stranger to power games among the poor and others whom he serves. In one of the scenes in the movie *Monsieur Vincent*, there was a beggar who created trouble because he was not given help during the distribution. Vincent took him aside and told him to stop begging and that he needed to work. In another instance,

⁴⁵ There are also incidents of other nobles making fun of Vincent. While he was riding on his horse from Saint Denis, a group of noblemen pursued him and fired their guns in his direction saying that when the danger is gone, he will first go to a church to thank God for the protection against the robbers. Vincent actually did, as they guessed. PIERRE COSTE, *The Life and Works of St. Vincent de Paul*, Vol. 3, 88-89.

⁴⁶ JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 559.

Vincent was happy that one ungrateful poor person would not come back to see him again.⁴⁷

Thanks to this down-to-earth appraisal of the poor, we are sure that his concern for them is grounded and realistic. Despite all their failings, his heart still goes out to them. When he talks about them, he speaks with the language of his heart — in all care, love and tenderness. “God loves the poor, and thus surely he must love those who love and serve them. When we also love someone, we love his friends and servants. The little Company of the Mission strives to serve the poor tenderly. God loves them so much, and so we have reason to hope that because of them God will love us as well. We then have, my brothers, a new reason to serve them. We should seek out the poorest and most abandoned. We must recognize before God that they are our lords and masters, and that we are unworthy to render them our small favors.”⁴⁸ What comes to mind is the third notion of power as solidarity. Beyond ‘power over’ which Vincent acutely analyzed and responded to, or ‘power to’ whose sources of resistance he powerfully deployed, the feminist sensibility of a ‘power with’ — one that nurtures and cares, one that empowers and connects — is quite alive in Vincent. “When we go to the poor,” he tells the missionaries, “we should so identify with them that we share their sufferings.... We must open our hearts so that they become responsive to the sufferings and miseries of the neighbor.”⁴⁹ Such a spirit of compassion has to fill our hearts, our attitudes, our language, and lastly, our actions: “We must help them as much as we can to bring about a partial or complete end to their sufferings, for the hand must be directed as much as possible by the heart.”⁵⁰ Such a solidarity is not only ‘affective’ but also ‘effective’, to use one of Vincent’s famous distinctions.

⁴⁷ He wrote to the community of the Daughters of Charity in Valpuseaux: “That poor man came yesterday morning to collect his things at the door without either coming in or speaking to anyone except the porter. You can rest assured, Sisters, that you will never see him down there again with my consent; and if he is so unthinking as to go back, I ask you to let me know immediately so that I can see to his removal. I do not think he will ever come to see me again, for which I will be very grateful.” PIERRE COSTE (ed.), *Saint Vincent de Paul: Conférences, Entretiens, Documents*, Vol. V (Paris: 1920-1926), 594 quoted in THOMAS DAVITT, “Less Publicised Facets of Saint Vincent,” *Colloque* 17. Henceforth, SV.

⁴⁸ LOUIS ABELLY, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God*, Book III, 117.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 119.

4. Repercussions to Vincentian Mission and Formation

What follows are my initial attempts to enumerate some repercussions of the above reflections in contemporary Vincentian mission and formation. Far from being exhaustive, these reflections are provisional.

4.1. *The Need for an Analytic of Power*

If charity is to be effective in socio-economic and political contexts as the theme of this whole Conference wants us to consider,⁵¹ then, it is in need of a viable analytic of power. Socio-political contexts are so charged with power that, without a practicable framework to analyze these dynamics, we will end up with ‘pious’ works without real impact in society or ideologically motivated programs that ironically end up oppressing the poor whom we intend to help in the first place. A well-grounded and, hopefully, effective response can only come from a realistic assessment of the situation. In his work for the poor, Vincent did not have just the bible in hand and a good heart. He had all the analytical resources that came from his experience and his knowledge of human nature but also advice coming from all persons whom he thinks can be of help. Furthermore, society has quite changed from the reign of Louis XIII to the present reign of global capitalism. If there is anything significant, the mechanisms of oppression and exclusion have become more systematic and flexible. All the more should the analytic of power becomes necessary.

What are the characteristics of such an analytic? (1) First, it needs to be responsive to the sensibilities of the poor. It should bear out an analysis from the perspective of the victims of the system. Those holding political and economic power have their own analysis; the IMF-World Bank also presents another; as well as those who make ‘culture’ their main business (media moguls, lifestyle gurus, fashion designers, etc.). Our analysis should have a specific bias — not the bias of the powerful but of those excluded from power. The bottom-line question is: “What do the poor say when we analyze society this way? Is this their perspective as well?” (2) Second, the analytical framework needs to be critical. Since we intend to unmask the complex mechanisms of power, the analytic must be judicious and critical. (3) Third, it must be scientific. We need all the resources that the present human and social sciences can give us in order to understand poverty, the systemic mechanism of exclusion that causes

⁵¹ See Call for Papers to the Indonesian Joint Meeting.

it, uncover its hidden dynamics, and search for more effective ways towards helping the victims. (4) It must also be effective and practicable. Our analytic of power should not stop on the level of analysis (and paralysis). It should also provide a way to think of practical actions in order to alleviate the suffering of the victims. The poor are not so much interested in our theoretical discourses. They always ask the practical question: “So, what shall we do now?”

What consequences have this practical analytic to our way of dealing with those in power? For one, it is about time to do away with a simplistic reply common among Vincentians: that we should make the poor and the rich come together — so that the rich may share their abundance with the poor and the poor become rich in the eyes of God! As we have seen, it is not that simple. On the one hand, sharing out of one’s abundance can sometimes be a legitimization of a mechanism that keeps the poor at their places and poses permanent hindrance for their liberation. It can serve as an act of ‘sprinkling holy water’ on their injustices, to use a phrase from Marx. On the other hand, we have also seen that the poor are not ‘saints’. Critical analysis of power makes us see where in society God already works and where the Good News still needs to be preached.

4.2. Openness to Multiple Responses

As we have seen, Vincent was open to multiple and flexible responses. He can talk with the King or prostrate in front of the Queen or her Ministers. If these do not work, he can tell them directly to resign since they are the root of the problem or write them letters suggesting courses of action that can pacify or mitigate the impact of their presence. In all these multiple lines of actions, there was just one guiding principle: the response should be able to help alleviate the suffering of the poor.

This tells us that it is salutary to integrate helpful aspects from different, even opposite perspectives. One does not have to rely on one direction alone. The Spirit of God blows where S/he wills. Some recent frameworks of social analysis — either from the left or the right — have become quite dogmatic and doctrinaire. When theories and systems become fixed, they will become idols. Idols demand unquestioning obedience and wholehearted worship. Such uncritical stance has produced the Gulag or Auschwitz, Cambodian killing fields and Philippine Martial Law, the 9/11 event and ‘axis of evil’ discourse. ‘Flexibility’ has always been a crucial political virtue — and a Vincentian virtue as well.

4.3. *The Centrality of the Concrete Person*

Beyond all efforts to come to a practical and strategic analysis, what still proves crucial to Vincent is the concrete human person in front of him — his/her actual needs, his/her specific concerns. All theories must be able to advance the well-being of the concrete person. This is the lacuna of Foucault's analysis. Even as he is sensitive to macro-micro dynamics of the hegemonic system, he also neglects the fact that there are relatively free agents — concrete persons — who can exert some acts of resistance. This point challenges us to put a concrete face to our analysis. A concrete name, a concrete need, a concrete face is always a reliable check on the effectiveness of our analysis.

For all his many works — from the world of the court to ecclesiastical circles, from visiting his foundations in far-flung places to taking care of the Daughters or the confreres — Vincent never failed to do one crucial thing. He made it a point to personally serve or have some time to listen to the raw complaints or actual stories of poor persons in the gates of Saint Lazare every time he comes home from a trip. For him, the concrete person is the endpoint of all our strivings. There is one side-note that catches my attention in Roman's biography of St. Vincent. After having convinced the Ladies of Charity that the work of the Foundlings had to continue, the Daughters had to distribute them to the houses of different foster mothers all over Paris since they could not be accommodated in one house. Louise de Marillac, who was directly in-charge, kept a register of the different placements of children. And Roman wrote: "Vincent checked this register and (a touching detail) signed it with his own hand."⁵² This means that Vincent did know where each individual child went, who the foster mothers were, and their concrete whereabouts. It was a 'detail' but it was crucial for him. Vincent did not serve the 'universal poor' or an 'abstract humanity'. Each concrete child, each concrete beggar, the concrete sick person — was the reason to all his numerous undertakings.

