

COLLOQUE

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Contents

Editorial	310
Sermon in St Peter's, Phibsboro, on Feast of St Vincent, 1990 <i>J Loftus</i>	311
St Vincent and the Enneagramme: Another View <i>A McGing</i>	314
A Synod Experience <i>R McCullen</i>	325
St Louise de Marillac in her Letters and Other Writings <i>T Davitt</i>	333
The Poor in Luke's Gospel <i>M Prior</i>	349
Forum	
The Pilgrimage of Solidarity to Tobar an Ailt – a Personal Reflection <i>J Loftus</i>	370
Planctus for the Dooleyites <i>J H Murphy</i>	372
Miscellanea	
Archdeacon Murphy and St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork <i>T Davitt</i>	376

Editorial

The Enneagramme has already been used in COLLOQUE to try understand St Vincent's personality better. This issue carries what Aidan McGing calls "another view".

Michael Prior in his second article moves from looking, from the point of view of a scripture scholar, at Lk 4:18 to an exploration of the theme throughout Luke's gospel.

Our Superior General was elected to participate in the 1990 Synod and contributes his personal reflections on that event.

12 August 1991 will be the four hundredth anniversary of the birth of Louise de Marillac and this issue commemorates this by an article portraying her as she appears in her writings.

Fr Tom Dougan died while this issue was with the printer; his obituary will appear in the Autumn issue.

Sermon in St Peter's, Phibsboro, on Feast of St Vincent 1990.

Joseph Loftus

One night we were sitting in a trailer in south County Dublin. We had just finished a mass and I was quietly delighted about how well it went. All of a sudden a travelling woman began to talk, and out of her flowed a whole flood of resentments, bitterness and a sense of grievance about her treatment as a travelling woman. She had been refused in shops, followed by store detectives in supermarkets where she had shopped for twelve years, belittled before she had ever done anything wrong. This was the reality of being pushed to the edges of our society and I had nothing to say to that woman. "Good news to the poor, indeed". I felt very small that evening. I had gone to that site thinking I was doing something for the poor, and discovered that I didn't have a clue. I have thought often about that evening ever since, and it reminded me of a saying of my old Primary School teacher when someone was being over-fussy about their belongings. She used to say: "Put it in a glass case and throw sugar at it".

I began to realise that, for me, St Vincent had been confined to a glass case and his feast-day had become an annual sugar-throwing exercise. I say this because, compared to the real St Vincent, my glass case St Vincent has become sterile and un-threatening. He is admired, certainly, but from a safe distance where he can be invoked, but only on my terms. In a glass case he is not patron of all works of charity but, instead, he has become an icon to some sort of charitable status quo. I can impose on him my own interpretation of his insights. I can piously rattle off the profound quotes and use them to support my own particular view of the poor, who *they* are and what can be done for *them*. Locked in his glass case Vincent can be a traditionalist or a radical, he can be a distributor of bread or of prayer cards. In his name people can put up the barricades of the revolution, or defend the existing order. In his glass case Vincent is safe. When I look on him I can be encouraged to do what I was going to do anyway. He has become a justification for my own actions, not an inspiration to a more complete following of Christ. In his glass case Vincent is a gong booming with my enthusiasm

of the moment, not the bearer of Good News to the Poor.

Released from his glass case St Vincent is a much more complicated fellow; he won't fit neatly into any category. He is the friend of the poor, but the confidant of a queen; he is a dedicated organiser for material aid, but insists that the reason for doing it is to save souls. He is the one who demands an hour's daily prayer from his priests, but tells the sisters to leave mass itself if the needs of the poor demand it. St Vincent de Paul was not from a very noble family, nor did he have an impressive beginning. He was a career priest, who wanted a nice parish; one which would let him live in the manner to which he wanted to become accustomed. He wasn't a bad priest, but he was no great shakes either. Along the way he came in contact with the suffering people of France. Eventually he reached a point of no return. He decided that to follow Christ he had to devote his whole life to the needs of the poor, both spiritual and physical.

Locked in his glass case Vincent is a saint who met a poor family and "bingo" is transformed by the experience. Released from it he is the shy, over-serious, teacher of a wealthy family who slowly and painfully discovered what service of the poor meant. Locked in his glass case Vincent becomes a sentimental grand-uncle with children clinging to his coat-tails; released from it, he is a person who has to struggle with his stubbornness, his pride and even his temper, in order to keep the poor at the centre of his life and not just objects of his charity. While he is in the glass case you can throw sugar at Vincent and go off about your business. Release him, and he might just throw it back at you!

The fact of the matter is, I am afraid of St Vincent de Paul. If I had a genuine regard for him he might be able to keep me silent when I want to speak out, bring me to prayer when I want to do something more "useful". He might insist that people in need might be approached with love, not just as a crusade. If St Vincent could change the lives of Louise de Marillac, Frederic Ozanam and countless other men and women, maybe he might just change my life too. That sort of talk is dangerous talk; far better to begin another endless armchair discussion on "Who are the poor?"

Those are the two Vincents I bring to this feast. One is a Vincent I know too well, the other is a Vincent I would like to know a lot better. I have been reflecting on them for the past year. It has been a confusing time, a challenging time and a time of deep questioning. It makes me very uncertain about suggesting anything to people who are already living the Vincentian ideal. There is one thing I can say, and it is this: The journey must begin here, at the altar. What we receive here is

the core of what we take to those most in need. You may have to take money with you as well, but that is not why you are there. You are there to share together the fruits of the altar, Jesus Christ. Then come back to the altar to give thanks to God for any good that may have been done, and to be refreshed for the next time you go out to those in need. In this way maybe someone will be able to say of you, as they did of St Vincent: "How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him [or her] who brings good news to the poor" (cf Is 52:7, 61:1).

St Vincent and the Enneagramme: Another View(1)

Aidan McGing

Experience has shown that ... personalities ... may be grouped into various major categories, and for purposes of studying them this is a helpful device. Classifications must never be taken too seriously – they ruin much thinking – but the fear to use them has prevented much more serious thinking.

Karl A Menninger: *The Human Mind*(2)

Every year in the western world commercial and industrial enterprises and the military spend great amounts of time and money investigating the personalities of their members. They have many reasons for doing this, but all depart from the assumption that these personality descriptions are accurate, that they really unveil the different ways in which people behave, and also *why* they behave differently. Among these personality descriptions is the Enneagramme.

The Enneagramme

The Enneagramme, as many readers of COLLOQUE are aware, is a psychological system which claims that there are nine basic types of human personality, each type based on the most fundamental need of that personality. One personality type, for instance, according to the theory, has the need to enjoy life, another has the need to be a leader, and so on. Of course the matter is more complex than this. We all have subpersonalities, so that the leader will at times be the enjoyer, and the enjoyer at times will be the leader. And then the human person is so complicated that no scheme can hope to capture it adequately.

This being said, the theory still insists that there are only nine basic personality types and, no matter how complex we are, the basic personality permeates all our behaviour. So, for instance, the leadership traits of the leader type will influence all his behaviour no matter what he is doing. To know a person's personality type helps us to understand him

more deeply. Behaviour which was formerly baffling and contradictory now begins to appear logical, while strengths and weaknesses are seen to be closely related to each other.

Many years ago I “did” the Enneagramme and found my personality type. At the time I regarded it all as little more than a parlour game, but last summer I was drawn back to the Enneagramme again. This time, after an inner struggle, I was able to recognise and accept the darker side of my personality, which the Enneagramme portrayed so realistically. It was a moment of great enlightenment. I was hooked, and wondered whether the Enneagramme had anything to say about Vincent.

The nine personalities are known by their numbers, not by names, to emphasise that all the personalities are intrinsically equal. If they were given names, some might sound more desirable than others. All are equal, it just depends on what we and the grace of God do with the personalities given us. There are saints and sinners in every group, but the saints in one group will differ from those in another group, and so will the sinners. It is true that some commentators on the Enneagramme give names to the different personalities (e.g. The Leader, The Artist, etc) but this is a later development. Some commentators assign totem animals to the groups to illustrate their typical behaviour. If the reader reflects that my own personality, at least in its worse moments, is represented by the terrier snapping at people’s heels, he will realise how accurate the system is.

The Enneagramme asserts that each of the nine basic personalities depends on the most fundamental need of each personality; hence it recognises nine fundamental human needs, the dominant need in each case influencing the whole personality.

What are these needs (sometimes called centres of energy, because they motivate the person so profoundly)? It would take us too far afield, and be wearisome to the reader, to explain all the needs and their variations, so I will simply explain the needs (centres of energy) of personalities 2 and 3 (“Twos” and “Threes”), which I believe are the most relevant to our discussion.

The basic need of Twos is to love and be loved. “Healthy” or “redeemed” Twos, that is, Twos at their best, love other people unselfishly, without any thought of reward. According as they are more “unhealthy” they use this love of others to manipulate them and gain power over them. They serve in order to control. The indispensable secretary is a classic example.

The basic need of Threes is to be admired for their efficiency and

proWess. Healthy Threes are supremely self-confident, so that they can achieve great things with their talents and receive a lot of admiration. In less healthy Threes the desire for admiration rather than sound self-esteem becomes predominant. Alex, in the comic strip in the London *Independent* is a good example.

Further reflections on the Enneagramme

I must emphasise that the above descriptions of Twos and Threes are simplifications to the point of caricature. Commentaries on the Enneagramme, for those who care to follow them, fill out these observations with great subtlety and insight.(3)

I should also explain that within each personality type there is a continuum from the very healthy “redeemed” persons, who transcend themselves (are unselfish), and are moved by a healthy love of themselves and of others and, if believers, of God. The further down the continuum people find themselves the more self-centred, less integrated, more prey to inner conflicts they become, finally moving into neurosis and even crime.

Most of us in fact move up and down the continuum in our behaviour. In our good moments we tend to the healthy end of the continuum, and in our bad moments we tend to inner conflicts and neurosis; we haven’t “got it together”, whether from stress or ill health or overpowering emotions, etc. We can probably all identify with Bonhoeffer’s soliloquy in prison as he asked himself:

Who am I? This or the other?

Am I one person today, and tomorrow another?

Am I both at once? (4)

If my reader objects that human beings are too complex to be categorised neatly under nine personalities, I agree. These categories cannot totally reflect the existential complexity of human beings, but they really do offer precious clues as to how and why people act, and they explain how their behaviour is unexpectedly consistent. A map is a very simplified reflection of the countryside or city streets which it represents. The reality must be far more complicated, and we are often surprised, on coming to a new area, to find how different it is from what we had imagined on looking at the map. Yet the map remains our indispensable guide. So it can be with the Enneagramme, a guide which leads us to richer realities. Of course, the same is true of other

personality descriptions, but here we are confining ourselves to the Enneagramme.

St Vincent and the Enneagramme

And so to St Vincent. Can we assign him to one of the nine personalities? I believe we can, and I also believe that the exercise throws considerable light on his character. If we look carefully through the nine types it seems to me that there are only two possibilities: Vincent is a Two or a Three. Stan Brindley believes he is a Three; I rather believe he is a Two. There is a significant convergence between us because, in fact, the personalities tend to merge into their neighbouring personalities. That is to say, there are affinities between a One and a Two, between a Two and a Three, and so on. Hence, while some Twos are very “pure” types, others will shade off into One or Three, displaying character traits from One or Three. The fact that one of us holds for Two and the other for Three suggests that Vincent may be on the border between the two types.

The situation then is that Stan believes Vincent to be a Three. I incline to think he is a Two, with strong traits of Three. Let us look at the evidence. As we do so, and as we begin to see the difference between Twos and Threes, I believe we will learn quite a lot about our founder.

The first principle must be that a saint, supremely unselfish, with a strong experience of being loved by God, loving God and his fellow men, and himself (Mt 22:36-39) must be at the upper end of the continuum. He will be emotionally healthy and highly integrated, whatever human weaknesses he still displays. Hence, to locate Vincent *after his conversion* we must look at the Twos and Threes as they behave in their perfection, not in their weakness at the lower end of the continuum.

At this stage also let us remind ourselves that, according to the theory of the Enneagramme, the central drive of Twos is the desire to love and be loved. That is their centre of energy. At their best they love unselfishly, but as they move down the continuum they love rather to get love in return, or even to manipulate and gain power over others.

In order to test, then, the hypothesis that Vincent is a healthy Two let us see how Don Riso in his commentary on the Enneagramme characterises healthy Twos:

At their best, healthy Twos are amazingly unselfish and altruistic, able to offer others a truly unconditional, continual love, with no

strings attached. Their unconditional love allows Twos to love without concern for themselves, and without necessarily being loved in return ...

Their attitude is that good is to be done, no matter who does it or who gets the credit for it. Very healthy Twos are not angry if someone else takes credit for something they have done. Good was done, other people have benefitted, and that is all that matters. (Riso, *op. cit.*, pp 55-56).

Compare Common Rules 12:10:

All of us should as well make a particular effort to repress the first feelings of envy which can arise when the reputation public estimation, and prominent works of other congregations are better than ours. We must definitely convince ourselves that it does not matter by whom Christ is preached, as long as he is preached, and that as much - sometimes even more - grace and merit come to us when we are pleased at other people's good work as would come if we had done it ourselves with self-congratulation or from a less worthy motive.

Some more quotations from Riso, with comments:

Their intentions and actions are purely directed towards the good of the other, with no ulterior motives. Their disinterest allows Twos to see the real needs of others clearly, without ego clouding the picture, (*op. cit.* p 56).

An apt description, surely, of Vincent's endless and *enlightened* efforts to help the neighbour.

The more revered they are the more humble they become. The more people give them in their lives, the less they want. The less they think about themselves, the more people love them. (*op. cit.* p 56).

Vincent was widely loved and became a folk hero in his own lifetime. At the same time his humility was profound and genuine, if at times strangely expressed. The theme of humility occurs repeatedly in the Common Rules, and the desire not to call attention to ourselves remains part of our charism.

Emotionally attuned to other people, they [Twos] are the most empathetic of the personality types. Empathy is the quality of being able to feel with another person, to experience his or her feelings as if they were your own. Being highly empathetic, healthy Twos are able to put themselves in the place of others, feeling compassion and concern. They have the strength to empathize with those who suffer ... (*op. cit.* pp 56-57).

