

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

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Editorial

For the first time, almost all of the articles in a *Colloque* are from sources other than confreres of the Irish Province. Perhaps it is a significant change and I encourage confreres to take up the baton of those like Sean Farrell (who recommended the excellent article by Alison Forrestal) and Pat Collins (who introduced the VIA to *Colloque*): if there are articles you come across which might be of interest to *Colloque* readers, please send them on; or if you know people who have an interest in any aspect of Vincentian Studies, encourage them to write for us. It takes the pressure off the confreres of the Irish Province but, far more significantly, it makes us aware that the Vincentian charism is something in which we share with others, rather than something that we possess and then share out. It reminds us also that Vincent (like Louise and others) is a powerful figure, inspiring people in many walks of life and in ways that may be very different to those we have known.

Dr Forrestal came to know Vincent principally as a figure in 17th century history and has come to admire him and his endeavours in various ways; her article in this journal looks at Vincent and government. In this, she is linked with other students of history, like Susan O'Brien and Ruth Manning in England, who have traced the influence of 'vincentian' approaches in nursing and other fields.

Pat Collins was very taken by the work of VIA (Vincentians in Action) and their methodology for reflection, which is based on an article by Fr Weisner.

Many years ago, I read Sr Jean Miller's booklet of reflections on writing out the names of all the sisters of the English Province. I have always admired it and was delighted when Sr Sarah King-Turner gave permission to publish it. It is a reminder that our history is composed not merely of data but of real people who have walked this way before us and with us. Perhaps, each of us has our own list of names; those who have inspired and challenged us.

Peggy Brewer's letter to me was a private one but I was very taken with her reflections on attending a Catholic Eucharist as a member of one of the Churches of the Reform and asked her permission to reprint it.

There are a number of obituaries in this edition but that of Fr John Doyle is still to come. The editor begs your indulgence in this; time has been at a premium these past months and some things escaped his attention (and, apparently, his computer's confines!)

The astute reader will note that *Colloque* 55 is dated as the Spring 2008 edition; this is because there was no edition at all in 2007. If *Colloque* is to continue, we will need confreres to write articles or to search out other articles which may be of interest to our readers.

Reception of Eucharist

Peggy Brewer

Context;

The following is a letter I received some time ago. Both the author, Peggy Brewer, and myself were students of the *Epiphany Certification Programme* (ECP), held at Seton Cove, Indianapolis, from September 2005-May 2007. The Programme is an introduction to the Formation Science of Adrian van Kaam and the course was presented by Sharon Richardt DC, Ron Mead and Rita McCloskey-Paine. Of the eight students in our group three (Margarita Synnott, myself and one other, from Colombia) come from the Catholic tradition, while the other five came from various churches of the Reform. It is worth noting that Ron, who is Vice-President for Mission for all of the St Vincent Health Care Services of Indiana, and succeeded Sr Sharon in that office, is a Methodist.

Although Mass is not an integral element of the programme (though prayer is), I generally offered Mass at some time during the day and people were free to attend if they wished. The daily prayer booklet had a section at the back which set out the conditions for reception of the Eucharist.

It was after attending such a Mass with Rob, a student in the year behind us, that Peggy wrote the following letter. In the context of a great deal of discussion about this, I thought it a most opportune and personal reflection. I asked her permission to print it in *Colloque* and she kindly consented. It is presented almost as it was written (*Ed.*)

October 16, 2006

Dear Father Eugene,

I wanted to share with you my appreciation and gratefulness. I am so thankful for the opportunity I had to participate in Communion with you. I am also grateful for the opportunity Rob had to participate in his first Catholic experience of the Eucharist. As a result of this set of experiences much information was received and gathered, and as I commented to you in our discussion before your departure, I would now

like to take the time to share with you the processing Rob and I engaged in as a result of all said experiences.

It is more difficult for me to back track in time and remember the nuances, feelings, and thoughts throughout the years of coming to the place I am now. This reality makes it such that observation and dialogue from another's perspective is helpful and allows one to revisit a facsimile of experiences. I can enter with understanding and compassion spaces I have integrated but I can not bring back the immediate depth of the experience as someone currently participating in the events. In this way, Rob has proven faithful in his calling to this relationship. What his calling in due course may be I am uncertain yet for the time his faithfulness to be willing to openly reveal in trust and truthfulness his position in current events has proven to be very helpful and I am grateful God has seen fit to allow us to work together.

As I have indicated above this was Rob's first time to be invited to a Mass. He does not have Catholic roots or experiences other than the ones I have introduced to him. He did not know that he was not "allowed" as a Protestant to participate in the taking of the elements until the night before Mass, as he read the liturgy. When he arrived early the next morning for prayer he was not going to go to Mass until Sr Sharon personally invited him. This personal invitation allowed him to move toward a space that he would not have moved if he had relied only upon the written information that informed him he was not to receive the elements.

It's interesting as I sit to record this because it occurs to me that this group of 'Epiphany people' is Rob's first real experience with a "Catholic" group. His first formation perspective will be based upon how he is received and treated in this group.

After he experienced his first Mass, we dialogued about his feelings and thoughts. We came to a place of asking the question 'why?' Why would I go to a communion service if I am not allowed to take communion or receive Christ? This is, in fact, a wonderful question packed with emotion. As we continued to process this seemed reality, I was allowed to engage in the concepts of the power of symbolism. It occurred to us that because the symbols of communion and Eucharist are so similar they seem to invoke a space that is different from one that would be present if we were participating in a traditional experience that did not hold such a similarity in its physical symbolism.

Example: if we were to enter a Jewish Synagogue during a ritual that was meaningful to them and equated to deep connection and receiving from God, yet the ritual in no way invoked within us memories of a

Protestant equivalent experience of deep connection with God.