4.4. *The Reality of Power and the Formation of our Candidates*

There are two things I want to stress with regard to the issue of power in the formation of our candidates. First, our students need to be acquainted with recent trends in social analysis and apply them to their contexts. They need to be critical to the social, economic,

⁵² JOSÉ MARÍA ROMÁN, *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, 489.

political and cultural movements of our times and how these impact on their lives and those of the poor. They need to be taught how to read newspapers or listen to TV news critically. We should not only train seminarians to faithfully read their breviaries and pray their rosaries. For, as we have seen, even religion and spirituality can become institutions of hegemonic oppression. The dominant power is so inventive that it penetrates all aspects of contemporary life. And if we listen to St. Vincent, charity (that is, political charity) — if it is to counter such a flexible oppressive machine — it also needs to be inventive unto infinity.

Beyond critical social analysis, however, there is also a need to learn how to discern power at work in our own lives. It is only when one is self-reflective that s/he can critically discern the power dynamics at work outside, i.e., in the socio-political spheres. A famous psychologist, Rollo May,⁵³ outlines five levels of power at work in the life of a person: (1) 'exploitative power': a type of power as force which is resorted to in extreme inequality between two peoples or groups; (2) manipulative power: a desire to control beyond brute force and is done through manipulation, exploitation or trickery; (3) competitive power: impulse to either crush the opponent or excel in one's potential, thus, it is ambivalent; (4) nutrient power: power used for the benefit of the other though not to one's equal; (5) integrative power: a power with the other person as equal, one which is characterized by mutuality and respect. Formators shall help the students to discern their location in the above continuum of power leading them out of their experience of exploitative compulsions towards nurturing and integrative power or, to go back to our framework, from the ambivalent fields of 'power over' to the empowering horizons of 'power with'.

⁵³ ROLLO MAY, *Power and Innocence* (New York: Norton, 1972).

STUDY

350th Anniversary of the Delivery of the Common Rules

The Spirituality of Work According to Saint Vincent de Paul

by José Ignacio Fernández H. de Mendoza, C.M.

“HE DISTRIBUTED THE BOOK OF OUR RULES”

On May 17, 1658, Vincent de Paul spoke before the community of Saint Lazare about the observance of the Common Rules. After stating with great emotion the motives and means to put them into practice, he reminded the missionaries that, in imitation of Jesus Christ who began to do before he taught, the Company had observed these rules for thirty three years (1625-1658). The Saint, not being able to contain his sentiments, manifested before the community his personal convictions, those proper to a man of faith, about the origin of the Rules. They must be attributed to God, and only to God. They were being pieced together, one after another in the measure that new situations required. Finally it seemed appropriate to have them written down and distributed to the members of the Community. The event occurred, as has been said, May 17, 1658. It has been three and a half centuries since then. In May 2008 we celebrate the 350th anniversary of this solemn act. Those who recount the event say that those who heard San Vincent “were not able to contain their tears and they felt diverse movements of joy in their souls” (SVPEs XI, 331).

The Common Rules contain the fundamental directives of Saint Vincent, referring to the life of perfection of the missionaries. They

have had a determining repercussion on the life of the Congregation for three and a half centuries (1658-2008). Today we find them printed in the same volume as the Constitution and Statutes of the Congregation. They lack judicial value, but in the 21st century they continue to be a place of reference for the sons of Saint Vincent.

**“WORKS DIRECTED TO THE SALVATION OF THE NEIGHBOR”
(CR I, 1)**

The Common Rules are comprised of twelve chapters, each one with a distinct nature. Reading them carefully, we observe here and there the diverse ministries of the missionaries. At no time did Saint Vincent pretend to name all of the activities or ministries that in 1658 were carried out by the missionaries, much less put down in the Common Rules detailed reference to the occupations of the missionaries. To get to know them better, we have other writings of the founder: conferences, letters, prayer repetitions and rules. Truthfully for one reason or another there are numerous works mentioned within the texts of the Common Rules. The catalogue is extensive. The Congregation of the Mission proposes to imitate Christ “in the works directed towards the salvation of our neighbor... to preach the good news of salvation to poor people, especially in rural areas [and] to help seminarians and priests to grow in knowledge and virtue so that they can be effective in their ministry” (CR I, 1). What is stated refers to the general program of the Company, in order to achieve its own goal: to follow Jesus Christ evangelizer of the poor.

It is a function of the clerics “to travel through the towns and villages breaking the bread of the divine Word by preaching and catechizing” (CR I, 2). They are equally responsible to hear general confessions, settle disputes, establish the confraternity of charity, staff the external seminaries, give retreats, convoke conferences for the priests in their homes and perform other activities in conformity with the works enumerated. “The lay members help in these ministries like Martha” (CR I, 2).

We have before us a very complete design of the activity of the missionaries. But not all is said. In the following line the Saint will tell us that the Spirit of Jesus Christ shines through us in “the love for the sick,” in the missions and other activities (CR I, 3). “We will practice indifference including in the way we direct, teach and preach” (CR II, 11); poverty and chastity are to be practiced before all, “in our works and in the missions” (CR III, 2; CR IV, 1). Avoid idleness; mother of all vices, “always making good use of his time” (CR IV, 5).

Chapter VI is rich in allusions to a specific activity: the attention given to the sick of the house and those outside. It is concretized in visits to them and in the corporal and spiritual help given. There must be great efforts made “to found and visit the confraternities of charity” (CR VI, 1). It is the duty of the missionaries “to encourage others to receive and participate frequently in the sacraments of penance and the Eucharist” (CR X, 6). In Chapter X, Saint Vincent limits the penance of his priests because of “the continuous work of the missionaries” (CR X, 15). Following this he talks about another ministry: “Catechize the poor, especially the beggars, whenever the occasion presents itself” (CR X, 20). It will be in the following chapter that he will talk about the missions and other ministries of the Congregation in favor of our neighbors. We limit ourselves in enumerating the diverse activities that are mentioned here: spiritual direction, missions and retreats (CR XI, 2.5.6.7), preaching, catechism, hearing confessions and resolving disputes (CR XI, 3.4.8). The ministry of the missions must be the first and principal work for our neighbor (CR XI, 10); we must also “direct the Daughters of Charity” (CR XI, 11). We must not disregard many other activities: “In our homes with the external ecclesiastics, especially those who are to be ordained and the seminarians, and with those who make retreats” (CR XI, 12).

In Chapter XII, Saint Vincent offers some considerations in carrying out assertively some of the ministries mentioned beforehand: intention of pleasing God alone (CR XII, 2), never be dominated by vanity if our results are obvious, nor distressed if they turn out wrong (CR XII, 3); always be simple in the missions, in preaching, catechism and services to the clergy (CR XII, 5.6). A decisive point is the one which Saint Vincent reiterates often: it is bad to have the “undisciplined craving for learning,” but students “are not to neglect, because of this, their dedication to the studies necessary in order to carry out properly the activities of a missionary” (CR XII, 8).

One must be attentive to two vices that threaten us. The first one is the spirit of laziness that, according to Saint Vincent, leads us to search for comfort and the extreme care of our health, to the detriment of an interest in work. The second is an exaggerated zeal that places the person at the border of emptiness and cause them to act harshly towards themselves and towards others (CR XII, 11).

When he was finishing the text for the Common Rules, Saint Vincent reminds us of the five virtues which “make up the spirit of the Mission” (CR XII, 12). The missionaries will appreciate them, but “overall in the exercising of our ministries” (CR XII, 12). The founder

wants missionaries who are given to their works, to certain ministries, to the established order and true to the mission of the Company.

The Common Rules state, as we have seen, the path on which day by day the activities will make their way for the members of the Congregation.