Vincent continually in his letters and elsewhere expressed his sorrow for the plight of the galley-slaves, the victims of war, soldiers, abandoned children, and sick confrères. He felt for them, and expressed his feelings openly in a way impossible, for instance, for St Ignatius who was a One, probably the most cerebral of all the nine personalities. Compare Vincent's injunction in the Common Rule to weep with those who weep, to rejoice with those who rejoice (2:12).

Moreover realizing that they sincerely care for others gives Twos an enormous amount of self-confidence, allowing them to venture where "angels fear to tread". Their confidence however is not primarily in themselves, but in the value of the goodness they so deeply believe in. (*op. cit.* p 57).

These words describe exactly the self-confidence of Vincent which enabled him to carry out such great works.

Healthy Twos like to express how much they like others. Their strong, positive feelings for others *naturally impel them into action* [italics mine]. Service therefore is the keynote at this stage, and healthy Twos become giving people who take great satisfaction in helping others in many tangible ways. They serve those who are in need and cannot take care of themselves, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, volunteering for philanthropic work, using whatever means are at their disposal to help others, (*op. cit.* p 58).

Could there be a clearer description of Vincent's activity? In this connection it is worth remembering that his visiting of the sick in the St John of God hospital in Paris was one of the turning points in his conversion.

Healthy Twos have uniformly good effects on people because

their love is so particular; they make others feel that someone really cares about what is best for them. (*op. cit.* p 58).

This must surely be the reason why Vincent had so many friends. Abelly, who knew him well, constantly refers to the friends he made. When Vincent fled from the De Gondi household in Paris to Châtillon it was only when the general finally sent his secretary, one of Vincent's closest friends, that the saint agreed to return. And, indeed, one gets the impression that he was on everybody's wavelength as soon as he met them. Finally:

In a word, they [Twos] are the embodiment of the ideal of *charity in action* [italics mine], (*op. cit.* p 59).

Is any comment necessary?

Had Vincent the defects of his personality?

On page 30 Riso describes the Two as “the Helper”, and states that the Two is caring, generous, possessive and manipulative. We can readily agree that Vincent was caring and generous, (I think particularly of the great numbers of retreatants he accepted at St Lazare at a time when he was pressed for money), but was he possessive and manipulative? Apart altogether from the Enneagramme it is an observed fact that generous people are often very possessive of those to whom they are generous, and very adept at manipulating them into submission, as if they needed a return for their generosity.

Let us remember first of all that these epithets, since they are negative, will apply primarily to Twos who are down the continuum, “average” or “unhealthy” Twos. These Twos are possessive because they no longer give love disinterestedly. They love in order to get love or even to gain control over the loved person as their reward. And as the desire to control others grows, affection may gradually be replaced by manipulation in order to acquire control. If Vincent was possessive and manipulative one would expect to see these traits before rather than after his conversion.

Possessiveness

We know very little of Vincent's early years, and I can think of no evidence of possessiveness in him early on. But even the most cursory reading of his correspondence will show the tight rein on which he kept his superiors. Perhaps he had not men of great calibre, perhaps he had had his disappointments; he was certainly influenced by the pessimism

of his age, and by the even tighter controls throughout French society, as the nation moved from the chaos of civil wars to become a highly centralised state. His contemporaries craved order at any price, and he had before his eyes the disorder which prevailed in many religious orders at the time. He was also acutely aware that he had to get it right for future generations. The Congregation was going to survive, and later generations would look back to the origins.

But when all that is said, does he show a certain possessiveness over his works which not all founders showed? Leonard Cheshire describes his own difficulties in letting go of the houses he founded:

We find it both difficult and painful to delegate day by day control of some activity for which we are responsible and which is of importance to us. If it is an undertaking that we ourselves have brought into being ... it may prove almost impossible to hand over the reins, because we tend to look upon our creation rather as we would our own child. We feel that a special relationship has been created, almost a mutual dependency, which we have no right to disturb.(5)

Does something of this appear in the attitude of Vincent to his superiors?

Manipulation

Early in his career Vincent manipulated the Vice-Legate quite shamelessly. Later on, after his conversion when he had moved up the continuum towards integration, there is no more manipulation. Instead, we find him exercising the most extraordinary ascendancy over others, not seeking his own advantage but making himself pleasing to all men, so that he might gain them to Christ (1 Cor 10:33). His tendency to manipulation, proper to unhealthy Twos, has been sublimated. He uses his powers no longer for himself but for God and his fellow men. Perhaps his continued emphasis on simplicity, the first of the five virtues of our state, was there because he was (subconsciously) afraid of falling back into manipulation.

Abelly tells a story about Vincent travelling in a coach with a bishop. As they travelled in silence the bishop said suddenly: "Would it not be a good idea to bring our ordinands together for a retreat before their ordination?" To which the saint replied: "Imagine such a sentiment coming from a bishop! This is a sign from God" (Livre I, ch XXV; pp 117-118, 1664 ed.). No doubt he had already planted the seed in the bishop's

mind, but when the bishop himself suggested it Vincent attributed the idea to him. It is worth remarking that one of Dale Carnegie's golden rules is to "let the other person feel that the idea is his or hers".(6) In fact I believe his masterpiece *How to Win Friends and Influence People* could be illustrated chapter by chapter from Vincent's behaviour. Was Vincent manipulating the bishop in this case? Since he was not doing it for himself (see the quotation from St Paul above) I do not believe he was, but the incident shows what a manipulator he could have been had he wished to use his powers for himself.

To summarise, then, I believe, without bending the evidence, that Vincent fits exactly into the Enneagramme as a Two personality, and a redeemed Two at that, with indications that he could potentially move down the continuum by being possessive and manipulative.

Disagreement over the diagnosis?

But is not this conclusion (that Vincent is a Two) vitiated by the fact that Stan Brindley believes he is a Three? Stan argues that Threes have a compulsion to avoid failure, and they therefore tend to be extremely efficient.(7) Vincent showed extraordinary efficiency (Stan's word) from the beginning, but after his conversion, although new power was flowing through him, he realised that all the praise should be given to God, so that he became a very humble man. Stan appears to be relying on Beesing, Nogosek and O'Leary, *op. cit.* pp 99-123.

Riso sees Threes slightly differently, positively rather than negatively, as people pursuing the need to be seen to succeed, rather than seeing them as avoiding failure. He sees them as status seekers, who tend to find fulfilment in what others think of them, and are therefore drawn to impress. At their best, according to Riso, "healthy" Threes learn to find their true worth in themselves, but *they always remain very other-oriented*. They have great self-assurance in dealing with others, and great political skill. People find them stimulating role models.

All this was certainly very true of Vincent after his conversion, so I believe with Stan that there were very strong elements of Three in him. My view is that the evidence I have adduced above from Riso (which could be corroborated from other writers) indicates that Vincent was primarily a Two, a man who overall lived to love other people gratuitously. This is confirmed, I believe, since he also shows traces of possessiveness and manipulation, which occur in Twos further down the continuum; a logical consequence because, according to the theory, Twos in so far as they deteriorate wish to possess those they love, and are willing to use manipulation for this end.

To conclude, then, I believe that Vincent was primarily a Two, bordering on Three (and here I agree with Stan). In the Enneagramme jargon that makes him a Two with a Three wing. These two components would explain both his extraordinary love of others (Two) and his undoubted energy and political skill (Three). Riso remarks that Twos with a Three wing are “charming, friendly, and outgoing ... There is a genuine warmth in people of this subtype, and the ability to communicate with warmth to others”, (*op. cit.* p 74). *This is exactly Vincent as we see him in his conferences.*

So, I would see Vincent primarily as a “healthy” and redeemed Two (the unselfish lover) with a strong dash of healthy Three (the outgoing politically aware person). I do, in fact, converge with Stan, if not totally.

Some readers, if they have got this far, may shake their heads and ask whether all the talk about personality types is simply another form of pelagianism; can it be true that the saints develop willy-nilly according to their fore-given personalities? I am afraid the answer seems to be “yes, that is the way they develop”. We have always said that grace perfects nature, and here is a case in point. The given personality is the material on which the Holy Spirit works. Ignatius, a One, remained cerebral and detached; Vincent, a Two, remained emotional. It is intriguing to reflect that Ignatius and Margaret Thatcher are in the same sub-type (Ones with a Nine wing), but how different are the motives and the inner world of each!

But psychology must remain subordinate. In the end, the revival of religious life will come only with the arrival of the new saints. We can see this in our own history, where the two families were founded by St Vincent and St Louise and were re-founded in the aura of St Catherine Laboure, St Justin De Jacobis, and the Beati and Beatae. But the saints, and the movements they bring about, are always rooted in a contemporary culture, whether it is Benedict helping to restore civilization, or the friars responding to the needs of the medieval cities, or the Cistercians involved in the agricultural expansion which made the medieval movement possible. Many other examples could be given of the highest mysticism being locked into a contemporary culture.

In our own time, old forms of religious life have passed away, and the soft options (“the liberal model”) which we have chosen since Vatican II had to fall. We are waiting for a *tertium quid* to emerge, something traditional and contemporary. But, as it will be based on the origins and adapted to contemporary culture, it is important that we look at the origins in the light of those human sciences which influence

us so deeply today. Hence, all these new studies of Vincent, with the aid of disciplines unknown to Coste (anthropology, psychology, etc.), are all, in however modest a way, preparing for the renewal of religious life in forms we can only guess at. Psychology is not religion, but it throws new and unexpected light on religious figures whom we wish to imitate.

Whether I have placed Vincent correctly on the Enneagramme I am not sure, although I naturally hope I have. But at any rate, like Stan Brindley, I believe I have come to see a little more deeply into my hero as a result of this exercise. I also have to record that, as I delved into the Enneagramme, I grew more and more in awe at the accuracy of its insights.

Notes

1. I refer to the present article as “another view” because Stan Brindley has already dealt with the same topic in COLLOQUE No. 13, Spring 1986, pp 56-63: *Locating St Vincent on the Enneagram*.
2. Quoted in Don Riso: *Personality Types*, London 1988, p 319.
3. Don Riso: *Op. cit.*; also Beesing, Nogosek and O’Leary: *The Enneagram*, New Jersey 1984, and Metz and Burchill: *The Enneagram and Prayer*, New Jersey 1987, deal with the Enneagramme. Without disputing the insights of the second two books, often very sharp indeed, I generally follow Riso, because he seems to be more coherent in his exposition.
4. Quoted in John Finney: *Understanding Leadership*, London 1989, p. 187.
5. Quoted in John Finney, *Op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.
6. Dale Carnegie: *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, New York 1981, pp. 191-196 (part 3, section 7).
7. In the article quoted above.

A Synod Experience

Richard McCullen

Introduction

The Synod which I was privileged to attend during the month of October 1990 was the eighth which had been held since Synods were first established by Pope Paul VI twenty-five years previously in 1965. Thus the Synod had, one could say, the character of a jubilee celebration last year. At the final lunch, hosted by the Pope in Santa Marta, I was talking to an English archbishop who told me that he had been present at seven Synods and that he would consider that of 1990 to have been the one that was most free of tension. There were some 220 participants at the Synod. In addition to the bishops, who came as representatives of the Episcopal Conferences in the world, the Union of Superiors General had been invited to elect ten representatives. To these ten the Pope added three others, the Superiors General of the Sulpicians, the Eudists and the Legionaries of Christ. In addition there were some thirty other nominees of the Pope, mainly bishops, along with a few seminary rectors. Some cardinals of the Roman Curia were present as *ex officio* members. Also invited to the Synod were a number of *auditores* and *auditrices*. They could be described as observers. They had not the right to vote, or to speak at the general sessions unless invited, but they could take part in small group sessions. These observers were, for the most part, priests, professors, and a few religious sisters and brothers, as well as five lay people, two of whom were a married couple, both psychoanalysts.

There were two sessions each day throughout the month, one in the morning, a three-hour session, and a two-hour session in the afternoon. On Saturday afternoon and on Sunday there were no sessions.

The method of work in the Synod

The calendar of the Synod had been prepared in detail for the entire month, clearly based on the experience of previous Synods. It could be said to have had three principal phases. After the presentation of some papers on, for example, the History of the Synods (Monsignor

Schotte), the Theology of Priesthood (Cardinal Ratzinger), the Synod and Ecumenism (Cardinal Willebrands) the Synod settled down to the first phase of listening to more than two hundred speeches on the topic of priestly formation in present-day circumstances. The great majority of synodal fathers spoke, and the small number who did not speak submitted to the secretariat their written observations.

Each speaker was limited to eight minutes (suitable warning bells were sounded after five, six and seven minutes!), and it must be said that the time-rule was very well observed. The synodal fathers were always indulgent, however, to the bishops from Russia and eastern Europe when they exceeded by a minute or two the allotted time. Indeed the bishops from these countries, along with two bishops from Vietnam who succeeded in arriving only for the final days of the Synod, were listened to with much reverence and admiration, as they recounted some of the sufferings inflicted on, and endured by, bishops, priests and laity in the Church of Silence over a period of forty to fifty years. As each of these bishops concluded his intervention in the debate, sometimes made with choking emotion, spontaneous and warm applause was always given.

It would not be quite correct to describe the first two weeks of work as a debate. It could more accurately be described as a forum in which the participants set forth a variety of views on the topic of formation for the priesthood. Speeches had to be prepared beforehand, as well as summaries of them for the press. Every aspect of priestly formation was, in that first phase of the Synod, touched upon by one or another of the synodal fathers. Some of the representatives of the Union of Superiors General had held a meeting a few days before the opening of the Synod to decide upon the topics that should be raised and who should speak to them. That which fell to me was on-going formation, with special reference to the young priest.

The first eleven or twelve days of the Synod could be said to have been a period of total immersion. As speaker followed speaker the topic of formation of the priest for today's world was presented in almost every possible facet. One could say that it was a period of unsystematic bombardment of the participants with ideas, but ideas that were all within the parameters of priestly formation today.

The second phase of the Synod began when an overall general synthesis of the ideas expressed in the aula was given in Latin by the Brazilian Cardinal Moreira Neves, the official Relator. The idea of synthesis could be said to have been a key word throughout the month. The dynamic of the Synod would seem to have been based on achiev-

ing syntheses. At three or four stages in the month one was presented with a synthesis. These were then worked upon, chiefly in groups, until the final synthesis of forty-one propositions had been made and voted upon on the last day of the Synod. After Cardinal Moreira Neves had presented his synthesis we were put into small language groups (approximately twenty members in each) and invited to draw up propositions on the matter which the Relator had given to us in the aula. No fixed number of propositions was set, but it was suggested that the number should not exceed fifty.

