

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

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Editorial

Following those in the issues for Autumn 1992 and Autumn 1993 this issue also carries a new translation of one of St Vincent's conferences to his community.

And continuing a recent practice, which had been suggested by several readers, it also carries an article by a confrere from another province.

With two seminarists from England expected in the Autumn it is a happy coincidence that this issue has an article on St Vincent and England.

There are also three contributions about present-day activities, with the Travellers, on the radio, and with the St Vincent de Paul Society.

Finally, there are two personal letters written by Irish confreres in the middle of the last century, which reveal some of the feelings of the two men about events of their time.

The Purpose of the Congregation of the Mission

Vincent de Paul

(Talk to the community in St Lazare, 6 December 1658.
Translation by TD)

This evening we're not going to do things the usual way, a conference with each one sharing his thoughts on a set subject. We thought it might be a good idea to explain the rules of the Congregation, and because I don't keep them, wretch that I am, I'm afraid I don't understand the importance of keeping them, and so I've nothing to say which could give glory to God and explain the spirit of the rule in order to bring it out. We'll give it a try, anyway, and then see if it's worth going ahead with it, myself or some others, in the way we start. We've to read the rules first if we're to talk about them.

[A lamp was brought and he opened the book]

Here's the first article, and that's the logical place to start. I'll read it in French since our laybrothers don't understand Latin:

We read in sacred scripture that our Lord, Jesus Christ, sent on earth for the salvation of the human race, did not begin by teaching; he began by doing. And what he did was to integrate fully into his life every type of virtue. He then went on to teach, by preaching the good news of salvation to poor people, and by passing on to his apostles and disciples what they needed to know to become guides for others. Now the little Congregation of the Mission wants, with God's grace, to imitate Christ, the Lord, in so far as that is possible in view of its limitations. It seeks to imitate his virtues as well as what he did for the salvation of others. It is only right that if the Congregation is to do the same sort of work, it should act in the same sort of way. This means that the whole purpose of the Congregation is: 1, to have a genuine commitment to grow in holiness, patterning ourselves, as far as possible, on the virtues which the great Master himself

graciously taught us in what he said and did; 2, to preach the good news of salvation to poor people, especially in rural areas; 3, to help seminarians and priests to grow in knowledge and virtue, so that they can be effective in their ministry.

These are the opening words of our rules; they let us see God's plan for the Congregation, and how from all eternity he had the idea of the spirit and ministry of this Congregation.

Now the rule, if it can be called a rule, expressed in the words we've just heard, says at the end of the article that the little Congregation should use the same means as our Lord used to follow his vocation, namely: first, to strive for growth in holiness; second, to preach the gospel to the poor, especially country people; and in the third place to be of service to the clergy.

That's the rule, and what we did with it is what's done at councils, where, before a canon is formulated, the cardinals and bishops state the teaching and put forward not only the material from which the canon is to be drafted but also the reasons for doing so. The opening words of our rule say that our Lord came into the world to save the human race, and that he began by doing things, then later on he taught. What he did was to put all the virtues into practice. Now all the things he did were virtues fitting for the incarnate God, to be an example to others. And the later instruction was teaching poor people the divine truths, and passing on to the apostles the learning needed for saving the world, for directing people and making them really happy.

The Congregation's idea is to imitate our Lord, in so far as poor weak people can. What does this mean? It means that the Congregation takes as its aim to model itself on the way he behaved, on what he did, on his work and on his own aims. How could a person stand in for someone else if he hadn't the same characteristics, features, proportions, style and looks? It couldn't be done. So, if we aim at making ourselves like this divine model, with this desire, this blessed longing, in our hearts, we must try to make our thoughts, actions and intentions the same as his. He's not just *Deus virtutum* (1); he came to put all virtues into practice, and since what he did and didn't do are virtues, we have to model ourselves on these, trying to be men of virtue. And not merely in our intentions, either; we have to carry these out in the way we behave, so that what we do or don't do stems from this principle. That's how we have to understand the opening words of our rule.

It was right to begin the rules by stating the aim of the Congregation, the ways in which it can serve God, and the means for doing this.

That's what St Augustine, St Benedict and all other founders did. They first laid out what the orders had to do, beginning by defining the community. That's why we were right in putting at the start of our rules the target or goal we are aiming at. If anyone were to ask us: "Why are you in the Congregation of the Mission?" we'd have to acknowledge that God was responsible, so that we could work firstly at our own growth in holiness, secondly for the salvation of the poor, and thirdly to be of service to priests, and say: "That's why I'm here". Now, Fathers and Brothers, how does that strike you as an aim? Could our Lord give us a holier one, or one which would be better for making us holy, one more in line with his infinite goodness, more in keeping with his wish, in his providence, to bring all people to salvation?

Our purpose, then, is to foster our own growth in holiness, to evangelize the poor and to pass on to seminarians and priests the knowledge and virtues they need.

As regards the first, it's offered to us in the gospel, where priests and all Christians have a rule for growth in holiness, and not just any sort of holiness but holiness like that of the eternal Father (2). What a marvellous command from the Son of God! "Be perfect", he says, "as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). That's aiming high, and who'll hit the target? To be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect! Yet that's the yardstick. But, since all Christians don't work at it, God with a touch which should amaze us, seeing most people neglect this, got himself a group who would dedicate themselves to his divine majesty to work, with the help of his grace, at their own and others' perfection.

And what's the point of this perfection? It makes us acceptable to God, constantly giving us justifying grace. It's what makes our thoughts, words and deeds, and even what we omit, acceptable to him. What happiness! What happiness for a missionary who puts at the top of his list wanting to make himself acceptable to God, who works at ridding himself of anything which blocks this, and at attaining what he lacks. That sort of work makes us acceptable to God.

And, of course, all that pre-supposes that to work at virtues means to work at making oneself acceptable to God. And this has to be worked at all the time, to obtain grace for it, always forging ahead, *plus ultra*. So, if in the morning we mark ourselves six we should be up to seven by the afternoon, doing all we do as well as possible. A priest or brother who turns to God in the morning, offering him all he's going to do during the day, his actions and intentions linked with those of our Lord, cutting out all vanity, self-congratulation and self-interest,

what is he actually doing? He's doing something about his perfection, something which makes him more acceptable to God than he was the night before. Or take someone who during prayer has a look at his tendencies towards evil, takes measures to overcome them, generates sorrow for his sins, willingly accepts humiliations and sufferings, steps up his zeal; what's he really doing? He's doing something about his perfection, so that today he's more acceptable to God than yesterday. Since that's the way it is, Fathers, the more perfectly we put virtues into practice the more acceptable we are to God. O Saviour, aren't we blessed to be on the road to perfection! O Saviour, give us the grace to step out smartly along this road and never slow down.

So, in one word, what exactly is our perfection? It means doing well everything we do. First, as reasonable men we get on well with others and respect their rights; second, as Christians we put into practice the virtues of which our Lord has given us examples; finally, as missionaries we do well the work he did, and in the same spirit as far as our weakness, which is known to God, allows. That's what we have to set our sights on.

Following that, if a missionary were to think only in terms of learning, of preaching well, of being the talk of some province, of working up the whole population somewhere to repentance, of all the other good effects achieved by missions, or more accurately by the grace of God, if he were to do all that yet neglect his prayer and other spiritual exercises in the rule, is he really a missionary? He's not; he lacks the really essential ingredient, his own growth in holiness. It's only right that persons called to something important like serving God the way we do, who have received from his goodness the grace to follow his call, should make themselves acceptable to him and dedicate themselves in a special way to pleasing him. Shouldn't a wife be acceptable to her husband, with nothing to alienate him?

On top of all that we're the intermediaries who reconcile people with God. Now, to make a success of that, the first thing we have to do is to try to please God. When we want to make an approach to a nobleman, a prince, or a king, we choose someone acceptable to him, someone he'll listen to, someone with nothing about him which would block the favour requested.

In the same way, Fathers, we have to work all the time at growing in holiness, doing everything well, so that all may be according to God's good pleasure and so that we, in this way, become fit to help others. In line with that, if a superior during a mission were to pay little attention

to his spiritual exercises and to good organization, if he let each one do things his own way, if he did not put his own spiritual life at the top of the list, then he would not be obeying the first point in the rule, which says he must have a genuine commitment to grow in holiness.

So, that's one of the resolutions we should make, to give ourselves to God so that we give top priority to doing ordinary things in such a way that they are acceptable to God; that's growth in holiness. The opposite is *Quidprodest homini si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur?* (Mt 16:26). What'll be the use of our having done wonders for others but having thrown away our own soul? Our Lord went off to pray, getting away from people, and he wanted the apostles to get away, like himself, after their work, so as not to neglect their spiritual exercises; doing both of these well was their growth in holiness.

The second thing the rule lays down for us is to instruct the country people; that's what we're called to do. Yes, our Lord wants us to evangelize the poor; that's what he did, and what he still wants done through us. There's plenty of reason for humility in this, seeing that the eternal Father makes use of us for his Son's work; he came to evangelize the poor, and used that fact to show that he was the Son of God and that the expected Messiah had arrived. So, shouldn't we be really grateful to his infinite goodness that we are teamed up with him in this work of God, chosen from among so many more worthy of this honour and better capable of making a success of it than we are?

"But, Father, we're not the only ones to instruct the poor; what else do parish priests do? What about preachers, in towns and down the country? What to they do in Advent and Lent? They preach to the poor, and they do it better than we do".

That's true, but there's no other congregation in the Church which has the poor as its special care, which gives itself totally to the poor and never preaches in large towns; that's what missionaries do; that's what's special about them, being for the poor in the way Jesus Christ was. Our vocation, then, is a continuation of his, or at least is similar in outline to his. What a happiness that is, but what an obligation to take it seriously!

A driving motivation for this, then, is the greatness of what is involved: to make God known to the poor, to announce Jesus Christ to them, to tell them that the kingdom of God is near and that it is for the poor. Isn't that wonderful? But that we should be called to be fellow-workers and sharers in the plans of the Son of God, that's incredible!

Wait now - that we should - I wouldn't dare say it - anyway, evangelizing the poor is such an important work that the Son of God himself did it; and we are the instruments used by the Son of God to continue from heaven what he did on earth. Plenty of reason there, Fathers, to praise God and never stop thanking him for this grace.

And then there's a further motive for giving ourselves totally to it, and it's this: it's needed! You, Fathers, know what it's like, the ignorance of the poor people; it's almost unbelievable. You also know that there's no salvation for people who do not know the Christian truths necessary to be believed, according to the teaching of St Augustine, St Thomas, and others, who hold that a person who does not know what Father, Son and Holy Spirit mean, who knows nothing of the Incarnation and the other mysteries, cannot be saved. And really, of course, how could someone who does not know God, does not know what God has done for his love, believe, hope and love? Now God, realising this need and seeing the things which happened in the course of time because of neglect by pastors and the birth of heresies, which caused great damage to the Church, wanted in his great mercy to remedy all this by missionaries, sending them to guide the poor people into the way of salvation.

Other theologians find this teaching too strict, even though it is based on our Lord's words: *Haec est vita aeterna ut cognoscant te solutn Deum verum et quern misisti Jesum Christum* (cf Jn 17:3); eternal life is knowing you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. From that we can conclude that those who don't know the unity and trinity of God, or Jesus Christ, certainly will not have eternal life.

We have, then, some saying that a person cannot be saved without this knowledge, and others holding the opposite. In a doubt like that isn't it better to follow the safer opinion? *In dubiis tutior pars est tenenda*. And anyway, is there anything in the world that ranks higher than teaching those truths to the ignorant, truths needed for salvation? Doesn't it seem to have come from the goodness of God to have this need met? O Saviour, my Lord and my God! You founded a community for that; you've sent it to the poor and want it to make you known to them as the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent into the world, so that in this way they may have eternal life; for this reason we should prefer this assignment to any other situation or work on earth, and make us realize that we are the happier. O God, who could possibly understand this!

There's another way in which people need help; I mean those who don't make good confessions, who consciously conceal mortal sins. Such people do not receive absolution, and if they die in that state they are damned for all eternity. And yet don't we find many who do this through embarrassment? They still go to confession and communion, but they turn all these good actions into so many sacrileges.

I saw a man like this who had a horrible sin and hadn't the courage to accuse himself of it. It happened that while he was sick and close to death he went to confession to his parish priest without mentioning this big sin; and he knew well that by not mentioning it he was committing a sacrilege and that he'd be damned if he died like that. In spite of this he did not want to mention it to him. When he recovered there was a mission going on near his place and he came and went to confession and admitted all that I've just told you.

Now in view of all that, I ask you: can't you see what reason we have for praising God for sending us out as a remedy for this evil, and how much we have to stir ourselves up to love this work of helping poor people, and really to get down to it, since the need is pressing and God expects it of us?

That being the case, those who don't want to go on missions act against the rule; the same goes for those who ran into some difficulty on missions and won't go back. Also for those who have a taste for work in seminaries and won't go out, or who have settled into some other work and won't exchange it for the missions which are needed so much.

Now a wish to go on missions is certainly something a confrere should have and nourish, a whetting of appetite to help poor people in the way our Lord would do if he were still on earth; and, finally, an intention of living and dying in this holy work. That's what has to be done; we mustn't let problems frighten us; it's God's work and deserves our mastering dislikes and resisting temptations. These things happen to everyone who wants to follow our Lord, but so what! Didn't the Son of God have to put up with this? He overcame it and no doubt he will give us the same grace, if we want to resist like he did. It'll be a great help to us in all this if we have no preferences about work.

The third purpose of our little Congregation is to instruct priests and seminarians; and not just knowledge for its own sake, but virtues to be put into practice. What's the point in teaching one without the other? None, or almost none. They must have ability, but also must lead a good life; without this the other is useless and dangerous. We must lead them equally to each; that's what God asks of us.

At the start, being of service to the clergy was the last thing we had in mind; we were concerned with ourselves and with the poor. How did the Son of God make a start? He hid himself, and appeared to think only of himself; he used to pray to God and engaged in some private activity; that's all that was apparent. And then he announces the gospel to the poor. But as time went on he appointed apostles, taking trouble to teach them, warn them, form them and really animate them with his spirit, not just for themselves but for all people on earth. He also taught them all the maxims for forming priests, for administering the sacraments and fulfilling their ministry. I'd take too long if I went into detail.

In the same way, at the start, the Congregation was interested only in itself and in the poor. At certain times it withdrew into its own premises, at others it went out instructing the poor people down the country. It was God's will that this was all we did. But in the fullness of time he called on us to form good priests, to provide parishes with good priests, showing them what they should know and do. Now that's certainly a noble calling, sublime, far beyond us! Who would ever have thought of retreats for ordinands, and seminaries? That idea never even entered our heads until God indicated that it was his good pleasure that we take it on. So it was he who brought the Congregation to these works, without our seeking them. But he asks this commitment of us, serious, humble, dedicated and lasting, such as the importance of this work calls for.

That's almost all I wanted to say to you, Fathers, in explanation of this rule. Let's have a look now at the problems it can bring. First of all, the Son of God could have been asked: "Why have you come"? In order to evangelize the poor. "That's your Father's command; why, then, are you forming priests, giving them the power of consecrating, binding and loosing, etc"? It could be said that evangelizing the poor is not confined to teaching the mysteries needed for salvation, but includes bringing about what was foretold and prefigured by the prophets, and making the gospel effective.

You know that in olden times God rejected polluted priests who had profaned sacred things; their sacrifices were an abomination to him and he said he'd raise up other priests who from the rising of the sun to its setting, and from south to north, would make their voices heard and their words ring out: *In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum* (Ps 18:5, & Rm 10:18).

And through whom did he keep this promise? Through his Son, our Lord, who appointed priests, instructed them, formed them and gave

them power to make others priests: *Sicut misit me Pater et ego mitto vos* (Jn 20:21). All this was in order to do, down the centuries, what he himself had done in his lifetime, to bring all nations to salvation by teaching them and administering the sacraments.

Someone in the Congregation may say: "I'm on earth, Father, to evangelize the poor and you want me to work in seminaries; I want to do what I came to do, to give missions in country places and not be stuck in some town dealing with seminarians". It would be a mistake, a big mistake, for someone not to want to be involved in the formation of good priests; all the more so since there is nothing greater than a priest, to whom he gives all power over his natural and mystical body, the power to forgive sins, etc. O God, what power! What dignity! That idea, therefore, obliges us to work for the priesthood, holy and sublime as it is.

But there's something else: the need which the Church has for good priests in order to remedy so much ignorance and vice with which the world is filled, to get the poor Church out of this pitiable state, something for which good people ought to weep tears of blood.

One wonders whether all the disorders we see in the world ought not to be blamed on priests. That idea will shock some, but the point demands that I show, from the extent of the evil, the importance of the remedy. There have been several meetings on this matter, going into it in depth, to trace the source of so many misfortunes. The conclusion was that the Church has no worse enemies than priests. It's with them that heresies started. Take those two heretics, Luther and Calvin; they were priests. It's through priests that heresies conquered, vice triumphed and ignorance set up its throne among the poor people. All this was because of their own bad conduct and their not opposing with all their might, as they are bound to do, these three floods which have inundated the world.