In this way it was further discussed that depending upon the persons watching such an event unfold they would be disposed to either participate by entering into and appreciating what they were witnessing or they would be disposed to block any incoming grace present during the event because of a preoccupation. These preoccupations could be on things such as: concentrating too hard to understand, or over indulgence in confusion, or time spent in impatient thoughts of leaving. All and many more such places one might go with mind, emotions, thoughts, and spirit seem to prove to be a block.

Furthermore, the similarity between the symbols of Communion and Eucharist seem to cause a feeling of division for some, because of the experience of not being allowed to participate in something that is, by physical symbol, so similar for both Catholic and Protestant. In this way we had to wonder if a unity would be achievable given some universal physical symbol introduced that would not jeopardize or take from the uniqueness of the faith traditions but in fact allowed them to respectfully retain their character and boundaries while identifying with each other.

As I entertained the question myself and engaged my memories of experiences of the years while in Catholic Mass situations, I can remember processing through many similar spaces.

1. I remember when I did not know I was not supposed to take Eucharist and therefore went forward without any expression or experience of doing something wrong.
2. I remember when I found out I was not supposed to accept the elements but I could go forward for something called a blessing. The process was explained to me and I tried that. On the receiving end it seemed very much like being singled out because everyone else came forward to receive elements except me.
3. I remember being in several situations after I was informed I was not supposed to receive the elements, that I went forward to received with others when no one else I was with knew I was not a Catholic. The experience was one not only of being allowed to partake of the elements but also feeling a welcome part of the whole because I was doing what everyone else was doing.
4. I remember being in a catholic monastery when the abbot decided the visiting assembly of Protestants could not come forward for a blessing or have Communion beside the Eucharist. The priest that had invited the assembly was a rebellious type and intentionally turned and made it known to the Protestants assembled that he took communion on their behalf anyway. He did this not in a

reverent way but in a defiling attempt to create a unity that was not exhibited in his actions. The feeling was one of sadness, not so much of his actions but of the deep sense of separation.

5. My last experiences with the receiving of Eucharist have occurred within a group where most knew I was not Catholic but I felt it was OK to go forward as I had perceived through a conversation that it was acceptable in this place. I could claim true lack of knowledge in this area simply because I did not know the rules for such a thing and did not know if the rule was subject to the current governing leaders of an establishment or a universal truth. The feeling here is one of being able to receive without guilt because of my perception that in this place it is okay. Because of my deep desire to receive, I was not willing to question this perception but was content to remain pure in my motives by means of lack of knowledge if in fact there was a miscommunication on my part.
6. This experience of Eucharist with you has been different than any before. I would like to explain:

As I had shared with you the day before, I was happy to have been in the building when you offered Eucharist, even though I was in my room, I was very capable of being present to the change in the atmosphere and the movement of energy that comes in when the grace of God is present in this way. It is experienced as a wonderful feeling of filling and love and expansion. Even though I am not present in body at the Mass. I am able to receive the presence of our Lord in a gentler and more accommodating way than when I sit with others that do not allow me to share in my uniqueness.

I was very tired that night and was not going to come to Mass. Earlier that day when I had a conversation with Rob, he informed me of the turn out for the Mass he attended. I was disappointed by the number. Even though I was exhausted, I desired for you to feel appreciated for your service, I decided to go to Mass. When it was only "Brad" and I for some time I was glad about the decision to attend. As more people showed up, I found myself wishing I could slip out and go lie down during the service, knowing we would all be spending time together afterwards. However, I found it unacceptable to leave at that point and comforted myself with the understanding I was there to show my appreciation and love for your services. As I looked through the liturgy, I found myself wondering how long it was going to take because I was really tired and it looked quite lengthy. I found myself experiencing and going through all the conversations Rob and I had about his experience along with all of my past experiences with the same material.

I found myself wondering:

- why I was there,
- how long it was going to take,
- if I could get out of it
- Questioning why I was there if I wasn't going to be able to receive the elements.
- Answering each question as it rose with appreciative answers such as:
 - I was there not to get anything but because I loved you and your service,
 - it was not necessary for me to get anything from the time spent
 - it was a sacrifice of love.

This is what it could look like from a Protestant's perspective if they choose to attend mass in a disposition of awe and appreciation. This is what I would like to speak to others about in hopes that at your next visit there may be more Protestants involved in the sacrifice you offer.

1. Why as Protestants do we come to Eucharist when we know we can not receive the consolations (or the elements) of our Lord?

Because we love so much, we come not because we expect to receive for in fact we have been told we are not going to be allowed to receive.

2. Why would anyone come to Eucharist knowing they were not going to receive?

Because we have so much love and respect for the one offering the sacrifice. The heart of God cannot be stopped by the symbols we limit it to for God is so much bigger than our boundaries. The heart of God transcends the very barriers that are between us. We can receive if we are inclined or disposed to do so for we receive not by consolation but by love. The boundaries of love are none.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to put this into words and experience it. I experience you as one blessed by God in so many ways and your ministry is one of openness to your brothers and sisters. Your offering at the table of our Lord is not limiting but it is respectful of the placement of tradition in this way those who have eyes to see are given the space.

(This also extends to all things we are asked to do in life for the experience of movement through love will play itself out uniquely within the lives of different people. For me it has made itself known in

the taking of Communion between denominations or the shared union of God between people/groups. With another it may make itself present in the daily life of family obligations or the priest hood. The same questions seem to rise. Why do I do what I am doing when there is no seeming payoff? As my son has asked me, “Why do I run the race?”)