Many participants of the Synod found this stage very satisfying. The small group discussions were in one's own language and so freely ranged over many points, prior to the formulation of the group's propositions. After a little time one found that displaying a certain interest in a particular topic usually drew an invitation from the chairman to bring in the following day a draft of the proposition for discussion and acceptance by the group. In all there were thirteen language groups (the English language had three groups), including one in Latin with only four members, and, for the first time in the history of Synods, there was a group for the speakers of the Slav languages.

When the propositions of all the language groups had been gathered, they were then synthesised, translated into Latin and sent back to each language group for discussion with a view to the proposal of amendments or *modi*. This could be described as the third phase of the synodal work. It was at the beginning of this phase that one could detect a certain dissatisfaction with the process. Groups felt at times disappointed that their particular proposition had disappeared, or was not recognizable in the new synthesis of the matter. Besides, the drafters or *redactores* of the synthesised propositions had been forced to work under pressure and far into the night, in order that the time frame of the Synod could be maintained. It was not surprising, then, to find evidence of haste and imprecision in some of the propositions that were presented at this stage to all the groups for amendments. All the official documents were presented in Latin. The Latin language was used so that the risk of misinterpreting the nuances of different languages would be minimized. As the median age of the Synod fathers was 60.8 years the Synod secretariat could still presume on a knowledge of Latin. What, I wondered, of Synods thirty and forty years hence?

Amendments could be presented only after they had been accepted by the particular language groups. This often called for voting within the group. It was hoped in this way to reduce the number of amendments that would be proposed, for at all previous Synods individual

fathers could propose any number of amendments to the secretariat and the result was that thousands of *modi* had to be examined in a very short period of time. On this occasion, however, it was only the groups that could present amendments. That, however, did not seem to lessen greatly the number of *modi* presented, for towards the end of the Synod the Secretary General informed us that almost as many *modi* had been presented as at previous Synods.

The final list of propositions (forty-one) was drawn up and they were individually voted upon (some of them had two or three sub-sections) at the final working session of the Synod. No single proposition received a unanimous *placet*, even if all of them received strong majority support. These propositions will form the basis of the Apostolic Exhortation on Formation which the Holy Father will address to the Church some time in the future.

Some personal impressions

What are my personal impressions of the month-long Synod? First, I saw it as a precious grace to have participated in the Synod. At times, as I listened to the ideals of priesthood that were being proposed, I felt a little like St Vincent who, at the end of his life, felt he should never have been a priest at all, so elevated is the priestly vocation and so great its dignity. On the other hand one felt greatly heartened by the fact that the topic of priestly formation had been proposed by the concern and love of the laity for their priests, particularly as it was expressed at the Synod on the Laity in 1987. At the very outset of the 1990 Synod it was made clear to us that the topic of priestly formation in today's circumstances was closely related to the theme of the last Synod on the Laity and to the exhortation of the Pope *Christifideles laici*.

At the beginning of the Synod many references were made to the theological identity of the priest. One sensed that there was a desire among many that the priest's identity would shine out more clearly. A real difficulty, one felt, was surfacing here. It would seem that the problem might not be unrelated to that of the fathers of Vatican

II who wrestled with the problem of defining the Church, until they agreed in the end to speak rather of the mystery of the Church. One often heard the word "vision" mentioned. It was not the identity of the priest that the world was waiting to hear about, but rather a new vision of the priesthood.

The problem of clarifying further the identity of the priesthood could be said to be related to the particular model of Church with which

one works. Just as there are different models of Church, nuanced by the theologians, so there could be said to be different models of priesthood. The Synod seemed to lay stress on the text from the Letter to the Hebrews of the priest as one taken from amongst men and ordained for men in the things that pertain to God (cf Hb 5:1), and to stress the threefold aspect of mystery, communion and mission.

In its consideration of the identity and mission of the priest I was somewhat surprised at the prominence given to the evangelical counsels of chastity, obedience and poverty. Not that this is not valid and useful for the priest, be he diocesan or religious. What surprised me was the reliance that the Synod seemed to have on the three evangelical counsels as a way of expressing the spirituality that corresponds to the identity of the priest. Indeed one Superior General remarked to me that the Synod seemed to be openly borrowing elements from the consecrated life and relating them to the life of the diocesan priest. There was a general feeling among the Superiors General present that the Synod did not consider sufficiently well the place of the religious priest in the diocesan presbyterium.

The Synod, as you are aware, affirmed strongly the value of celibacy. The mind of the bishops was that the Synod owed it both to priests and people that no one be left in doubt on the issue. Celibacy, or rather chastity in celibacy (which was the phrase which seemed to be a more precise and accurate expression of the ideal), was considered to be still highly relevant for men who, to quote one bishop's phrase, "most clearly manifest the Church's difference from the world, and God's love for the world". Not that the bishops were unaware of the shortage of priests in some countries, particularly in countries of the First World. It was recognized that there was a real difficulty in some countries where the faithful must be left for long periods without the eucharist because of the scarcity of priests. It was also, however, recognized that this difficulty and the sign value and sanctifying character of chaste celibacy are two different issues, even if they are related. It seemed as if the Synod wished to make a fresh vote of confidence in the value of celibacy for its priests, and to express also its confidence that the Lord would not fail to give the charism of celibacy to a sufficient number of men from whom priests could be chosen.

On a number of occasions during the Synod I was reminded that as a man living in the First World I tended to see the problems of the Church Universal as being only those of that world. Perhaps if we, the faithful of the First World, could hear, and listen more carefully to, the faithful of the Third World, or the world of eastern Europe and of Russia, we

might be less strident in demanding that the Church change her discipline on celibacy for diocesan priests. I was, for instance, astounded when I heard that at a universal level there had been an increase of 53% in the number of vocations to the priesthood in the last thirteen years.

It was recognized, of course, that life-long chaste celibacy demands much of a man. For that reason there was much emphasis on the importance of assessing well candidates on entering the seminary, and often during their course of formation. That the candidate for the priesthood would have affective, emotional, psychological and spiritual maturity before being ordained was clearly and repeatedly underlined by many groups. Seminary authorities and spiritual directors were encouraged to enlist the help of skilled and trustworthy psychologists to assure that candidates who are immature should not be admitted to the priesthood (cf *Optatam totius*, #6).

Little new was proposed on the topic of formation in the seminary. The value of a preparatory or propedeutic year before entering the major seminary was considered to have much merit for a number of countries, while in Asian and African countries the minor seminary is proving to be a good source of vocations.

As one might expect, considerable thought was given to the *Formatores*. Apart from the fact that they should themselves be good, convinced and dedicated priests, the importance of working as a team in the seminary was highlighted, as was also the importance of presenting to the students a programme of studies that was well coordinated, enabling the student to grasp a clear overall vision of his studies and of his formation. The Synod also acknowledged that suitable and qualified women could be members of a seminary formation team.

There was some criticism of the fact that in the *Instrumentum laboris* sufficient attention was not given to ongoing formation and its importance in the fast-changing world of today. It was stated that ongoing formation should be seen as a process of continual conversion or a process of continual growth in faith, hope and love, and of growth into the likeness of Christ, the Good Shepherd. The urgency of work to be done in the pastoral field should not be allowed to damage the psychological or spiritual equilibrium of the priest.

It was recognized that seminarians should be so formed as to accept the necessity of continual or ongoing formation. Special times of transition call for particular attention (some of these were mentioned by Cardinal Lustiger of Paris). These would include the transition from seminary to priestly ministry; the completion of, say, five years in priestly ministry; reaching the age of forty; and, again, in preparation

for retirement from active ministry.

As I look back on the Synod I would see it as an exercise of linking the formation of priests to the sixteen documents of Vatican Council II. One heard much about the importance of being able to collaborate with the laity, to dialogue with people of other faiths and of none, of being capable of animating liturgies, of being able to direct religious men and women, of developing a strong mission sense, and of having a certain skill in the use of the media. Indirectly or directly the Synod was urging priests and seminarians to enter more fully into the world of Vatican Council II, to know its vision, its theology, and to live its spirituality.

A superman?

On a few occasions I felt somewhat daunted by the ambitious nature of priestly formation today. Are we, I said to myself, trying to create a superman? Can only a superman be a priest today? Obviously, no. For that reason I would have liked to have heard more echoes in the aula of some of the great Pauline convictions: that God uses the weak things of this world to confound the strong, that an apostle can do all things through him who strengthens him, that no man is tempted beyond his strength, and that however earthen the priest's vessel may be he still carries within himself a great treasure. In making this reflection I am not suggesting that the theological principle that grace builds on nature should be ignored. Indeed, it was one of the principles that could be said to have underpinned much of what was said in the aula and in the small language groups. The point I wish to make is that in the formation of the priest the reality both of nature and of grace must receive equal attention.

"Sub Petro et cum Petro"

The month of the Synod could be said to have been passed *sub Petro et cum Petro*. The Holy Father was present at almost all the general sessions, listening to voices from many countries and many cultures, as they expressed their profoundly held convictions on the Church, the People of God, the world, the seminarian of today, and the priest of tomorrow. The month was passed *cum Petro* in that the Holy Father invited to his own table for lunch or supper, in groups of ten or twelve, every synodal father. The twelve Superiors General were invited to lunch on 24 October. It was a memorable experience, with the Holy Father in a most relaxed mood. Towards the end of the meal the topic

of beatifications came up and various names of men and women, whose causes have been introduced, were mentioned. “And what”, asked the Pope with a smile, “of Superiors General?” To which Fr Kolvenbach, the Superior General of the Jesuits, answered: “Very difficult, Your Holiness. Too much correspondence!” That is as good an excuse as any for immediately laying down my pen.

St Louise de Marillac in her Letters and Other Writings

Thomas Davitt

Part I: Her Letters

In a conference to the Daughters on 24 July 1660, four months after Louise's death, Vincent said that what was then needed was to take her as a model, but that in order to do so it was necessary to get to know her (X 725-6). For a very long time after their deaths in 1660 Louise was overshadowed by Vincent; she was not canonised until almost two hundred years after he was. People came to know Louise usually through reading biographies of Vincent.

In the English-speaking world a fairly long popular life of Louise, by Alice, Lady Lovat, the mother of a Daughter of Charity, was published in London in 1916. In 1973 *The Streets of the City* by Sr Lucy Archer DC, a condensation and adaptation of a thesis which she had presented at the London School of Economics in 1936, was privately printed for use by the Daughters. In 1959 an English translation (but slightly adapted) of Jean Calvet's biography, which had come out in French the previous year, was published in London. This was probably the book which made the initial breakthrough in making people aware of the real Louise. In 1970 a new biography, roughly twice the length of Calvet's, by Joseph I Dirvin CM, was published in New York. In 1984 the first biography of Louise by Nicolas Gobillon (1675) was translated into English and published by the British Province of the Daughters of Charity.

As well as good biographies other material about Louise has also been published over the last twenty-five years or so. In 1961 a collection of her letters and other writings was published in Paris, and in 1972 the letters from this collection were translated into English by Sr Helen Mary Law DC and published by the Provincial House in Emmitsburg, Maryland. In 1983 a more accurate edition of the letters and writings was published in Paris and the following year a translation of the writings, other than the letters, was made by Sr Louise Sullivan

DC and published by the Provincial House in Albany, New York. By the time this article is in print there should also be available an English translation of *Un Chemin de Sainteté: Louise de Marillac* (1988) by Sr Elizabeth Charpy. To sum up, at the moment those who read English have available two excellent biographies by Calvet and Dirvin, a translation of Gobillon, and translations of Louise's letters and other writings. From these sources Louise emerges very much as an interesting and important person in her own right, no longer largely hidden in the shadow of Vincent.

This article has evolved over a period of more than a dozen years from talks which I have given on various occasions and the quotations used are ones I have collected over this period, and are given in my own translation. The reference which I give for each is to the page number in the 1983 French edition, unless otherwise noted; references to the volume number and page in the Coste set are also given where relevant.

As is the case with Vincent, Louise comes through in her letters as a very human person, showing interest in the personal life and work of her correspondents. An example of this, and one in which again she resembles Vincent, is that she stresses the importance of the sisters taking proper care of their health, and she shows real concern for them when they are sick. In August 1641 she wrote to Sr Elizabeth Martin:

God be praised that your health has improved! Take care of yourself for love of him, and remember that one of the best ways is to be happy by uniting yourself completely to his holy will, without worrying about anything. Ask very simply for what you want, and don't be discouraged because your illness keeps you from an active life, making you feel useless; you are the only one who sees it that way (57-58).

Fourteen years later she wrote to Sr Anne Hardimont, saying that she could remain where she was

on condition that you don't overdo the work, and that you let yourself be relieved by other sisters. We must willingly accept being incapacitated when it pleases God to allow this, and use such occasions to raise ourselves above worldly matters (464).

It was probably her own experience of inactivity, forced on her by sickness, which caused her to return to this topic so frequently in her

letters, and she often mentions that sisters in this condition are not to consider themselves a burden on the community (e.g. 36). Among her writings she has “Notes on subjects that need to be discussed during conferences”, which contains the following:

Whether those who stay at home do not have just as much merit as those who are actually serving the poor (759).

In a letter addressed to Sr Jeanne Lepeintre in 1646 she wrote:

It’s true, my dear sisters, that you are quite a burden on our good Fathers, but don’t worry – you know their charity! (149).

She also suggests that sick sisters can profit from being sick because it will help them to understand better those to whom they will be ministering later on:

I’m concerned about the illness of our dear sister, whom I cordially greet at the feet of Jesus Christ, encouraging her in his holy love not to be depressed but to experience within herself the need our poor sick have of care, cordiality and gentleness (14).

In view of her own illnesses it is not surprising that she passes on to Vincent, and to many other correspondents, remedies for their illnesses and injuries which she herself has already found useful. Sometimes the remedy is a bit surprising:

When the chills stop it would be a good idea to give her half a glass of knapweed water (256).

Knapweed is a kind of thistle. She was always worried about Vincent’s health and constantly sent enquiries as to how he was. On one occasion he thanked her for her solicitude but pointed out that he was not suffering from his usual troubles; this time he had been kicked by a horse (I 110). She frequently recommended him to drink tea, especially about four o’clock in the afternoon, at least during his retreat (570, & VI 495), and, if he needed to be bled a man of his age should have it done around the time of the full moon (606, & VII 264). She always thought he worked far too hard and did not take sufficient care of his health. She wrote to the Abbe de Vaux in Angers in June 1643:

I ask you very humbly, Father, to remember Fr Vincent in your masses. He needs this more than ever. I greatly fear he may collapse under the load (96).