What sacrifice, Fathers, would you not make to God in order to work for their reform, to get them to live in accordance with the dignity and greatness of their calling, and in this way to get the Church to pull out of the shame and desolation it's in at the moment?

"Right, Father, as regards doing that. But what's the point in serving the Daughters of Charity? Didn't the Son of God come to evangelize the poor, to form priests, etc.?" Yes, but didn't he accept women into the group? Yes. Didn't he lead them to perfection and the service of the poor? Yes. If, then, our Lord did that, and everything he did was to teach us, shouldn't we give some serious thought to imitating him?

Does taking care of these girls who help the sick poor seem contrary to his way of acting? Hadn't the apostles also women to direct? You know that at that time deaconesses were appointed who did wonders in the Church of God. Their work was seating women at meetings and teaching them the ceremonies. In this way God was served by both sexes yet we're going to suggest it's not the Congregation's work to have our Lord honoured and served by both! Aren't we imitators of this divine master who came into the world just for the poor, yet nevertheless organized a group of women? See what a blessing of God it is, Fathers and Brothers, for us to be in the same line as the Son of the eternal Father was, guiding, as he did, women who serve both God and the public in the best way poor girls can.

"But what's the point", someone will say to me, "of burdening ourselves with a hospital? The poor in the Nom-de-Jesus divert us from our work; we've got to go and say mass for them, instruct them, administer the sacraments to them and take overall care of their lives. Why go to the border areas to distribute aid, risking great danger and being diverted from our work?". Now, Fathers, can we object to these good works without being faulted? That priests give time to caring for the poor, isn't that what our Lord and several great saints did? And they didn't just recommend the poor, but they themselves consoled them, helped them and healed them. Aren't the poor the suffering members of our Lord? Aren't they our brothers? And if priests neglect them whom do you expect to help them? All this being so, if there are any amongst us who think they are in the Congregation to evangelize the poor and not to help them, to deal with their spiritual needs but not their physical ones, I answer that we must help, and see that help is given, help of all sorts, by ourselves and by others, if we want to hear those pleasant words of the sovereign judge of the living and the dead: "Come you blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you, because I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was naked and you clothed me, sick and you helped me" (cf Mt 25). To do that is to evangelize by word and action, and that's the best way. And it's also what our Lord did, and what those who represent him on earth should do, representing both office and character, namely priests. I've heard it said that almsgiving is what helps bishops to become saints.

"But, Father", someone else will say, "is it part of our rule to admit madmen into St Lazare, as well as troublesome characters who are little demons?". I'll answer him that our Lord wished to be surrounded by lunatics, demoniacs and madmen, by the tempted and the pos-

sessed. They were brought to him from all over the place to be freed and healed, and he tried to help. Why blame us for this, as we're trying to imitate our Lord in something which he showed was pleasing to him? If he received the mad and the obsessed, why won't we? We don't go looking for them; they are brought along to us. And how do we know that Providence, which arranges things that way, doesn't want to make use of us to provide a remedy for these poor people's condition, a condition which he loved so much in them that he seems to have wanted to be taken for one of them, wishing to be seen in a rage and out of his mind in order to sanctify such a condition in his own sacred person: "And they took hold of him, saying that he had gone mad" (Cf Mk 3:21). O my Saviour and my God, give us the grace to see these things from your point of view!

"But the abandoned babies, why take on those? Haven't we enough to do already?" Remember what our Lord said to his disciples: "Let the children come to me" (Mk 10:14), and we should be on our guard not to put them off. If we do, we're opposing him. What a friendly attitude he had towards children, taking them in his arms and blessing them with his hands. Wasn't it because of them that he gave us a rule for our salvation, telling us to become like them if we wanted to enter the kingdom of heaven? Taking care of children is, to some extent, to become like them. Taking care of abandoned babies is to take the place of their fathers, or rather of God who said that even if a mother should come to forget her child God wouldn't forget it (cf Is 49:15). If our Lord were still living on earth and he saw babies abandoned by their fathers and mothers, as these ones are, do you think, Fathers, do you think, Brothers, that he also would want to abandon them? It would be an insult to his infinite goodness to entertain such a thought. And we'd be unfaithful to his grace, since he called on us to take on the care of this hospital, if we refused to accept the inconvenience it causes us.

I want to draw attention to these problems before they actually happen, because it may turn out that they will crop up. I can't be around much longer; I'll pass on soon; my age, the state of my health, the abominations of my life, won't allow God to put up with me on earth much longer. So, it may perhaps happen that after my death troublemakers and people lacking nerve will come along and say: "What's the point in being saddled with looking after these hospitals? How can we possibly help so many people ruined by the wars, searching them out in their own areas? What's the use of taking on so many things and so many poor people? Why be involved with the Daughters who serve

the sick, and why waste time with madmen?" There'll be some, have no doubt about it, who'll speak out against such work. And others will say it's too much to send men to far-off places, to India, to Barbary. But my God, O Lord, didn't you send St Thomas to India and the other apostles all over the world? Didn't you give them charge and care of all people in general, as well as many individual persons and families? No matter; our vocation is *evangelizare pauperibus* (Lk 4: 18).

"We want to have a good mission in this country; there's enough to do here without going so far off; that's what I want to do; but as for abandoned babies, or the old men in the Nom-de-Jesus, and those who are locked up, I don't want to hear about them". Some day we'll see these unstable characters who'll oppose the works God has got us to take on and to keep at with good results; don't doubt it. I'm warning the Congregation so that it can look at things as they are, as God's works, which he has entrusted to us. We didn't push ourselves into a single one of them, or do anything to have them given to us. We got them either from those who have authority, or from sheer necessity; that's how God involved us in his plans. That's why everyone looks on this Congregation as God's, because it applies itself to the most urgent and most neglected needs.

In spite of all that, though, some people will find something to carp at; I'm warning you, before I leave you, in the way Moses warned the Israelites, as told in Deuteronomy (cf Dt 11:16-17). I'm going away, you won't see me again (cf Jn 16:16); I've known that some of you will emerge to corrupt the others (cf Mt 24:11). They'll do what I forbid you, and won't do what I recommend in God's name. Be careful not to be caught off your guard, for if you do what they do, evils will come upon you which will destroy you. On the other hand, if you carry out the Lord's work, not holding back in anything, you'll be blessed with all sorts of blessings. *Post discessionem meam*, St Paul used to say, *venient lupi rapaces* (Acts 20:29). After I've taken my leave voracious wolves will appear, and from among yourselves false brothers will emerge who'll put forward perverse ideas and teach you the opposite of what I've said. But don't listen to them; they're false prophets.

There'll even be missionaries who are just corpses, who will try to slip in false maxims to undermine, if they can, these foundations of the Congregation. As for them, they must be resisted.

I don't know if I'm going too far in repeating what St Benedict used to say before he died. At that time there were unsettled monks in the houses he had founded, who used to say: "Why this, or why that?", who

used to grumble at the way the house was run, and criticised practices which had a firm spiritual basis. All this came to the holy abbot's notice and he realised that after his death everything would be turned upside down. What does he do? That's a religious order which does not have a superior general; each monastery is autonomous, and does not have a visitation or renewal from any other. He urged the bishops near the monasteries, who might notice any of them in disorder, to take action by warnings and suspensions to curb those troublesome and grumbling monks, and he even went so far as to get the neighbouring landowners to proceed against them by force of arms to get them back to their duty.

I don't like saying all that, but only that if it should happen later on that someone in the Congregation should suggest getting rid of this practice, pulling out of that hospital, calling men back from Barbary, staying on here, refusing to go there, giving up that work, not going to answer needs in distant places, may someone say to those pseudo-conferees: "Fathers, allow us stay faithful to the usages of those who went before us, in the way we are; God put us there and he wants us to stay". Don't weaken!

"But", they'll say, "the Congregation is saddled with such and such a work". Now, if in its infancy it coped with it, and carried all the other burdens, why won't it do so successfully when it will be stronger? "Allow us", they must be told, "allow us stay the way our Lord was when on earth; we're doing what he did; don't interfere with our imitating him". See to it that you warn them; warn them and don't listen to them.

But who will these people be who'll turn us away from the good work already begun? They'll be lax characters, the lax; the lax, who want nothing except diversion and, provided they get enough to eat, don't bother about anything else. And who, besides these? There'll be – it would be better if I didn't have to say this. There'll be the pampered.

[As he said this he folded his arms, mimicking a lazy person]

Persons who have only a limited horizon, who confine their perspective and their plans within a certain circumference, inside which they lock themselves, confined to one insignificant thing; they don't want to venture outside this; and if someone points out something beyond this, and they come out to have a look at it, they at once return to their centre, like snails pulling back into their shells.

[In saying all this he made certain gestures with his hands, certain movements of the head, and used an ironic tone of voice, so that these

expressed what he wanted to convey better than what he was actually saying.

Pulling himself together, he said to himself:}

Wretch, you're an old man just like those people; small things seem big to you, and difficulties scare you.

Yes, Fathers, there's not a thing, even to getting up in the morning, which doesn't seem a major undertaking, and the smallest annoyances seem insurmountable.

So, there'll be small-minded persons, like myself, who'll want to cut back the practices and works of the Congregation. We should give ourselves to God, Fathers, so that he'll give us the grace to hold fast. Hold on, hold on for the love of God. He'll be faithful to his promises, he'll never abandon us as long as we remain submissive to him in carrying out his plans. We should remain within the bounds of our vocation, taking our spiritual life seriously, working up a genuine holy love for God's service. Let's do well the work which comes our way, along the lines I've been suggesting. I'm not saying we have to go to extremes, and take on everything indiscriminately; only what God lets us know he's asking of us. We are his and not our own; if he piles on the work he'll also step up our capacity. O Saviour, what happiness! O Saviour, if there were several heavens, to whom would you give them if not to a missionary who would have held on with reverence to all the works you had marked out for him, and who had not pulled back from any of the duties of his state? That's what we hope for, that's what we ask from his divine majesty. And all of us, at this very moment, should thank him without reserve for having called us and chosen us for such holy works, sanctified by our Lord himself who was the first to do them. What graces have we not reason to hope for if we do them in his spirit, for the glory of his Father and the salvation of souls. Amen.

Notes

1. The expression *Dominus virtutum* appears in many psalms in the Vulgate: 45, 56, 79, 83, 88, etc. Vincent takes "virtus" to mean "virtue", for his own purpose. The JB has "Yahweh Sabaoth" while in the breviary the Grail translation has "Lord of hosts" in Ps 45.
2. In Benet of Canfield's *Rule of Perfection* "perfection" means "the whole spirituall life", or simply growth in holiness. Vincent tends at times, again for his own purpose, to take the word "perfection" somewhat more literally, and then makes links with scriptural uses of the word "perfect".

St Vincent de Paul and the Word of God

Jean-Pierre Renouard

(Talk given at the XVII Convegno di Animazione Vincenziana, 1993, in Leggiuno (Varese), Italy, printed in *Annali della Missione* 3, 1993. The translation given here is from a French text supplied by the author).

There are many pages of articles and studies on this topic. They all come to the same conclusion: Monsieur Vincent is a man possessed by the word. He is the man of the word. He was this way from birth, he focused on the word, he fed on it, he shared it with his fellow human beings.

1. "He was this way from birth"

Just take a look at Vincent's childhood and adolescence. They show a strong family faith, obvious because it was handed on from one generation to the next. We can imagine, without risk of being mistaken, family prayer, catechesis by the mother or other family members, being made aware of the sacred mysteries in the life of the Church by the parish priest. We cannot afford to overlook, either, the major role played by his father's brother Etienne, prior of Poymartet in Gourbera; he was behind the beginnings of his nephew's culture, since without him it would be impossible to imagine Vincent getting down to the study of the humanities in Dax (1). Vincent got involved in the world of the bible (salvation history) piecemeal, drawing the best of the word from the parish priest's sermons and his uncle's reflections on sick pilgrims going to Compostella.

In 1604 he was already a bachelor of theology. We can well imagine that there was evidence of his basing himself on the sacred text. He

knows the text, but has he internalised it? His love of adventure and his taste for travel keep the soil of his soul unproductive.

His arrival in Paris marks a change; is it just the appeal of novelty? He is open to what is happening, but even more so to the grace which this mediates. He is going to “discern his special grace, find his vocation and set up a way of living” (2).

We don’t have many texts from this formative period. His theology, no doubt, was still scholastic, theoretical rather than experiential or existential. In the set of rules drawn up in Châtillon we find the name “Jesus” (XIV, 125-6, n). The breviary and missal provide on-going biblical nourishment for him. He tries his hand at different types of work and acquires some benefices, three within three or four years (3).

In fact he is trying to find himself, and God is putting him through a spell as a sort of postulant. Fr de Bérulle is his protector, no doubt eyeing him as material for his projected Oratory.

His novitiate consisted of two well-known incidents, the wrongful accusation of theft and the dark night of faith. We can well imagine that it was in the word of God that he found motives for carrying on in spite of what he was going through. At the end of his tunnel he found light in the joy of self-giving. A decision became unavoidable, because of the driving force of truth: to give his life to God in the service of the poor. The divine answer was not delayed, and he found peace. Christ revealed himself to him in the guise of the rustic in Cannes.

Gliding through the spiritual atmosphere of Teresa and the Carmelites, Fr de Bérulle and the Oratory, St Francis de Sales’ friendship and the Visitation order, he continually contemplates this Christ “in agony till the end of the world”. He turns the medal over and sees things as they are from God’s point of view (VII 376-388; XI 31). He’s going to say, and mean it: “Nothing pleases me, except in Jesus Christ”(4). That’s how his real vocation is born. He literally lives the word of God. A poor person reveals Christ to him. He understands the mystery of the Incarnation in depth, and its prolongation. It’s not just something in a particular historical period but is interwoven from then on in every human being and in all human history.

He advances beyond the intellectual and spiritual threshold which Fr Duval had opened up and finds that God is pleased to dwell, and even hide, in the poor. He announces what from now on will be his spur: “Let’s love God, brothers, let’s love God, but in the strength of our arm and the sweat of our brow” (XI 40-41). He signs his life and

activity with the two loves which he never separates from now on, Christ and the poor.

2. *“He focused on the word”*

There were three things which explain this great discovery by Vincent which made him climb the steps to holiness.

a) *The base*

Everyone knows that 1617 marks the radical transformation of his life. In January he discovers Christ, missioner to the poor, in Folleville. In August he meets him as the servant of the poor in Châtillon. These two aspects merge into the sole central interest of his life, the charity of Christ. From then on he bases himself on two scriptural passages which permeate him, dwell in him and mould him definitively. “The spirit of the Lord is on me because he anointed me to bring the good news to the poor, etc.” (Lk 4:18). St Vincent makes use of this text eight times to summarise Christ’s mission and the vocation of the Congregation of the Mission and of each of its members (5). “Amen I say to you, as often as you did it to one of these the least of my brethren you did it to me, etc” (Mt 25:40). This is the heading on the rules of the Charity in Châtillon, in both the provisional and definitive drafts (XIII 125; XIII 428); all surviving copies include this quotation, indicating that it was in fact put into practice. We also find this text in the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission (ch. 6, §2), and an allusion to it in connection with the virtue of charity in a conference to the confreres (6), and in the volume of documents on the subject of the service of the poor and the Ladies of Charity (XIII 811).

In each case, and this needs to be emphasised, St Vincent bases himself on scripture as on an unshakable granite foundation: “Everything is uncertain, except what is defined by sacred scripture” (II 30).

He believes in the power of the word and that is what motivates him in all his missionary and charitable undertakings.

b) *Making the connection*

Quite naturally, then, scripture leads Vincent to Christ, the incarnate Word of God, the Word made flesh. The actual person of Christ is the focal point of his life, of his spiritual experience, of his love and of his activity.

He continually contemplates this Christ, missionary and servant. Abelly was the earliest to point this out:

One of the oldest members of the Company remarked that the extraordinary devotion of Monsieur Vincent in the celebration of mass was especially apparent when he read the holy Gospel. Others, too, noticed it when he came to some of the words of our Lord. He pronounced them with such tender love that it struck a chord in all who heard them. On many occasions those who did not know him, but who attended his mass, were heard to say, there indeed is a priest who knows how to say mass; he must be a holy man. Others said that while he was at the altar, he seemed to them to have the appearance of an angel.

Several others noticed that when he read the holy Gospel and came upon the passages where our Lord said *Amen, amen dico vobis*, that is, I solemnly say to you, he paid particular attention to the words that followed, as if he were amazed that these were the words that God himself truly used. By the affectionate and devout tone of his voice, he testified to the prompt submission of his own heart in recognising the great mystery and importance of these words. He seemed to be nourished by the passages of Scripture like a child taking his mother's milk. He drew such nourishment for his soul that in all his words and actions he seemed filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ. (7).

Monsieur Vincent's love for our Lord resulted in his always keeping the Savior in mind. He walked always in his holy presence, and modeled himself upon him in his actions, words and thoughts. I can truly say, as we all know, that he was so filled with God's spirit that he hardly ever spoke unless it was to recall a Gospel teaching or some action of the Son of God. I often admired how he would apply the words and deeds of our Lord whenever he counseled or recommended something.