VINCENT DE PAUL: TIRELESS WORKER

An example is worth more than a hundred sermons. Vincent de Paul spoke on diverse occasions before people, in and out of the community about work. But his words were consistent with his personal example. He was a man fully given to his work: “Let us love God, my brothers, love God, but with the strength of our arms” (SV XI, 40). “Some are happy enough talking to God in their prayers, but when it comes to work for God, of suffering, and mortification of instructing the poor... all falls down and their strength is gone. Let us not lie to ourselves. *Totum opus nostrum in operatione consistit*” (SV XI, 41-42). He expressed his convictions about work with authority because he did more than what he said. There were no empty spaces in his agenda.

The first biographers, as well as the recent ones, tell us of Saint Vincent's occupations: the list is broad. We give, in a brief synthesis, the general lines of his occupations. He was the Superior General of the Mission and responsible for Saint Lazare. He followed day to day the formation of his missionaries, paying particular attention to his major work, the Mission. He did the same in relation to the Daughters of Charity: founding, orientation and spiritual formation. He followed step by step the evolution of the new Company. On the other hand, he assumed responsibilities related to new lay groups: Ladies of Charity and the Confraternity of Charity. He dedicated time to the clergy with the Tuesday conferences and retreats for those to be ordained. He did all of the above mentioned without leaving other occupations: services to the nuns of the Visitation, the council of conscience, chaplain to the galleys, help in devastated regions and missions in the towns in which he participated well into his later years. These and other activities kept him fully employed. During the thirty years that he lived at Saint Lazare, he rose at four in the morning and went to bed at nine in the evening, after working ten to twelve hours. He dedicated many hours to correspondence — about thirty thousand letters to diverse addressees — and to the preparation of speeches to various groups: Daughters of Charity, missions, clergy and laity.

An incentive to personally work and at the same time to teach about this to his followers, he used, on the one hand, a saying from Mr. Duval: a priest must have more work that he can accomplish (SV X, 202) and on the other hand the example of the laziness of the religious and the idleness of the clerics of the epoch. The mendicant orders had lost their proper spirit, converting the petition of alms to a pretext to live at the expense of the work of others. Even in the Mission there were some backsliders in carrying out some of the works begun by the Founder: "It might happen that after my death some spirits of contradiction and easy-going confreres may say: Why should I take care of those hospitals? How can I take care of those people ruined by war...? ... some may criticize these works" (SV XII, 89-90).

Vincent de Paul, moved at seeing the poverty of his contemporaries, started many works in favor of the poor. Vincent counted on collaboration with other persons such as missionaries, Daughters of Charity and laity. It has been said that it is easier to do work on your own than to involve others but this is not the case for Saint Vincent. He personally worked hard and successfully involved many others in being fully committed in this noble enterprise.

A SIGNIFICATIVE CONTRIBUTION

We have said repeatedly that Saint Vincent was not a systematic theologian. This was not what he pretended to do and he did not give any doctrinal treaty elaborated to perfection. This does not mean that his contributions, in what refers to our reflection about work, can be called insignificant. We can say, to start with, that in his writings, his speeches and his practical work we can always find a place for it. He was personally, as it was said, an untiring worker and he was surrounded by men and women workers. He fed the spirituality of his missioners by frequently alluding to the obligation and the grandeur of work. More so, he supported his convictions in this respect on the firm base of the divine revelation: the creative activity of God, the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, and the responsible collaboration of humanity.

Vincent de Paul knew the theological reflection of his time about work. Without being original, he offered us some orientations that were specific and valuable. Whoever goes to the biography of the Saint and consults the passages that refer to work will be pleasantly surprised. He did not limit himself to a certain school or system, but knowing them, he elaborated and gave a synthesis with his own color, a synthesis constructed upon materials taken from the Holy

Scripture, theological tradition and an “in situ” reading of the signs of the times, the poor in particular, who had to be liberated in their corporal and spiritual needs, culminating in this way the creating work of God and liberating gesture of the incarnate Son of God. As long as there are poor, both things are incomplete. For the poor, it is worthwhile to start the task, to eliminate all that obscures the creative and redemptive work of God.

FUNDAMENTAL INDICATIONS

The Common Rules of the Mission contain, as we have said, an extensive catalogue of the activities proper to the missionaries although they are not rich in commentaries about human work in itself. What refers to work is found in the letters and conferences to the missionaries and the Daughters of Charity. Among the testimony preserved, one is more noticeable, by its length, solidity and reasoning: the conference given on November 28, 1649 to the Daughters of Charity. Its title is “*On the love of work.*” Gleaning here and there, we can see some pointers that the saint makes with major emphasis. What he deals with are the powerful, thoughts about the meaning of work and the obligation to work.

GOD HAS NOT SPENT “A SINGLE MOMENT WITHOUT WORKING”

Vincent de Paul took advantage of the theological conclusions in reference to work from humanity, shaped by the long Church tradition. However what was received from other hands, provides a step forward in order to give a solid foundation to his personal convictions about work. With this purpose he turned to, among other things, the word of God, where he found valuable paradigms, and was able to extract practical conclusions.

In the founding bull for the Congregation, he reminds us “that we are bound to honor the mystery of the Trinity” (CR X, 2). From the mystery of the Trinity he is going to take in this case, a life lesson: “God himself worked continuously, continuously He has worked and works. God works through all eternity within himself for the eternal generation of his Son, which will never cease to engender. The Father and the Son have never ceased in their dialogue, and that mutual love has produced eternally the Holy Spirit, through which they have, are and will distribute all of the graces to humanity” (SV IX, 489).

Vincent de Paul directs, in this case, his vision toward the transcendence of the God, One and Triune. In remembering the

explanations he had heard in the classroom about the inter-Trinitarian relation, he extracts the first conclusion: in imitation of God, that is God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and who works in his being, we are compelled to work with the sweat of our brows.

The founder of the Mission continues his discourse: “*God works, also, outside of Himself in the creation and preservation of this great universe, in the movements of the heavens, in the influences of the stars, in the productions of land and sea, in the nature of the atmosphere, in the regulation of the seasons and in all that beautiful order which we observe in nature, and which would be destroyed and would return to nothing, if God was not constantly guiding it*” (SV IX, 489). Vincent de Paul calls, in the next moment, to God the creator, and following the established theological guidelines, also conserver. God does not stop taking part in the work realized by his hands. God is involved continuously in sustaining it. God is present in the history and the outcome of the events. The project that God created and maintained is unfolded here among us. From what is said we can extract a lesson: collaborate like good workers in the procreative work of God: “*Humanity created in the image of God, through his work, participates in the creative work of God*” (*Laborem exercens*, 25). Human work here finds its reason for being.

Vincent de Paul, who has looked upon the creative God, offers us new shades of meaning: “*In addition to this general work, God works with each individual, with the draftsman in his workshop, with the woman in her housework, with the ant, with the bee, to do their collecting, and He does so constantly and continually. And why does He work?... for us*” (SV IX, 489). In other words, humanity collaborates in the transformation of the work created by God and it is in this collaboration that we find the dignity and authentic meaning of work. The Second Vatican Council teaches us: “*Humanity with its works develops the work of its creator, serves the good of its brethren and personally contributes in the carrying out of God’s design in history*” (*G. et S.*, 34). The Vincentian thought coincides, then, with the conciliar teaching. Let Vincent be the one to conclude this section “*how reasonable it is, that we, God’s creatures, should work, as He has said, in the sweat of our brows!*” (SV IX, 490).

“WHAT DID OUR LORD DO WHILE HE LIVED ON EARTH?”

The “*imitatio Christi*” occupies a central place in the Vincentian spirituality. The language of the founder in this respect is multiform: to follow and imitate Jesus Christ, to conform our sentiments to his, to work as our Lord worked, Jesus Christ is the invisible frame to

which we have to form our actions. The resources in the following of Jesus Christ are many: in the virtues, sufferings, work, through which path life and Christian behavior, as Vincent tells us, gain meaning and security.