Vincent's legs, of course, were a constant source of worry to her, because of the lymph oedema from which he suffered. She wrote to him in November 1655:

Permit me to tell you that it is absolutely essential that your leg should not dangle for more than a quarter of an hour, nor should it be exposed to the heat of the fire. If it gets cold wrap it up in a warm scarf placed over your pants (490, & V 464-465).

Around New Year's Day of 1658 Vincent was thrown out of the carriage in which he was travelling in Paris; he was coming up to his seventy-eighth birthday and Louise was understandably worried about the effect this sort of accident would have on an old man of his age. She was also worried about the chances of its happening again. She wrote to Antoine Portail on 13 January:

I'm taking the liberty of asking you to have something done about what I consider defects in the carriage. It seems to me that the doors are below elbow-level, and that the whole body of the carriage is set too high on the springs because, although this gives a smoother ride, it causes such a swinging motion that sometimes when riding in it I was afraid the jolts would pitch me out through the door. I also think that handrails should be fitted to each side of the doors, though this is no longer the fashion (580).

From very early on she was very appreciative of Vincent's guidance of herself and the sisters. In January 1643 she wrote to him:

I hope the sisters will make good use of the conference you gave us today. Their hearts are full of good intentions about it and they would like to keep your words in their hearts for ever. I beg you, therefore, to send us your notes; they would help me to remember the greater part of what our good God said to us through your mouth (88, & II 358).

Seven years later she referred to Vincent in a letter which she wrote to Sr Jeanne Lepeintre:

Of course you realise that one word of advice from him is worth a hundred from anyone else (332).

When she herself needed to see him about something she could usually slip across the street to do so, since after 1641 the motherhouse of the Daughters was just across the street from St Lazare. This is probably why there are not more letters from one to the other; most of the matters to be discussed were probably done when they met rather than by letter. However, it was not always easy to pin down Vincent for an appointment, as appears from a short un-dated letter:

For the love of God, fearing that you're leaving tomorrow, I beg you to fix a time, and let me know it, at which I can talk to you, so that I can have enough time to deal with the matter which I mentioned to you after dinner. If you can't fit me in before you leave then let me go in the coach, or borrow a carriage so that I can go to where you will be stopping for a meal and speak to you there (676, & IV 110).

In March 1656 we find her apologising to Vincent for writing on poor paper (498, & V 567), and in 1658 telling a sister that if she has to write to Vincent she is to keep the letter short (589).

In April 1657 she got what she thought was a brilliant idea. She suggested to Vincent that the Company of the Daughters of Charity was of such public benefit that it should be officially under the authority of the King or the *Parlement* ("The High Court"), and that on the authority of either the one or the other a Daughter should be forbidden to leave the community and that, if she left, legal proceedings could be taken against her for disobedience to the King or the *Parlement*. She ends the letter:

If such an idea is completely ridiculous I'm sure you'll forgive me this fault, together with my usual ones ... (544, & VI 271).

A very pleasing feature of Louise's letters is the way she so often passes on to sisters news of their parents, brothers, sisters and other bits of home news. In a PS to a letter to Sr Jeanne Lepeintre in 1642 she wrote:

I don't know whether your uncle has written to you; he informed me that your father and stepmother are well, but their business

is going badly. I believe that that mill was destroyed again. I've asked Sr Turgis to pay him a visit to get firsthand news and find out if they're in need. Don't worry, but commend them to God. I'll let you know what we find out and we'll see to it (78).

In another letter we read:

Tell Sr Marguerite Noret that all her people are well and Sr Françoise received her letter. Tell Sr Jeanne that her brother also is well, TG. I haven't heard that any other relative of any of the sisters is sick (224-225).

A rather human aspect of Louise comes out in her letters with regard to food. In an early letter to her Vincent thanks her for the good bread, the jams and the apples which she sent, but "In the name of God don't do it again" (I 222). She herself added a PS to a letter to a sister in 1645:

You sent me very few dried apricots and they were of inferior quality, and I was counting on them for a gift (134).

In another letter she asks:

... send me a *quarteron* of good small pears, in good condition (344).

Shortly afterwards she is asking for a good supply of cod (303). In 1654 she adds a PS to a letter to Vincent enquiring if it is in order for the Duchess de Ventadour to treat the sisters to roast beef on Easter Sunday (543). And, to round off this topic, she tells a sister in a letter to make excuses to another sister on her behalf; she can't write because she has to go and have her dinner (436). In another letter she admits that she has no teeth (406).

She very frequently had recourse to the PS, sometimes concerning the most surprising things; on one occasion the PS was to say that the pigs were not to be let out so much together, and above all they were not to get into the garden (282).

She was quite blunt in pointing out faults to her correspondents: "For the love of God learn how to spell!" (585). And she could turn the tables on a Sister Servant who had complained to her about one of the community:

Well! There you go again, highly offended, and you interpret our sister's fault as something which it is not. This sister became annoyed at seeing so many cats around you and herself during prayers. You even mention another sister who dislikes them ... I've told you time and time again to get rid of these animals, and you have never paid any attention to me; and one individual sister won't obey you promptly! (677).

She had this to say about postulants for the community in 1658:

I'll tell you, though, that it's extremely important that theirs be a true vocation; because we've learnt from experience that some girls use these opportunities to come to Paris in the hope that if they are not accepted they'll get a good job (594).

Four years earlier she had written to a sister who had two girls who wanted to join the community:

... you must impress on them that they're coming to try out our way of living, and that they in their turn must be tested. Please see that they bring enough money to cover the expense of their first habit and their journey here, and back home again if necessary. I'm telling you this because the girls must come in this frame of mind, even though they're quite suitable for us in every way (442).

Obviously some applicants would prove unsuitable, even though they themselves might not see it that way. Jeanne Fouré was one of these, in 1651; Louise wrote about her:

... please dissuade poor Jeanne Fouré from the thought of returning to us, for even if she persisted with this idea for ten years neither you nor I could take her back, nor our successors either (344-345).

Retreats were an important element in community life. In 1643 she wrote to a sister in Angers:

Thank God for the grace he gave you of a holy retreat. You should value all the good thoughts and resolutions his goodness gave you, although you may think you have done nothing worthwhile.

So what! If you were not pleased with yourself that, perhaps, is a sign that you were pleasing to God (92).

In the un-dated letter to the Sister Servant with the cats she is on somewhat the same lines:

... don't become discouraged at the sight of your faults. Unless we realise that we are prone to them we cannot correct them ... Take heart from the hope that the retreat will do you good (677).

Still on retreats, she wrote the following to another sister in 1656:

... I have praised God many times for the graces he granted you, to help you forget yourself and mortify your desire for self-satisfaction, which in your case is under the appearance of striving for great holiness. We are greatly fooling ourselves if we think ourselves capable of this, and still more so if we think we can reach such holiness by our own efforts and by watching closely the slightest movement or disposition of our soul.

Once a year is quite enough to delve into this kind of research, duly mistrusting ourselves and recognising our weakness. It's useless, even dangerous, to be forever giving ourselves hell in order to peel ourselves, and giving an account of all our thoughts. I'm passing on to you what I was told in the past (518-519).

That sounds very much like the sort of advice Vincent would have given her early on in their acquaintance.

Since the sisters were engaged all the time in an active apostolate it is interesting to see Louise's views on doing the appointed work, and sticking to it. She wrote to a sister in 1647:

You must put your hand to everything, even though you may be there only temporarily. Even if we are to be somewhere only for a week we must work as though we were to stay there all our lives. We must live in such harmony that what one does is pleasing to the others, and not say "I'm supposed to do this, or that"; rather, both of you should lend a hand with everything (208-209).

There is an interesting letter from 1653:

As for Sr Barbe I think she must be joking to think of coming

back before she is recalled by obedience. Tell her, Sister, I can hardly believe you, and that souls who are seeking God could not have a better appointment than Angers. If they knew what it is like to be somewhere else, Oh! they would dread being moved from there (416).

That letter was written in May 1653 and it mentions that Vincent was away giving a mission at the time; he would have been just after his 72nd birthday.

In 1658 Louise wrote to Brother Bertrand Ducournau, one of Vincent's two secretaries:

Experience has shown that girls who enter in houses of our Sisters in far-away places, before they are accepted and given the habit in the motherhouse, never persevere, because they live under the mistaken impression that they will never have to do anything other than what they started off doing (581).

A final extract on this topic comes from a letter she wrote in April 1659, less than a year before her death:

Mistrust any thoughts that come to you to turn you away from the paths where obedience has placed you as, for example, if it occurred to you "Oh! If I were in that place, or some other, I'm sure I would do very well". You can be sure that this is an illusion; you would do worse there. Unstable minds never establish a solid foundation of virtue because the habit of vacillating prevents them from getting used to obedience, humility, mutual support and the observance of the practice of their rules. The devil keeps them guessing. I'm so sure about this because I've witnessed so many cases of it in different places, and even encountered it in some of our sisters who have lost their vocation for this reason, and others who never got out of the torpor and slackening-off which caused them to wallow in their bad habits and inclinations. Even if an angel came down from heaven to tell me this I couldn't be more convinced (634).

Some notes have survived which Louise made about topics which needed to be raised with the sisters. On recreation, for example, she noted:

Conversation during recreation should be really happy and cordial, listening without distinction to those who please us and those who please us rather less, answering graciously, with no argument, and never taking anything badly ... Never make fun of those who don't speak too well, unless you are absolutely sure that they won't take it badly, and that there is no trace of anything contrary to charity in your intention ...

Take great pains to defend those who may be absent, doing this with a spirit of charity which will prevent you from too easily making a judgement about someone else; always put yourself in the place of those who are being spoken about, either by thinking of your own personal shortcomings or of how natural tendencies or habits influence people, and the near impossibility of rooting them out (795).

Finally, in a PS to a letter to the Daughters in the hospital in Ussel:

When you sing together for your own amusement be careful that people can't hear you from outside (614).

I will end this section on Louise's letters by using a summary that someone else has made of what comes out in her letters on the topic of medical care. On 11 May 1953 Sr Margaret Flinton, an American Daughter of Charity, defended her doctoral thesis at the Sorbonne, the University of Paris; the title of her thesis was: "St Louise de Marillac – the social aspect of her work". Her defence started with a summary of her findings; the following is a translation of part of that summary:

Louise, with her two feet on the ground and with the encouragement of Fr Vincent, fully appreciates the importance of "know how". In no way does she neglect the professional formation of the girls she is sending to the sick poor.

Although the qualifications of a 17th century nurse can hardly compare with a present-day diploma it seemed to us worth pointing out this care for medical "technique", rudimentary at first, more developed later on, which was established under her watchful eye. She took the initiative and responsibility for these first home-visitation nurses, and later for those in hospitals. In this connection her letters show:

1. Her personal knowledge of contemporary medical practice.

2. Her method of teaching: theory based on actual contact with the sick.
3. The careful choice she made of sisters who showed aptitude for caring for the sick and for learning practical nursing.
4. Her placing beginners with experienced nurses so that they could be gradually initiated into actual contact with the sick poor.
5. Her unobtrusive yet real supervision of these nurses at each stage, to forestall and correct mistakes.
6. Her guiding them towards practicality, to know both how to keep the essential and to modify the inessential in customs and established rules.
7. Her practice of discussing with sisters the conditions of the work they were going to take on.
8. Her insistence, well in advance of her time, on the link between morality and hygiene.
9. Her advice, encouragement and motherly care for the Servants of the Poor, and even more so for their “lords and masters”.

(Annales de la Mission, tome 118, p 27).

Part II: Other writings

If Vincent kept any sort of personal spiritual notebook or record of retreats which he made it has not survived. Louise did keep such notes, and quite a number of them have survived. This means that we have more about her personal spirituality than we have about Vincent's.

We can start by having a look at what she noted about God himself. In an un-dated note she wrote:

I should employ all my being in getting to know God in his works
... (700).

Perhaps she had been reading chapter 1 of Romans. In some retreat notes dated “about 1628” she reflected on some implications of creation:

When creating our souls ... God had only one thing in mind, that he himself should be the only occupier of them and should occupy them completely; for this reason, with the help of his holy grace, I want to choose to make myself completely his and to avoid all dangers which could obstruct this ... (696).

In the same notes she returns to this idea in a slightly different form; our souls

are capable of being completely possessed by him, of enjoying his presence and of giving him glory ... (696).

She then makes a resolution:

I will pay more frequent attention, with the help of his holy grace, to his sacred presence, which I never leave even when I do not advert to it (698).

In an undated retreat note she teases out the tension between purity of intention and self-satisfaction:

God demands great purity of intention from those who serve him, and they should not in any way take self-satisfaction from any act; but God will have to guide my intentions to reach such selflessness which has made me see that I should remember that there is lack of purity in the desire (which I have) of God's graces (700-701).

Different facets of this were noted in subsequent retreats; for example, "about 1632":

Pride and all its effects are very serious blockages to the work and plans which God has for the soul (711).

About a year later:

I must live in such a way that singlemindedness in my activities hides me from the eyes of the world, to be seen by God alone and unnoticed by the world or the devil. By the world, because being noticed by it will be of no use to me (714).

And at Easter, around the same time:

On Easter Sunday my prayer was about the desire to rise with our Lord, and since there can be no resurrection without death I saw that it was my evil tendencies which had to die, and that I had to be completely annihilated by a damping down of all my interior impulses (716).

A quarter of a century later she noted:

I came to see that all disorders in life stem from not giving oneself sincerely to God in order to receive the Holy Spirit (807).

And:

Reflecting on the fact that I belong to God because of his very being and because of my being created, which are the two foundations of my belonging to him, I saw myself as also belonging to him through the conservation which keeps me in being and which is like continual on-going creation. I asked myself, then, what did I understand by the idea of giving myself to him? And I came to the conclusion that this power of his to take possession of me was, because of the goodness of God's plan in creating mankind, to unite himself closely and permanently to mankind, seeing as how he used the only means he had to give this to mankind, namely the Incarnation of his Word who wished that, being perfect man, human nature should share in the divinity by his merit and by his nature, so closely joined (806).