Monsieur Portail had lived and worked for forty-five or fifty years with Monsieur Vincent. He is one of the oldest priests of the Congregation. I have heard him say that Monsieur Vincent was the perfect image of Jesus Christ whom he knew upon earth, and that he had never heard Monsieur Vincent say or do anything except relating to him who said: *Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego fed, ita et vos faciatis* ["What I just did was to give you an example: as I have done, so must you do"] (Jn 13:15). This is what Monsieur Vincent so often urged us to do.

On the occasion of my leaving to take over the Mission which I now guide, he recommended that when I was to speak or do something, I should reflect within myself and say, What did our Lord say or do in this case? How did he do or say this? O Lord, inspire me with what I must say or do, for by myself I can do nothing without your help (7).

In Monsieur Vincent we find both a search for and a meeting with Jesus Christ. He wants

to judge everything as our Lord judged them, so that in situations which arise we should ask ourselves: "How would our Lord have looked at such and such a thing? How did he behave in such and such circumstances? What did he say and what did he do about this or that matter?", and so that we conform all our behaviour to his teaching and examples (XI 52-3).

c) Union with Christ

Vincent therefore wished to be united with Christ, to put on his spirit (XII 107). In this he aligns himself with St Paul and his teaching on the Christian's "stripping off", on death to oneself and life in Christ. He gives prominence to the effect of baptism, which is death and resurrection in Christ (Gal 3:26-7), as in the famous passage in the letter to Antoine Portail of 1 May 1635 in which death and resurrection in Christ interact so as to develop into life (1295).

It is a question, therefore, of stripping off the old person so as to put on a new one:

I get rid of this old yeast which corrupts all the dough, and I give life to what I do by the care and intention I bring to it. If one works like this all one's life, not just correcting vices and evil inclinations but rather bringing one's standards and activity up to the level of those of the new person, our Lord Jesus Christ, that's what the unremitting stripping off of the old Adam and the putting on of the new means. So, exue me, Domine, veterem hominem et indue me novum (XII 224).

In the background of such a plan we are reading and hearing St Paul:

All baptised in Christ you have all clothed yourselves in Christ (Gal 3:27).

Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ; forget about satisfying your bodies with all their cravings (Rm 13:14).

You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth (Eph 4:22-24).

You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator (Col 3:9-10).

Through this twofold action, stripping off and putting on, Christ's disciple, the missionary as envisaged by Vincent, becomes a son of God:

Those who break with attachment to earthly goods, with hankering after pleasure and self-will, become children of God and enjoy perfect freedom, because it's only in the love of God that such is achieved (XII 301).

This is the divine sonship that St Paul speaks of to his Galatian Christians: "You are all sons of God because of faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal 6:26).

Fr André Dodin is correct when he writes: "The spirituality of the Mission is not based on a theology of priesthood but on the deepening of identification with Christ through baptism" (9). Of course it would be wrong to think St Vincent had no theology of priesthood or priestly ministry (10). There can be no question of a break with the theology worked out and taught by the French school, the air of which he breathes, even if St Vincent likes to go his own independent way. He speaks out in favour of the ministerial priesthood but above all he re-works it according to his own spiritual experience and the theology stemming directly from the Council of Trent. He, too, can go into ecstasies about the greatness of the priest:

The priestly character is totally divine and incomparable, power over the body of Jesus Christ which is the amazement of angels, power to forgive people's sins which is a source of wonder and gratitude to them. Is there anything greater or more wonderful? Oh, Fathers, isn't a good priest something great? What is impos-

sible to a good priest? What conversions can he not achieve! Look at Fr Bourdoise, that excellent priest: is there anything he doesn't do, can't do? The happiness of Christendom depends on priests, because if good parishioners see a good priest, a loving shepherd, they respect him and follow his voice, they try to imitate him. Oh, shouldn't we try to make them all good since that's our job and since the priesthood is such an awesome thing! (XI 7).

Is there anything in the world as great as the priesthood? Princedoms and kingdoms are nothing in comparison. You know that kings can't change bread into the body of our Lord as priests can, nor can they forgive sins. You know well all the other advantages which priests have in comparison with worldly greatness, yet these are the people God sends to us to bring them to holiness; did you ever hear the like? Poor weak workers, how little you measure up to the greatness of this work! (XI 9).

It is clear that God wants priests for his glory and service (XI 202). Their work is holy, eminent, heavenly (XI 308).

Two points derive from this, hammered home to the brothers of the Mission, or as we would say today, to dedicated lay people:

You must have great esteem for your priests (XII 99).

[You are] sharers and cooperators in the good done on missions, in seminaries, at ordinations, in retreats, etc... (XII 98).

From the priesthood of the faithful to the priesthood of the ordained, all are called to holiness. And the gospel nourishes this holiness with a view to the Mission. It comes about, mainly, through the Word of God.

3. "*He fed on it*"

How does this plunging into the divine milieu work out in practice? To try to answer that from the eight volumes of letters is mind-boggling! On the other hand, though, we can see St Vincent make significant references in his talks and conferences. In volumes IX and X of Coste, containing the conferences to the Daughters of Charity, there are 164 verbatim quotations from scripture, 23 from the Old Testament and 141 from the New. On top of this there are 1755 implicit quotations or allusions, 428 for the Old and 1327 for the New. The researcher drew a conclusion which we can make our own: "[This] shows that St Vincent was really steeped in biblical language" (11).

Now let's open volumes XI and XII, the conferences to the missionaries. We find 127 quotations from the Old Testament and 203 from the New, not counting repetitions and not putting the whole thing through the seductive and unbeatable process of the computer! We have to state in no uncertain way: MONSIEUR VINCENT KNOWS HIS BIBLE!

In these four volumes we note several key points. The most quoted evangelist is Matthew, 351 times to the Daughters of Charity, for example. St Vincent uses him as the Church does. Matthew handled money by profession; today we'd say he had an enquiring mind. His gospel is made up of five narrative sections, each followed by a talk on gospel values. The founder quotes him, we can be sure, as an "animator" to back up his teaching when he catechises and instructs the Daughters of Charity, as a legislator when he is arguing things out in the presence of his confreres who are as well educated as himself and capable of challenging him!

Next comes Luke, the man of kindness, of gentleness, of the Virgin Mary. He is also the evangelist of the Mission, of opening out to the pagans. Monsieur Vincent naturally feels at ease with him. His zeal leads him to read Luke, just as his wish to explain or justify his way of running things led him, as we've just seen, to quote Matthew.

Paul is his great source of baptismal spirituality, as we have shown: "He is irreplaceable because he is unique for unerring definition of the new state of re-born man" (12). By making this Pauline theology their own a missionary or Daughter of Charity can live the risen Christ and communicate him to the poor (13).

St Vincent read some of the New Testament every day and made this obligatory for his confreres:

[Each day] ... the priests and all the students are to read a chapter of the New Testament, reverencing this book as the norm of Christian holiness. For greater benefit this reading should be done kneeling, with head uncovered, and praying, at least at the end, on these three themes: 1) reverence for the truths contained in the chapter; 2) desire to have the same spirit in which Christ or the saints taught them; 3) determination to put into practice the advice or commands contained in it, as well as the examples of virtues (CR ch 10, §8)

What St Vincent passes on to us is what he drew from the best traditional sources: Reverence the word of God, make its ideas your own, put its advice or commands into practice.

He gives us this “synopsis of the gospel” in the second chapter of the Common Rules, which is kneaded from Christ’s teaching: 47 New Testament allusions in 14 paragraphs (14).

St Vincent makes a selection from the whole body of gospel teaching: “We don’t have to put all gospel teaching into practice, but only those points which are not contrary to our Institute” (XII 129). The conference of 14 February 1659 is crucial for our understanding of his meaning; it is packed with gospel references. And he emphasises:

We must take it as basic that the teaching of Jesus Christ does what it says, while that of the world never delivers on its promises; that those who do what Jesus Christ teaches are building on rock, unaffected by either flood waters or storm-force winds, while those who don’t do what he commands are like someone who built his house on shifting sand, to be flattened in the first storm. So, whoever says “the teaching of Jesus Christ” is saying “immovable rock”, he’s talking about eternal truths whose effects follow infallibly, so much so that the sky will fall before the teaching of Jesus Christ will let us down. That’s why the rule ends up by saying that the Company must make profession of always taking on board, and putting into practice, the teaching of Jesus Christ and never that of the world, and in doing this it will be filled with, and will put on, Jesus Christ (XIII115-6).

What he has in mind, then, are precepts and commandments:

- Seek the kingdom of God (Mt 6:33).
- Always and in all things do God’s will (Jn 4:34).
- Live in simplicity (Mt 10:16).
- Be prudent (Ibid).
- Carry one’s cross (Mt 16:24).
- Live in charity, by:
 - doing good to others (Mt 7:12);
 - not contradicting (Tt 2:9);
 - putting up with one another (Eph 4:2);
 - weeping with those who weep (Ph 2:14);
 - rejoicing with those who rejoice (Rm 12:15);
 - yielding precedence to one another (Rm 12:10);
 - being all things to all people (1 Cor 9:22);
- Accept calumnies and persecutions, even with joy! (Mt 5:44).

At the end St Vincent mentions five fundamental virtues, “the faculties of the soul of the whole Congregation”, the trademark of Vincentian

activity: simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification and zeal, all of which had been put into practice to the limit by the simple, humble, gentle, mortified and zealous Christ (CR 2, §14, and XII 298-311).

4. *“He Shared it”*

When it has been assimilated in this way the word is shared and taught. For Monsieur Vincent there are two special ways:

a) The prominent role he played in restoring renewed in-depth preaching is well known. His conversion in 1617 was played out in two different locations, Folleville and Châtillon, but in each place in the context of preaching to the people. Starting from there he worked out “the little method”, a way of speaking simply, adapted to a simple rural congregation; this was to renew all Christian preaching. Its aim was “to explain gospel truths by means of recognizable comparisons” (XI 347). This was called “preaching in a homely way so as to touch the heart” (VIII 149). He wanted his men to get used to “following the light of faith always and in everything” (XI 31). Simplicity is the key to the method. They were to preach in a homely way, humbly, forcefully and charitably (XII 23-4). Or, better still, “familiarily” (XI 258), “in a missionary’s way” (XI287). The sermon is built on three keywords: nature-motive-means. In this way the Little Company acted as a lubricant in the Church because of the influence it had on retreats for ordinands, at the Tuesday Conferences, in seminaries. It altered Christian preaching and allowed the poor to come into contact with the gospel, which is no mean result!

b) Catechesis is the other way of sharing and teaching the word of God. On missions St Vincent himself taught the catechism. In the volume of documents there are notes which give a rough outline of an instruction given to the poor in the Nom de Jesus hospice; it is a little masterpiece of catechetical technique (XIII 156-163). That summer of 1653 St Vincent was already 72!

The missionaries had a very clear plan: “The small catechism” was only for children, and was held some time in the afternoon. The missionary stayed with the children and shared the good bread of knowledge with them. The day closed with “the main catechism”, intended for adults but with the children also present.

Monsieur Vincent states: “Everyone agrees that any results which the mission has are brought about through the catechism” (I 429). To

his way of thinking, teaching taken directly from the gospel guarantees salvation for both children and adults. No doubt you are all acquainted with the famous beautiful passage in an instruction given to the lay brothers in St Lazare, in the presence of the priests, in which he urges them to teach the catechism: “Never to let slip an opportunity of instructing a poor person”:

... you there, Fathers, who go on missions and down the country, you know it better than I do nowadays, but I know how things were done when the Company started off. It was the invariable practice never to let slip an opportunity of instructing a poor person, and we did this as often as we saw the need, whether it was a question of the priests, or the students of those days, or the lay brothers, whether going or coming. If they met some poor person, some young lad, some decent fellow, they used to speak to him, checking whether he knew the mysteries necessary for salvation. If they found he didn't, they instructed him. I don't know whether this holy custom is faithfully kept up these days. I'm referring to those who go down the country, put up in hostels, travel the roads. If so, all to the good, and we must thank God and ask for perseverance for the Company. On the other hand if this has been let slip, then we must ask for the grace to get it going again.

As regards the second point, “What are the benefits which come from carrying out this holy practice?”, they are very great, just as, on the other hand, those who are not faithful to this will be in danger of causing great damage... I know of several in the Company who, thank God, hardly ever miss out on this, unless something prevents them. I don't know whether this is properly done at our door; it seems to me it's not done as well as in the old days; I'm afraid our two brothers who are on the door have slipped up on this. Perhaps it's because they're newcomers and don't know what's usually done. I don't know if it's done in the farmyard or whether our brother there is careful enough to check whether our staff are sufficiently well instructed or whether he bothers to speak to them sometimes in private about this, imitating our Lord when he went and sat down on that stone near the well and, having done that, started off his instruction of the woman by asking her for some water: “Could you let me have a sup of water, Ma'am”, he says to her. That's the way it's done, asking one person, then another: “And how are your horses?”

How's this affair going? What about that other business? How are you getting on yourself?". That's the sort of way we start, moving on then to what we're supposed to be at. The same goes for the brothers who are gardeners, cobblers, tailors, and the rest, so that there shouldn't be anyone in this place who's not sufficiently instructed in the truths necessary for salvation. At one time you talk about how to make a good confession, the conditions necessary for confession; at another about something else useful and necessary for them. Sacred scripture tells us that those who teach others things useful and necessary for their salvation will shine like the stars in eternal life (XI 381-3).

c) There is still one other point to be mentioned, how our saint likes to share the bread of the word during the repetitions of prayer. He invents this way of "being in congregation" and of reacting together to the Master's teaching. Each one gives his thoughts in as familiar and spontaneous a way as possible, and the superior general winds it all up and invites his community and each of its members to get away from abstractions and actually do something, or better still "to move from affective to effective love" (II190).

Conclusion

What would a saint be without the gospel? A virtuous man like Cicero? A prophet like Mahomet? A wise man like the Buddha? Jesus brings us a different wisdom, that of the word of God, a completely divine will and a message of salvation for people; all who are steeped in it attain communion with God. And St Vincent is among those. He deserves the tag he applied to St Francis de Sales: "Evangelium loquens", "a talking gospel". His achievements brought out the best in him, a gospel-filled heart, capable of welcoming the word, focusing on its author, feeding on its message and sharing it with others.

May we, following his footsteps, become intoxicated with the gospel so as to share it with the people of today.

Notes

1. Louty, Jean-Claude: *Prieuré-Hôpital de Poymartet (Landes): Etudes manuscrites 1993*: dès sa septième année, le petit père fut encouragé à passer son temps libre auprès de son oncle, à Poymartet, afin de s'initier au latin et à la langue de la ville... (p. 11). [...right from the age of seven the little shepherd was encouraged to spend his free time with his uncle in

- Poymartet, so as to get acquainted with Latin and the way people spoke in the town...].
2. Dodin, André: *Saint Vincent de Paul*, Paris, 1947, p. 8. Dodin said that his introduction to his choice of texts is one of the best things he has written (Personal correspondence with the author).
 3. Cf XIII 7; XIII 19; *Mission et Charité* No. 8, p 495; *Annales de la Mission* tome cvi, pp 265ff.
 4. Cf Abelly: *La Vie du Venerable Serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul*, Paris 1664, livre I, p 83. [English translation, Brooklyn 1993, pp 107-8]. The original French verbatim quotation is from the second (revised) 1664 impression.
 5. XI 32; XI108; XI135; XI 315; XII 3; XII 73; XII 90; XII 367. Our present-day Constitutions say: "The purpose of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ evangelizing the poor" (§1).
 6. XII 100-101. [It is through what he does that a man] "grows in holiness; it is by putting virtues into practice that he is saved. This comes out in the gospel passage on the judgement, where it is said that our Saviour will place at his right side those who will have put an effort into virtues, especially the virtue of charity, and that it is they alone who will enter the kingdom of God" (XII100).
 7. Abelly: *op. cit.*, livre III. pp 72-3. [English translation, p 76].
 8. *Ibid*, pp 86-7. [English translation pp 87-88].
[Editor's note: Abelly quotes this passage as "written testimony of the superior of one of the missions"].
 9. Dodin: *Op. cit.*, p 23.
 10. Koch, Bernard: "Le rapport de M. Vincent à l'Écriture Sainte dans les Règles Communes de la Congrégation de la Mission", 3ième session de l'École française, Annecy, 28 juin au 2 juillet 1993.
 11. Vansteenkiste, Maurice: "M. Vincent et la Bible" in *Bulletin de la Société de Borda*, No. 388, 1982, Colloque sur St Vincent de Paul, pp 585ff.
 12. Dodin, André: "Monsieur Vincent et la Bible", in *Le grand siècle et la Bible*, Paris 1989, p 640.
 13. *Ibid.*, pp 640-2.
 14. Koch: *Op. cit.*

St Vincent on Temptation

Eamon Flanagan

(This article was written for a forthcoming Spanish dictionary of Vincentian spirituality)

The theme of temptation has a long history, and has found a regular place in many theological and spiritual writers from New Testament times as far as the 1960s. More recently it has received less prominence. St Vincent fits easily into this enduring tradition. In dealing with Vincentian treatment of temptation I would first like to take three major areas of interest: (i) Sources of temptations; (ii) Purpose of temptations; and (iii) Response of the tempted person. Then I want to evaluate St Vincent's teaching in the light of modern theology and assess its validity today.