At present the answer that has occurred to me for the question:

1. What is one to do when they understand the gifts that have been showered upon them by God?
2. Gifts such as; being allowed to commune with our Lord in intimate ways
3. or the gift of being raised Catholic and being allowed to participate in bringing the grace of God to others
4. or the gift of being raised in a healthy environment of appreciation without deeply damaging scars inflicted by misguided people.

The answer that comes is; to give. To freely give what has been given to us. Offer each day and with each prayer not for a small number, but for the whole of humanity. It cannot be limited to only what is seen or what one is immediately engaged in. It must be given at a level that moves heaven and earth. It is a charge that does not serve oneself but is capable of impact that cannot be understood. To offer for those who cannot receive, for those who have not been given the opportunities to receive, for those that the world has beaten down and seem without a way to surface.

May we always be in remembrance of what is ours to give, may our Lord often keep in our minds and understandings the importance of the work He has entrusted to us. May our Father’s gifts not be hoarded or misused or limited by our lack of understanding or our forgetfulness. May we be ever mindful of the importance of prayer and how that which is and has been given enters all that is and moves with the hand of God if only we remember that it can and does. Lord keep us clean, Father grant us grace we pray.

Better understanding of past behavior

I see now, my receiving of the elements in the past showed disrespect for the boundaries of the tradition as if the only way to receive Christ was if I received the elements. But in this case it was revealed to me for the first time that it was not by the elements that we receive. Nothing can hold back the love of our Lord when He desires to give it. The decision to respect the boundaries of the Catholic faith tradition even if it seemed to mean I would not be able to receive Christ was an act

of selfless love that was rewarded by the very heart of our Lord in the revelation of wisdom such revealed.

The decision to humbly come forward for a blessing even though I was not allowed to participate fully in the ritual was out of love and respect for you Fr Eugene. I wanted you to be able to share the gift you were allowed to share within the respectful boundaries of the tradition. I wanted to receive the relationship I could to the fullest. I was able (to do so) not from a position of having but from a position of respect for your offering. Who am I to tell you that you should not be who you are? Who am I to suggest that you go against what is uniquely your tradition? Why can I not see it for the wonderful, unique and beautiful thing that it is and appreciate its beauty and participate in its wonder to the extent that one outside of anything can. How am I to say that all people or traditions should or have to be the same? Why can I not appreciate this tradition for what it is instead of trying to own it or make it my own? Why can't I appreciate without having to take or own. If we can appreciate something for what it is without trying to change it or greedily make it our own we can step into it and receive the blessing of encounter without fusion. The ironic part of this equation is that when we accept the idea of appreciating something for what it is without trying to *make* it our own, or fuse with it, the encounter is then free to become a union. It is only in the freedom of individuality that union is truly given.

I seem to have been given an understand that when we are able to respect one another for who we uniquely are without trying to change each other or invade each other, when we see each other for the mutual uniqueness that we all are, we are then united in unstoppable bonds of love. This is truly union for it is free from an attempt to control, the attempt to make everything like or the same. It is freedom by respect and reverence. It is union by grace and not similarity of form. We are then one in the spirit even if it may seem we are not unified because of outward traditions. True unity in Christ is through love and acceptance and reverence.

A major movement just occurred for me, when I recorded that I was able to receive the presence of our Lord in a gentler and more accommodating way. I was moved to tears and given an understanding of something I had not pondered before. I have been given a wonderful gift from our Father in that I am allowed to commune with Him in ways that many do not and I do not seem to be able to appreciate near as much as I would if I really understood what is mine. But how does one truly appreciate what one has Lord? This experience has helped but what is one to do with a reality like this? How is one to accept such love and grace poured out from God? How is one to understand the reality that what they have been given is, in fact, more than can possible be

understood? I do not deserve this favour of our Lord any more than the next person but for some reason I have received it and others who long and are wounded in far deeper ways do not seem to have access to Your love and healing Lord. I know how much pain it causes me to sit in a Eucharist service and long to be Catholic. A longing that breaks my heart knowing I can not have what they have. Not because it is unavailable to me, for I could easily convert to Catholicism, but out of love I do not enter into what I long for. Because I love so much and I understand that my place is here in the midst of that which is not, for He has asked me to be, then I will remain. Even though I long and I ache and the pain is real, I will not disobey my Lord's plans for my life. In the fullness of time, I will enter into what He has set aside for me and the consolations of now are just that, consolation in comparison to what is meant to be one day through the fires of obedience.

Vincentian Praxis

Pat Collins CM

Last year, I was asked to write a brief description of Vincentian spirituality. Having given the subject some thought, I suggested that it involved three main components, compassion, friendship and prayer. I'm quite sure that affective and effective compassion is the key Vincentian characteristic. It is empathy with people who suffer as a result of material and/or spiritual poverty. Effective compassion is an ability to respond appropriately to those sufferings by means of such things as prayer, deeds of mercy and action for justice.¹ I also believe that Vincentian spirituality values non-exclusive friendships which are characterised by mutual respect and warm affection. Talking to Daughters of Charity in 1658 St Vincent observed: "St Paul says that whoever abides in charity has fulfilled the law... It is a means of *establishing a holy friendship* among you and of living in perfect union, and in this way enabling you to make a paradise in this world."² St Vincent believed that our evangelisation, whether in word or deed, would only be effective to the extent that it was rooted in the experience of God's love as mediated by the members of the community.³ Finally, I believe that we have a distinctive Vincentian way of praying. It involves what modern spirituality refers to as praxis, namely, the belief that there is a reciprocal relationship between prayer, community living and service of the poor. Our encounter with the compassionate Lord in prayer, not only prepares us to experience his compassion in and through the members of the community, it also empowers us and to share that same compassion with the suffering poor.⁴ Having done so, we go on to reflect prayerfully on those experiences and their implications. This transforming process prepares us to return, hopefully with greater selflessness, to renewed service of Christ in one another and the poor.