This led her on to pen a prayer:

Remove my blindness, O eternal light; simplify my mind, O perfect unity; make my heart humble, as a foundation for your graces and so that the power to love which you have put into my soul no longer gets blocked by the disorder of my self-reliance, which is really nothing more than a lack of power and a hindrance to the real love which I should have from the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (807-808).

With God's grace and her own inclinations pulling in opposite directions she experienced disturbance, so she noted: "Avoid things which

disturb the serenity which he wants me to have”, and that she should “expect that in this serenity God will come to me ...”(701). As they are in retreat notes perhaps she had been thinking about Elijah at Horeb. During a retreat about 1633, perhaps at Christmas, she was again reflecting on serenity:

I will honour the serenity seen in the crib by an attitude of having the actuality, rather than the desire, of the possession of God, who never refuses himself to the soul who really seeks him ...(714).

That serves as a useful transition into what she says about the person of Jesus. Around 1650 she was reflecting on the implications of having been baptised, again perhaps from reading Romans:

We who are baptised in Jesus Christ have been baptised in his death. Since baptism is a spiritual birth it follows that he in whom we are baptised is our father, and therefore, like good children, we should resemble him; since we are baptised in the death of Jesus Christ all our life should be a continual dying ...

So, like the good daughter that I want to be, also wishing to imitate this very good father and to be, in actual fact, a daughter of death I no longer wish from now on, helped by his holy grace, not to love death which will join us to Jesus Christ for all eternity ... (778).

At an earlier retreat she had noted, about Jesus:

I will have great trust in him who has assured me that irrespective of my wretchedness and powerlessness he will do everything in me (713).

On other occasions she noted “The excellent way in which our Lord united the contemplative life with the active” (710) and “Since Jesus took on our needs it is very reasonable that we should follow and imitate his very holy human life” (711). And since Jesus promised the Holy Spirit, she noted:

I must be persevering in my expectation of the Holy Spirit, although I don’t know the moment at which he will come; but accepting this lack of knowledge, as well as that relating to the ways in which God wants me to serve him, I must place myself

totally at his disposal so as to be completely his ...(713).

There are very many references to Mary in Louise's letters and writings, including the somewhat unusual reflection on Mary as a widow. Louise related to Mary in the double role of mother and widow. Louise was also an amateur painter, which is probably not unconnected with the following un-dated passage:

On the octave day of Corpus Christi, adoring the Blessed Sacrament in the church of our venerable Fathers, I asked him, through the loving union of the Word with human nature, that the Fathers and ourselves might always be united, and always in union with the apostolic and Roman hierarchy by a solid union of the entire body of the Community with the poor, as God wills. I had had the idea, and renewed it, of presenting to Chartres, to St Lazare and to the motherhouse, a picture of the Blessed Virgin against a sun, representing her Immaculate Conception, in order to obtain the preservation of purity in both companies, begging it from God through the purity of his Incarnation.

I have now carried out this resolution, having sent to Chartres a small portrait of our Lady, to St Lazare the small picture of the Virgin with the little pearl rosary, and to the motherhouse a wooden image of the Blessed Virgin holding a nine-bead rosary to honour the nine months which our Lord spent in the Blessed Virgin's womb (728).

In her final will she first of all expresses her faith and devotion to God and asks the help of various saints. She also asks pardon of those whom she may have offended. She recommends her son, Michel, to remain loyal to the Church, always to ask advice from Vincent, and to honour and help the Congregation of the Mission as much as he can. She leaves money to the Congregation for various annual masses on New Year's Day, All Saints, and the Immaculate Conception, and for three annual masses for the dead. She also leaves money to various confraternities of which she was a member, to the poor of Montferriand, to the Daughters of Charity to cover the cost of making ointment. She leaves more to be distributed to the poor on the first Sunday or Holy Day after her death, after a sermon instructing them about their duties towards God. There are some other legacies as well. At first sight it is perhaps surprising that there is no mention in this will of her deceased husband, Antoine Le Gras. The explanation is that at the time of his

death thirty-five years earlier she had arranged that a priest of the Congregation of the Mission would celebrate mass on his anniversary, 21 December, every year in perpetuity, and that her son was always to keep his father in his prayers. Incidentally, she had made several previous wills and had mentioned Antoine in earlier ones.

She asked to be buried outside the end wall of the chapel of St Lazare, in a spot which she had pointed out to Vincent, and that after her death a large wooden crucifix should be erected there. However, the Parish Priest of St Laurent insisted that she be buried in a side chapel of that church, the one dedicated to the Visitation. This side chapel has since been re-dedicated to St Francis de Sales, but there is on its wall a plaque to commemorate the fact that Louise was buried there. In 1755 she was exhumed and re-interred in the chapel of the then mother-house of the Daughters opposite St Lazare. During the period of the French Revolution her remains were kept safely in secret until they were transferred to the present mother-house in the rue du Bac in 1824.

The Poor in Luke's Gospel

Michael Prior

According to various writers from the so-called Third World the interpretation of the Bible in the Western World will always be distorted. The reason, they claim, is that the central message of the Bible is that God is on the side of the oppressed while interpreters from North America and Europe do not know the experience of being subject to economic, personal, or institutional oppression. All Western interpreters of the Bible live in considerable comfort and guaranteed security, and are respected members of prestigious academic institutions. The present writer, alas, is no exception. Such circumstances become an obstacle to an authentic reading of the text.

First World difficulties with the text of the Bible, it is claimed, do not arise from the strangeness of the language, or from the time-span and the differences in culture that separate the two civilizations. Rather they come about because the Bible witnesses to the experience of the powerless and exploited, while the modern western interpreter reads it from her/his guaranteed and secure position of power (see, e.g., Tamez 1982, Sugirtharajah 1991).

It is one of the results of recent reflection on the process of enquiring into the meaning of a text that *the reader* no less than the text is in a particular historical context and tradition. The *reader* of Luke 4.16-30 is in a state of pre-understanding (*Vorverstehung*) before s/he embarks on the reading.

The Standpoint of the Reader

We must be aware of the influence our own social circumstances impose on our understanding of any text, and this applies no less to the gospels than to any other literature, old or new. Any reader of any text, but particularly of one which is likely to provoke a moral response, will do well to enquire into her/his dispositions *prior* to engaging the text. Contact with any literature has the possibility of correcting, reshaping and enlarging the individual reader's standpoint.

Does one embark on the examination of a text in the hope of having one's own predispositions confirmed, or is one prepared to place oneself under the power of the word of the text even if it should invite a radical change of values and lifestyle? To be sensitive to one's own pre-understanding may turn out to be more fundamental to understanding a text than any enquiry into its putative meaning.

Suppose our enquiry into the meaning of 'the poor' in Luke concludes that 'the poor' are to be identified with the destitute/beggars of society. Is a subscriber to the Vincentian motto required, or at least invited, to align her/his energies to the evangelization of the destitute/beggars of our society?

Suppose, on the other hand, that our enquiry concludes that 'the poor' are those who because they are so deficient in material possessions put all their trust in God. Is a Vincentian true to her/his vocation to divest her/himself of all material possessions in order to share the blessedness of the poor?

In this article I enquire into the meaning of the term *the poor*, and examine whether the Gospel of Luke is 'the gospel of the poor'. In considering the context of that gospel I bring into the discussion some of the conclusions of the most recent scholarship which uses methods which derive from the science of sociology. All of this is done in an attempt to help us arrive at an understanding of the key phrase *evangelizare pauperibus*. By way of conclusion I offer some reflections on our Vincentian motto, and on its implications for Vincentians of the nineties.

Who are the poor of New Testament times?

Good scholarship avoids the pitfall of regarding the New Testament period as monochromatic in terms of its social, political and religious structure. Although some patterns were general, it is more accurate to presume that each writing in the New Testament reflects circumstances which are particular to the communities in which, or for which the writings were composed.

We readily concede that the thrust of the message of Jesus may be understood differently in Strawberry Hill and Ogobia, and that a letter to the church in Sunday's Well or Glasgow, may reflect different emphases from one to the church in Warrington or Tooting. It is reasonable to suspect that in addition to indicating Jesus' and Paul's views on *the poor*, the New Testament writings may also contain clues to the social, political, and religious circumstances of the communities reflected in each of the writings.

The Meaning of Ptochos

The Greek word in our motto which we translate 'poor' (*pauperes*) is *ptochos*. If one were guided only by Greek usage it should be translated by 'destitute', or 'beggar'. It marked a more severe form of poverty than the other common Greek term *penes* (which occurs in the New Testament only at 2 Cor 9.9), which refers to a person who could make a living, albeit with some difficulty at times. Another common Greek word for poverty, *endees* occurs in the New Testament only at Acts 4.34. The *ptochos* was on the fringe of Greek society, since he had no place in the economy, and for his survival depended entirely on the hospitality of others.

One has sympathy for the confrère who tapped me on the shoulder at the Convocation and asked, "If *ptochos* means 'destitute', why don't we translate it as such?" There is a problem in adopting such a swift solution and, as the following discussion shows, the difficulty is not easily solved. We are not dealing with classical Greek culture, and hence account must also be taken of the Jewish terminology. Every effort should be made to uncover the true meaning of *ptochos* in Luke 4.18, since so much depends on getting it right.

Patience is required when one is attempting to clarify nuances of meanings of words which have been used over hundreds of years in quite different social, political and religious contexts.

The most common words for poor in the Hebrew Scriptures are 'any (eighty times), and 'evyon (sixty-one times), 'any involves some dependence on others, but 'evyon suggests a much more fundamental need - if 'any needed help, 'evyon needed it immediately as a condition of survival. It would seem appropriate to translate 'any by *penes*, and 'evyon by *ptochos*. The situation in the Septuagint is not so straightforward. *Ptochos* translates any thirty-eight (out of eighty) times, and *penes* translates 'evyon twenty-nine (out of sixty-one) times. However, 'evyon is rendered by *ptochos* (or equivalent) ten times, and 'any is translated by *penes* (or equivalent) thirteen times. Moreover, where the context makes it clear that the poor person is in need of immediate relief 'evyon is rendered by *ptochos* or *endees*. Perhaps the fact that the term 'any came to have the religious meaning of being totally dependent on God contributed to its being translated by *ptochos*, albeit that that term had negative secular connotations (see Hamel: 167-73).

Another interesting insight into the meaning of the term 'poor' is provided by the specifically religious use of the terminology in the documents of the Dead Sea community. The author of the *Hymns of Thanksgiving* refers to himself as 'any (1QH 5.1; 5.21, etc.) and 'evyon

(1QH 2.32; 3.25, etc.), and in the *War Rule* the ‘sons of light’ are called the ‘poor in spirit’ (*anawey ruah*, 1QM 14.7). In the *Commentary on Psalm 37.11* the author refers to the Qumran community as “the Congregation of the Poor Ones” (4QpPs 2.11-12). Although living conditions by the shore of the Dead Sea were not luxurious, to put it mildly, subsistence was possible. Moreover, the architectural remains suggest a standard of sufficiency that would rival any Franciscan friary, and surpass many of the larger Vincentian houses of today.

Yet another piece of evidence should be brought in. In two passages Paul speaks of the *ptochoi* (Gal 2.10), or “the *ptochoi* of the saints in Jerusalem” (Rom 15.26). Were these destitute in the economic sense, or was their poverty to be measured by their total dependence on God? We cannot be sure.

Ptochos in the New Testament

In the New Testament alone the word *ptochos* occurs 34 times: ten times in the Gospel of Luke, five in Matthew, five in Mark, and four in John. Surprisingly, it does not occur in Acts, the second volume of Luke-Acts. In Paul it occurs only in Rom 15.26; 2 Cor 6.10; Gal 2.10; 4.9. It occurs four times in James (2.2, 3, 5, 6), and elsewhere in the NT only in Rev 3.17 and 13.16.

Ptochos in Luke

A certain perspective on the significance of the theme of the poor in Luke can be gauged by examining his ten occurrences of the term *ptochos*, and seeing these against the background of the term in the rest of the New Testament. The reader may readily see from the layout which follows which references are unique to Luke, and which are shared by the other gospels. If one accepts the common view of the literary relationships between the gospels one will use phrases like, “Luke modified Mark...,” or “Luke’s version of the material shared with Matthew reflects his emphasis...” For my part, I prefer to use the more neutral, “In Luke’s version we find stress on..., etc.”

(1) *Nazareth Synagogue Homily:*

Luke 4.18 he sent me to evangelize *poor people* (no parallel)

(2) *Beatitude:*

Luke 6.20 Blessed are *you poor*,

Matt 5. 3 Blessed are *the poor in spirit*,

Luke 6.20 for yours is the kingdom of God Matt 5.3 for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

(3) *John the Baptist's Witness to Jesus:*

Luke 7.22 Go and tell John what you have seen and heard:

Matt 11.4 Go and tell John what you hear and see:

Luke 7.22 the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, Matt 11.5 the blind receive their sight and the lame walk,

Luke 7.22 lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, Matt 11.5 lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear,

Luke 7.22 the dead are raised up, *poor people are evangelized*

Matt 11.5 and the dead are raised up, and *poor people are evangelized*

Luke 7.23 And blessed is he who takes no offence at me

Matt 11.6 And blessed is he who takes no offence at me

(4) *Parable of Places at Marriage Feast:*

Luke 14.12ff. When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbours, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. 13 But when you give a feast, *invite poor people*, maimed, lame, blind, 14 and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just (no parallel).

(5) *Parable of the Great Supper:*

Luke 14.21 Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame

Matt 22.9 Go therefore to the thoroughfares and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find

(6) & (7) *Lazarus:*

Luke 16.20 And at his gate lay a *poor man* named Lazarus... 22.