Sources of Temptation

To begin with, the saint offers a definition of temptation, calling it a "movement to evil", the opposite of inspiration (X 8). For St Vincent, God permits temptation. The Lord knows about the temptation and the person tried by it. Then, a more bold expression asserts that God actually sends temptation. "All these temptations are sent to you, or permitted, by God, for the same reasons that he sent and permitted the temptations suffered by his Son" (III 176; cf X 347). Besides, temptations are caused by the devil (IX 348; cf X 10, 21). The evil one would try to divert a good priest from his resolutions, "because these would lead to the salvation of a great multitude of souls" (III 628). St Vincent also indicates the onset of temptation, without mentioning a specific origin, using the passive voice without an agent. In one such instance he quotes the text from Jas 1:2 about rejoicing in these troubles (XI 149). Our unruly nature is also identified as responsible in some cases. Addressing Fr Blatiron St Vincent says: "Father, you ought not to be astonished if you have the same tendencies [as St Paul]" (V 467). We can be buffeted about by "external agitation", like a weather vane by the wind (VI 429), but in general there is stress on the person's own

responsibility in regard to the temptation. This is particularly underlined when it is clearly stated that a change of location as such does not relieve a temptation, for we always carry with us our individual temperament (III 629). Human glory could also be an incentive to temptation, but even there it is the person's own disposition that is of paramount importance (1).

Purpose

Temptations serve useful purposes. As a general rule, the Vincentian teaching regards spontaneous temptations within the plan of God for the good of the person concerned. Writing to the Daughters of Charity in Nantes, St Vincent views the tempted one as identifying with the Son of God, who gave proof in temptation of "his infinite love for his Father's glory, and for the sanctification of the Church" (III 176). All who follow Christ will suffer persecution; the saints were sorely tried. So, in bearing these trials one is following the path of the gospel.

So much is this the lot of good people that one would be worried if temptations were not to come one's way. St Vincent would see someone in that condition as being "one's own tempter" (IV 571). Temptations contribute to a salutary fear and humility, leading the person to put his or her trust in God (V 467).

And in very scriptural vein St Vincent evokes the testing quality of temptations. The good are searched to prove their goodness and the genuineness of their commitment to God. In this way they patently show their fidelity. This doctrine is close to the Sanjuanist nights and labours, which for the greatest part of our journey are directed to the refinement of purification. By this process one emerges gradually into a condition of great maturity and established strength of soul. A real peace can thus be reached. There is in addition an increased awareness of heart derived from the experience of confronting issues raised in the various temptations (X 10ff; cf VI 429).

St Vincent proposes the view that the tempted are in fact God's best friends: "My dear Sisters, it is a grace to be tried by temptations and a sign that God loves us" (X 11-12). A pattern of true spiritual authenticity is thus worked out in practice. The saint is so convinced of the positive value of these trials that his thought easily merges into the realm of suffering and the cross. He recalls the gospel text on renunciation and taking up the cross, as Jesus did (Mt 16:24): Here the focus is fixed on the essence of all true living, which is love for Christ above

every created thing. Here, too, the temptation would be to stop at the mediocre phase and shrink from the cost of the deeper love; instead we are exhorted to go on bravely every single day in the midst of temptation (Cf III 176f).

Response

Given the background as already set out, this in itself can aid persons in their understanding of temptations, which is a good start in the matter of dealing with them. But St Vincent offers a full armoury to us for times of temptation.

The general assertion is made that the “goods of grace”, as of fortune, are only preserved at a price (III 628). This is a very helpful covering note, so to speak. Addressing a missionary under the stress of temptation, perhaps in regard to his ministry or location, the founder of the Mission counsels resistance, with special confidence in the grace of God’s goodness, which will not fail one who is faithful. In the same instance the confrere, who has some difficulty with his superior, is given specific guidance. He is recommended to learn good communication from the manner in which Jesus communicated with Mary, his mother, with St Joseph, and the apostles, and even with the scribes, pharisees and tribunes (ibid.).

Resistance, in order to be effective, ought to be put into action immediately, as soon as the temptation is perceived. St Vincent enthusiastically agrees with a sister who makes this point at a conference, and he corroborates: “This is a great and sovereign remedy that we close our heart and ears to the temptation” (IX 352; cf IX 687). That surely implies a certain keen attentiveness and readiness for a decisive, positive response, without risky dalliance. A sound accompaniment to this sense of purpose is prayer. St Vincent keeps returning to the need for prayer in temptation. We should pray fervently for the grace not to fall, even though the temptation may remain (Cf I 149). In the *Pater Noster* we plead: “Lead us not into temptation”, paying close attention to these words and asking that we will never consent to the temptation (X 17). St Vincent with typical charity promises his own prayers for those in the throes of temptation.

Temptations against vocation were seen as attacking God’s specific call to live the gospel. St Vincent spoke with such lofty esteem about vocation that his listeners would be given powerful incentives to resist any contrary allurements to it. Concentration on the beauty of

one's call is strongly advocated. One should not reason with the evil suggestion. God gives the grace to persevere (IX 352ff). If tempted against chastity, one firstly avoids the occasions that might be dangerous. Strength is gained from the practice of virtues like humility and modesty. The prayer recommended is a meditation, or a kind of self-immersion in the wounds of Christ, and, also, prayer to the Blessed Virgin (IV 592f; XIII 555). A very modern means of assistance is mentioned, by which one reads over the inspirations one has received from the Lord at times of retreat. These are "provisions given us by God for our need" (IX 357).

These are the principal means employed by St Vincent to resist, and benefit from, temptations, little or great, that may occur in our lives.

Evaluation

In our modern western culture there is less emphasis on temptation than in the past. It is difficult to find an article or book on the subject in spiritual or theological writing of the last twenty years. But it seems in fact that the theme has appeared in new forms, since it has not gone away. One such is the symbol of the desert (2). There has been a re-discovery of the trials of purification in mysticism. The plight of the poor and the consequent testing through poverty, often unchosen but also the work of justice, are very evident in our world.

As some people have picked up a new, more optimistic, Christianity and a theology of the world (seen, e.g., in certain charismatic expressions and creation spiritualities), there has likewise been an economic affluence in the First World until quite recently. Temptation in the light of such a background may seem negative and static.

Perhaps, while revisionism of temptation proceeds into a different era, it is still quite possible that a new readiness and energy are needed to face into temptation in practice, to be tried and purified, even if there is no obvious external achievement as such. Temptation can occur within or without, but it is especially the inner drama of the heart that is played through inescapably.

Despite the change in perspective in the late 20th century, one can still find a continuous line of tradition mingled in with modern insights in certain writers of our time. These help to push forward a sound teaching with suitable application to daily life (3).

We see then the consonance of St Vincent with the best perennial doctrine. The saint's teaching on the origins of temptations and their

purpose accords well with what scripture, the Church, and theologians indicate. We referred earlier in Vincent to God's sending or allowing temptations. This double source seems to be in harmony with the scriptural and theological distinction between: testing (by God) to prove and advance spiritual growth; and the seduction by evil (permitted by God), but potentially directed towards what is ultimately the same purpose (4).

St Vincent's remedies for temptations also strike a helpful note. Principal among them are prayer and good decisions against the drift of the temptations. Concerned people today also see the value of the same means (5). It is encouraging to find a likeness to Christ and the saints on the path of temptation.

We are helped to understand and be prepared for temptation in the way the saint outlines a kind of pattern of assaults upon the person trying to lead a good life. First, there is sweetness in serving God; but then indifference creeps in; next appears a level of disgust, followed by aversion reaching the point of blasphemous thoughts and even repugnance towards God. But these are only "marks of God's love", and one's faithfulness is rewarded by great consolations once more (XI177).

In a few areas it seems that St Vincent's ideas would need some adaptation today. He strongly advocates adherence to one's rules in the context of people in community living, as a great means to avoid failure in vocation (Cf IX 359). A post-Tridentine tendency filters through here; today less emphasis is placed on rules as such. I think, however, that a closer reading of the Vincentian text shows that the spirit is more important than the letter.

On the matter of the calls to priesthood and the vowed life, St Vincent would certainly not easily countenance any thought of withdrawal from them (I 252; III 176, 457; IX 347). The lay vocation is more prominent in our modern age. And, of course, while final vows and ordination mean a life of commitment, we have now a greater knowledge of the person, in the wake of the development of the human sciences. Anyhow, the early years of seminary and religious life are part of discovering and discerning vocation. So, at this time the more absolute aspects of this teaching of St Vincent might be modified (6). Yet, he throws down a huge challenge to us.

In regard to revealing one's temptations to one's superiors only, the practice of today would be uncomfortable. The positive aspect in the Vincentian view is that the trouble is not spread indiscriminately. But

the modern way of seeking the help of a good spiritual guide accords better with true freedom (Cf IX 638, 689).

St Vincent's personal experiences of temptation were surely instructive for him. The youthful years from adolescence through early priesthood reveal a man constantly tantalized by the lure of riches as a means to reach a higher social plane (7). Perhaps in this regard a clear distinction between temptation and spiritual negligence bears strong echoes from the past (Cf X 189ff). Roman shows that the demon of ambition taunted him into his late forties, but then he had reached the point of conquest (8).

In conclusion, it seems fair to say that St Vincent gained great insight into this human reality from his own life and prayer, from contacts in ministry, as well as from his studies and reflection. He has thus been able to leave behind a very extensive and wise doctrine on temptation.

Notes

1. Common Rules of CM, 12:9
2. See, for example, P M Delfieux "The Desert Today" in *The Way*, London 1987, pp 184ff. A Monk: *The Hermitage Within*, London 1977.
3. "Temptation" in *Sacramentum Mundi*, London & New York 1970, vol. VI pp 210ff.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Examples are: Cardinal B Hume: *Light in the World*, Slough 1991, pp 128ff; and *Sacramentum Mundi*, *Ibid.*
6. For a modern discussion on motivation in vocation see L M Rulla, F Imoda and J Ricick: *Psychological Structure and Vocation*, Dublin 1979.
7. J M Román: *San Vicente de Paul*, Vol. I (Biografía), first edition, Madrid 1981, pp 89ff, 160-2. A Orcajo and M Pérez Flores: *San Vicente de Paul*, Vol. II (Espiritualidad y selection de escritos), first edition, Madrid 1981, pp 56-68 passim.
8. *Op. cit.* pp 185-6.

Vincent de Paul and England

Thomas Davitt

An article by Jerome Twomey, entitled “The Vincentians in Britain”, was published posthumously in *Colloque* No. 3, Autumn 1980. It contained the following paragraph:

During Cromwellian times St Vincent, apart from sending very successful missionary bands to both Scotland and Ireland, tried to establish his community in England also on a permanent basis, and sent one of his priests to England for that purpose. The French Ambassador at the time, however, was violently opposed to the project lest it give offence to the Lord Protector, and despite Vincent’s influence at the French court, political considerations proved too strong and he had to withdraw (1).

There are five main points in this paragraph: a) Vincent tried to establish his community in England on a permanent basis; b) He sent one of his priests to England for that purpose; c) The French Ambassador opposed the project; d) The Ambassador thought it would give offence to Cromwell; e) Vincent dropped the project.

In my prefatory note to the article I wrote that I could not find anything in Coste’s biography of Vincent nor in his 14-volume edition of the letters, conferences and documents, to back up this statement, and I wondered what grounds Twomey had for making it. Since then, on and off, I have tried to tease out the problem.

Patrick Boyle’s book seemed an obvious first place to look, but it throws no light at all on the question (2). However, when looking for something else in *A Century of Irish Vincentian Foundations 1833-1933*, I found the following, written by Edmund Cullen:

He [Vincent] even sent one of his Missioners in disguise to London, to try if through the influence of the French Ambassador, he could obtain some footing in the country. But terror and danger reigned everywhere at that dismal period, and St Vincent could do no more than pray for the unhappy nation (3).

This paragraph has three of the points which are in Twomey’s article: Vincent tried to get his community into England, though Cullen’s

“obtain some footing” is not as strong as Twomey’s “establish his community on a permanent basis”; he sent one of his priests to London, and Cullen adds “in disguise”; and the lack of success of this effort. Both authors also mention the French ambassador, Cullen writing that Vincent hoped for help from him and Twomey that the ambassador opposed the plan.

It is obvious that Twomey would have known of this passage, though he also appears to have had some other source(s), from which he got the point that the French ambassador “was violently opposed” to the project.

The next question, then, was: Where did Cullen get his information? I found an article by Thomas McNamara in *Les Annales de la Mission*, 55 (1890), which has the following (in French):

Taking advantage of the protection of the French ambassador he [Vincent] tried to get one of his priests in [to England], in disguise, but without success (4).

Running across this article reminded me that there was an earlier (1867) manuscript version of McNamara’s history, in English, in the Irish Province archives in Dublin. At the beginning of the section on St Vincent’s, Sheffield, I found the sentences quoted by Cullen, though Cullen omitted three words “in that Capital” after “the French Ambassador” (5).

But again the question arises: where did McNamara get his information? Abelly’s biography of Vincent (1664) does not have any mention of an attempt by Vincent to establish his community in England, though it deals quite extensively with the missionaries’ work in Ireland and in the Scottish Highlands and Islands.

It must be remembered that when McNamara wrote in 1867 there was no edition of Vincent’s letters yet in print. He was just beginning his time in the Irish College, Paris, and may have had access to the original letters in the rue de Sèvres, but that would seem unlikely. He would have known, however, of Collet’s biography of Vincent, published in 1748. In dealing with the work of the missionaries in Scotland, Collet writes:

Vincent already knew of the extreme danger in which his missionaries were since the edicts of Cromwell. He wanted very much to give them support, so in order not to leave undone anything possible he sent one of his community to London to confer with the ambassador of The Most Christian King and, with his influ-

ence and his advice, open some route to Scotland. Circumstances were not favourable. Cromwell was making everything tremble, on land and sea; and he was more against the Catholics than ever, because he well knew that he could be regarded by them as nothing more than a detestable usurper. Also, we noted somewhere else (6) that the French ambassador was the first to urge this Missioner, in whose favour persons of great influence had written to him, to leave, as quickly as possible, a city where a brief stay could cost him his life (7).

This has some of the points that Twomey has: Vincent sending a priest to London, the ambassador being against the project, and (at least implicitly) that it might “give offence to the Lord Protector”. But there is a very significant difference: the priest was not sent to London as part of an attempt by Vincent to establish his community in England on a permanent basis, but in order to open up a route from France through London to Scotland, to get help to the confreres there.

But, again, where did Collet get his facts? He gives a reference in the margin to a “Letter of 18 June 1656”. Unfortunately there is no letter of that date in the Coste edition. Collet mentions in his preface that there were more than six or seven thousand letters then extant, and in a footnote on the same page says that he could say ten thousand “according to the late M. B.”, which is more than twice the number in the Coste edition. Coste says that he does not know the letter referred to by Collet (V, 622, n. 3).

It is, however, worth looking at other letters from around this date. On 3 June 1656 Vincent wrote to Etienne Blatiron, superior in Genoa:

We had sent Fr [Brin] (8) to visit our missioners in Scotland and the Hebrides; but he’s back here, to my great disappointment, because as soon as he arrived in London the French ambassador obliged him to leave, as he saw no security for him on such a journey no matter what precautions might be taken (V, 622).

Here we have the opposition of the ambassador. Six days later Vincent wrote to Charles Ozenne, superior in Warsaw. Having written that there was nothing new he goes on to say that Brin had taken a third team of missioners down the country, as he

had been forced to come back from London, unable to get through, though dressed as a layman, to continue his journey to Scotland and the Hebrides... (V 624).

Here we have the priest in disguise. The same day Vincent wrote to Jean Martin, superior in Turin:

We sent Fr Brin to visit and affirm our poor confreres in Scotland and the Hebrides, but he was obliged to come back from London having seen no security in going beyond there. Yet he was dressed as a layman and recommended to the French ambassador, and it was he who obliged him to return (V 625-6).

There is a tantalising little point later in this letter: Vincent says he got some help to the men in Scotland by another route; we would like to know more about that.

Two days later he wrote to Louis Rivet, superior in Saintes. He gives a briefer account of what he wrote to Martin, with nothing extra (V 629).

On 21 July he wrote to the Abbé Louis de Chandénier:

We had sent Fr Brin to visit our confreres in Scotland and the Hebrides but he was obliged to come back from London because the English lord refused him a passport and the French ambassador, to whom he had been recommended, advised him against going further, although he was dressed as a gentleman (VI 34).

This is the first mention of the English authorities refusing him a passport. Another little difference is that Brin was not just dressed as a layman but like a gentleman.