“What did Our Lord do while he lived on earth.... He led two lives on earth. One, from his birth until His thirtieth year of age, during which he worked with the sweat from his divine brow to make a living. His trade was that of carpenter; he carried the hod and served as an unskilled laborer and as bricklayer. From morning till night he worked in his youth and continued until his death.... The other stage of the life of Jesus Christ is from the age of thirty until his death. During these three years what did he not work at day and night, preaching at times now in the temple, at other times in a small town, without rest, to convert the world and win over souls for God his Father?” (SV IX, 491-492) Vincent de Paul, in consonance with the life of the Son of God on earth, after contemplating his holy humanity, extracts another practical conclusion: Christ, the working man, asks that we be the same. In this respect he will say: this is the behavior of the Son of God; “we see him living by the work of his hands and in the lowliest and most arduous occupation in the world. And we, wretched, miserable creatures, are we going to be useless?” (SV IX, 492) we must share “in imitating the conduct of our Lord on earth; and earning a living in this manner, without wasting time, to earn a living as our Lord did” (SV IX, 492). On January 5, 1964, Paul VI left us, in Nazareth near the house of the carpenter, this message: “We want to greet all of the workers of the world and to offer the great model, our divine brother, the defender of all the just causes, in other words, Christ, our Lord.” In summary, human work contains a positive value in supporting the life of Jesus Christ the worker.

“HE USED DAY AND NIGHT TO DO WHAT HE NEEDED TO DO, ASKING NOTHING FROM ANY ONE”

A frequent resource for Saint Vincent was the example of Jesus Christ and the group formed by the persons that surrounded him during all his life in this world: Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, the holy women, the apostles and Paul of Tarsus. All of them form a theophanic picture that must be an obligatory reference: “We must work to imitate our Lord, his holy mother and Saint Joseph who worked all of their lives” (SV IX, 485).

Vincent de Paul had measured without a doubt, the reach of the biblical indications about Saint Paul the worker: “For we did not

act in a disorderly way among you, nor did we eat food received free from anyone, but day and night through hardships and fatigue, we worked so that we would not be a burden to any of you” (2 Thessalonians 3:7-8); Paul was housed in the home of Aquila and Priscilla “and since he practiced the same trade, he stayed with them and worked for them. They were tentmakers by trade” (Acts 18:3); “you know that these hands provided for my needs and those of my companions” (Acts 20:34).

In the prior reflection made by the Church about human work, the example of Saint Paul, just as they are presented in the passages just mentioned, has occupied a preferential place; it has been an obligated place of reference in dealing with this subject. Saint Vincent is not an exception. He is in tune with the example and the teachings of the Apostle of the people: “Saint Paul, the great apostle, the man full of God, the elected vessel, earned his living by working with his hands; in the midst of his heavy labors, of his important ministries, of his continual preaching. He took time, day and night, to be self-sufficient so as not to have to ask anything from anyone” (SV IX, 492-493). Saint Paul concludes his discourse about his condition as a worker with an invitation: to these “we recommend and exhort, in the name of Lord Jesus Christ, to work quietly and to eat their own food” (2 Thessalonians 3:12). Taking this for granted, Vincent de Paul also asked of his followers that they, following the example of Saint Paul, value the work for their own good and for all others: “Who would not be full of shame at such an example?” (SV IX, 493).

WORK: HUMANITY’S VOCATION

The life and the teachings of Saint Vincent have little to do with a pessimistic vision of work in itself. According to the founder of the Mission the person who works rejoices in honor. In general terms his valuation of human work is high. God mandated humankind to make a living “by the sweat of their brows” (SV IX, 486). It deals with an “express mandate God gave humankind.... So specific that no one can be exempted from it” (SV IX, 487). This mandate does not seem to be a punishment or malediction on God’s part. It has to be considered for what it is, a fundamental human vocation: the work realized by humanity “to reach better life conditions, considered in itself, responds to the will of God” (*Gaudium et Spes*, 34). On the other hand, because of sin “work serves us as a penance by the fatigue it causes the body” (SV IX, 487); “*the farmer we see behind the plow tilling the soil and producing the grain that will feed people, fulfills this*

commandment, for their bodies suffer from it and toil at it with the result that sweat often pours from their faces" (SV IX, 487); *O God, "what a lesson you give us in the farmers of the field, the artisans in the city, the soldiers who go to war! They work unceasingly and suffer greatly for things that perish with them"* (SV VIII, 112). Certainly work has its limitations, for example, the inadequacy existing between the efforts and the results, the logic of the permanent obligation and the fatigue inherent in human activity. That fatigue offers humanity the possibility of participating in the paschal mystery: "Supporting the fatigue of work in union with Christ crucified for us, humanity collaborates in a certain way, with the Son of God in the redemption of humanity" (*Laborem exercens*, 27).

OTHER VINCENTIAN CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT WORK

You Will Work with Your Knowledge and the Strength of Your Arms

In Greek society not all human activities were considered equally dignified. Reason, culture and the marketplace had priority before the work that was proper to the artisan. Intellectual work prevailed over manual work. This hierarchy of the human activity has influenced Christian thought, even though the biblical concept of work was adapted to other measures. All work has identical dignity. There are no reasons to undervalue corporal work or to overvalue the activities of the spirit. Vincent de Paul considers all activities as equally dignified "You will work not only with your mind, but also with your hands, with your arms and your entire body, and will work so hard that sweat will fall from your brow" (SV IX, 487).

Work in the Service of the Community

The theological reflection about work has definitively reclaimed one aspect, which is recognized by the ecclesial magisterium. Human activity unfolds fraternally for help and promotion in support of the community. Saint Vincent will say: "*Thirdly, you must do it with the thought that you are working in the service of the neighbor, which is so cherished by God, that he considers as done for him, whatever is done for the relief of others*" (SV IX, 497). This aspect of work is the one most sought out by Vincentian spirituality. The goal for Vincent de Paul for the groups which he founded coincides at a central point: we exist and are for others and in particular, for the poor. Everything moves around this principle: people, time, work, ministries and goods.

An example taken from nature illustrates what we say: “The ant is such a little creature to which *God has given such foresight, that it takes to the community all that it can accumulate in the summer and in the harvest time*” (SV IX, 488); “*the bees do the same during the summer. They store up the honey, gathered from the flowers, so they can live on it during the winter and, like the ants, they bring it also to the community*” (SV IX, 489). “*And if the bees do this, as we have said before, by gathering the honey from the flowers and taking it to the beehives for the nourishment of the others, why are you, who must be heavenly bees, not going to do it?*” (SV IX, 490). The thinking of Saint Vincent coincides with recent directives of the magisterium: “Work seems to multiply the patrimony of all the human family, for all of the people who work in the world” (*Laborem exercens*, 10). Through work, the individual personally realizes himself, is integrated in society and shares bread with others around the common table.

Work in not an Absolute Value

Human beings have suffered in relation to work in two temptations. At times it has idolized it; people have exalted production and competition to the point of desiring success and money over all other good things. On occasions they have converted it into the undeniable center of life, the supreme value. Work, instead of being a means, became a goal itself.

The word of God dismantles this fallacy. God created the world in six days and on the seventh day He rested. It is said that work does not represent the totality of human life. Jesus, on the other hand, in the parable of the rich man (Luke 12:13-21) puts the overvaluation of human work into perspective. Neither work nor production is capable of guaranteeing life. Vincent de Paul moves in this same direction: “I am sure, Father, that you are suffering from having been deprived for such a long time of doing the principal works of the company; but, aside from the fact that you do them in part, in so far as you are serving souls for eternity and are showing priests how they should act, by the virtues you practice, you *also have the means of honoring the inactivity of Our Lord by not forging ahead — I mean with all your zeal — in the enormous tasks of apostolic workers*” (SV VII, 489). In similar terms John Paul II expresses himself, “humanity must imitate God in work and in rest, as God has desired also to present his own creation under the form of work and rest” (*Laborem exercens*, 25).

The second temptation invites us to underestimate work, to accept it with resignation, as something lacking in meaning. Saint Vincent

de Paul finds himself at odds with this version. Frequently and energetically he comments in his speeches about the vice of idleness: *"I confess that idleness can be a frequent stumbling block and that missionaries more than any other person in the world must avoid it, because they are made for work"* (SV VII, 488-489); to the lazy person, *"they will be pleased to sit close to the fire or not move very far from it"* (SV IX, 463). Effectively those who underestimate work, impede the circulation of the divine mandate: "You will eat your bread in the sweat of your brow" (Gen 3:19) and cut off the creative capacity that God has given us.