I mention this because I was excited recently, when I visited the Vincentians at de Paul University in Chicago. There I was told about a

1 St Thomas wrote: "Compassion is heartfelt identification with another's distress, driving us to do what we can to help... As far as outward activity is concerned, compassion is the Christian's whole rule of life." Timothy Mc Dermott, ed., *Summa Theologiae: A Concise Translation* (London: Methuen, 1989), 360.

2 SV, X, 478.

3 Pat Collins CM, "Friendship and Evangelization in the Vincentian Tradition," *Vincentiana* (Jan-Feb 1998): 45-57.

4 The charism statement which was formulated in Dublin nearly a generation ago, said: "We Vincentians are called to experience the gentle, compassionate love of Christ in community and to share this love with those to whom we are sent!"

way in which these three elements had come together in a new, down-to-earth way. I heard how hundreds of students, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and un-churched were engaged in social work and action for justice. Most of them did so without explicitly relating their experiences with their beliefs or spirituality. As a result, Fr. Guillermo Campuzano CM of the Colombian province had been asked to help those responsible for university ministry to facilitate a reflection process on the connection between faith/spirituality and practical action. Among other things, he recommended that they read an article which had been published in *Spiritual Life* by the late Fr Theodore Wiesner CM, entitled, "Experiencing God in the Poor." It suggested that that a person who serves the afflicted, passes, typically, through three stages of spiritual development, "The Way of Appreciation," "The Way of Dialogue," and "The Way of Solidarity."⁵ When the staff responsible for college ministry read Fr Wiesner's article it occurred to them that it provided a template which could be adapted as the basis of an inter-faith process of theological reflection. From 2003 onwards, a new methodology, which was influenced by the Wiesner article, was adopted by the students. The ensuing process, of action followed by reflection, became known as Vincentians in Action or VIA.

Each week students who serve the needy members of local communities in Chicago come together in the large student centre which is beside the confreres residence. One of them begins the meeting with a prayer. It is followed by a sharing of food and conversation. Then the so-called "check-in" takes place. It is a 45-minute period during which the students engage in shared reflection on their experiences of compassionate action. Read in the light of the threefold understanding of Vincentian spirituality, already mentioned, it seems that VIA is an example of that spirituality in so far as it encourages friendly relationships and compassionate solidarity with the poor, within a context of prayerful reflection. Incidentally, the VIA meetings include what they refer to as "shout-outs" i.e. announcements about such things as opportunities of getting involved in justice issues either in the university, the city, or during holiday time either in the U.S.A. or South America.

When I read Fr Wiesner's article, I suspected that it was written by a confrere who had experienced what he wrote about. When I talked to an older confrere in Chicago about him, he confirmed that, prior to his premature death in 1987, Fr Theodore had indeed undergone a spiritual conversion as a result of his involvement with the poor, especially in the diocese of Marsabit, in Kenya. Not only did I find his article to be moving, insightful and challenging, it articulated many of my own

5 *Spiritual Life* 33 (4), 213-221.

nascent impressions in a helpful way. Although it was written twenty years ago, it still has a lot to say to the current members of the Vincentian family. It struck me that any group, such as Vincentian priests, Daughters of Charity, members of the St Vincent de Paul Society or student groups in our college chaplaincies would not only be inspired by Fr Wiesner's words they could use the VIA methodology, which benefit.

Experiencing God in the Poor

Theodore Wiesner CM

This article was first published in Spiritual Life in 1987 and is reprinted by kind permission. The suggestion to publish it in Colloque came from Pat Collins CM and we are grateful for his suggestion.

The author was a member of the Congregation of the Mission of the Midwest Province. He was assigned to the Diocese of Marsabit, Kenya and worked then until his death on May 27, 1987. RIP.

Spiritual writers have described growth in the spiritual life by means of such analogies as the castle, the ladder, and the ascent of a mountain. St Thomas used the analogy of the stages of human development from childhood to adolescence to maturity. These gave rise to the concept of the three ages or way of the spiritual life described in manuals of ascetical theology. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange in his *The Three Ways of the Spiritual Life* (Burns Oates & Washbourne, 1938) outlines this growth as the Purgative Way of beginners, the Illuminative Way of proficients, and the Unitive Way of the perfect. At the threshold of each way is a transition or crisis, called respectively First Conversion, Second Conversion and Third Conversion. With some variations in terminology, this process has been the traditional description or spiritual growth. However, the treatises develop this theme of ages or ways with almost exclusive reference to prayer (meditation, affective prayer, contemplation and virtues (moral, theological, gifts of the Holy Spirit, etc.). Only passing reference is made to more active or apostolic forms of spirituality. Garrigou-Lagrange, for example, when speaking of the illuminative life says; "It appears under two normal forms: the one definitely contemplative, as in many saints of the Carmel: the other active, as in a St Vincent de Paul, a contemplation which by the light of the gifts of wisdom and counsel, constantly sees in the poor and abandoned the suffering members of Christ" (73). Then he proceeds to describe the characteristics of this way but without developing the active form of it.

Many people today find themselves striving to live a Spiritual life: that "sees in the poor and abandoned the suffering members of Christ, that seeks peace and justice, that tries to live in solidarity with the poor. The purpose of this article is to sketch this kind of spiritual growth. The model used is the classic one mentioned above of the three ways

or ages, entered into by means of a transition or conversion. In preparing this article I have found two articles particularly helpful. One is not about the poor at all but about prayer. It is an article by Beatrice Bruteau entitled "Insight and Manifestation; A Way of Prayer in a Christian Context" (*Contemplative Review* XVI, Fall 1983, 8-37). The other is a talk given by Father Albert Nolan at the Annual General Meeting of the Catholic Institute for International Relations in London on June 29th, 1984. Fr Nolan is a former provincial of the Dominicans in South Africa and continues to work there. His talk is about growth in one's option for the poor and appeared in the newsletter of the Irish Missionary Union for July-August, 1984.