The next letter which refers to the matter is considerably later, 29 September, again to Martin in Turin:

We are also very worried about our missionaries in Scotland and the Hebrides, being without any news. We made a second attempt to send Fr Brin there to visit and affirm them, but we were unable to get an English passport, without which this would be a very dangerous journey (VI 99).

A fortnight later he writes to Donat Crowley, from Cork, superior in Le Mans:

Fr Brin was supposed to go to Scotland and the Hebrides to visit our poor confreres there, about whom we have no news, but we have twice been refused an English passport without which there would be great danger in making that journey (VI 109).

The next letter is almost a year later, 24 August 1657, to Edme Jolly, superior in Rome:

I have not received any recent news from our missionaries in the Hebrides because of the English, who block any sort of communication with the Catholics, so that Fr Brin, who had gone to London in order to get to Scotland and then on to those islands, was obliged to return here having been unable to go any further, although he was dressed as a merchant (VI 408).

Was this, perhaps, a third attempt, with Erin's disguise as a merchant being different from that of a gentleman?

On 22 September he wrote to Cardinal Nicolò Bagni (it should be di Bagno, but he always got this man's name wrong):

We had sent one of our Irish priests to visit our missionaries who are in Scotland and on the Hebridean islands, and more or less to find out about the things Your Eminence indicates; but he couldn't get a passport in London, although he was disguised, and was obliged to return (VI 482). (9).

We can safely presume, I think, that the lost letter of 18 June 1656, mentioned by Collet, was along the same lines as these letters. It would seem to be highly unlikely that Vincent mentioned in that letter alone that he was trying to obtain a permanent footing in England without referring to such a plan in any of the other letters from around the same time. All the extant letters make it quite clear that he sent Brin to London as a first step in trying to get him to Scotland and the Hebrides.

At this stage we have to come back to Thomas McNamara, to examine what exactly he says. At the beginning of his chapter on Sheffield he refers to England at the time of Vincent, and mentions that Vincent had tried to get one of his priests into that country. He would have taken that information from Collet. The statement is, of course, perfectly true, but by his neglecting to set it clearly in the context of an attempt to get this man through to Scotland his readers could easily be misled.

Did McNamara, then, *intend* to mislead his readers? Did he intend to give the impression that Vincent sent Brin to London in order to try to establish the Congregation in England? The answer to both questions, I think, has to be in the negative. At the start of his chapter on St Vincent's, Sheffield, which was the first Vincentian house ever in England, he refers to the fact that even in Vincent's lifetime there was a link with England. I think he could have taken it for granted that his readers would be familiar with the incident, and would be able to place it in its correct context. Collet's biography, from which he had taken

it, was the most popular biography of Vincent at the time McNamara wrote; it had seventy-nine editions in the 19th and early 20th centuries (10).

What, then, about Cullen's use of McNamara's words? He quotes them verbatim (though omitting three words) in his article, without quotation marks and without acknowledgement, and certainly gives the impression that this was an attempt to get a man just into England, and that is probably what he believed. If he had been acquainted with Collet's work he would surely have qualified what he wrote. Twomey obviously understood it in the same way, and reinforced this impression by strengthening "to obtain some footing in the country" to "to establish his community in England on a permanent basis".

It is interesting that in a later unpublished article Twomey does not suggest that Vincent tried to establish his community on a permanent basis in England. Quite the contrary, in fact:

Language difficulties meant that a newly founded French community, as the Congregation then was, could do very little by way of direct help, since foreigners, even some of the many Irishmen in the community at the time, would attract too much attention in the England of the day and would be of no help to the English Mission (11).

This article has many handwritten additions and alterations, some of these altered again later, from different times and in different inks, sometimes with indications of dates; the final note is dated May 1977, two years before his death. The position he takes in this article on the possible establishment of the Congregation in England is later than that in the article printed in *Colloque* in 1980 (but written long before), as he surely would have made a handwritten change if he had altered his view in the other direction.

So we have to come to the conclusion that there is no evidence that Vincent wanted to, or attempted to, establish his community in England. But then, of course, he did not attempt to "establish" his community in Ireland or Scotland either, merely sending individual confreres, or small groups, on missionary expeditions. Presumably any "intelligence reports" available to him would have indicated that to try to send missionaries to England would have been inadvisable or impossible. He was very friendly with Fr Henry Holden, a prominent writer from Lancashire, then in exile in Paris, and with Bishop Richard Smith, also an exile. René Almérás' father (who later, at the

age of 82, followed his son into the Congregation) had been secretary to Queen Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII and married to Charles I of England, and accompanied her to London in that capacity. These would be only some of the sources of “intelligence” available to him.

For French confreres to go to England there would have been the language problem, and there would have been danger for Irish ones.

Twenty-three Irishmen joined the Congregation in Vincent’s lifetime, two Scotsmen joined and one man from Jersey. No Englishman joined until 1744 when John Savage, from Fletching in Sussex, entered as a lay brother (12). Why did no Englishman join before then? In his unpublished article from 1960 Twomey suggests an explanation:

Englishmen, naturally enough when one considers the number of English Colleges then in France and the number of older communities with strong roots in England before the Congregation of the Mission was even founded, did not join the community (13).

But that is not a satisfactory explanation. There were also a number of Irish colleges then in France and a number of older communities with strong roots in Ireland, yet many Irishmen joined.

The real explanation may well have been simply that Englishmen did not feel attracted to a new community whose membership was roughly 90% French and 10% Irish, with a French superior general and administration, and headquarters in Paris (14).

Notes

1. *Collogue* No. 3, Autumn 1980, p. 43. The article was written more than twenty years before that date.
2. Boyle, P: *St Vincent de Paul & the Vincentians in Ireland, Scotland and England A.D. 1638-1909*, London, 1909.
3. Cullen, E: *The Origin and Development of the Irish Vincentian Foundations 1833-1933*, Dublin, n.d. [1933], p. 103. (This is the title as on the title-page. On the cover the title is *A Century of Irish Vincentian Foundations 1833-1933*).
4. *Les Annales de la Mission*, tome LV (1890), p. 265. This was one of a series of articles, with McNamara’s authorship mentioned only at the start of the series, tome LI (1886), p. 338.
5. McNamara, T: *Memoirs of the Congregation of the Mission in Ireland, England and Scotland*, manuscript, fcap, p. 219. This work is in the CM Provincial Archives in Dublin.
6. This would seem to mean a letter other than that of 18 June 1656. See later in the article.
7. [Collet, P.]: *La Vie de St Vincent De Paul*, two vols., Nancy, 1748, vol. II, p. 485.

8. Vincent left the space blank in this letter, but we know from the other letters that the priest in question was Gerard Brin from the diocese of Cashel, born in 1618. P Boyle changes him to Byrne, and J Leonard to Bryan, but he signed himself (very clearly) Girardus Brin in the acta of the St Lazare domestic assembly on 17 November 1660, though that may have been a French spelling and pronunciation which he had adopted. He apparently returned to Ireland a couple of years later, and he died in Thurles between October 1683 and February 1684. (See an article to be published in *Colloque* No. 31, Spring 1995).
9. The background to this letter is that the cardinal asked Vincent on 13 August to send two French secular priests to Ireland and Scotland to investigate the conditions under which missionaries from various orders were working. Vincent explained the impossibility of getting two French secular priests who knew the languages. In the compromise which he suggested there is an intriguing little detail. The cardinal had mentioned only Ireland and Scotland, but Vincent suggests sending a French priest of his congregation, along with “one of our Irish brothers for Ireland, an Englishman for England and a Scotsman for Scotland”. The French could mean “an English one” (i.e. a lay brother) and a “Scots one” (ditto). There were two Irish brothers at the time, the cousins Gerard and Laurence Cogley, from Carrick on Suir; Laurence was a brother of Fr Mark Cogley. There was one Scots brother, Thomas Gordon from Aberdeen. According to the *Registre des Entrées* there was not any brother from England. Brother Solomon Patriarche, from Jersey, may have been the man Vincent had in mind. He was appointed to Saint-Meen on his return from Ireland in 1649 with some form of mental trouble (III 486); he was still ill, and unfit for travel, in 1651 (IV 257). We have no information on him after that date. If there was a brother from England at the time of this letter he does not appear in the *Registre des Entrées*.
10. Dodin, A: *La Légende et l’Histoire: de Monsieur Depaul à saint Vincent de Paul*, Paris, 1985, p. 189.
11. Twomey, J: *Saint Vincent and the Vincentians in Great Britain*, 17 pages, typescript, 4to, pp. 4-5. In a handwritten note, dated 21 May 1977, JT says the article was originally written for the proposed tercentenary volume in 1960, which never materialised. This typescript is among the Twomey papers in the CM Provincial Archives, Dublin.
12. cf *Colloque* No. 13, Spring 1986, p. 78.
13. Twomey:op. cit. in note 10: p. 5.
14. J M Román, in Mezzadri & Román: *Storia della Congregazione della Missione*, vol. I, Rome, 1992, p. 74, says that although 614 men joined the community in Vincent’s lifetime the actual number in the latter part of his life, because of deaths and departures, was usually around 200, and was never more than 250. 23 Irishmen joined in Vincent’s lifetime and 19 would seem to have been alive at the time of his death; we do not know the date of death for some of them. Cf *Colloque* No. 11, Spring 1985, pp. 421-3.

The 150th Anniversary of the Society of St Vincent de Paul in Ireland

(Homily at the Mass, at the RDS, Ballsbridge, 8 May 1994)

Mark Noonan

My dear people, let us love one another since love comes from God, and everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. Anyone who fails to love can never have known God, because God is love (1 Jn 4:7-8a).

A few years ago in Kerdiffstown a member of the Society of St Vincent de Paul recalled an experience she had working with a family where the mother and father were both in prison. Part of her work was to cook shepherd's pie for the children. When the mother returned to the family she no longer cooked for the family, presuming that the mother would look after the children. One day the mother asked to be taught how to make shepherd's pie, as the children liked it. The Vincent de Paul member taught her to make shepherd's pie. Then she talked the mother into attending a home management course run by the Society. The Vincent de Paul sister spoke of the thrill she got from watching the mother's self-worth being restored. As a result the family situation was changed. That is the vocation of every member of this Society, to bring God's love into hopeless situations.

Today's celebration is a celebration of love. It's a celebration of God's love for us, individually and as a Society, it is a celebration of the love of generations of Society members for the poor in Ireland. It is also a celebration of the love of generations of Irish people who have so generously supported the Society in the past 150 years.

I am conscious today of hundreds of thousands of faithful members of this Society over the past 150 years, leaving the warmth of their homes after a day's work, to visit and work with those less fortunate than themselves. Whether they were aware of it or not, they were surely acting out of love. In reaching out to others they found God. Those who live in love, live in God. Venerable Frédéric Ozanam said

that we cannot love God as the great saints loved God, because we cannot see God. But he continues:

But we do see human beings, the poor, with our physical eyes: here they are. We can put our fingers and our hands into their wounds; on their foreheads are seen the marks of the crown of thorns. So, then, there is no room for unbelief. We ought to fall at their feet and say with the apostle: “You are my Lord and my God”.

For Venerable Frédéric Ozanam – as for St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac – what was done for the poor was done for God. What the Society does today is done for and through the love of God. It is important for the Society to reflect that, as the largest charitable organization in the country, its motivation for all its work is specifically rooted in the person of Christ. We go from the Christ of the eucharist to the Christ of the poor. Ozanam used to say that to use the name of Vincent de Paul without a strong Christ-centred motivation is a betrayal of the name of Vincent de Paul. St Vincent de Paul himself said:

Love God. Let us love God, but let it be with the strength of our arm and the sweat of our brow.

In 1844, when the Society was established in Ireland, the country was on the verge of a terrible famine which resulted in millions of deaths and mass emigration. The poverty must have been enormous and the need for this Society must have been very great at that time. The Society of St Vincent de Paul, however, was never put off by the enormity of problems, but in a truly Vincentian way has always set about tackling difficulties with enthusiasm and a practical love for people. No work of charity was foreign to the Society: hospital visitation, home visitation, working with Travellers, budget submissions to governments, clothes shops, home management courses, job creation, a Sunshine Home for youngsters, youth clubs, holidays for the elderly, building houses for the homeless, fund-raising, and so on. The members of the Society of St Vincent de Paul do not preach about love, they show love by charitable works, they bring love by their very presence and concern. In the words of Cardinal Daly this morning: “The Society is the compassionate face of Christ for the poor”.

The challenges for the Society in serving the poor in Ireland, North and South, today are many. There is an urgency in the Society about

addressing issues of justice for those who live on the margins of society. The Society has always worked for justice. The Handbook of the Society says:

The Society of St Vincent de Paul, always in a strictly impartial and non-political way, actively, constantly and, where necessary, publicly, plays its part in striving for justice for the less privileged members of the community.

We work for justice because the love of God urges us on. We struggle to relieve the poverty we experience in our less privileged brothers and sisters because our love for them comes from God. Sometimes, members of the Society can be overcome by the poverty they experience in their work. Coming face to face with third generation long-term unemployment nearly always leaves members feeling inadequate and worthless. Yet, the love of God urges us on. For us, Vincentians, love is our answer to hopelessness.

Unemployment is the greatest injustice in our country today, North and South. The Society's work for justice for the unemployed raises a number of questions for me:

- What can the Society do to further solidarity with the unemployed?
- How do we enable and empower the unemployed to voice their concerns for themselves?
- How do we communicate the pain of having no work, so that it penetrates the comfort of our lives? If the pain is felt, the political will to do something about it will be generated.
- How is the voice of the poor to be communicated to those in leadership in Church and State?
- What can be done to change structures which result in the poor becoming poorer?
- Can more be done about the growing social exclusion of whole communities where third generation long-term unemployment is now the norm?
- How can we ensure that the economic boom predicted in the recent ERSI report will benefit the poor as well as those who are better off? We don't want to see the poor becoming poorer while the rich get richer.

Yet another challenge facing the Society is how to equip Society members to face these issues in a Vincentian way. Training is important if we are to serve the poor as effectively as we can. New problems

and new poverties create the need for new skills. Developing relationship with people on the margins is fraught with difficulties. Training would enable Society members to deal more competently and effectively with the many problems which arise in the course of our work. We owe it to the poor to be open to training so that we can serve them more effectively. Much work has been done to equip members, but much remains to be done. Frédéric Ozanam wrote on January 15, 1831:

I will stretch out my hand to offer it as a liberating beacon to those who sail on the sea of life, feeling blessed if some friends come and gather round me. We would then unite our efforts.

There are many thousands of us gathered here today. Frédéric Ozanam's dream of some friends joining him has become a reality, but his vision is never fully realised. There is always more to be done. I can only guess at what his dream for the Society in Ireland today could be, but from his writings and life I believe his vision would be for a Society

- where the poor will feel loved and listened to as a result of the quality of our relationship with them;
- where we will have many more young people who will be welcomed and made to feel at home in the Society;
- where there will be regular training for Conference Presidents, new members and experienced members;
- where the spiritual motivation for our work would be nurtured and developed;
- where part of the weekly Conference meeting would sometimes include snaring of our experiences of working with poor people and learning from it;
- where there is regular use of scripture at meetings to apply gospel values to everyday life;
- where every Conference will have a spiritual adviser or resource person.
- where the members of the Society would support each other, and where Conferences would support each other;
- where the Society would collaborate with other organizations in Church and State in working towards a more just society.

Today, in the words of Frédéric Ozanam: “Let us stretch out our hands as liberating beacons to those who sail on the sea of life”. We face the future, with his vision and his hope in our hearts. We can be confident that the Spirit of God, which guided the Society in the service of the poor in the past, will continue to guide the Society into the future.

“My dear people, let us love one another since love comes from God, and everyone who loves is begotten by God. Anyone who fails to love can never have known God, because God is love”.

The Travellers' Parish – A Review

Joseph Loftus

Introduction

Winnie kept saying: “My two little birds, my little birds”, as they lowered the little white coffins into the damp clay of the small cemetery in the west of Ireland. Her two children, aged two years and eighteen months were burned in a fire while her own mother was in the next trailer boiling milk for the baby’s bottle. The priest who said the prayers and tried to comfort her had travelled down from Dublin for the funeral and would travel back the two hundred miles with her again. He would keep in touch with herself and her husband Patrick, and wherever they would find themselves in the archdiocese of Dublin there will be someone who knew of her grief and who had shared it with her. At the births, deaths, marriages of her relations there will be a priest or pastoral worker who can greet her and remember, perhaps without words being said, her pain. In this way the care of the Church for Winnie is shown. Hopefully it is a statement to her that whatever other groups in Irish society neglect, patronise or discriminate against her as a Travelling woman, the Church, her Church, tries to make real the greeting announced to her at her baptism: “The Church welcomes you with great joy”.

It is this immediacy of relationship with a marginalized group in Irish society which is at the heart of the work of the Parish of the Travelling People in the archdiocese of Dublin. The description which follows, of this unique parish, tries to capture the range of activities, personalities and influences which have moulded it into what it is today, and are directing its shape for the future. It is necessary, however, to issue a disclaimer. These are the opinions of the author and, despite aspirations to objectivity, omissions and personal opinions, not shared by all, are inevitable.