The gospel of Matthew reminds us that the owner of the vineyard went out to hire workers and said "why do you stand here all day idle?" (Mt 20:6-7). In the vineyard, it is the same now as it was before, there is always work. The poor of the world are legion. This is motive enough to accept the universal law of working together. It is ours.

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ÉTUDE

350^{ème} Anniversaire de la remise des Règles Communes

Spiritualité du travail d'après Saint Vincent de Paul

par José Ignacio Fernández H. de Mendoza, C.M.

« IL LEUR DISTRIBUA LE LIVRE DE NOS RÈGLES »

Le 17 mai 1858, Vincent de Paul disserta devant la communauté de Saint Lazare au sujet de l'observance des Règles Communes. Après avoir exposé, non sans émotion, les motifs et les moyens de les mettre en pratique, il rappela aux missionnaires que, tout comme Jésus-Christ qui commença par agir avant d'enseigner, la Compagnie avait observé ces Règles pendant trente-trois ans (1625-1658). Le Saint, ne pouvant retenir ses sentiments, manifesta devant la communauté ses convictions personnelles, celles d'un homme de foi, au sujet des origines des Règles Communes. Elles doivent être attribuées à Dieu et seulement à lui. Elles avaient été composées l'une après l'autre au fur et à mesure que les nouvelles situations l'exigeaient. Finalement, il avait semblé opportun de les mettre par écrit et de les distribuer aux membres de la Compagnie. Ce qui fut fait, comme nous l'avons déjà signalé, le 17 mai 1658. Il y a donc ni plus ni moins trois siècles et demi. En mai 2008, nous fêterons les 350 ans de cet acte solennel. Les récits de l'époque racontent que lors d'une telle occasion, beaucoup de ceux qui étaient présents en entendant Saint Vincent « *ne purent contenir leurs larmes et tous sentirent en leurs âmes différents mouvements de joie* » (XII, 13).

Les Règles Communes contiennent les directives fondamentales de saint Vincent, en lien avec la vie de perfection de ses missionnaires. Elles ont eu une répercussion déterminante sur la vie de la Congrégation de la Mission pendant trois siècles et demi (1658-2008). Aujourd'hui, elles sont imprimées dans le même volume que les Constitutions et les Statuts de la Congrégation. Elles n'ont pas de valeur juridique, mais au 21^{ème} siècle, elles continuent d'être un lieu de référence pour les fils de Saint Vincent.

« EMPLOIS POUR LE SALUT DU PROCHAIN » (RC I, 1)

Les Règles Communes comprennent douze chapitres, avec des contenus très différents les uns des autres. Par une lecture minutieuse, nous observons que par ci par là affleurent les divers ministères des missionnaires. À aucun moment, dans les Règles Communes, Saint Vincent n'a prétendu nommer toutes les activités ou ministères que les missionnaires faisaient en 1658, ni même faire apparaître les petits détails en lien avec les occupations des siens. Pour mieux les connaître, nous disposons d'autres écrits du fondateur : conférences, lettres, répétitions d'oraison et règlements. Ce qui est certain, c'est que pour un motif ou un autre, les occupations des siens mentionnées dans les Règles Communes sont nombreuses. Le catalogue est vaste. La Congrégation de la Mission se propose d'imiter le Christ « à l'égard de ses emplois pour le salut du prochain », « de prêcher l'évangile aux pauvres, particulièrement à ceux de la campagne » et « d'aider les ecclésiastiques à acquérir les sciences et les vertus nécessaires à leur état » (RC I, 1). Ce qui précède concerne le programme général de la Compagnie, en lien avec sa fin propre : suivre Jésus Christ, évangéliste des pauvres.

Les prêtres se doivent « d'aller, à l'exemple de Notre-Seigneur et de ses disciples, par les villages et bourgades, et y rompre le pain de la parole de Dieu aux petits, en prêchant et catéchant » (RC I, 2). Ils doivent aussi entendre des confessions générales, régler des litiges, donner les exercices spirituels, faire et diriger les conférences pour les ecclésiastiques dans nos maisons et d'autres activités conformes aux travaux énumérés. Quant aux laïques, « leur emploi est d'aider les ecclésiastiques en tous ces ministères, en faisant l'office de Marthe » (RC I, 2).

Nous avons déjà devant nous une ébauche assez complète des activités des missionnaires. Mais tout n'est pas dit. Rapidement, le Saint va nous dire que l'esprit de Jésus Christ brille en nous « dans sa charité envers les malades », « dans ses missions et autres emplois envers les peuples » (RC I, 3). Il faut pratiquer l'indifférence même dans la façon « de diriger, d'enseigner, de prêcher » (RC II, 11) ; la pauvreté et

la chasteté doivent être mises en pratique avant tout dans « *nos emplois dans les missions* » (RC III, 2 ; RC IV, 1). Nous éviterons la paresse, qui est la mère de tous les vices « *en étant trouvés toujours utilement occupé* » (RC IV, 5).

Le chapitre VI est riche en allusions à une activité particulière : l'attention aux malades de la maison et de l'extérieur. Elle se concrétise dans la visite et les aides corporelles et spirituelles. On prendra « *un grand soin d'établir et de visiter la Confrérie de la charité* » (RC VI, I). C'est aux missionnaires qu'il revient « *d'exhorter les autres à recevoir dignement et souvent les sacrements de Pénitence et de l'Eucharistie* » (RC X, 6). Au chapitre X, Saint Vincent limite les pénitences des siens à cause des « *continuels travaux des missionnaires* » et des « *grandes occupations* » (RC X, 15). Immédiatement, il signale un autre ministère : « *Catéchiser les pauvres, surtout les mendiants, lorsque la commodité s'en présentera* » (RC X, 20). C'est dans le chapitre suivant qu'il va parler des missions et des autres fonctions de la Congrégation envers le prochain. Ici, nous nous limitons à énumérer les diverses activités ici mentionnées : direction spirituelle, missions et exercices (RC XI, 2.5.6.7), prédication, catéchèse, confessions et résolution des conflits (RC XI, 3.4.8). Le ministère des missions doit être pour nous la première et principale fonction envers le prochain (RC XI, 10) ; nous devons aussi « *conduire les Filles de la communauté de la Charité* » (RC XI, 11). Les autres activités ne devront pas pour autant être négligées : « *En la maison à l'égard des ecclésiastiques externes, particulièrement des ordinands et des séminaristes comme aussi à l'égard des autres que nous conduisons dans la retraite spirituelle* » (RC XI, 12).

Au chapitre XII, Saint Vincent offrent certaines considérations pour mener à bien et avec justesse les ministères précédemment mentionnés : intention de plaire à Dieu (RC XII, 2), n'être jamais dominés par la vanité si les résultats sont manifestes, ni angoissés si le résultat est mauvais (RC XII, 3) ; toujours simples dans les missions, prédications, catéchèse et services aux ecclésiastiques (RC XII, 5.6). Il y a ensuite un point décisif souligné par saint Vincent : même si l'« *avidité immodérée de savoir* » est mauvaise, les étudiants « *ne laisseront pas néanmoins de vaquer soigneusement à l'étude des choses nécessaires pour se bien acquitter des fonctions d'un missionnaire* » (RC XII, 8).

Il faut prêter une attention particulière à deux vices qui peuvent nous guetter. Le premier est l'esprit de paresse qui, d'après saint Vincent, est une recherche de commodités et la conservation à outrance de son propre corps, au détriment d'un intérêt pour le travail. Le deuxième est le zèle indiscret qui avant ou après met les personnes

au bord du vide et les rend trop rigides envers eux-mêmes ou envers les autres (RC XII, 11).