The poor man died... (no parallel)

(8) *The Rich Ruler:* Luke 18.22 One thing you still lack,

Matt 19.21 If you would be perfect,

Mark 10.21 One thing you lack,

Luke 18.22 Sell all (*panto*) that you have

Matt 19.21 go, sell what you possess

Mark 10.21 go, sell what you have

Luke 18.22 and distribute it to *poor people*,

Matt 19.21 and give it to *poor people*,

Mark 10.21 and give it to *poor people*,

Luke 18.22 and you will have treasure in the heavens

Matt 19.21 and you will have treasure in heavens

Mark 10.21 and you will have treasure in heaven

Luke 18.22 and come, follow me

Matt 19.21 and come, follow me

Mark 10.21 and come, follow me

(9) *Zacchaeus*:

Luke 19.8 “Half of my goods I give to *the poor*...” (no parallel)

(10) *The Widow’s Mite*:

Luke 21.3”... this *poor* widow has put in more than all of them

Mark 12.43 “...this poor widow has put in more than all those

Ptochos in the other gospels

Matthew uses the word *ptochos* five times: 5.3 (par. Luke 6.20); 11.5 (par. Luke 7.22); 19.21 (par. Mark 10.21; Luke 18.22); 26.9 (par. Mark 14.5; cf. John 12.5), 11 (par. Mark 14.7; John 12.8). Mark similarly uses the word five times 10.21 (par. Matt 19.21; Luke 18.22); 12.42, 43 (par. Luke 21.3); 14.5 (par. Matt 26.9), 7 (par. Matt 26.11; John 12.8). John has the word four times, three in the context of the Bethany anointing (12.5, 6, 8), and the fourth concerning what the eleven at the Last Supper supposed Jesus to have said to Judas (“that he should give something to the *poor*”, 13.29).

Luke, then, shares with both Matthew and Mark the incident of the Rich Man only. He shares with Matthew alone the Beatitude, and John’s Witness to Jesus, and shares with Mark alone the incident of the Widow’s Mite. Luke alone has the Nazareth homily, the places at a feast parable, (the use of *ptochos* in the parable of the Great Supper), the Lazarus parable, and the Zacchaeus incident.

On the other hand, Luke’s scene of the anointing of Jesus (7.36-50) deals with the question of sin, while that of Matt 26.6-13, Mark 14.3-9, and John 12.1-8 bring in the theme of the poor. Luke, therefore, does not

have the phrases, "For this ointment might have been sold... and given to *the poor*" (Matt 26.9; Mark 14.5; and cf. John 12.5), and "For you always have *the poor* with you" (Matt 26.11; Mark 14.7; John 12.8).

Ptochos in Paul

Romans 15.26 uses the word in connection with the collection in favour of *the poor* of Jerusalem. In 2 Cor 6.10 Paul and Timothy describe themselves as "*poor*, yet making many rich." Gal 2.10 describes the help of *the poor* as a part of the agreement made between Paul/Barnabas and James, Cephas and John. Gal 4.9 uses the adjective of 'the elements' in the pejorative sense of *beggarly*.

Ptochos in James

In his celebrated passage criticizing the attitude of a preferential option for the rich, James contrasts a man with gold rings and in fine clothing, with a *poor* man (2.2, 3). He gives the core of his theological reflection: "Has not God chosen those who are *poor* in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?" (v.5), and he chastises his readers for their having dishonoured *the poor* (v. 6).

Ptochos in Revelation

In the Letter to the Church of Laodicea, the author writes, "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, *poor*, blind and naked" (Rev 3.17). The author of the Apocalypse completes the NT usage of the term with his description of all people, under the headings, "the small and the great, the rich and the *poor*, the free and the slave..." (Rev 13.16).

Cognate noun and verb

The cognate noun *ptocheia* also reflects the root meaning. Paul and Timothy remind the Corinthians that in the churches in Macedonia, while in a severe test of affliction, "their abundance of joy and their extreme *poverty* have overflowed in a wealth of liberality on their part" (2 Cor 8.2). The *poverty* of Christ is invoked in 2 Cor 8.9. The association of tribulation with *poverty* occurs also in Rev 2.9: "I know your tribulation and your poverty, but you are rich."

The cognate verb *ptocheuo* occurs just once in the NT, with reference to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, "that though he was rich, yet for your sake *he became poor* (*epptocheusen*), so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor 8.9).

Conclusions

Clearly one must respect the possibility that the same term *ptochos* may refer to a person in somewhat different social circumstances from one place to another. As we know, the social circumstances of a Phibsboro *ptochos* may not be quite the same as those of the Mill Hill variety. Nevertheless, from the survey of the occurrence of *ptochos* in the New Testament it appears that

- *the poor* are the opposite of the rich (Luke 6.24; Luke 16.20, 22; 2 Cor 8.9; James 2.2, 3). However, the author of Revelation turns the term on its head when he assures the rich, prosperous and self-sufficient that they are in fact wretched, pitiable, *poor*, blind and naked (Rev 3.17).
- the path to discipleship for the rich ruler of Luke 18.22 (cf. Matt 19.21; Mark 10.21) is to sell all that he has, and give it to the poor
- compare Zacchaeus who gave half of his goods to *the poor* (Luke 19.8). The importance of caring for the poor is reflected also in its being a condition of the agreement struck between Paul/Barnabas and James, Cephas and John (Gal 2.10). The care of *the poor* of Jerusalem spurred on the collection referred to in Romans 15.26. James chastises his readers for their having dishonoured the *poor* (2.6).
- the evangelization of the poor is of the same order as the liberation of prisoners, the restoring of sight to the blind, the freeing of the oppressed (Luke 4.18), the healing of the lame, lepers, and the deaf, and the raising of the dead (Luke 7.22; Matt 11.5)
- the poor are classed as the non-rich, the maimed, the lame, and the blind (Luke 14.13; cf. Luke 14.21)

The Rich

In addition to enquiring into the use of *ptochos* in the New Testament, and especially in Luke-Acts, it is significant to examine the use of the term which expresses the other end of the spectrum, *plousios*, a rich person. While it occurs in Matthew three times (Matt 19.23, 24; 25.27), twice in Mark (Mark 10.25; 12.41), not at all in John, it occurs eleven times in Luke. Elsewhere in the New Testament it occurs in 2 Cor 8.9; Eph 2.4; 1 Tim 6.17; James 1,10, 11; 2.5, 6; 5.1; and Rev 2.9; 3.17; 6.15; 13.16.

Statistics alone, then, suggest that Luke has a particular interest in the rich. Luke's Jesus is critical of the *rich man* who brought forth plen-

tifully, and who was tempted to eat, drink, and be merry (12.16). He also criticizes the host who invited only *rich* neighbours (14.12).

But it is in those passages in which he contrasts the rich and the poor that his teaching is at its starkest (Beatitude/Woe of 6.20, 24, and a *rich man* and Lazarus at 16.19, and the poor widow who gave her all, Luke 21.1-4; Mark 12.41-44).

Luke records incidents which reflect a total selfishness (the rich ruler of 18.22-25; parallels in Matt 19, Mark 10), and a total selflessness (the poor widow of 21.1-4; Mark 12.41-44), separated by the example of Zacchaeus who gave half his possessions away (Luke 19).

Putting these reflections on the theme of rich in Luke side by side with his remarks on the poor leaves me in no doubt that when Luke speaks of *poor people* he clearly means people who are lacking in the essentials for subsistence. It is obvious, of course, that one is never poor only in a material sense. Material poverty involves loss of dignity, status, and security, and, in a society sensitive to questions of ritual purity, uncleanness.

What makes a person poor?

There are, broadly speaking, two kinds of poverty, absolute poverty which describes the state of a person who is without the basic food, clothes and shelter required to subsist, and all other forms of relative poverty which vary according to the changing standards of every society and period. For the purposes of what follows, we regard as poor those people who, according to the standards of their own society, are ill fed, ill clothed and ill housed. The reasons for this state of poverty may be due to natural causes, or to human causes, or to some combination of the two. Clearly substantial improvement of the lot of the poor will require dealing with the underlying causes.

How far does the information about the living conditions of first century Galilee bring us? Poverty is related to the serious absence of sufficient food and clothing, or of the means to secure them.

Diet

Food consumption differentiated the rich from the poor. The celebration attending the return of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15, with the slaughter of the fatted calf, and the other son's complaint that not even a goat had been available to him, shows both the festive nature of eating of meat and also its rarity. Wealth was recognised by the possession of

choice meat, white wheat bread and wine, and by the absence of barley bread, certain legumes, wild plants, etc.

Poor people could not eat meat or wheat, and they were recognised by their consumption of barley bread and meat (if any) or wine (vinegar) of low quality. The purity laws of Judaism made it more difficult for poor people to fulfill them. Some of the food they had to eat, because of their poverty, was in the unclear state. It was less pure or less white, and their meat came from locusts and from older domesticated animals, etc. So that to be poor in that sense meant having enough to eat, but with little dignity and security. Among these poor people were the needy who, for one reason or another, lost even that little security they had and were reduced to beggary.

There were certain categories of poor people who were entitled to regular help, and from a second century A.D. text, it appears that a poor person was supposed to receive two loaves of bread per day, that is, enough for two meals (*mPe'ah* 8.7). This was considered to be the basic minimum for a day. It is determined that a loaf weighed between 500g & 600g. This average loaf of whole wheat bread was deemed to be the minimum fare for one day, it was just about enough to survive. People who did not have this amount per day would be in danger of starvation. In such cases, the duty to preserve human life took precedence over purity rules, even impure food.

The wealthier people appeared to have secured a good living, although they too were subject to catastrophes, mainly of a political form. They ate good meat regularly, drank old wine, ate excellent bread and varied vegetables, fruit and nuts. Most people ate bread or porridge made of barley, various cereals and legumes, or more rarely wheat. They also supplemented them usually with salt and oil or olives, etc. Sometimes, also, they had quantities of milk and cheese, and when in season they had some vegetables and fresh fruits, and out of season dried fruits which were very important sources of calcium, vitamins and riboflavin. Meat was restricted to festivities and normally only in small quantities.

The real difference between rich and poor was in terms of security. The rich people could store away food in anticipation of famines, etc. The *rich man* of Luke 12.16-21 is a good example: "The land of a *rich man* brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry'..."

The poor, on the other hand, had no such stores, and they were therefore much more liable to be devastated by the various catastrophes like drought and famine. The Midrash on Lamentations puts it as follows: "While the fat one becomes lean, the lean one is dead" (LamR. 3.10).

Clothing

The account in the Acts of the Apostles of Peter's miraculous escape from jail indicate the normal pattern of dress: "Get up quickly", and the chains fell off his hands. And the Angel said to him, 'Dress yourself and put on your sandals.' And he did so. And he said to him, 'Wrap your mantle around you and follow me'" (Acts 12.7-8).

The Gospel of Luke shows the contrast between wealth and poverty in the clothing of Lazarus and the Rich Man, "There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, who desired to be fed from what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores" (Luke 16.19-21). The two figures, Lazarus and the rich man, highlight the difference in economic terms. The rich man could dress in the greatest refinements of his time, and feast accordingly. Lazarus had no clothes worthy of mention, was afflicted with sores, perhaps due to malnutrition, and was happy to get the scraps from the table, while he didn't even have the strength to drive off the dogs.

The causes of poverty were many. We know from our sources that in normal times intensive work produced an abundance of the necessary foods, but whether this was enough to go around, if the society wished it, we simply do not know. Food production was upset by such factors as famines, wars and disease. In general the existence of poverty and wealth was considered to be a question of religion and politics rather than one related to food production (Hamel: 141). The exploitation of people's labour through taxes, rents and debts also added to some people's poverty.

Luke-Acts: 'the gospel of the poor'?

The Gospel of Luke is commonly regarded as 'the gospel of the poor'. Let us examine whether Luke-Acts stresses the poor, and if so consider why.

The claim of Richard Cassidy (a priest of the Detroit archdio-

cese) reflects a common view: “An unmistakable feature of the Jesus described in Luke’s account is that he displays a specific and consistent concern for the sick and the poor” (1987: 2). He cites the Nazareth synagogue scene (4.18-19), the banquet of poor, maimed, etc. (14.12-14), the reference to diseases and infirmities (14.21), the parable of Lazarus (16.19-26), all of which are peculiar to Luke. In addition he highlights Luke’s references to Jesus’ concern for less regarded groups, Samaritans, Gentiles, Women, and Tax-Collectors.

Are the poor in Luke’s gospel to be identified with the hungry, those who weep, the sick, those who labour, those who bear burdens, the last, the simple, the lost, the sinners? It is prudent in the first instance to distinguish between Jesus’ attitude to the poor, and that to tax-collectors and sinners (Karris: 1978).

Rich and poor in Luke’s community

The scholarly methods applied to the study of the documents of the New Testament in this century (Source, Historical, Form and Redaction Criticism) have paid scant attention to the social, political and religious circumstances that provided the spur for the composition of the documents. More recent scholarship has attempted to respect these factors. The application of the methods of sociology to the investigation of New Testament texts has proved to be both popular and enlightening. There is, however, a fundamental limitation in this methodology as far as the gospels are concerned. Unlike the situation reflected in the letters of Paul, the authorship, time and place of composition of the gospels is a matter of ongoing speculation. The lack of sound facts in these matters invites high levels of conjecture, which, however attractive, are never altogether convincing.

Moreover, all sociology based study of the gospels operates on the basis of unproven solutions to the problems of the sources of, and the literary interrelationships between, the gospels. A further limitation arises from a concentration on the final stage of gospel composition. Sparse attention is paid to the context of the material in the ministry of Jesus. Readers may like to know whether the views on the poor (and the rich) in Luke-Acts derive from Luke’s free re-presentation of Jesus’ attitudes, if not in part of his own composition, or whether they accurately reflect Jesus’ own attitudes, if never quite *verbatim*.

Why does Luke portray Jesus as being so concerned with the poor and the rich? Scholars have proposed various answers. According to

Cadbury Jesus' focus was on the rich, and their responsibility to give alms, rather than on the alleviation of the lot of the poor as such (pp. 262-63).

Degenhardt argues that the admonitions to abandon wealth are given only to the travelling apostles, missionaries, wandering preachers, and resident community leaders, etc (pp. 41, 214-15). He argues that Luke confronted *Gentile* Christians, who because of their background, had little time for the poor (pp. 221-23).

Jacques Dupont, OSB, takes the view that the beatitudes of Luke are addressed to the Christian community, while the woes are addressed to those outside that community, i.e., blind Israel (1973: 149-203).

In addition to taking account of the occurrence of the terminology of the poor it is very important to enquire into what is the overall thrust of Luke-Acts in the matter. If it is the case that the destitute/beggars are the particular concern of Luke how does one explain that this concern is not prominent in the Acts of the Apostles? Secondly, it is of interest to investigate whether the emphasis in Luke on the poor reflects Luke's real concern for their economic betterment, or whether it is more in the form of a polemic against the rich. Is Luke an invitation to make a preferential option for the poor, or is it more an invitation to abandon one's riches? Is Luke for the poor, or is he merely against the rich?