Travellers in Ireland

The Travelling People are the only nomadic group in Ireland, and constitute 0.5% of the population, or about 23,000 people. They are historically associated with relatively few parts of Ireland, but urban

drift has meant that they now live in or near large centres of population, particularly Dublin. They are not gypsies, such as one finds in continental Europe, and in names and features are indistinguishable from other Irish people. Their origins are disputed, and conflicting theories are often politically motivated, rather than based on hard evidence. What is true is that, in Ireland today, there are people whose customs, traditions and nomadic lifestyle make them a distinguishable cultural group, separate from the rest of Irish society.

Ireland is, by and large, a homogeneous society, and has not had to come to terms with the demands of a multi-culture society. For this reason much of the debate which one finds in Europe about the nature of culturally appropriate education, health care or pastoral support has not taken place. This has been detrimental to Travellers in Ireland, who have not gained the advantage now being offered to minority groups in other European countries. We have no anti-discrimination laws, nor has the educational sector had to adopt multi-cultural approaches, as has happened elsewhere.

In Ireland Travellers have always been at the edges of Irish society, and the only escape is through assimilation into the settled community, and the suppression of their Traveller heritage. Travellers who remain within their own community face discrimination from their settled peers. The almost universally held beliefs about Travellers duplicate those held about gypsies in Europe. Stories about their dishonesty, hygiene and drunkenness are legion. Any evidence which runs contrary to the negative image is assumed to be atypical. In this "tyranny of the anecdote" all examples of bad behaviour confirm the stereotype, while good examples prove only that there are exceptions to the rule.

Travellers traditionally belonged at the bottom of a rural economy, grudgingly tolerated for their skills with horses, tinsmithing, and as a source of casual labour. With the revolution in agriculture and the depopulation of rural Ireland, Travellers were no longer a necessary part of the economy. As a result, many have drifted to the cities and large towns. In their new surroundings some have adapted well, finding new skills as scrap merchants and market traders. Others have become an underclass, unable to get employment because of their lack of modern skills, or because of discrimination. In consequence, they become totally dependent on the welfare system. In urban Ireland they are unnecessary to the local economy and lack even the grudging acceptance afforded to them in the past.

Antipathy to Travellers is increasing, and interaction with settled people is often hostile. The Travellers today are an unwelcome part of urban (or, more frequently, suburban) Ireland. Most efforts of Irish society to relate to them have been hindered by misunderstanding, and a failure of the settled community to appreciate the nomadic assumptions and culture of the Travelling People.

This is not the place to give a detailed history of the response to Travellers by the Church, the State or voluntary agencies. However, it is clear that most responses to Travellers have been based on the presuppositions of articulate settled people as to the needs of the often inarticulate and ill-educated Travellers. For example, those agencies dealing with accommodation concerns of Travellers have failed to appreciate the difference between homelessness and the nomadic way of life. Throughout the 1960s these agencies attempted to “house” Travellers. This lack of appreciation is only slowly changing, and is still the norm in Irish society as a whole.

Because of their isolation from the rest of Irish society Travellers preserve customs which might have been held in common with their settled rural neighbour a hundred years ago, but are today alien to the average Irish person. Arranged marriages are still frequent enough as to be unremarkable, as is the practice of close-relative marriages. The marriage age is ten years below the national average, and is curtailed more by changing Church regulation than by Travellers accepting the desirability of later marriage. The strict supervision of children, particularly girls, before marriage is still usual, and the fear of “scandal” affecting a girl’s marriage prospects is a real concern in many families. This issue is becoming more acute in that the Travellers are not immune from the permissive forces in contemporary society, and yet they still operate from the strict, even harsh, code of sexual morality common to peasant communities the world over. For example, a teenager who wishes to take part in educational or social activity with a mixed group may not get permission from his or her family. As mixed groups are now the norm, Traveller participation in many educational and social opportunities is severely curtailed.

The world in which Travellers live is a marginalized one. Their chronic accommodation situation, with its associated health and employment concerns, is considered self-inflicted and is of low priority. The widening of the gap between Travellers and their settled peers is accelerating, and moments of understanding and mutual acceptance offer hope for a possible future, rather than describe the reality of today.

Travellers and the Archdiocese of Dublin

The Dublin Archdiocese with its more than one million Catholics has three hundred families living by the roadside, without electricity, water, sanitary or waste-disposal amenities which all of us take for granted in our daily lives. There are twelve hundred children now growing to maturity and few of them will see their fiftieth birthday. Because of their nomadic way of life they are feared by many and rejected by most communities... It is my hope that these words will help to initiate a new dialogue among people about our Christian duty to respect the basic human rights of Traveller families through suitable accommodation, adequate incomes, health care, education and employment. A particular right, arising from their own way of life, is the right to travel from one properly serviced site to another. I earnestly ask your wholehearted support for the provision of such sites for the Travelling people.

Archbishop Desmond Connell, 29 January 1989

The drift of Travellers to urban areas constituted a unique issue for the archdiocese of Dublin. Situated in the east of Ireland the archdiocese has seen its historically small Traveller population increase to include one third of the total Traveller population of the country.

In the 1960s the attention of many people in the archdiocese, as elsewhere in Ireland, was focussed on the Travelling People. Settlement committees were set up, and the religious orders were very much to the fore in the provision of educational services, and in the lobbying for more adequate accommodation.

In relation to the concern for families a comprehensive marriage preparation programme was initiated. This programme offered individual attention to couples whose needs were recognized as being quite different from those of their settled peers. Successive archbishops have spoken out on the treatment of Travellers, and Bishop Desmond Williams (an auxiliary bishop) has kept the Travellers very much to the fore in his public statements on poverty in Dublin. However, as the numbers of Travellers moving to Dublin continued to increase through the 1970s it became clear that the pastoral care of Travellers could not be adequately met by either the traditional parish system or the uncoordinated pastoral support offered by individual priests and religious. Travellers, with their alien socio-religious practices and unfamiliar nomadic lifestyle were often misunderstood and, as a consequence,

neglected by pastors more used to the care of an urban population. It became clear that a new approach was necessary. It was in response to these increasing needs that Archbishop Dermot Ryan took the bold step of starting the Parish of the Travelling People in 1981.

The Parish Team

It is perhaps appropriate to leave the beginnings of the parish to its first Parish Priest, Fr Michael McCullagh CM:

As a means of meeting the pastoral and spiritual needs of the Travellers, the Archbishop of Dublin in 1979 asked the religious superiors to nominate a man from their communities who might fulfil that role [of Parish Priest] ... One year later I was appointed as the first Parish Priest of the Travellers in the diocese. A year later the Archbishop accepted the nomination of Fr Adrian Eastwood CM and Sr Mairéad O'Donovan DC, the latter as catechist, to complete the team.

The Original Direction of the Work

Again Fr McCullagh:

Our first priority as the parish team working with the Travelling People is to have a personal faith relationship with them. We do this through pastoral visitation of all the families in their homes, chalets, sites, roadside halts, in hospital or in places of care and detention. We also see ourselves as ultimately responsible for the sacramental and religious instruction of both adults and children.

We have as our base Exchange House, where our parish secretary is available to deal with the personal calls and queries, not only from Travellers but also from the many religious, professional and voluntary people working with them.

Our best resource is the Pre-Marriage Preparation Group, a voluntary group of couples who give pre-marriage courses to all our couples...

The final major service we offer is our parish mission which is established as an annual event... It consists of four weeks of catechesis, preaching, and celebration of the sacraments in churches and on various sites.

Fr Michael McCullagh CM, 16 March 1982

This description, despite many changes, still forms part of the self-identity of the parish team. The cost of such an agenda is high when those with whom one wishes to form personal faith relationships experience a disproportionate number of tragedies, both personal and communal. The logistics alone inherent in this description are demanding, and even the most mundane of requests, for example attendance at a funeral, may involve a trip to a traditional burial site two hundred miles away. However, it has been, and remains, central to the vision of the parish team that we approach the Traveller as an individual and offer him or her a Christ-centred opportunity to share the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, which they experience in their lives.

Commitment to Education

From the very beginning there has been a commitment in the parish to the educational ministry. In the past this work concentrated on the preparation for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Now that initial focus has broadened to include a commitment to wider educational concerns. In cooperation with others, the parish team encourages the Travellers to participate in education. The parish has been instrumental in setting up two pre-schools to facilitate the integration of Travellers into formal education.

The work of the parish catechists has evolved over the years. Initially the work was an expansion of the pastoral visitation, following up on specific educational issues of families, and preparing for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. Close cooperation with the school teachers revealed a need for religious education material which reflected the lives of the Travelling children in its images, stories, etc. The writing of a suitable programme was a major task for the two catechists, but the parish's religious education programme for Primary Schools and Junior Training Centres remains the only school textbooks for Traveller children published in this country.

The catechists have responsibility for the instruction of those adults who did not receive the usual sacraments in childhood. Normally this is done in cooperation with a local voluntary worker who will prepare the individuals near their own home. There is in the archdiocese a Confirmation Service for Adults in November. In practice, this is mostly for members of the Travelling Community. Increased participation in the ordinary education system is diminishing the need for this service.

Changing Times

The Travelling Community is changing. Many of those changes are welcomed by all. There is an improving level of education in the community, a greater awareness of their rights as citizens, and a confidence in demanding those rights. There is greater access to health care, and increasingly the media are accepting the Travellers as a part of Irish society and describing their way of life in a positive fashion.

In 1963 there were 114 Traveller children regularly attending primary schools. In 1988 this figure had jumped to 4,000. In the light of that success the focus of concern has moved from simply providing a service which didn't exist to asking what is the quality of that education. The integration/assimilation debate, so unusual in Irish education, is more and more being addressed in relation to Travellers and primary education. There is little participation of Travellers in formal education beyond the age of twelve. However, Junior Training Centres offer opportunities for some teenage Travellers to have vocational training. Also, a national network of Training Centres is helping some young adult Travellers to interact as self-confident equals with a society which would deny them that equality. These Training Centres provide many, particularly women, with a forum to reflect on their life and shape its future, rather than have that future shaped entirely by outside, and often hostile, influences.

In the greater Dublin area there are 27 official sites providing for 273 Travelling families, 31 unofficial (illegal) sites providing for 208 Travelling families, and 9 temporary sites providing for 126 Travelling families. There are 606 Travelling families with 2,120 children under fifteen. The situation is one which demands more action than the authorities are willing to take. The existing plans for the provision of halting sites are hopelessly behind schedule and, if fully implemented, they still could not meet the needs of the growing community. More happily, a recent architectural competition sponsored by the Irish Head of State, President Mary Robinson, generated great interest and produced plans which took the concerns of Travellers into consideration in their design. Hopefully some of these plans will be used in the building of sites in the future.

The period of the 1980s also began a period of change within the Travellers' scene. New groups, typical of which is the Dublin Travellers' Education & Development Group, brought with them newer, more radical, approaches. They began to cast a cold, and often critical, light on the activities of those who had been "in the field" up till then. The new people posed more questions to existing structures than did the

traditional organizations. They not only looked at the plight of the Travelling People and tried to address it, but they also posed “why?” questions and demanded structural change. The traditional approaches often arose from the demands of Charity, which asked of the system that they be more responsive to Travellers. The approaches which emerged in the 1980s were motivated more by the demands of Justice, and questioned the very validity of the system itself. Through the late 1980s the two camps existed side by side and worked together in the National Council for the Travelling People, a loose federation of groups working for Travellers.

Increasingly the clashes became more heated as the two approaches became more antagonistic towards each other, and finally a split became inevitable. The result is that the interests of Travellers are represented by two national organizations, The National Federation of Irish Travelling People, and The Irish Traveller Movement. Each organization is competing for funding and claims to speak for Travellers as a whole.

The split in the unity of those who work for Travellers is to be regretted, but it is clear that the insights of the new groups have brought a new vitality to the Travellers’ “scene”. These groups have effected an increased participation of Travellers in forging their own future. Further, they have been influential on all who work with Travellers in Ireland today by their insistence that Travellers be included in decision-making on issues which affect their lives.

The Parish Today

In 1989 the parish team, which had recently seen a considerable change in personnel, decided to reformulate its own goals. After reflection, the goals agreed to were as follows:

- To work in partnership with Travellers.
- To foster, encourage and develop a Confident Christian Community among the Travelling People.
- To promote understanding and appreciation of Traveller culture among the settled community.
- To give special care to the most marginalized Travellers.

The consequences for the parish team of this reformation have been quite radical and are still unfolding. Some of the effects are measur-

able, some are more difficult to evaluate, but all are, none the less, significant.

Working in partnership with Travellers has required of us that we look first to The Travelling Community for help in our initiatives. For example, the couples who helped with marriage preparation were all settled people. We are now reshaping the programme so that Travellers can make a significant contribution to that work. Last year [1992] the parish sponsored a work programme, Project '92, for young Travellers in cooperation with a government agency. The board of management had Travellers on it, and the supervisor of the scheme was a Travelling woman.

The development of a confident Christian community has demanded more co-ordinated catechetical and educational opportunities for adults. In recent years the parish has begun to celebrate the liturgical seasons with groups of Travellers. Through weekly gatherings in people's homes we have tried to deepen Travellers' experience of the Incarnation and Paschal Mystery. The parish has had to work at creating culturally sensitive liturgies. This has the effect of making Travellers feel at home with the vernacular liturgy, which is very often demanding of those with limited education. Recently we have begun to offer adult education opportunities, usually with a government agency. It is felt that such initiatives are a necessary part of building up the self-confidence of people conditioned to see themselves and their talents as of no consequence.

There is, within the parish team, a concern to help both settled person and Traveller overcome their mutual hostility and prejudice. With our associations in education it is perhaps natural that much of our efforts might be in this direction. There is a resource centre with material for teachers in the parish office, and recently a programme of seminars for teachers of classes in which there are Traveller children was begun. It is hoped to develop these workshops in the future. The parish team, in cooperation with some Travellers, holds workshops in both the national seminary in Maynooth and the Dublin diocesan seminary, Clonliffe. Other lectures and workshops are offered according to request.

The commitment to the most marginalized demands of us that we do not confine our attention to those who can benefit from development programmes. There remain those who will not, or cannot, help themselves. These families remain important for us, and we try to keep their pastoral concerns very much on our agenda.

In the last two years the team has grown to eight members, two priests, four catechists, an office administrator and a part-time parish sister. This has created the possibility of redirecting resources in ways not traditionally associated with the parish team. In 1990 the archdiocese of Dublin provided new offices with increased space, including a large meeting room and an oratory. This changed situation of the team has created many opportunities to meet the needs of the Travelling People in a new way.

Traditionally the parish team has had a serious commitment to the education of Travellers. Now we have been able to respond to a long-felt need for a module for student teachers on "Who are the Travelling People?" The resulting programme, Promoting Attitudinal Change Towards Travellers (PACTT), invites the student teachers to uncover their own attitudes and beliefs about Travellers. The students are then asked to test their suppositions for accuracy by bringing the students into direct interaction with the Travelling People and with others who work with them directly. The aim of PACTT is to promote attitudinal change towards the Travelling People so that Ireland may begin to "see us as a people with a difference that is positive and that is enriching for all" (Michael McDonagh, Traveller).

Such change should lead to more appropriate classroom practice and management, a greater openness to Travellers, and a welcoming of cultural diversity. It is hoped that the lectures used in PACTT '92 will be published at Easter this year [1993] under the title "Do you know us at all?"

In April 1992 the parish launched a booklet called "Wrapped in the Mantle of God". This booklet, a long series of reflections on the ways in which Travellers express their deep faith, was the result of a government work programme sponsored by the parish. Since the previous November the workers had been interviewing Travellers, young and old, from around the country, and collected and catalogued their material as a resource for further research. The themes covered in the booklet include: blessings and relics, funeral customs, pilgrimages, and marriage. As well as being an educational opportunity for those Travellers who participated in the scheme it was an education for the parish team also. From its inception this scheme included Travellers in the process of reflection, implementation, and evaluation. Its success is an encouragement for further projects in partnership for the future.

Issues for the Parish Team

Perhaps the most difficult issue to resolve for a Parish of the Travelling People is that of the relationship with the local parish of residence. In this the Church echoes the wider debate as to the competing values of separateness and assimilation. Does the Church offer to Travellers separate, culturally-sensitive, pastoral care through a distinct Parish of the Travelling People, thereby risking the danger of ghettoization and the criticism of being discriminatory? The alternative is to offer to Travellers the local church, which is often welcoming enough but ignores the distinctive socio-cultural needs of the Traveller family and fails to recognize their trailer as another home in the parish.

In the archdiocese of Dublin one rarely finds deep-seated ill-will towards Travellers among clergy or pastoral workers. Sometimes, however, the local parish assumes that the Traveller is a parishioner who can be successfully responded to by existing pastoral strategies. In a country untouched by the multi-cultural debate mentioned earlier, this is to be expected.