Au moment de terminer la rédaction des Règles Communes, Saint Vincent a rappelé que les cinq vertus « *composent l'esprit de la Mission* » (RC XII, 12). Les missionnaires les apprécieront toujours, mais « *plus particulièrement lorsque le temps est venu d'exercer nos fonctions* » (RC XII, 12). Le fondateur veut des missionnaires tout donnés à leur travail, à certains ministères, en lieu constant avec la mission propre de la Compagnie.

Les Règles Communes signalent, comme nous venons de le voir, le rythme par lequel, jour après jour, se dérouleront les activités des membres de la Congrégation.

VINCENT DE PAUL, TRAVAILLEUR INFATIGABLE

Un exemple vaut mieux que cent sermons. Vincent de Paul a parlé à plusieurs reprises du travail devant des personnes de sa communauté ou extérieures à elle. Mais ses paroles allaient de paire avec son exemple personnel. Ce fut un homme tout donné au travail : « *Aimons Dieu, mes frères, aimons Dieu, mais que ce soit aux dépens de nos bras* » (SV XI, 40). Certains sont heureux de parler à Dieu dans l'oraison, mais « *est-il question de travailler pour Dieu, de souffrir, de se mortifier, d'instruire les pauvres... hélas ! il n'y a plus personne, le courage leur manque. Non, non, ne nous trompons pas : Totum opus nostrum in operatione consistit* » (SV XI, 40-41). Il exposait ses convictions sur le travail avec autorité parce qu'il agissait plus qu'il ne disait. Dans son agenda, il n'y avait pas d'endroits laissés blancs.

Les biographes anciens et récents nous rendent compte des occupations de saint Vincent, la liste est longue. Signalons, en une brève synthèse, les lignes maîtresses de ses occupations. Il a été supérieur général de la Congrégation de la Mission et premier responsable de saint Lazare. Jour après jour, il a suivi la formation des siens, en prêtant une particulière attention à son œuvre préférée : la Mission. On peut dire la même chose en ce qui concerne les Filles de la Charité : fondation, orientations et formation spirituelle. Il a suivi pas à pas l'évolution de la nouvelle Compagnie. D'autre part, il a assumé des responsabilités en lien avec les nouveaux groupes de laïques : Dames de la Charité et confréries de la charité. Il a pris du temps pour les ecclésiastiques : conférences du mardi et exercices aux futurs ordonnés. Il a fait tout ce qui précède sans mettre de côté d'autres occupations : services aux Sœurs de la Visitation, conseil de conscience, aumônier des galériens, aides aux régions dévastées et missions auprès du peuple auxquelles il participa jusqu'à un âge avancé.

Ces activités et d'autres l'obligèrent à se donner à fond. Pendant les trente années passées à saint Lazare, il se levait à quatre heures et se couchait à neuf heures du soir, après avoir travaillé de dix à douze heures. Il a passé un temps considérable à écrire sa correspondance, environ trente mille lettres destinées à des destinataires très variés et la préparation d'allocutions à différents collectifs : Filles de la Charité, missions, ecclésiastiques et laïcs.

Un stimulant pour travailler personnellement et instruire les siens sur le sujet fut d'une part ce que disait M. Duval : « *Un ecclésiastique doit avoir plus de besogne qu'il n'en peut faire* » (SV XI, 202) et d'autre part la légèreté des religieux fainéants et des prêtres oisifs de l'époque. Les ordres mendiants avaient perdu leur esprit propre, transformant la quête d'aumônes en un prétexte pour vivre aux dépens du travail des autres. Plus encore, au sein même de la Mission, certains faisaient marche arrière au moment de gérer certaines œuvres commencées par le Fondateur : « *Il pourra donc arriver après ma mort des esprits de contradiction et des personnes lâches qui diront : "A quel propos s'embarrasser du soin de ces hôpitaux ? Quel moyen d'assister tant de gens ruinés par les guerres ?..."* ». Il y en aura qui contrediront ces œuvres, n'en doutez pas » (SV XII, 89-90).

Vincent de Paul, ému de constater la pauvreté de ses contemporains, a entrepris un nombre très important d'œuvres en faveur des pauvres, en comptant sur la collaboration d'autres personnes, missionnaires, Filles de la Charité et laïcs. On a dit que parfois, il est plus facile de faire les choses soi-même que d'impliquer les autres. Ce n'est pas le cas de saint Vincent. Il a travaillé dur personnellement, permettant que beaucoup d'autres s'investissent eux aussi pleinement dans d'aussi nobles tâches.

UN APPORT SIGNIFICATIF

Nous avons répété à satiété que saint Vincent n'a pas été un théologien systématique, qu'il n'a jamais prétendu l'être et qu'il ne nous a pas laissé de traité doctrinal élaboré à la perfection. Ce qui ne veut pas dire que ses apports concernant une réflexion sur le travail soient insignifiants. Pour commencer, nous pouvons dire que dans ses écrits, allocutions et dans sa vie pratique, le travail s'est toujours trouvé en bonne position. Personnellement, il fut un travailleur infatigable et il s'est toujours entouré d'hommes et de femmes travailleurs. Il a nourri la spiritualité des siens par de fréquentes allusions à l'obligation et à la grandeur du travail. De plus, il a appuyé ses convictions à ce sujet sur la base solide de la révélation divine : l'activité créatrice de Dieu, l'œuvre rédemptrice de Jésus-Christ et, bien sûr, la collaboration responsable de l'homme.

Vincent de Paul connaissait la réflexion théologique de son époque concernant le travail. Sans être original, il nous a offert des orientations entièrement caractéristiques et de valeur. Celui qui parcourra la biographie du saint et consultera les passages de ses écrits concernant le travail sera agréablement surpris. Il ne s'est pas enfermé dans une école unique ou un système mais, tout en les connaissant, il a élaboré et nous a offert une synthèse à la couleur particulière. Une synthèse construite avec des matériaux pris dans la sainte écriture, la tradition théologique et la lecture sur place des signes des temps, en particulier la situation des pauvres, qu'il voulait libérer de leurs manques corporels et spirituels, faisant ainsi culminer l'œuvre créatrice de Dieu et l'œuvre libératrice du Fils de Dieu Incarné. Tant qu'il y aura des pauvres l'une et l'autre resteront inachevées. Pour les pauvres, il vaut la peine de mettre la main à la pâte pour faire disparaître tout ce qui enlaidit le projet créateur et rédempteur de Dieu.

INDICATIONS FONDAMENTALES

Les Règles Communes de la Mission contiennent, comme cela a déjà été dit, un grand catalogue des activités propres aux Missionnaires. Cependant, elles ne sont pas très riches en commentaires au sujet du travail en lui-même. Ce qui concerne la réflexion sur le travail est exposé dans les lettres et conférences aux missionnaires et aux Filles de la Charité. Parmi les divers témoignages, la conférence du 28 novembre 1649 aux Filles de la Charité ressort davantage par sa longueur, et la solidité de son argumentation. Elle a pour titre : « Sur l'amour du travail ». En piochant par ci par là, il nous est possible de signaler quelques points sur lesquels le saint insiste tout particulièrement. Ce sont les lignes forces qui nourrissent sa réflexion sur le sens du travail et l'obligation de travailler.

DIEU « N'A JAMAIS ÉTÉ UN MOMENT SANS AGIR »

Vincent de Paul a profité des conclusions théologiques concernant le travail humain, inscrites dans la longue tradition de l'Église. En plus de ce qu'il a reçu de mains étrangères, il a fait un pas de plus pour donner des fondements solides à ses convictions personnelles sur le travail. Pour en arriver là, il a fait appel, entre autres, à la Parole de Dieu, dans laquelle il a trouvé de solides exemples pour en extraire des conclusions pratiques.

Dans la bulle de fondation de la Congrégation, il nous rappelle que « nous devons honorer, d'une façon toute particulière, les ineffables mystères de la Très Sainte Trinité » (RC X, 2). De ce mystère de la

Trinité, il va tirer une leçon de vie : « *C'est que Dieu lui-même travaille incessamment, incessamment a travaillé et travaillera. Il travaille de toute éternité au dedans de lui-même par la génération éternelle de son Fils, qu'il ne cessera jamais d'engendrer. Le Père et le Fils n'ont jamais cessé de s'entretenir, et cet amour mutuel a éternellement produit le Saint-Esprit, par lequel toutes les grâces ont été, sont et seront distribuées aux hommes* » (SV IX, 489).