Thomas Schmidt concludes his study on *Hostility to Wealth in the Synoptic Gospels* by claiming that there is little evidence of sympathy for the poor as such in any of the Synoptic Gospels. From the lack of any clear indication of the socio-economic circumstances of Luke's audience or of the situation described, Schmidt argues that Luke was not really interested in the poor as such, but only in communicating his judgement that the dispossession of wealth was a Christian's way of expressing his trust in God (pp. 161-62).

While Schmidt does the service of showing that hostility to wealth has a history independent of socio-economic circumstances, and a place in a variety of literatures, I consider that his conclusions with respect to Luke are too doctrinaire. If some of the texts of Luke bear the interpretation that hostility to wealth rather than care for the poor is the predominant factor, others must be read differently (esp. Dives-Lazarus of Luke 16, special to Luke). Although the second volume of his work does not use the word *ptochos*, we do find that the alienation of wealth in favour of others is a feature of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 2.45; 4.34f.; 6.1), and was practised by Cornelius (Acts 10.2, 4, 31). Moreover, the alleviation of those suffering because of famine is noted in Acts 11.28-30, and Paul's collection is mentioned in Acts 24.17.

Of the recent scholars who attempt to describe the social context of Luke's community we select two, Robert J. Karris, OFM, and Philip Esler.

Karris

Karris challenges the view of Dupont that the beatitudes and the woes cannot be addressed to the same community (p. 115). He concludes that Luke is more concerned with possessors than with the poor (p. 116). He holds that the summaries of Acts 2.41-47 and 4.31c-35 are of major significance, and that they show that the ideal of friendship, so rarely found in secular society, is found in the Christian community, because Christians treat each other as friends. The function of these summaries, then, is to try to bring the Gentile Christians in his community to a sense of the Christian/Jewish concern for the poor.

Luke's Christian community consists of "propertied Christians who have been converted and cannot easily extricate themselves from their cultural mindsets. It also consists of Christians in need of alms. Luke takes great pains to show that Christians treat each other as friends and that almsgiving and care for one another is of the essence of the Way. If the converts do not learn this lesson and learn it well, there is danger that the Christian movement may splinter" (p. 117).

This theme of concern for almsgiving is also to be found in Acts 1.18 (Judas); 3.2-10 (Peter & John without silver & gold to give alms); 5.1-11; 6.1d-6; 8.18d-25; 9.36; 10.2, 4, 31; 11.29; 20.28-35; 24.17.

Karris holds that the identity of the poor (*ptochos*) of 4.18 and 7.22 are the Christian community of Luke's day, who are suffering deprivation and persecution for their faith. He adds that the woes are addressed to the rich members of the Christian community who are tempted to stick to their riches, and ignore the plight of their fellow followers of the Way. The example of Simon, James and John (5.11), and Levi (5.28) who left everything and followed him, Karris takes to be examples of what some people did in response to becoming disciples.

Karris asks why does Luke in his Travel Narrative (Luke 9.51-19.44) have Jesus equip his disciples with *so* much teaching on rich and poor? He suggests that for Luke, almsgiving is one of the signs of adherence to the law, and one of the conditions for participation in a meal (Luke 11.41). The message of the warning against avarice (Luke 12.13-15), and the Parable of the Rich Fool (Luke 12.16-21), both special to Luke, is that possessions are for distribution to the poor. Karris takes these verses to be addressed to the rich in Luke's community who may be

tempted to ignore the plight of the poor.

Jesus' instruction to invite the poor, the maimed, and the blind to attend the festive meal (Luke 14.12-14) was directed by Luke against those in his community with the wherewithal to host festive meals to go against their Greco-Roman values in inviting only the wealthy.

Karris is on less secure ground in claiming that the Pharisees of Luke 16.14 ('lovers of money') are the rich members of Luke's community who think that almsgiving is not important, not only because their cultural background made them blind to the needs of the poor, but for the theological reason that they imagined that riches were a sign of the divine favour.

Luke 18.18-31 (The very rich ruler in search of eternal life), and 18.28, he argues, proposes the ideal of renunciation of that which is one's own for the sake of the poor in the *koinonia*. Read alongside Acts 2.41-47 and 4.31c-35, the possessors in Luke's community can voluntarily renounce their possessions in favour of those in need. But in Luke's community there was room also for those who give away in favour of the poor only half of what they own (Luke 19.1-10 – the Zacchaeus scene, unique to Luke).

Karris concludes: "Luke's community clearly had both rich and poor members. Luke is primarily taken up with the rich members, their concerns, and the problems which they pose for the community. Their concerns, as evidenced in 18.18-30 and 19.1-10, revolve around the question: do our possessions prevent us from being genuine Christians? The concerns of the rich are multiplied by the onslaught of sporadic, unofficial persecution (see 6.24-26 and 14.25-33)" (p. 124).

Karris builds up a credible picture from some hints. But he never faces the question of the setting of the words of Jesus in his lifetime (*Sitz im Leben Jesu*), nor that of the communities which traditioned the material (*Sitz im Leben der Kirche*). Everything is related to the circumstances of Luke's community, nothing to the context in Jesus' ministry, or later.

Philip F. Esler

Philip Esler insists that Luke has shaped the Gospel traditions at his disposal in response to social and political pressures experienced by his community. His investigations have led him to conclude that "it is entirely unrealistic to expect to be able to appreciate the purely religious dimension of Luke-Acts apart from an understanding of the social and political realities of the community for which it was composed" (p. 2).

The circumstances of the Lucan church he summarizes as follows: Luke's community, living in a hellenistic city of the Roman East in the period 85-95, experienced difficulties both from within and without. Its membership was mixed, and included people from the opposite ends of the religious and social spectra. Prior to their embracing the Christian Way some had been pagans, and others conservative Jews. Some were from the richest echelons of society, while others were beggars.

The fact that the members of Jewish origin shared table fellowship with those of Gentile origin further exacerbated the problems which the Jewish Christians were having with the synagogue. The social mix of the community also contributed to the internal tensions of the Lucan community: "The presence within the same group of representatives from the glittering elite and from the squalid urban poor was very unusual in this society and created severe internal problems, especially since some of the traditions of Jesus' sayings known to the community counselled the rich to a generosity to the destitute quite at odds with Greco-Roman attitudes to gift-giving" (Esler 221). There was also a political problem for the members of the community who were Roman soldiers or officials, who were embarrassed by the fact that Jesus, the founder of the new movement had been put to death by the Roman Governor of Judea, and Paul, its leading propagator, had been before Roman courts a number of times.

This situation spurred on one of the leaders or intellectuals in the community, whom tradition named Luke, to re-interpret the traditions of Jesus in such a fashion as to reassure the different groups within the community by answering their problems. He argued that table fellowship between Gentiles and Jews had already been authorized by Peter's vision which was of divine origin (Acts 10.1-48), and was approved by the Jerusalem church on two occasions (Acts 11.1-18; 15.6-26). Moreover, Luke-Acts from beginning to end presents the Christian Way, rather than that of the synagogue Jews, as the genuine fulfilment of the Jewish traditions.

On the social front Luke intensified the preference for the poor which was in the traditions available to him, and which went back to Jesus himself. He also introduced a parenetic motif, warning the rich that their way to salvation depended on their generosity to the poor.

He dealt with the fear that there was conflict between Christianity and Rome, by showing that both Paul and Jesus had repeatedly been adjudged innocent of any crime against Roman law. Moreover, since it derived from the ancient religion of Judaism, it was not a new religion which might produce social unrest.

Luke's theology, then, was motivated by the religious, social and political forces active in his own community. Esler concludes from this that it is not so much that some of Luke's theology is as relevant today as it was in his time, e.g., his teaching on rich and poor, but the fact that he exercised such liberty in re-interpreting the traditions in order to address the real needs of his own community. "The freedom with which he has moulded the gospel to minister to the needs of his community constitutes a potent authority for all those struggling to realize a Christian vision and a Christian life-style attuned to the social, economic and political realities of our own time" (Esler: 223).

Conclusion

We began our investigation in the hope of contributing towards discovering the meaning of the seminal Vincentian text *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*. The apparently simple question, 'What does the text mean?' does not allow of a correspondingly simple answer, and this for several reasons.

Firstly, no literary text has 'a meaning'. A text may well have 'a meaning' for the author at the level of her/his consciousness - the influence of the author's unconscious is by definition excluded from the meaning of the text as intended by the author. In the nature of a literary, or artistic work, 'the meaning' is never locked within the confines of the work. Moreover, as soon as it leaves the hands of its author a text encounters the world-view of each of its readers. The 'meaning of the text' for the reader will reflect both the reader's world-view even before encountering the text, and the impact the reading of the text has on her/him.

I have used the historico-critical method of investigation in my earlier article (Prior 1990) and in this study, in the hope that knowledge of the circumstances of the author and of the first audience/readership of Luke's Gospel clears the way for us to arrive at an understanding of Luke 4.16-30, which is not inconsistent with the truths intended by the author. It must still be remembered, however, that whatever the findings of such an investigation be, they are no substitute for the opportunity which every new reading of the text presents to the reader of posing the question, 'What, then, shall we do?'

Secondly, in enquiring about the meaning of *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* we are not dealing with 'any old text'. Believers will see 'the hand' of the Spirit of God in the text. It derives its authority also from its position within the Canon of the Scriptures of the community

of believers.

Thirdly, before deciding on ‘the authentic meaning of the text’ one would be wise to respect the tradition of interpretation, which becomes a highly significant factor when one regards the Founding Father of the Vincentian communities, and considers the praxis of the charitable societies either founded by him, or which look to him as Patron.

Nevertheless, accepting these caveats, what can we say? I suggest that the following findings are derivable from, and are consistent with the Lucan text. It is my view that a reading of Luke’s account of the scene in the Nazareth synagogue requires that attention be given to the following areas:

1. Faith in Jesus Christ as Response to Reading Luke To profess faith in Jesus Christ is to say that his message and significance is central to one’s values, gives one’s life its fundamental character and direction, shapes one’s understanding and vision, is the norm for evaluating oneself and others in our world, gives grounding to one’s hopes and fears and aspirations, and informs one’s conscience, affections and loyalties (see MacNamara 1988: 2f.). The invitation to profess faith in Jesus Christ, then, may require that one turns one’s personal, and community, world on its head.

2. Repentance as Response to Reading Luke

While the emphases of each of the evangelists diverge, they are at one in requiring of the reader repentance (*metanoia*). Whereas Matthew and Mark open the public ministry of Jesus with the call to repentance, Luke proclaims the good news to the poor in the synagogue of Nazareth.

After John the Baptist had preached his message requiring repentance, ‘the multitudes said to him, “What then shall we do?” And he answered them, “He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.” Tax collectors also came to be baptized, and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than is appointed you.” Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Rob no one by violence or by false accusation, and be content with your wages.”’ (Luke 3.10-14). In other words, responding to the invitation to repentance is not merely a matter of words, and no sensitive reader can fail to be alerted to the social obligations implied in the Lucan call to repentance.

3. Repentance and Discipleship

In Luke's account of Jesus' movements we find him in Capernaum after the Nazareth incident, performing an exorcism (4.31-37), the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (4.38-39), and other healings and exorcisms (4.40-41). Then he left to preach in other cities (4.42-44). So far he operated alone. After the miraculous catch of fish Simon, James and John 'left everything and followed him' (5.11). It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that discipleship of the Lucan Jesus demands frugality, and, if one has possessions, the alienation of them in favour of the poor. This is not an easy option.

4. Repentance for the Rich

I find it impossible to escape the conclusion that the Lucan theme of rich and poor must leave any Christian community fundamentally disturbed in the face of serious inequalities of wealth and social security in its own community. Since Luke-Acts moves inexorably from Jerusalem, the centre of Jewish 'ethnic' religion, to Rome, the secular city and capital of the Empire, its readers should embrace the universalism of its message that all people, and in the first place poor people, fall under the grace of God, and should be beneficiaries of his good news.

A Lucan Christian ought not to possess more than what is absolutely necessary for survival, as long as others are in need. It would be a scandal if the dress and meals of Vincentians were closer in quality to the those of the Rich Man than to those of Lazarus.

The Lucan theme of rich-poor invites its readers to alienate its riches in favour of the poor. The programme outlined in Luke 4.16-30, and in the passages which speak of the poor and the rich, implies an invitation to respond. Unless one insists on so interpreting it, it is not an imperative. Readers are left free to respond in proportion to their moral generosity.

5. Social and Political Dimensions of Discipleship

A study of Luke 4.16-30 which ended with a mere definition of the phrase *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* would represent a dereliction of one's responsibilities. If Luke's gospel defines the message of Jesus in terms of evangelizing the poor, a disciple must ensure that the poor are not robbed of its message by giving the impression that the gospel is a promise to the wealthy, rather than to them.

The concept of *evangelizing the poor* involves two interrelated terms – in *evangelizing the poor*, one is presumed to effect some action,

or programme of action, in favour of the poor person. What kind of betterment of the poor person is required to constitute evangelization? At this point we must acknowledge the radically different context of the Christians in Luke's church, and that of Christians, including Vincentians, today.

The inspired documents of the Early Church reflect a context in which followers of the Christian Way were in a minority, and were without any significant political power. The same cannot be said of the Christians of any period since Constantine. If the most that was required by Luke in his context was that the rich members of his community should come to the aid of the poor ones, and that they should live frugally, much more is required of Christians today if they submit themselves to the power of Luke's invitation.

Whether or not a Vincentian, or any other Christian, or group of Christians, lives frugally is not a phenomenon of cosmic significance, and is probably a matter of little interest to the poor. The poor do not require Christians to adopt the frugality of their life-style. In any case, because Vincentians and all church officials are secure members of the empowered class, their 'practice of poverty' can never be more than a ritualistic gesture - in our western society, at least, Christian leaders can never share the degradation of the poor. In antiquity, as also today, religious people by designating themselves as living in poverty, distort the word 'poverty', and misrepresent and probably insult those who are really poor.

What the poor can with justification require is that Christians use their power in their favour. Modern Christians true to the picture presented by Luke are invited to subvert those cultures which produce poverty and ignore the plight of the poor, rather than underpin them. The modern Lazarus is not likely to be impressed should Dives imitate his life-style, even to the point of having the sores of his body licked by dogs. A Christian society which rests content with the life-style of the rich man of Luke 16, and allows Lazarus to languish, cannot expect to fare any better than the man who dressed in purple and feasted sumptuously every day.