The Travellers' Parish has always upheld the Travellers' right to attend their local church and be ministered to by their local parish priest. However, the degree to which that local parish can offer culturally appropriate pastoral care is limited by the experience of the parish personnel and their prejudices. (Statistics show that Church personnel share similar levels of prejudice with their lay peers). Most parishes have a clear identity of the social groups within their parish, and have perhaps been responding to their needs for generations. The arrival of Travellers into the parish represents a new situation. The socio-religious needs of the Travellers are usually unfamiliar, and the parish is not geared to deal with them. Some parish priests and co-workers have made heroic options in favour of the Travellers, often risking the alienation of long-standing parishioners by their stance. Others take a paternalistic interest, inviting them into the life of the parish while ignoring the distinctive elements of their culture and experience. Others ignore their presence, offering them minimal pastoral care, and referring them to the Travellers' Parish for all important issues. The quality and nature of the pastoral care offered by the local parish is dependent on individual clergy and pastoral workers.

An example, from outside the archdiocese of Dublin, is not untypical. A parish with a large Traveller population held a mission. The parish priest was delighted that the missionaries had visited every home in the parish. When the mission was over some vocal Travellers com-

plained that the missionaries had not called to them, and the parish priest had to admit that he had failed to include the Travellers in that visitation. Failures are usually less glaring, but result in a level of pastoral care that leaves a whole community vulnerable to the enticements of the fundamentalist groups, or abandons them to an ill-formed folk-religion, with only the most superficial connection with the sacramental life of the Church.

For some parishes the experience of integrating Travellers into parish life can be daunting and disillusioning. For example, the parish which makes every effort to include Travellers in its baptismal programme can be hurt at their failure to participate, unaware that the level of literacy still found among Travellers makes even the filling out of their initial form a threat! In time, the Travellers are not asked anymore and one more link with the parish is broken.

A positive experience of the existence of the Travellers' Parish is that, in a situation where the majority of pastors are unfamiliar with the socio-religious needs of the Travellers, the Travellers' Parish can provide culturally-sensitive pastoral support. For example, a request to "bless this cross" might be dismissed by an urban pastor as an idle petition, not realizing its significance. For the Traveller, the blessing of the newly-erected cross over a grave is an important moment for a whole family. The custom is unknown in Dublin, and the reluctance of priests to perform this blessing is an often-repeated criticism.

For a nomadic people pastoral care which is not limited to a small territory is invaluable:

"Fr Seán married us in Finglas, he brought us the news of my brother's death in Ballymun, and visited us when we moved to Clondalkin".

"I had a baby when we were staying in Tallaght. Sister Margaret came to visit me. She also went to see my husband Johnny when he had that operation, even though we were staying in Bray".

"Tony helped me get First Communion for James in Clondalkin; he helped me again in Ballymun with Mary Theresa". Such continuity is a support to a community used only to discontinuity in such relationships.

The dilemma of the Travellers' Parish is, on the one hand, the danger of further reinforcing limited relationships between the local parish and the Traveller, and, on the other, the urgency of existing pastoral need. The parish team has had to wrestle with this issue over the years of its existence and has not succeeded in arriving at an adequate solution.

The parish has not been removed from the new reflections on the

Travellers' situation, as many of those in these new groups are motivated by their Christian faith. Liberation theology, which has had such a powerful effect on many who work with the poor, has not been a major influence within the parish team. For this reason, many of the new groups have been deeply critical of the methods and concerns of the parish. As grass-roots organizations they criticized the parish for the fact that no Travellers are members of the parish team. Also, they disapprove of the methods of the parish team which reproduce hierarchical and clerical structures and confirm pietistic fatalism among the Travellers. They have criticized the parish for its lack of a politicized stance on justice issues. The team has, in the past, reacted by being defensive of present practice. More recently we have come to see the value of some of those criticisms and begun to be more inclusive of Travellers, as well as having a more developed justice agenda within the parish.

The Future: Parish Team, Pastors, or Agents for Change

The parish team has been changing over the last number of years, both because of the changing needs of the Travellers and because of the different skills brought by new personnel. The initial intention of the parish team is clear:

From the outset it was clearly specified that our role as parish team was to be specifically pastoral and spiritual. (Fr Michael McCullagh CM)

The parish has always been able to respond immediately and very well to the ordinary pastoral needs of Travellers. However, it has long been felt that the level of commitment to pastoral support frustrated the parish's ability to respond to other, more long-term, needs. In a parish co-extensive with the diocese, parish visitation alone is a full-time job, yet such visitation shows up so many other serious needs, from accommodation to adult religious education, from law reform to health care. The concern has been to make some response to these wider issues while remaining at heart a group committed to an immediacy of relationship with Travellers in their homes and day-to-day experience.

More recently, the increase in personnel has allowed the parish to develop in new and exciting directions and to begin programmes long dreamed of but impossible to implement for lack of resources. The parish team is making a significant contribution to the changing of attitudes through the PACTT programme and allied initiatives. Project '92 allowed the parish team to be involved in the building up of the

confidence of Travellers in a way which does not neglect the spiritual aspects of genuine self-confidence.

These programmes require the parish to take on more of the attributes of an organization, albeit one sympathetic to Travellers. However, the very qualities which make it possible for those initiatives to run successfully curtail the immediacy of contact with Travellers in their homes and in the domestic situations of birth, marriage, and death. In the past all members of the team would have had that immediacy of contact in common. Now it is shared only by some. In the future, the parish team will have to balance the demands of the long-term projects with the maintenance of those domestic relationships, which is a distinguishing feature of the Parish of the Travelling People.

Conclusion

The Parish of the Travelling People in the archdiocese of Dublin is a unique expression of a diocese's concern for the nomadic people in its care. It is a way of reaching out to the Travellers in Dublin who are neglected in many ways by Irish society and administrative structures. It is a signal to a marginalized community that it is cared for and supported by the Church. Through the structures of the parish, Travellers, in particular those who remain mobile, receive a level of pastoral care which would not be possible within the ordinary parish structures. The parish is able to keep the concerns of Travelling People on the agenda of a diocese which has to cope with many equally important and demanding preoccupations.

The difficulty of a parish as a response to a nomadic people is that it imposes a concept that is essentially territorial on a community which doesn't identify with such boundaries. It is an institution whose primary concern is traditionally pastoral, but the terrible conditions in which Travellers are forced to live requires of the parish well-organized social justice agenda also. The parish runs the risk of being an ambivalent signal to both Travellers and existing Church institutions. Some Travellers see its existence as an attempt to ghettoize the Travellers. At the same time, some reluctant parishes see the existence of the Travellers' Parish as excusing them from taking on appropriate pastoral initiatives for those Travellers who live (often for many years) within their territory. This dilemma is familiar in many outreaches to marginalized groups and defies easy solution. It is the task of the parish to monitor its own methods in order to ensure that it does not perpetuate the marginalization of Travellers by its own success!

Forum

RELIGION ON LOCAL RADIO

The first licensed “community radio” in the Republic of Ireland, Anna Livia, was born in November 1992. The name is taken straight from James Joyce’s *Finnegans Wake* and is the poetic name of Dublin’s River Liffey, and the idea is that it should flow right through the Dublin area, uniting its varied people with one voice. Dublin is a city of contrasts, with over a million people in more than a hundred parishes. The Liffey is no great physical barrier with its fifteen bridges, but in the minds of the people it is like a great chasm between north and south side. There are areas of great poverty and high unemployment side by side with areas of great affluence, all of which have different needs and have different expectations of any broadcasting medium that purports to serve them.

Anna Livia’s mission statement is summed up in the caption “Listen to Dublin talking”. The station is owned by a co-operative made up of Dublin people, many of whom represent local groups; but it was decided not to divide up the city when it came to programming, but to see the city as a whole and ensure that content was of interest to, and relevant to, all Dubliners, while retaining a very localised flavour. This is not an easy mix to achieve, but over the past year radio reviewers in the national press have welcomed the new station’s general strategy and praised the programmes, so the plan seems to be acceptable.

Religious programmes are catered for through an interdenominational group which advises all the commercial radio stations in the country. This was considered the fairest way to proceed, as all church groups are represented and have a voice.

There are two hours a week of religious programmes, and I present one of them. It is a twice-weekly half-hour of news and interviews, with notices of what’s happening in the parishes around the city. The programme is called *Network* and it goes out on Sunday morning and also on a mid-week evening. It is ecumenical not only in content but also in where it is put together. The Church of Ireland (Anglican) Theological College in Dublin has a superb broadcasting studio and this was made available to us without charge. A panel of interview-

ers and a production team are attached to the Jesuit Communications Centre in Dublin and they look after the gathering and editing of the programme material.

It is worth noting at this point how the production team came about, and what the Vincentian involvement is. When commercial radio began in the mid-1980s local churches became involved with both finances and trained radio personnel. Religious programmes were given time and a number of priests and religious participated as presenters and producers. A need was felt, however, for a source of programme material in the form of news bulletins, interviews with people in the news, and also devotional and inspirational items. Producers found that radio is a voracious medium and devours material. So the Conference of Major Religious Superiors decided that they should get involved and they set up a production agency to make programme material to be syndicated and sent round on tape to local stations.

The Vincentians joined the Dominicans, Jesuits, Divine Word Missionaries and Sisters of Mercy in providing personnel and finances for the project, which was set up in an already existing communications office owned by the Jesuits. The provincials of the orders form the executive, and they have appointed members to serve on the production team. The Vincentian provincial is on the executive and I am a producer. In fact I chose the name under which the syndicate operates, *3R Productions*, short for Religious Resources for Radio. 3R also uses the Church of Ireland's facility already mentioned, so I think it would be useful to explain the exact relationship between Anna Livia, the Jesuits and ourselves; most people find it confusing.

The Jesuits own and run their own communications centre in Leeson Street. This handles all Jesuit contact with the media, and general publicity for their varied projects. They also run training courses. Their team produces the 3R material on behalf of CMRS for about twenty local radio stations around the country; and the team also, as a separate project, produces the *Network* news show for Anna Livia in Dublin. So I wear two hats, as a 3R producer and as a *Network* presenter.

Having described the stable out of which the *Network* programme comes I can now outline what are the programme's objectives, and assess how it achieves them. We have found that people who are famous, or who have written books, especially ones which are critical of the Church, have no difficulty in getting on the national media. People, however, who quietly go about living out their faith and trying to do something for their local community seldom get a mention. Our

aim is to give them a voice. We seek out what's going on in the local parishes and let the whole city hear about it. We handle international stories, of course, if they have a Dublin angle. Missionaries home from trouble spots of the earth have given our listeners first-hand accounts of what is going on. And, on the lighter side, when the film *Sister Act* was showing, we found out, via an Irish bishop, that a local nun was employed by Whoopi Goldberg to advise her on the film set. Our interview caught even RTE and the BBC by surprise. Both wrote to us to arrange a contact with the nun concerned. We seldom have a spectacular item like that, though. Most of our material reports the ordinary events of the ordinary people of Dublin. We hear from parishes and groups who are putting on all sorts of functions and we provide an audible notice-board for them.

For technical reasons the *Network* programme is on tape, so there is no phone-in facility to the presenter of the programme. This is a drawback, because radio is becoming more and more interactive, and religious programmes particularly provide a point of contact for those who need to talk to someone. Dublin had one particularly successful example of this on a commercial station when a well-known and well-liked Dublin diocesan priest, the late Fr Michael Cleary, did an entire hour of phone-in every night. The programme had very little structure and people could talk about anything they wanted to. This attracted a large following, but it also irritated those who like a programme to have some sort of overall direction in which it is going. Our *Network* programme tries to weave some sort of unity out of the threads of diversity, which is the aim of any good radio magazine programme. We usually have about four main items which are treated in about six minutes each, normally with one-to-one interviewing, and with some "vox populi" interviewing when appropriate. Music is used sparingly, and usually only when illustrating a news item.

The feedback we receive comes from various sources. Though the *Network* programme itself has no phone-in facility, as mentioned above, Anna Livia does have phone-in quizzes, which indicate that our listeners are spread throughout the entire city area, and out to part of the surrounding counties of Kildare, Wicklow and Meath. Some national surveys have indicated that the number of listeners is about 50,000. Out of a million that is not a huge number, but it is growing slowly. We hear frequently from small Protestant church communities dotted around the capital who appreciate the opportunity to speak to a wider audience. In fact if the word "community" is to have a meaning

in relation to Anna Livia I would say our programme serves the Protestant community of Dublin more than any other. The same community has, of course, generously supported the project. They gave a grant to Anna Livia itself when it was set up and they have, as I have already mentioned, provided a studio for the religious programming. The Catholic archdiocese of Dublin also provided a cash input to Anna Livia, but it is our experience that Catholics have not responded quite as enthusiastically to the notion of community radio. The Protestant churches, Jews and Muslims seem to have a stronger sense of community and therefore feel more need of Anna Livia and our *Network* programme.

Radio is very competitive, and is becoming more so. The cable television company Cablelink provides fifteen channels of radio free of charge to people who already pay for cabled television. Anyone with a satellite dish can receive many more FM radio channels, so a Dublin talk station is a very small David facing an enormous Goliath. I think there is need for such an effort, even if it develops only slowly. There is also need for the ministers of the gospel to be in there with a voice. We have been on the air now (April 1994) for a year and a half and the feedback is positive and encouraging. The programme has a definite ecumenical dimension and I think it is very worthwhile. It is also good that the Congregation of the Mission is involved from the start in a significant media experiment in an EU capital city. I think the programme could take a whole new direction if it were presented live, and this may be possible soon, as the Church of Ireland is upgrading its studio to link it by modern fibre-optic to local stations round the country.

Jack Harris

Miscellanea

TWO INTERESTING LETTERS FROM IRISH CONFRERES IN THE MID-19th CENTURY

There were many important movements, political, ecclesiastical, and educational, in Ireland in the 19th century. I have often wondered about how Vincentians, individually or collectively, reacted to these movements, as in reading about them one does not normally find Vincentian names. The first letter below, with the attached Memorandum, is in the Dublin Diocesan Archives. It was written in 1858 by Philip Burton CM (1) to Paul Cullen (2), archbishop of Dublin, and shows how one confrere made his own input into the ecclesiastical thinking of the time. Spellings and abbreviations in the original have been left unaltered. The letter is reprinted here with the permission of the Archbishop of Dublin.

TD

St Vincent's Church
Cork June 19/58

My Dear Lord,

I little thought even a month ago that I would have the honour of so much correspondence with your Grace. I must again return my humble thanks for the paternal condescension that has been extended to me. Things here seem to be taking a most promising turn, as the following incident out of many others wd show. The Dean & Chapter invited the Bishop (3) to a dinner on last Tuesday; all the Bishops of the Province were invited as guests, the Bishop of Ross alone attended. Father McCabe (4) got a most gracious invitation & attended with the other heads of religious houses. We suspected this all had some meaning under present circumstances; its meaning came out more clearly & happily than we expected. It had two unmistakable ends: first to demonstrate & declare that the new chapter would stand by the Bishop in weal & woe; secondly to inaugurate a Catholic & Roman policy. Fr D Murphy VG opened with such a speech on the Holy See & Pio Nono as Cork ears had not heard for years if ever before. It was elaborate – strong – Catholic – enthusiastic even ultramontane – all most care-

fully prepared. The other speeches reached the same sentiments and expressly announced that the new chapter would Catholicise Cork Society & Institutions. All the incidents of this memorable festival pointed in the same direction. The *clique* (5) without whom a dinner was hitherto thought impossible were studiously excluded. Fr McCabe was the object of marked and unusual attention; he has been since appointed confessor to the SS. of Charity (6). I met the Bishop twice since; he was most cordial. The new turn of things is gradually oosing out; the Roman party hitherto silent begins to see the downfall of the *clique* that wielded against them hitherto the Episcopal Authority in the most annoying manner. The Cork Examiner even shews signs of Catholic life now that it knows it may please Cloyne & Ross & Kerry & Waterford without risk of displeasing Cork. The Bishop has disavowed the *Reporter* on several occasions besides his private disavowal to me. We endeavour to get trustworthy individuals among the clergy to aid this movement; they are only too happy to keep the *clique* out of office and to encourage the Bishop in his new course. 'Twas the dinner that revealed to us the full extent of the panic we had unintentionally created in high quarters. It is feared we are in league with some Roman power, and it wd be most imprudent to disturb this impression of which good must come in Cork where *fear* is allpowerful. The Bishop's great weakness is fear; we have been long aware of this; and it was always a question with us whether we shd attribute the unhappy course of things here to *his fears* or to his *disposition*; even now we can't say which. The *clique* alone had his ear; and not we alone think it probable that they, by constantly representing the "schismatical" tendency of Cork, frightened him into the course he has pursued for the last ten years. Many things wd make us hope that his own tendencies are Roman, & that if he finds himself well supported he will heartily carry on the project of "Catholicising the Society & Institutions of Cork". Of the power of the popular element he seemed utterly unaware 'till the Holiday movement (7); and every Priest here in Cork capable of wielding the popular element was fortunately engaged in the Holiday movement and is thoroughly sound & Roman. All these are aware of the new turn of things and most anxious for its success. A split with the College (8) wd do immense good; and its treachery in the affair of the Model School furnishes the pretext of which the authorities could avail to get out of this awkward connection with the College. Tis encouragement & praise the Bishop needs at present; perhaps the synod (9) wd furnish an opportunity of administering a little of this mild but useful medicine. Nothing

should be left undone to encourage him in his new course. A hint about *reform* or *strict discipline* to the Augustinian Friary here wd paralyze one opponent without offending the rest of that religious community. The *bare hint* wd be enough. In truth Friars & ex-Friars have been the greatest part of the unsound element here for the ten years that I am here. The influence of this class of men alternating perpetually between the Bishop's table & the tables of the entire upper class laity was so overwhelming that nothing could withstand it. Their banishment from the Bishop's will please God clip their wings.