Dans ce cas précis, Vincent de Paul tourne son regard vers le domaine de la transcendance du Dieu Un et Trine. Du souvenir des explications des relations intra trinitaires qu'il avait entendues dans les cours de théologie, il fait ressortir une première conclusion : à l'imitation de Dieu, qui est Père, Fils et Esprit Saint, et qui travaille en lui-même, nous aussi, nous devons travailler à la sueur de notre front.

Le Fondateur de la Mission continue son discours : « *Dieu travaille encore hors de lui-même à la production et conservation de ce grand univers, aux mouvements des cieux, aux influences des astres, aux productions de la terre et de la mer, au tempérament de l'air, aux régléments des saisons et à tout ce bel ordre que nous voyons dans la nature, qui serait détruit et retournerait au néant si Dieu n'y tenait la main sans cesse* » (SV IX, 489). Dans un deuxième temps, Vincent de Paul a recours au Dieu créateur et, en accord avec les règles théologiques en vigueur, au Dieu fidèle. Dieu ne se désintéresse pas de l'œuvre réalisée par ses mains. Il s'y implique à fond en la nourrissant continuellement. Il est présent dans l'histoire et dans le devenir des événements. Le projet créateur et nourrissant de Dieu se déploie ici même entre nous. De ce qui vient d'être dit, nous pouvons tirer une leçon : collaborer comme de bons ouvriers à l'œuvre créatrice de Dieu : « L'homme, créé à l'image de Dieu, participe par son travail à l'œuvre du Créateur » (*Laborem exercens*, 25). Le travail des hommes trouve ici sa raison d'être.

Vincent de Paul, qui a posé ses yeux sur le Dieu créateur, nous offre de nouvelles nuances : « *Outre ce travail général, il travaille avec chaque particulier, il travaille avec l'artisan en sa boutique, avec la femme dans son ménage avec la fourmi, avec l'abeille, pour faire leurs cueillettes et cela incessamment et sans discontinuation. Et pourquoi travaille-t-il ? Pour l'homme* » (SV IX, 489). En d'autres termes, l'homme collabore à la transformation de l'œuvre créée par Dieu et c'est dans cette collaboration que se trouve la dignité et le sens authentique du travail. Le Concile Vatican II nous enseigne : « Ces hommes et ces femmes qui, tout en gagnant leur vie et celle de leur famille, mènent leurs activités de manière à bien servir la société, sont fondés à voir dans leur travail un prolongement de l'œuvre du Créateur, un service de leurs frères, un apport personnel à la réalisation du plan providentiel dans l'histoire » (GS 34). La pensée vincen-

tienne coïncide ainsi avec l'enseignement du Concile. Laissons Saint Vincent terminer ce paragraphe : « *Combien est-il plus raisonnable que nous, qui sommes ses créatures, travaillions, comme il a dit, à la sueur de nos visages !* » (SV IX, 490).

« QU'A FAIT NOTRE SEIGNEUR PENDANT QU'IL A VÉCU SUR LA TERRE ? »

L'« imitation du Christ » occupe une place centrale dans la spiritualité vincentienne. Le langage du fondateur dans ce sens est multiforme : suivre et imiter Jésus Christ, conformer nos sentiments aux siens, agir comme notre Seigneur agissait, Jésus Christ est le tableau invisible sur lequel nous devons former toutes nos actions. L'allusion à la suite du Christ en toute chose est fréquente : dans les vertus, souffrances, travail... D'après saint Vincent, par ce chemin, la vie et les comportements du chrétien prennent sens et sont pleins de sûreté.

« *Qu'a fait Notre-Seigneur pendant qu'il a vécu sur la terre ? Il a mené deux vies sur terre. L'une depuis sa naissance jusqu'à trente ans, pendant laquelle il travailla à la sueur de son divin visage pour gagner sa vie. Le métier de charpentier fut le sien, il porta la hotte et servit de manœuvre et d'aide-maçon. Du matin au soir il fut dans le travail dès sa jeunesse, et il continua jusqu'à la mort... L'autre état de la vie de Jésus-Christ sur terre est depuis l'âge de trente ans jusqu'à sa mort. Pendant ces trois ans que n'a-t-il point fait de jour et de nuit, allant prêcher tantôt au temple, tantôt dans une bourgade, sans discontinuation, pour convertir le monde et gagner les âmes à Dieu son Père ?* » (SV IX, 491-492). Vincent de Paul, en accord avec la vie du Fils de Dieu sur la terre, après avoir contemplé sa sainte humanité, en déduit, une nouvelle fois, une conclusion pratique : Le Christ, cet homme travailleur, nous demande à nous aussi de l'être. Il dira à ce sujet : voilà le comportement du Fils de Dieu « *Nous le voyons vivre du labeur de ses mains et dans le plus bas et pénible emploi du monde ; et nous, chétifs et misérables, nous serions inutiles !* » (SV IX, 492)... ainsi, nous devons « *imiter la conduite de Notre-Seigneur sur terre ; et gagner sa vie de cette sorte, sans perdre de temps, car c'est la gagner comme Notre-Seigneur la gagnait* » (SV IX, 492). Le 5 janvier 1964, à Nazareth, près de la maison du charpentier, Paul VI nous a laissé ce message : « Enfin, nous voulons saluer ici les travailleurs du monde entier et leur donner en exemple le grand modèle, le frère divin, le défenseur de toutes les causes justes, c'est-à-dire le Christ notre Seigneur ». En résumé, le travail humain renferme une valeur positive puisqu'il reproduit la vie de Jésus Christ travailleur.

« IL PRENAIT DU TEMPS, OU DE JOUR OU DE NUIT, POUR SE SUFFIRE ET NE DEMANDER RIEN A PERSONNE »

Saint Vincent fait souvent appel à l'exemple de Jésus-Christ et à la constellation formée par les personnes qui l'entourèrent pendant sa vie en ce monde : Marie, Joseph, Jean-Baptiste, les saintes femmes, les apôtres et Paul de Tarse. Ils forment tous un tableau théophanique à qui il faut obligatoirement s'en remettre : nous devons travailler « *pour imiter Notre-Seigneur, sa sainte Mère et saint Joseph, lesquels ont travaillé durant toute leur vie* » (SV IX, 485).

Vincent de Paul avait sans aucun doute mesuré l'importance des indications bibliques concernant Saint Paul le travailleur : « Nous n'avons pas vécu parmi vous d'une manière désordonnée ; nous n'avons demandé à personne de nous donner le pain que nous avons mangé, mais, dans la peine et la fatigue, de nuit et de jour, nous avons travaillé pour n'être à la charge d'aucun de vous » (2 Th 3, 7-8) ; Paul a vécu chez Priscille et Aquilas « et, comme il avait le même métier — c'était des fabricants de tentes — il s'installa chez eux et il y travaillait » (Ac 18, 3) ; « Les mains que voici, vous le savez vous-mêmes, ont pourvu à mes besoins et à ceux de mes compagnons » (Ac 20, 34).

Dans la réflexion postérieure de l'Église sur le travail humain, l'exemple de saint Paul, tel que le présentent les passages cités, a occupé une place de choix et est devenu une référence obligatoire pour parler de cette thématique. Saint Vincent n'est pas une exception. Il est en plein accord avec l'exemple et les enseignements de l'Apôtre des Gentils : « *Saint Paul, ce grand apôtre, cet homme tout divin, ce vaisseau d'élection, gagna sa vie du travail de ses mains ; au milieu de ses grands travaux, de ses grandes charges, de ses prédications continuelles, il prenait du temps, ou de jour ou de nuit, pour se suffire et ne demander rien à personne* » (SV IX, 492-493). Saint Paul termine son discours sur la condition du travailleur par une invitation : « A ces gens-là, nous adressons, dans le Seigneur Jésus Christ, cet ordre et cette exhortation : qu'ils travaillent dans le calme et qu'ils mangent le pain qu'ils auront eux-mêmes gagné » (2 Th 3, 12). Bien évidemment, Vincent de Paul, demande aussi aux siens qu'à l'exemple de saint Paul, ils considèrent le travail comme un bien pour eux et pour les autres : « *Qui ne rougira de confusion d'un tel exemple ?* » (SV IX, 493).