First Conversion

The moment we enter upon a spiritual process that sees the poor in Christ and Christ in the poor is the moment of First Conversion. It is, however, often difficult to know when this occurs except in retrospect. Sometimes it is through some contact with the poor, suffering and abandoned; sometimes it is the result of a retreat or workshop; sometimes some experience of oppression or suffering in oneself.

In and event, we see the initiative and invitation of God in the experience, the first aspect of conversion. Then, we make a decision, the second aspect of conversion, to direct our life toward the poor in some way, to make an option, however tentative, for the poor. Once this decision is acted upon, we are able to reflect on our experience in such a way that an event or series of events are seen as a turning point. We also see the action and initiative of God in the midst of the experience, so that it can be seen as a grace of conversion. Thus, we enter upon the first stage or way, which I shall call the Way of Appreciation.

Way of Appreciation

The first characteristic of this way is the experience of the poor. We observe their suffering, hear their cry, study their character, actions and situation. This exposure is essential to the development of this stage of the spiritual life. It is our response to the grace of First Conversion. This contact may be serving in a soup kitchen, visiting a hospice for the dying, a trip to some Third World country, or prison ministry. Whatever form it takes, it is important for us, since we so easily protect ourselves from the harsh realities of hunger and oppression, from the smell of the slums, the potential violence of the night. We can, of course, experience some of this through books, films and the like. But there is no substitute for immediate contact.

This experience leads to compassion, or at least can lead to compassion if we allow it to develop. We need to avoid putting obstacles in the way of compassion, by seeing the poverty and suffering of the poor as the result of laziness or ignorance, by washing our hands of the problem, or by claiming helplessness in the face of it. We need to nourish the sense of compassion by feeling with the poor as deeply as we can, by seeing compassion as God's attribute, the way God feels about the world. Here reflection on St Luke's Gospel can help develop this compassion for what we have seen and heard of the sufferings of the poor. Christian compassion opens up to the mystery of the identity of Christ and the poor, and allows us to see the face of Christ and hear his voice in those who are suffering.

As the virtue of compassion develops, it results in acts of mercy. At this point we begin to go to the poor in their need, not merely to observe and experience their suffering. We act on their behalf to express our compassion and to help them in some way. The help may be as simple as distributing food, clothing or money, or as complex as involvement in urban renewal or international famine relief.

Compassion also leads us to simplicity in our way of living. We begin to sense the need to live more simply, to let go of many superfluous possessions, to examine the way we live in contrast to, and of ten at the expense of, the way the rest of the world lives. The Quaker, Richard Foster, in his book *Celebration of Discipline* has an insightful and practical chapter on simplicity. He speaks of three inner attitudes that characterise simplicity: to receive what we have as a gift from God; to know that it is God's business, not ours, to care for what we have; and to have our goods available to others. Then he goes on to speak of the outward expression of simplicity and lists the controlling principles that are excellent guidelines for developing a simple lifestyle. They are: buy things for their usefulness rather than their status; reject anything that is producing an addiction in you: develop a habit of giving things away; refuse to be propagandised by the custodians of modern gadgetry; learn to enjoy things without owning them; develop a deeper appreciation for creation; look with healthy scepticism at all "buy now, pay later" schemes; obey Jesus' instructions about plain, honest speech; reject anything that will breed the oppression of others; and shun whatever would distract you from your main goal.

Each of these characteristics of the Way of Appreciation - experience, compassion, acts of mercy, simplicity of lifestyle - is important for spiritual growth toward solidarity with the poor. Indispensable as they are, however, they are only a beginning, a part of any truly Christian life. Although they are concerned with the poor, they are directed toward improving the self. The Poor are treated as the objects of our efforts.

The poor are talked about, but rarely talked to; we work for the Poor but rarely with them. Our stand in life remains over against the Poor; they are something other than what we are. These remarks are not made to criticise this Way of Appreciation but merely to point out that it is a beginning. What is important is that we recognise this and move on from there.

Those who are in this beginning way, as well as those who may direct them, need to realise that an experience of the poor that is as broad and deep as possible is essential to spiritual growth at this stage but it is not enough. To it must be added reflection on the experience and on the experience of Jesus in the Gospel. Then there must be fervent prayer for a heart of compassion, that Jesus may be discovered in the midst of the poor and on their faces.

Second Conversion

St John of the Cross showed that the transition from the Purgative to the Illuminative Way is marked by a night of the senses, which is a second conversion. Signs of this night are such things as a lack of consolation in prayer and an inability to meditate in a discursive way. In a similar way, we whose spiritual life is centred on finding God among the poor pass through a crisis or second conversion. As a result of our ministry to the poor we come to experience poverty not only as an individual problem but as a structural one. Poverty is the result, not so much of the lack of talent or drive of individuals as it is of conscious political and economic policies. Poverty is seen as the deliberate exploitation of people and whole countries the economic or military advantage of others. Poverty becomes a matter of injustice and oppression, not just an unfortunate but unavoidable situation. Poverty is a structural problem, a problem of unjust and oppressive institutions and system and we are a part of it.

Our first reaction to this heightened awareness is that of anger, anger against the rich, the powerful, the huge corporations, the politicians, the governments. This anger becomes a part of the crisis of the Second Conversion. We need to acknowledge and express it in appropriate ways. We are challenged to expand the virtue of compassion to include not just those who are unjustly oppressed but also those who are the cause of the oppression and against whom we experience such strong feelings of anger.