As to the Holiday movement 'tis only now we are hearing the extraordinary rumours & untruths that have been afloat about it & us. These rumours I fear reached Castleknock before they reached Sundays Well. We find it most easy to contradict & correct them here; but at a distance we must leave this work to time. The Bishop *now* understands the matter; for the rest it matters little. We preached the doctrine of the General Catechism (10) approved for all Ireland – chap. XX. – We gave the principles of exceptions v.g. necessity, dispensation &c but avoided all details for three reasons: 1. because individuals will only too readily discover the exceptions for their own cases; 2. because to dwell too much on *exceptions* for the people is to make them practically *the rule* as all experience proves; 3. because in Ireland the exceptions are disputed; some asserting that the “Irish custom” is enough; others that the custom of the universal Church as laid down in St Liguori – Gury – Voight – Scavini & the other manuals in common use is the only legitimate standard, and requires restrictions securing the *existence* and *observance* of the Holiday v.g. “*clausis januis*” – “*sine strepitu*” – “*exclusis semper horis div. offic.m*” – “*emptorum necessitas &c*”. We kept clear of all this, said nothing about the obligations of shopkeepers or anyother class, gave out the general law from the Catechism with the *principles* for exceptions; and when consulted by individual shopkeepers told them to *open* 'till the others of their trade agreed to close; for 'till then the *custom* whether right or wrong created a *necessity* for each individual. I rather think that neither the Bishop nor anyone here considers the *custom as legitimately established & approved* for working men at least; for their habit of asking leave to work – the teaching of chap. XX of the Catechism - the feeling that the custom is *imposed* by Protestantism - are all *protests* against this Custom. At all events the prop, “all shops & merchants are free” wd mean all carters, porters, packers, cutlers, paperhangers, guilders, glaziers, hammerers and all other noisy fellows are free, as well as their families who must prepare

& carry their food &c &c. This is the result everywhere; and if these classes are all free adieu to the Holiday. To preserve the duty of hearing Mass while permitting work is found everywhere impossible.

The *desireableness* of the observance had as much weight here as the *duty*. We urged its *desireableness* from the reason in the Catechism Chap. XX – from the clear connection between Holiday-breaking and contempt for the Church’s authority – from the facility of rallying the people around holidays rather than *ordinary* Sundays for instructions sacraments processions &c -from the baneful influence of the contrast between our respect for Protestant Holidays & our contempt for our own – from the experience of all past & present times in favour of the religious moral social & even physical advantages of Holiday Keeping – from the example of Wexford & other places – from that of the present Jews & even of the Pagans of India - from these & many other reasons the people felt the *desireableness* of Keeping their Holidays. There are many, very many places far better situated than Wexford for enforcing the Holiday; other places should not stir ‘till the most Catholic cities & towns have proved the feasibility of the thing & furnished by their example an argument that brings conviction & even touches temporal interests. The objections turn out practically to be merely imaginary: Cork has already done much to answer them; may it reap a blessing in more ways than one.

I remain My Lord with profound esteem Your Grace’s ob.nt h.ble svt

P J Burton

MEMORANDUM

The following circumstances all seeming to tend to the production of a general contempt for the Authority of the Church and of the Holy See the friends of this Authority here are bound to look on in silence no longer.

1. The silence of the Bishop & the other Ecclesiastical authorities during the last ten years while the Clergy, the Mayors, the Corporation, the M. P. Pagan, the College Superiors & professors, and numerous private individuals were making open demonstrations of contempt for the Pope’s rescripts &c.
2. The Bishop’s special & notorious friendship for the Priests most opposed to Rome (the Dean of Residence alone excepted), and the vast influence thus given them to make the Bishop’s silence speak louder

than any words could against Rome. Hence every person in Cork looks on the Bishop as an authority *for* the College; no parent doubts it: they freely quote it. The Clergy almost without an exception have made the entering the College the *general rule* not the *rare exception* for students. Even the V.G. strongly & sneeringly advised a late student of the Catholic University to enter the Cork College - and the manner in which he did it proves his mind and practice. The President & Vicepresident of his Conference of St Vincent are professors of the College; I heard, but am not certain, that his two nephews are students of it; the adopted & real nephew of the other V.G. & archdeacon is certainly a student of it & lives in his uncle's house. The organ of the Queen's Col. The S. Reporter (11) is [almost] (12) certainly *the paper* read by the Bishop and those about him even to the very monks of the Presentation order who depend entirely on him. The Priests who surround the Bishop are understood to be almost on the staff of that paper; and I heard that some of its worst articles come from them. The Examiner which retains a little Catholic spirit is as far as I can ascertain dispised by the Bishop & those around him. Even this week the Society of St Vincent has a raffle for the poor and 'tis at the Reporter office *all* the tickets are to be had. The Bishop's recognised *alter ego* is an ex-friar of notoriously strong & unsound opinions who stood up at a large party of the Clergy to make a most violent attack on poor Father Michael (13); and who is the known confidant of the most unsound portion of the upper lay Catholics. He is a particular friend of the present Mayor whose (almost) first act was to write up to the board for a Model School. The Queen's Col. is in the parish of the Dean & V.G.; it had a college farm; on this farm buildings to the amt of I think over £20,000 have been erected during the past year by the College as was supposed; but it turns out that the College long ago sold the place to the N. Board (14) which has therefore just ready unknown to us all a model farm school for whose success the Board has no fears - so its friends boast - except from the Protestant Bishop of Cork. The Convents had a long struggle to avoid a connection with the Board; only one of which Fr Michls sister was superioress held out against the pressure of the Authorities (15). All the Vicars and members of the Bishop's council are without any *sure* exception of the same opinions on all these subjects.

3. But 'tis the Conferences that show fully the point to which things are tending. This year the Archdeacon read an essay that shocked even those most insensible to the honour of the Church - 'twas a real panegyric on Luther - the Bishop expressed *some* disapprobation. Some time ago an

essay on the Inquisition was of the same stamp; but the Bishop told me he endeavoured privately to get a counter essay written; but 'twas not done. The Bishop this year recommended Ranke's Hist, of the Popes (16) to us when holding the Conferences on the Council of Trent; it seemed to me to be the authority most recommended; but he denied to me that he meant it for the class-book or anything so principal. Fleury's Hist, of the Church (17) is the book read by his orders, I suppose by his confessor superior & all, in the nun's refectory at Blackrock (18). There seems a complete ignorance if not contempt among the Clergy for the standard Church historians. In essays &c they love to quote high English & Scotch & other Protestant names. On the whole we think them so unsound as to be unfit to stand any shock that may arise; the Bishop assured me the unsoundness was confined to a few.

Notes

1. Philip Burton was born in Curras, Co. Cork, in the diocese of Cloyne, on 20 November 1823, and entered the CM on 18 July 1844. He was ordained on 7 December 1847, and his first appointment was to St Vincent's Seminary, Cork, which had opened in January 1845 and had become a Vincentian house in October 1847. Burton was headmaster for a short while in 1858 before being transferred to the mission staff in Phibsboro, then to the ICP, Castleknock, Lanark, Castleknock again, Kouba (Algeria) for reasons of health, and finally Cork from 1874 till his death in 1900. He is buried in the vault under St Vincent's church. His stay in Africa led him to write a biography of St Augustine (1886), which was well received and went into second and third editions.
2. Paul Cullen (1803-1878) was rector of the Irish College, Rome, from 1832 till 1850, when he was appointed archbishop of Armagh. In 1852 he was transferred to Dublin.
3. William Delany, bishop of Cork from 1847 till 1886.
4. Neal McCabe CM, superior of St Vincent's, Sunday's Well. He was born in Killeagh, near Oldcastle, Co. Meath, on 22 June 1816, entered the CM on 23 July 1844 in Paris, and was ordained in 1845. After his period in Cork he was appointed superior in the ICP in 1867 and named bishop of Ardagh & Clonmacnois in 1868. He died in Marseilles on 24 July, 1870, on his way back from the first Vatican Council and was buried in the CM vault in Montparnasse cemetery, Paris.
5. Words printed in italics are underlined in the original letter.
6. This was the convent of the Irish Sisters of Charity in Peacock Lane.
7. The Holiday Movement was obviously a pressure-group against working on Church holy days.
8. Queen's College, Cork. The Queen's Colleges in Belfast, Cork and Galway, had been set up between 1845 and 1849 as non-denominational university colleges. Catholic opinion on them was sharply divided, between those who

were dissatisfied because they were not Catholic colleges and those who were reasonably satisfied because they were the best thing available for Catholics. Daniel Murray, archbishop of Dublin from 1823 to 1852, had been of the latter opinion but his successor Paul Cullen was of the opposite one, and swung both the National Synod held in Thurles in 1850 and the Holy See around to his way of thinking. Bishop Delany of Cork was apparently of Murray's way of thinking while Burton clearly sided with Cullen.

9. Presumably a diocesan synod rather than the national synod of 1850.
10. James Butler, archbishop of Cashel, published a catechism in 1777. In 1802, eleven years after Butler's death, it was "revised, enlarged, approved and recommended by the four R.C. Archbishops of Ireland as a General Catechism for the Kingdom". This version became known as *The General Catechism*.
11. *The Southern Reporter*, a local newspaper.
12. The word "almost" is crossed out.
13. Probably Michael O'Sullivan CM (1800-55); (see *Collogue* 10, Autumn 1984). The use of "poor" could be taken as indicating "the late", and MO'S was normally referred to as Fr Michael.
14. "The N.[ational] Board" refers to the Commissioners of National Education. The system of national primary education was set up in 1831. While most of the members of the Board were Protestant, the archbishop of Dublin, Daniel Murray, was a member, and the Catholic Church was broadly in favour of the system, until the Synod of Thurles in 1850 and Paul Cullen's succession to the see of Dublin two years later. The Church wanted radical changes in the system and it opposed the Model Schools. These were schools for the training of primary teachers and were under the direct control of the Commissioners.
15. See note 13. Michael O'Sullivan's sister, Julia, had entered the North Presentation Convent, Cork, in 1828, taking the name Sister Charles.
16. Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) was a prolific German author of historical works of a very high order. Although he was a Lutheran he wrote a highly regarded three-volume history of the popes of the 16th and 17th centuries (1834-39), with later editions bringing the history up to Vatican I.
17. Claude Fleury (1640-1723), a French priest, is principally famous for his *Histoire ecclésiastique* (20 volumes, Paris, 1690-1720), which covered the period from the start of Christianity to 1414.
18. The Ursuline Convent, Blackrock, Cork.

(Acknowledgement is made for help with these notes from Fr Patrick O'Donoghue CM and Sr Angela (Dr Evelyn) Bolster RSM).

The following letter, which also reveals opposition to the Queen's Colleges, was written eight years earlier from Castleknock by James Lynch, to a confrere in the Maison-mère, Paris; it is in English. The writer never uses question marks, and is somewhat sparing of commas and full stops; dashes often do the work of the latter. It is in the archives of the CM General Curia, Rome.

St Vincent's June 12th (1)

Rev'd & very dear Confrere,
 Gratia D.N. sit semper nobiscum

I hasten acceding to your wish to send you an answer to your truly kind & welcome letter which I received this day. God help the German project (2), it is as you remark very like the one which our good God brought to so happy an issue in our regard - I hope we shall soon, please God be able to send you some postulants, all our hopes are in prayer. Do my dear confreres pray hard for us -Mr Dowling (3) will, please God, be in London on the appointed day 16th Sunday. He will have everything arranged very easily. He is delighted at his vocation - what a happy lot for those whom God calls. I am sorry our dear Most Honoured Father (4) was obliged to undertake the Italian journey, as I fear his heart may be grieved at the state of things in Italy. Mr Dowley had a letter a few days ago from Mr Middleton (5) inviting him over to England to inspect the new foundation - it will not be finished quite so soon as was expected I believe. The good Bishop is most anxious for the completion. Mr Dowley has got a hint from the Primate that he will be invited to assist at our national Synod (6). It is the first we shall have had since the English conquered our poor country in the 12th century.

We have a good number of very remarkable conversions to our holy Faith from amongst the Protestants here. Tell Mr Martin (7) we are greatly obliged to him for not allowing Mr Burke who left him last autumn, to come to us. His Father who was connected with the Colleges, now the source of such misery to Ireland cut his throat & died in the house while with a priest who was president of one of them. It is looked upon as a judgement, as the Holy See has condemned these Colleges. Pray for us. We want prayers badly. Beg of Mr Martin to get his dear children to pray for poor Ireland very hard now before our Synod. Can we entertain the fond hope of seeing him amongst us this summer. If you come to London could you not take a race across England, as you know the way now (8), & be assured you will get a warm welcome by all the confreres of Ireland. Farewell dearest confrere joined by all here in most affectionate regards to all our confreres in St Lazare

I remain in the hearts of Jesus & Mary
 Your devoted confrere

J Lynch

Notes

1. There is no year given after the day and month, but from the reference later to the forthcoming National Synod it has to be 1850. The Synod opened in Thurles in August 1850.
2. Five young priests of the diocese of Cologne wanted to become a missionary group and they spent some time in the Maison-mere in Paris, were accepted into the Congregation and returned to Cologne and founded a CM house there in 1851.
3. At this time Irish confreres were using the title "Mr" for themselves. Michael Dowling was born in Caltragh, diocese of Elphin, on 21 October 1820. After ordination he entered the CM in Paris in 1845. He arrived in Macao in 1850, and later went into China. He died in Tchou-san on 30 July 1858.
4. Jean-Baptiste Etienne, Superior General from 1843 to 1874.
5. Towards the end of 1848 Mr Middleton of Sickling Hall, Yorkshire, asked for two confreres as chaplains to his family and to take charge of a small mission on his estate. In 1849 James Lynch went over to see him and the local bishop. The Provincial Council decided negatively on 1 July 1850. See *Colloque* No. 3, pp 51-3.
6. In a letter to Etienne, dated 26 July, Philip Dowley says he has been invited to attend the synod.
7. Pierre-Jean Martin (1802-53) was director of the seminaire in Paris at this time; he had been assistant director from 1836 and would have been known to all the Irish confreres who had been in Paris.
8. The facts that the addressee knew English, had been in Ireland before, and was known to all the Irish confreres suggest that he was probably Joseph Girard (1791-1879). In 1840 he was sent from Paris to Castleknock to see to the Vincentian formation of the Irish priests; he remained until he had witnessed Philip Dowley's vows on 19 March 1841.

OBITUARY

Father Donal Gallagher CM

(Homily at removal of remains, Phibsboro, 30 June 1994)

A few years ago I attended a funeral in North Kerry of a retired parish priest. He was being buried in the church grounds, and just as they were about to lower the coffin into the grave three men appeared and sat by the side of the grave on three little stools. One had a bodhran, one a fiddle and the third an accordion. And they began to play jigs and reels and North Kerry sets. This is what is known as a perfect rite of passage. For those of us who believe, the bodhran players and the fiddlers and the accordionists and the singers of songs and the poets have gathered in heaven to continue the tunes begun on earth.

Donal in his lifetime experienced many rites of passage. In recent years he was able to gather the musical forces of the National Symphony Orchestra, the RTE Concert Orchestra under Proinsias Ó Duinn, Our Lady's Choral Society, and many soloists, to sing in this church the praises of God. If I were able to gather these same musical forces here this evening I would have them sing that great chorus from Elgar's "*The Dream of Gerontius*". The words are Cardinal Newman's:

Go forth upon thy journey Christian soul.
Go in the name of the Father who created you.
Go in the name of the Son whose blood was spilt for you.
Go in the name of the Holy Spirit who was poured out
upon you

[Donal] in baptism, in confirmation and in your priesthood. May now the choirs of angels welcome you into the eternal kingdom of your heavenly Father.

Sean Johnston CM

DONAL GALLAGHER CM

Born: Dublin 6 December 1936.

Entered CM: 7 September 1955.

Final vows: 8 September 1960.

Ordained a priest in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by Dr John Charles McQuaid, 7 April 1962.

APPOINTMENTS

1962-1966 St Vincent's, Cork.

1966-1968 St Joseph's, Blackrock (Studies).

1968-1974 St Vincent's, Cork.

1974-1975 St Joseph's, Blackrock.

1975-1979 St Peter's, Phibsboro.

1979-1980 St Joseph's, Blackrock (Studies, Carlow).

1980-1983 St Paul's, Raheny.

1983-1994 St Peter's, Phibsboro.

Died 24 June 1994. Buried: Dean's Grange.