LE TRAVAIL : VOCATION DE L'HOMME

La vie et l'enseignement de Vincent de Paul n'a pas grand-chose à voir avec une conception pessimiste du travail en tant que tel. D'après le fondateur de la Mission, la personne qui travaille jouit d'une certaine honorabilité. D'une manière générale, son appréciation du travail humain est hautement positive. Dieu a demandé à l'homme de « *gagner sa vie à la sueur de son visage* » (SV IX, 486). Il s'agit d'un « *commandement si exprès qu'il n'y a point d'homme qui s'en puisse exempter* » (SV IX, 487). Ce commandement ne ressemble en rien à un châtement ou une malédiction de la part de Dieu. Il doit être considéré comme ce qu'il est, une vocation fondamentale de l'homme : le travail réalisé par les hommes « pour améliorer leurs conditions de vie, correspond au dessein de Dieu » (G.S. 34). Cependant, à cause du péché, le « *travail nous sert à faire pénitence par la peine qu'il cause au corps* » (SV IX, 487) ; « *Le laboureur que nous voyons aller à la charrue pour cultiver la terre et y faire venir le grain pour la nourriture des hommes satisfait à ce commandement, car son corps en souffre et y peine, en sorte que la sueur lui tombe souvent du visage* » (SV IX, 487) ; « *Mon Dieu, quelle leçon nous faites-vous par les laboureurs des champs, les artisans des villes et les soldats qui vont à la guerre ! Ils travaillent sans cesse et souffrent beaucoup pour des choses qui périssent avec eux* » (SV VIII, 112). Il est vrai que le travail a aussi des limites, par exemple, l'inadéquation entre l'effort et les résultats, la logique d'un côté obligatoire permanent et la fatigue inhérente à l'activité humaine. Cette fatigue offre à l'homme la possibilité de participer au mystère pascal. « En supportant la peine du travail en union avec le Christ crucifié pour nous, l'homme collabore en quelque manière avec le Fils de Dieu à la rédemption de l'humanité » (*Laborem exercens*, 27).

AUTRES CONSIDÉRATIONS SUR LE TRAVAIL

Tu travailleras avec ton intelligence et tes bras

Dans la société grecque, toutes les activités humaines n'étaient pas considérées comme ayant la même dignité. Le Logos, la culture et l'agora avaient priorité sur les activités propres aux artisans. Le travail intellectuel prévalait sur le travail manuel. Cette hiérarchisation de l'activité humaine a eu de l'influence sur la pensée chrétienne. Cependant, la conception biblique du travail s'ajuste à d'autres paramètres. Tous les travaux jouissent d'une identique dignité. Il n'y a pas de motifs pour dévaloriser le travail corporel et survaloriser les activités de l'esprit. Vincent de Paul considèrent toutes les activités avec

une égale dignité : « *Tu travailleras non seulement de ton industrie, mais de tes mains, de tes bras et de tout ton corps, et tu travailleras avec telle activité que la sueur t'en tombe du front* » (SV IX, 487).

Travail au service de la communauté

La réflexion théologique sur le travail a définitivement retrouvé un statut, aujourd'hui reconnu par le magistère. L'activité humaine se déploie en vue de l'aide fraternelle et la promotion en faveur de la communauté. Saint Vincent dira : « *En troisième lieu, il le faut faire en pensant que vous travaillez pour le service du prochain, qui est si cher à Dieu qu'il estime fait à lui-même ce que l'on fait pour le soulagement d'autrui* » (SV IX, 497). Ce statut du travail est le plus reconnu dans la spiritualité vincentienne. Le but que Vincent de Paul signale aux groupes qu'il a fondés converge vers un seul point central : nous existons et nous sommes pour les autres et, en particulier, pour les pauvres. Tout s'articule autour de ce principe : les personnes, le temps, les œuvres, les ministères et les biens.

Un exemple pris de la nature illustre tout ce que nous disons : « *La fourmi, c'est un petit animal à qui Dieu a donné une telle prévoyance que tout ce qu'elle peut amasser pour l'hiver durant l'été et le temps de la moisson, elle le porte à la communauté* » (SV IX, 488) ; « *Les mouches à miel font de même durant l'été. Elles font leur provision du miel qu'elles recueillent sur les fleurs, pour vivre durant l'hiver, et le portent, comme les fourmis à la communauté* » (SV IX, 489). « *Si les abeilles le font, comme déjà nous avons dit, cueillant le miel sur les fleurs et le portant à la ruche pour la nourriture des autres, pourquoi vous, qui devez être comme des abeilles toutes célestes, ne le feriez-vous pas ?* » (SV IX, 495). La pensée de Vincent de Paul correspond aux directives récentes du magistère : « *Le travail sert à multiplier le patrimoine de toute la famille humaine, de tous les hommes vivant dans le monde* » (*Laborem exercens*, 10). Par le travail, l'individu se réalise personnellement, il s'intègre à la société et partage le pain avec les autres autour de la table commune.

Le travail n'est pas une valeur absolue

Dans sa relation au travail, l'être humain a connu deux tentations. Parfois, il l'a idolâtré, il a exalté la production et la compétitivité, au point de désirer le succès et l'argent au-delà de tout autre bien. En d'autres occasions, il l'a transformé en centre unique et indiscutable de la vie, en une valeur suprême. Le travail a cessé d'être un moyen, il est devenu une fin en lui-même.

La Parole de Dieu démontre cet égarement. Dieu a créé le monde en six jours et le septième jour, il s'est reposé. Ce qui veut dire que le travail ne représente pas la totalité de la vie humaine. Pour sa part, Jésus, dans parabole du riche insensé (Lc 12, 13-21) relativise la survalorisation du travail humain. Ni le travail, ni la production ne sont capables de garantir la vie. Vincent de Paul va dans le même sens : « *Je ne doute pas, Monsieur, que vous ne souffriez de la peine d'être si longtemps privé des principales fonctions de la compagnie ; mais, outre que vous les exercez en partie, en tant que vous servez les âmes pour l'éternité et faites voir aux ecclésiastiques comment ils doivent être faits, par les vertus que vous pratiquez, vous avez aussi moyen d'honorer le non-faire de Notre-Seigneur en ce que vous ne voguez pas à pleine voile, je veux dire de tout votre zèle, dans les vastes occupations des ouvriers apostoliques* » (SV VII, 489). Jean-Paul II ne dit pas autre chose : « L'homme doit imiter Dieu lorsqu'il travaille comme lorsqu'il se repose, étant donné que Dieu lui-même a voulu lui présenter son œuvre créatrice sous la forme du travail et sous celle du repos » (*Laborem exercens*, 25).

La deuxième tentation invite l'homme à mépriser le travail, à l'accepter par résignation, comme une charge qui n'aurait pas de sens. Vincent de Paul est aux antipodes de cette version. Fréquemment et avec beaucoup d'énergie il parle dans ses conférences du vice de la paresse : « *J'avoue que l'oisiveté est souvent une pierre d'achoppement et que les missionnaires la doivent éviter plus que toutes les personnes du monde, puisqu'ils sont faits pour le travail* » (SV VII, 488-489). La personne paresseuse « *sera bien aise de ne bouger d'auprès du feu, au moins de ne s'en guère éloigner* » (SV IX, 463). En effet, celui qui méprise le travail va à l'encontre du commandement divin : « Tu mangeras ton pain à la sueur de ton visage » (Gn 3, 19) et diminue la capacité créatrice que Dieu a offert à l'homme.

L'Évangile de Matthieu nous rappelle que le propriétaire de la vigne est sorti pour embaucher des ouvriers et leur a dit : « Pourquoi êtes vous restés là, tout le jour, sans travail ? » (Mt 20, 6-7). Dans la vigne, celle d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, le travail ne manque pas. Les pauvres du monde sont légion. Voilà un motif supplémentaire pour accepter la loi universelle du travail sur ce front commun qui est le nôtre.