As we become aware of the systemic nature of poverty, some of us at this point become completely frustrated. What began as the simple act of Christian goodness toward some poor people who came for bread and soup because they were hungry, unfolds before us as the complex structural problem of world hunger. We do not know where to turn; the

problem overwhelms us. We do not know how to channel the tremendous energy tapped by our anger and it turns to feelings of guilt. We become paralysed. Or we become very active and devote enormous amounts of time and energy toward social and political change in the hope that it will transform the structures and systems that cause poverty. It is precisely here they we may falter. We give way to the paralysis we feel, give up the struggle, perhaps retreat into some form of quietism. Or we give in to the temptation of activism and find ourselves burnt out and exhausted. It is truly a night of the senses but as we work our way through it, or as God leads us through it, we enter into a second stage of growth, the Way of Dialogue.

Way of Dialogue

I have called this stage the Way of Dialogue because persons at this stage enter into a new kind of relationship with the poor. In the Way of Appreciation the poor were talked about, the acts of mercy were performed for them. Now we begin to develop a more personal relationship with the poor. Names are exchanged; friendships are formed. We seek the person of Christ in the person of the poor. This is quite different from observing the poor, studying reports about poverty, analysing their struggles, devising strategies on their behalf. It is rather the experience of entering into their personal world, as though we had asked the poor "Where do you live?" and they had answered "Come and see". We see the poor 'at home' and get a sense of the rhythm of their lives, an experiential understanding of the roots of their poverty. We begin to feel yoked with them and pulling as one in the same direction.

Our activity in this Way of Dialogue is more often work for social change. We are more interested than before in devoting our energy to work with the poor for structural change. The emphasis is more on acts of justice than on acts of mercy on behalf of the poor, even though the latter are always a part of the Christian life. The focus of the activity is less on ourselves and the deepening of our own experience and more on what can be done for and with the poor. We enter more intensely into the life of the poor. We do not necessarily think in the same way or have the same opinions and views as they do, but our actions on behalf of justice are united with the action of the poor. Even though our activity may be intense, the emphasis is more on being with the poor than on doing for them.

Through entering into the world of the poor and touching the vital core of their lives, they touch the vital core of ours. We then come to a profound realisation, the realisation of our own poverty. It is a kind of experiential enlightenment, not precisely acquired by reasoning but

granted by God's grace. It begins with the awareness that the poor are the subjects of their own liberation, not the object of the efforts of conscientised, middle-class people and leaders. We discover that we have been considering the poor as the needy and that we must somehow reach out and save them. We may cooperate with the poor or teach them to help themselves, or empower them, but fundamentally we have treated them as the needy. Now we discover that they are perfectly capable of solving their own problems, know what to do and how to do it and, in fact, are in a better position to effect structural change than we are. We learn that these needed changes in systems and institutions will come only from the poor themselves, from the Third World itself. We realise that we are not needed in the way we thought, that rather we must learn from the poor. The Lord "has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, has put down the mighty" (Luke 1; 51-52). The Lord has chosen the poor as instruments and in Christ uses them to save us all. In dialogue with the poor and with God in prayer we begin to experience God in a new way. God is not only present in the poor as seen as the object of our compassion and mercy, Nor is God only seen as Christ in the faces of his suffering members. In the Poor, God is experienced as a God that is present in them and acting through them to save us all. But this very realisation, this very image of the poor, has within it the seed of a new crisis of growth. Perhaps even without realising it, we are at the threshold of a third conversion. But first, a word about lifestyle.

In this Way of Dialogue, we continue to identify ourselves with the poor in our way of living; we continue to simplify our lifestyle. We also become engaged in the struggle for social change. This usually leads to involvement in such things as protests, boycotts, demonstrations, actions of resistance, even civil disobedience, arrest, imprisonment. We often become part of what is sometimes called a resistance community, a network of persons with similar ideals and goals. As a result of this involvement, we experience the fact that others – friends, relatives, families, members of our community – simply do not comprehend what we are about. We feel misunderstood, alienated, criticised, even persecuted. These experiences, in addition to our efforts to live more simply become a part of our way of living.

Third Conversion

Just as the transition from the way of affective prayer and acquired contemplation to the Unitive Way of infused contemplation is marked by a purification or dark night of the spirit, so also the transition from the Way of Dialogue is marked by a third conversion. In the Way of Appreciation we tend to see ourselves as coming to the aid of the poor by our acts of

compassion. We thus unconsciously place ourselves above the poor in the position of helper. We need to be brought down from our pedestal in order to enter into a relationship of genuine dialogue with the poor. Then, in the course of the Way of Dialogue, we tend to place the poor themselves on the pedestal. The poor are idealised, romanticised, seen as God's favoured ones, endowed with an almost innate wisdom. If they happen to come from a Third World country, they are automatically an expert on world oppression, economics and social analysis. This romantic notion of the poor leads to the crisis of this transition period. We soon realise that the poor do not measure up to our ideal. They are seen as people with feet of clay. They may be as selfish and greedy, as lacking in commitment and political insight, as weak and sinful as their middle class brothers and sisters. We reach a crisis at this point, a crisis of disappointment and a crisis of belief. When we realise that the poor simply have not lived up to our expectations, we become disillusioned and discouraged. They are not the Christ-like figures we imagined them to be; they are not endowed with a special wisdom. Then we face the crisis of belief. Are they indeed God's favoured ones? Can we continue to experience God in such imperfect images of his presence? We need to pass through this crisis of disillusionment and again come to see God, now in the vessel of clay that is the poor.