Readers vowed to the evangelization of the poor in the Vincentian tradition may be expected to respond to Luke's invitation with enthusiasm, in virtue of their mission statement. To respond absolutely puts one in a position of radical discipleship - that will always be a minority response. Turning one's back on the poor leaves the rich one sad. Fortunately, as the discipleship of Zacchaeus shows, half-measures are better than none.

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Forum

The pilgrimage of Solidarity to Tobar an Ailt – a Personal Reflection

Between the 8th and 15th of July 1990 a group of about seventy Travellers and settled people went on the second “Pilgrimage of Solidarity” to Tobar an Ailt. The pilgrimage began at Multyfarnham Abbey and continued on foot to the Holy Well of Tobar an Ailt (The Well on the Height), just outside Sligo town. The theme chosen for the pilgrimage, which had been discussed throughout the winter, was “From Darkness into Light”. All the prayer services and the vigil at the shrine were based on this theme and its implications for the struggle of the Travelling People.

One of the relics of the Leaving Certificate is a nodding acquaintance with the *Canterbury Tales*. I was reminded of this piece of schoolroom poetry when thinking about a more recent pilgrimage which took place this summer to Tobar an Ailt – *A Pilgrimage of Solidarity with the Travelling People*. This pilgrimage was the brain-child of a group of settled people and Travellers reflecting on how best to overcome the barriers between the two communities. Their first effort, a pilgrimage to the traditional patronage site of Mamean in Connemara, proved very successful and the group were encouraged to begin preparations for Pilgrimage '90.

The preparations for a medieval pilgrimage must have been very demanding; ours were also, and took place over months and during interminable meetings! The choice of destination, the planning of the route, the exploration of the theme, were all discussed by the many Traveller groups taking part in the project. These meetings were quite taxing but through them we were encouraged, sustained, cajoled and even videotaped into becoming, instead of a disparate collection of Travellers and settled people, the band of pilgrims who set out from Multyfarnham on our journey to Tobar an Ailt. From the start this was a joint effort between Travellers and settled people, the former bringing their familiarity with the holy places dotted around the country, their knowledge of the roads and their experience of injustice and preju-

dice at the hand of their fellow country men and women. The settled people brought their own particular skills and a willingness to hear the Travellers' tale without imposing solutions or demanding conformity to some pre-defined norm. In this spirit a genuine sense of solidarity was formed.

Our days together were exceptional. I felt, for the first time, accepted by the Travellers as a peer, not as a PRIEST. I have always felt respected - honoured, even, - but from a distance. On the walk, at the prayers, round the camp-fire of an evening, we were all one, the labels of role and background lost against the common experience of blistered feet, heat exhaustion and the task of coping with life on the move. In this setting one heard things too often left unsaid: the heart-break of a mother despairing of her children's future. One saw things too often hidden: the high-handed attitude of Gardai and local residents of one provincial town, an attitude which changed perceptibly when they realised they were not talking to Travellers. One felt feelings too often rationalised by "professional distance": the sadness of being condemned for who you are, a condemnation from which no "good deed" can win salvation. However, the pilgrimage was not unremittingly sorrowful; we heard laughter too, and song. We rejoiced in fine weather and we laughed at a local publican caught out in an act of petty prejudice. We sang songs late into the night around the camp-fire. The tales of our pilgrimage had all the pathos of a suffering people, but they were shot through with the humour of which human nature, even in the most difficult of circumstances, is capable.

Living cheek by jowl in this way one also saw less glamorous realities. It is a cliché to say that the Traveller women have a particularly hard time; it is more shocking to witness this at first hand. The negative attitudes concerning women are deeply ingrained: the boy who was mortified by the very idea that he should wash up after the common meal, or do his share of the preparing of food; the soon-to-be-married young man who treated his fiancée as little more than a servant. To see these attitudes among the young was, perhaps, the most upsetting, as it does not bode well for the future. One saw at first hand what the blight of illiteracy meant to individuals and to a whole community, reducing confident, intelligent, men and women to shamefaced stuttering children, simply because of shapes on a page. It was depressing to meet a gifted poet whose output is limited, not by creativity but by literacy skills which cannot keep pace with his ability.

One saw the disparity of approaches by settled people to the situation of the Travelling People. There was, at one extreme, a well-

intentioned paternalism. Some individuals seemed to luxuriate in that which shocked them, regaling others with stories of terrible conditions. One wondered as to whose need was being met; was it that of the Travellers, or their own need to find an outlet for their undeniably genuine sympathy? There was, at the other extreme, an ideological dogmatism. In this case very impressive success masks a methodological *idée fixe* which is alien to Traveller custom. One cannot argue with the effectiveness of such methods, but rather with the assumption of superiority over other approaches. In an age whose watchword is pluralism, dogmatism in any form is unattractive. The situation of the Travelling People demands all the energies of those settled people willing to stand with them. That any energy should be dissipated in mutual animosity is as sad as it is scandalous.

My experience of the Pilgrimage of Solidarity was an experience of intimacy. It was an experience of the depth and complexity of the Travellers' lives, which their reserve and my blindness had kept from me before. It also showed me that, however noble, my presence with the Travelling People cannot simply be a superficial conformity to a Vincentian charism statement. Instead, it must come from the heart and be lived as my own. This last realization does not bring any necessary transformation, and the movement from personal *glasnost* to *perestroika* remains a task for the future. On our journey I heard the Travellers' tale told with more intensity than ever before. It was a privilege to have been there for those days. I hope the prayers we said have been heard and that our journeying together will have played their part in the journey of the Travelling People *from darkness into light*.

Joseph Loftus

Planctus for the Dooleyites

Anyone who thinks that anti-clerical writing only began in Ireland in the last thirty years might care to take a glance at the works of M J F McCarthy. Two of his books, *Five Years in Ireland* (1901) and *Priests and People in Ireland* (1902), launch ferocious attacks on the Irish clergy. In *Priests and People in Ireland*, however, he pays what by his standards amounts to a compliment to the Vincentians:

Though I spent three years at school with the Vincentians in Cork, I judge them by their public behaviour and utterances, and not at all from personal experience, and should be inclined to say

that they are the least objectionable of the many different classes of regular priests in Ireland.

Maybe he was trying to make up for his earlier work where he had not been so generous. In *Five Years in Ireland*, however, during the course of an attack on the Vincentians he manages to make a most interesting point:

Dr Lynch, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, died at Tullow at the advanced age of 90. As far as one can gather, he, with a Fr Dooley, had been the founder of the Irish Vincentians, and of their well-known school at Castleknock, to which we shall refer again briefly. It is stated that the original idea was that the Order were to devote their lives exclusively to giving missions to poor people. That is quite lost sight of now; and they are now reapers and gleaners of Intermediate Result Fees; official confessors at Maynooth; directors of the young Catholic National Teachers at Drumcondra; and of the ecclesiastical students for the Foreign Mission at All Hallows in the same locality. They are what one might call superior priests.

M J F McCarthy's view of the Irish Vincentians around 1900 was that they had not been faithful to their charism, though he would not have used that word. Indeed, his view was that they ceased to be faithful from quite an early stage in the history of the Province. He even took to insisting that they should be called "Dooleyites" so different were they from what he thought the Vincentian ideal should be.

Shortly after I entered St Joseph's, Blackrock, in 1976 I remember noticing the medallion with the Vincentian seal on it on the back of the 1930s student wing. My Latin was good enough to translate the motto, "He sent me to evangelize the poor".

Before I entered the community I had formed the impression that the Irish Vincentians were a group that valued diversity. Though I knew that St Vincent de Paul had been associated with works of charity and though I knew that the Irish Vincentians did to some degree involve themselves with the poor I did not know that it was supposed to be the over-riding imperative of all their works. And yet as the years went on I learned from the emphasis on the life of St Vincent in our formation, from the constitutions of the Congregation and from various homilies and conferences that we received that it was far from so in practice and that the disparity between theory and practice was a considerable

source of tension in the community. Many confrères seemed content not to be working with the poor while some others seemed very restive that the Irish Vincentians were not living out what was understood to be their charism.

To my mind two important ideas are involved when we speak of a religious community renewing its charism. The first is that the early period of a community, the time of its founder, is a privileged time. It is the time when its guiding spirit or charism is established. It is a spirit, moreover, which should animate that community throughout its entire history, though adapted to different times and circumstances, if it is to be faithful to its founder. The second is that renewal entails the assumption that a community needs to refresh itself in its charism because its vision and exercise of it has somehow grown stale. In other words, it entails returning to an original vision and leaving behind those things which are not in accord with it.

For the last twenty and more years the Irish Vincentians have been attempting to renew themselves in the Vincentian charism. With the crisis in manpower it is now reaching the stage where urgent decisions about the future are having to be taken. The perspective for such a renewal has been the one provided for us by the international Vincentians, through documents such as the new Constitutions and the *Lines of Action*.

If one takes St Vincent and the modern Vincentian documents seriously then I believe one is forced to come to a determination as to the fidelity of the Irish Vincentians to their charism not only now but throughout their history. And it seems to me that one must inexorably come to the conclusion that something like M J F McCarthy's analysis is the correct one. The Irish Vincentians' departure from the spirit of their charism is not of recent date. In fact it goes back to the very beginnings of the Province.

St Vincent used to speak of his little company being like a mother. One ought to love her even if other mothers were more beautiful. His vision of the community then was primarily of a living group of people rather than as a juridical reality. Indeed, as we all know, he delayed issuing the Common Rules of the community until near the end of his life so that they could be based on actual practice:

You will not find anything in them which you have not been doing for a long time, and I must say how pleased I am that you do live by them and that they have enabled you all to help one another (Prefatory letter).

St Vincent's idea was that theory should follow practice. For the modern Vincentians, however, the reverse has been the case: changes in practice are seen as a response to a new theory, in this case to the new Constitutions and other documents of the General Assemblies. And it is not very difficult to conclude when comparing these documents with the present reality and past history of the Irish Vincentians that they do not describe the Irish Vincentians, present or past. In the course of our moves towards renewal we Irish Vincentians have assumed that this means that our present reality must change in future to be more in line with those documents which provide us with a charter as to the practical implications of our charism. By implication, also, I believe it means that we must come to a negative judgement with respect to our own past.

However, I would suggest that there is another possibility we have not considered and this is the main point I want to raise in this brief piece. What if the group McCarthy so disparagingly calls the Dooleyites had something to recommend it after all? What if what many would prefer to see as the tolerant inclusiveness of its spirit was seen as having something akin to the authority of a founding charism? Perhaps, the experience of the Irish Vincentians, different though it may be from the international Vincentians, has a positive validity in its own right. Would it not be a valuable thing if we were to place it along side the experience of St Vincent and the modern documents of the international Vincentians as we Irish Vincentians forge our own particular way ahead?

James H Murphy

Miscellanea

Archdeacon Murphy and St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork

In the December 1985 number of *Bulletin CM* the item on Cork mentioned Archdeacon James Murphy, an early benefactor of St Vincent's who, in later life, retired to live there.

In November 1915 some confrère in Cork wrote to Patrick O'Gorman in St Joseph's, Blackrock, apparently asking him to "pump" Daniel O'Sullivan who at that time was in his 87th year; he had been ordained in 1851 and appointed to Cork in 1852. It would appear that the writer of the letter (which has not survived) wanted confirmation from Daniel O'Sullivan (before he died) of something which Philip Burton (died 1900) had told the writer. Burton and Laurence Gillooly, also mentioned in O'Gorman's reply, were both foundation members of the Cork community. In the letter the context will make it clear whether "Fr O'Sullivan" refers to Michael or Daniel. All the bracketing of words and the inverted commas are in the original.

Blackrock 18 XI '15

My dear Confrère/ G.D.N ssn.

Fr O'Sullivan tells me the following facts about Archdeacon Murphy. As they may all interest you, I give them in order including the one in which you are particularly interested. What you heard from Fr Burton is substantially, in fact literally, true, in as much as the morning after the "unroofing" of the Church (by the "big wind" of November 1853) Archdeacon Murphy came to Fr Michael O'Sullivan with the "I.O.U." for £300 (previously lent by the Archdeacon to Fr O'Sullivan), tore up the "I.O.U." (drawn previously by Fr O'Sullivan) in Fr O'Sullivan's presence & told him 'twas no longer due or owed to him (the Archdeacon). No one knew of this transaction or remission of £300 debt (Fr Dan says) but Fr Michael O'Sullivan, Fr Gillooly (Assistant) and Fr Burton (Bursar).

Except this £300 which went into the Church, Fr Dan is not aware of any other gift or bequest to the Church except the £100 a year which he paid during the years (about 1871-1883) he lived in the house, waited upon by "Brother Henry". Fr Morrissey who attended him in his last illness confirms this.

And now for a hurried summary of facts & dates about Archd. Murphy, as recalled by Fr Dan O'S.

Fr Murphy came home to Cork in 1847 stricken himself from ministering to famine victims in Liverpool. Hearing that our missionaries were doing good work in Schull, when convalescent joined them there. Remained for some time after their departure to combat "soupers".

Became Administrator of Carey's Lane, and began St Peter & Paul's (July-November 1857) just after opening of St Vincent's July 1857.

After finishing St Peter & Paul's (opening up a new entrance from Patrick St) he organised the Sick Priests' Sustainment Fund in Cork.

Took over Mercy Hospital from "Vins" when latter began the school on the "Mill Road".

Went to live at Sunday's Well after resigning Carey's Lane 1871-3? Died a year or so after Fr Dan's departure from Cork (1883 or so).

Please excuse this hurried note. I shall be very pleased to help in your investigations at anytime and in anyway.

With all good wishes, I remain, my dear Confrère,

Yours very sincerely in J.C.

P. O'Gorman u.p.C.M.

I have been puzzled as to why St Patrick's Place is referred to as the Mill Road. No map which I have seen uses this expression, and no local expert whom I have consulted has been able to provide an answer; none of them ever heard the expression before. Since PO'G puts the words in inverted commas the name may have been either unofficial or of purely Vincentian usage. If the former it may have referred to either a windmill or a powder mill, the latter because of the nearby military barracks. If it was purely a Vincentian nickname the key to its meaning is probably unrecoverable now.

Thomas Davitt