At this point we wait. As St Thomas says that sight, touch, and taste fail us when confronted with the reality of the Eucharistic Bread, so here our senses fail us and we wait upon the grace of faith. With it we see the mystery of God's love for the poor, the fact that the very clay itself is a thing of value to God. It is much like the grace of infused contemplation: we may desire it, pray for it, but fundamentally we await God's gift of prayer, St Vincent de Paul has said: "We should not judge the poor by their clothes and their outward appearance nor by their mental capacity, since they are often ignorant and uncouth; on the contrary, if you consider the poor in the light of faith, then you will see that they take the place of God the Son, who chose to be poor". As we are illumined more and more by this gift of faith, and work our way through this transition, we enter the third stage, the Way of Solidarity.

Way of Solidarity

Damien du Veuster had worked on Molokai for twelve years. When, in 1885, at the age of 45, he began his sermon not with the usual "my dearly beloved", but with "we lepers" he entered into a new relationship with his people. In a similar way we enter into solidarity with the poor when the distinction between we and they no longer applies. The distinction breaks down and we are the poor, one among them. We

have, it is true, differing talents, life experiences, but the fundamental point is that we stand together as one, of one mind and heart in the midst of the political, economic and social structures that oppress. We approach the world with the same outlook. We approach it aware of our different backgrounds and roles, aware of our sinfulness, limitations and weaknesses but with mutual love and a common cause.

The experience of God in this way of solidarity is the experience of the justice of God. We are in solidarity with the God of the Poor in Christ Jesus. We have freed ourselves from our superiority, our illusions, our discouragement and disillusionment, our guilt and our romantic notions of the poor. In addition, we have freed ourselves for, opened ourselves to, Christ in the person of the poor. It is truly the gift of God, much as contemplation is the gift of God. It does not mean, as contemplation does not mean, that we pass beyond our struggles, sufferings or are protected from misunderstanding and even persecution. But it does mean that we experience God saying to us; "Blessed are you poor for you shall see God".

We continue in the same work with the poor. Our activities remain much the same in this Way of Solidarity. We may be helping to prepare and serve food in a soup kitchen. or working for some urban housing project, or trying to influence policies in some multinational corporation towards the Third World. These acts of mercy and justice remain part of our lives. What has changed is our relationship to the poor, our stance with them, and through them our relationship with God has changed. Like the enlightened one of Buddhism, we have returned to the market place. We experience a solidarity with the poor and with God. We may experience this only occasionally as a unity and peace at the core of our being or we may be aware of this oneness more or less habitually. It is what directs our lives and actions, gives us energy and expresses itself in an inner peace that is the consequence of a reconciliation within ourselves with the poor and with the God of the Poor. Reflection on the Gospel continues to be a part of our prayer but we more often pray about Gospel incidents from the point of view of the poor and less often from the point of view of the one who ministers to their needs. We may also either desire to live among the poor or actually do so as a further expression of our solidarity. Solidarity becomes the motive force of how we view the world and live within it and of how we experience God.

Conclusion

Spiritual writers caution us not to interpret too strictly the progress a person makes from the Purgative to the Illuminative to the Unitive Way. In actual practice people move from one to the others more freely

than suggested by the descriptions in ascetical theology. So here the movement from stage to stage should not be interpreted too rigidly. This description of the three ways of experiencing God in the poor should rather serve as a model. Through it, experiencing God in the poor is seen as a process of spiritual growth. The model can help us understand those who are a part of this process of growth. We realise that we are not all at the same stage of development. It can also assist us by giving us some idea of the development of our own spiritual journey, and some awareness of the dangers and problems to be faced.

Vincentians in Action: An Interfaith Model for Civic Learning and Spiritual Growth

Siobhan O'Donoghue and Karl Nass, DePaul University

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Siobhan O'Donoghue is the Associate Director of Community Service in DePaul's University Ministry Department. A British native, Siobhan received her Masters in Divinity and Social Work from Loyola University, Chicago.

Karl Nass is the Project Manager for the Faith and Civic Engagement (FACE) Project at DePaul University. Additionally, he serves as a Visiting Faculty member at DePaul's School for New Learning.

Introduction

How can one promote and connect the values of spirituality, community, and civic engagement in a culturally and religiously diverse group of student leaders? Using DePaul University's *Vincentians in Action Programme* (VIA) as a framework, this paper explores ways of integrating civic engagement with spiritual and personal growth.

Vincentians in Action (VIA) is a values-based developmental leadership model for student leaders engaged in weekly service and justice work at DePaul University, Chicago. VIA provides an interfaith, reflective framework to promote, enhance and integrate the values of spirituality, community and civic engagement through co-curricular involvement.

Before describing the history and structure of the VIA program, it is important to offer a brief institutional overview of DePaul University in order for readers to understand the context of the university which gave rise to VIA:

- The total enrolment at the university in 2005-2006 was 23,148.
- DePaul has a longstanding commitment to diversity. Today, minority students make up nearly 28 percent of the total student population.
- Once known as the "little school under the 'El'" (train tracks) in

Chicago, DePaul now ranks as the nation's largest Catholic university for the eighth consecutive year and remains among the 10 largest private universities in the United States.

- The principal distinguishing marks of the university and its mission are its Catholic, Vincentian, and urban character.
- 29% of the fall 2005 freshmen were first-generation students from families in which neither parent had a college degree. This continues the mission of the university to serve first-generation college students.
- The most recent data show that 36% of the undergraduate population is Catholic. DePaul also has significant student populations, representing a wide variety of religious traditions, including Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist student groups.
- The Religious Order, The Congregation of the Mission, otherwise known as the Vincentians, founded DePaul University in 1898 and continues to sponsor the university today.

History

The VIA model for spiritual growth and civic learning emerged at DePaul as a pedagogy to develop the leadership skills of the forty student co-ordinators of the DePaul Community Service Association, (DCSA). DCSA consists of 15 student-led groups involved in advocacy programming and weekly community service. The student co-ordinators of each of these groups, which are housed in DePaul's University Ministry, are required to meet together weekly to reflect on their service experience.

Less than a decade ago, these weekly reflections rarely included any mention of faith or spirituality. While there may have been many reasons for the lack of spiritual openness in these dialogues, one of the most commonly reported explanations was that students were reticent to speak publicly about their faith or spiritual beliefs for fear of offending peers who might believe differently. Additionally, some of the students who identified themselves as activists would often demonstrate cynicism or hostility toward any organised religion. Such sentiments inevitably tended to derail or truncate any spiritual reflection. Despite the fact that over the years an increasing number of students who professed various faith commitments became involved in service, the content of the service reflections continued to be mostly secular, and the link between spirituality and civic engagement was rarely broached.

This dynamic began to change, however, during the 2001-2002 academic year, when DePaul's University Ministry department underwent a strategic planning process to ascertain the effectiveness of the Department's service and justice programming. An integral part of

this process involved 10 focus groups carried out with key university stakeholders, including 110 students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community partners. In addition, a random sample of hundreds of students was surveyed, and a number of interviews took place. Extensive benchmarking also occurred with colleges and universities with similar programming in order to research best practices.

One of the central findings that emerged from the research was the need to develop and define more clearly a spiritual component of University Ministry's service and justice programming. This finding was particularly significant since a number of departments in the university were also involved in service and civic engagement. The question was therefore beginning to be asked, "What makes University Ministry's programming distinct?"

Given the fact that DePaul's campus is so culturally and religiously diverse, the goal of raising the spiritual component of the programming posed both an opportunity and a challenge. How could one best promote and connect the values of spirituality, community, and civic engagement in a language that might appeal to such a diverse audience? How could one create a safe space that would encourage trust and open dialogue?

A multi-faith audience, which included student leaders, staff, faculty, and community partners, as well as a cadre of committed Daughters of Charity and Vincentian priests, addressed these issues. After a lengthy discernment process, the answer finally began to emerge. Why not look to the life of St Vincent de Paul, the patron saint and founder of the Vincentians, to examine the values upon which he built his own life? Students could then explore what wisdom his life of committed service could offer to their own experience.

As clarity emerged from the discernment process, it became increasingly evident how Vincentian virtues and values continue to have a far-reaching impact on the culture of DePaul today. The majority of students involved in service and justice at DePaul, whether or not they identified with a religious faith or spiritual tradition, could relate their involvement at some level to the narrative of St Vincent de Paul.

Development

In order to develop the content of the VIA curriculum, therefore, the obvious first step was to identify the needs of the student leaders and examine these in the light of Vincentian values. As a result, key knowledge, skills, and values were identified and developed into a core curriculum. Based upon ongoing needs assessments and yearly evaluations, the curriculum continues to be shaped.

It was at this juncture in the discernment process that a Vincentian priest from Colombia, Fr Guillermo Campuzano CM, became involved

in helping University Ministry develop a pedagogy based upon a Vincentian framework. Through conversations, meetings and presentations, he shared his discernment principles, which are rooted in Vincentian values. Campuzano also introduced staff and student leaders to books, literature, and people, steeped in the Vincentian tradition. Together the group began to develop a Vincentian framework of reflection to support and enhance an ethic of civic engagement.

One of the primary sources that Fr Guillermo presented to the staff was an article by Fr Theodore Wiesner CM, *Experiencing God in the Poor* (1987). In this article, Wiesner outlines three “ways of spiritual life” through which he posits a person of faith passes when engaged in service. He identifies these three ways as “The Way of Appreciation”, “The Way of Dialogue” and “The Way of Solidarity”. Wiesner describes these three ways as a model through which experiencing God in the poor is seen as a process of spiritual growth. The model can help us understand those who are a part of this process of growth. We realise that we are not all at the same stage of development. It can also assist us by giving us some idea of development of our own spiritual journey, and some awareness of the dangers and problems to be faced.

Since DePaul operates on a quarter system with students engaging in service for three quarters each year, the framework of the three ways served as an ideal structure within which to organise the content of the VIA curriculum. It has been the experience of University Ministry staff that while Wiesner’s article is clearly written from a Christian perspective, the pathway of spiritual growth described therein seems to resonate with students of many faith traditions and spiritual backgrounds. Consequently, *Experiencing God in the Poor* became the cornerstone of the pedagogy that eventually came to be known as *Vincentians in Action* or VIA.

Structure

Once the core components of the VIA curriculum had been identified, the following structure was instituted. Thirty-five to forty student co-ordinators of DCSA receive a small St Vincent de Paul scholarship from the Division of Student Affairs to lead their respective service and justice groups. Each DCSA Co-ordinator commits to recruiting DePaul student volunteers (now totalling more than 130 each week) and facilitating a weekly service experience with a local community partner in Chicago’s south- and west-side neighbourhoods. The DePaul Co-ordinators travel with their volunteers to their sites. After the service experience, the co-ordinators lead a weekly reflection session with their volunteers. Additionally, the co-ordinators are required to meet as a group on a weekly basis for ninety minutes to engage in interfaith

dialogue, critical reflection, and community building. These meetings are led by a team of senior VIA student leaders, who consult with University Ministry staff on a weekly basis to plan the meetings and discuss how to integrate a designated Vincentian value from the VIA curriculum. Often the format of the meetings will incorporate some of the following components: use of multimedia, lectures, small-group work, literature and research reviews, guest presenters, and interactive reflection exercises. Community building is always emphasised through the sharing of food, retreats, social gatherings, and more.

At the weekly VIA gatherings, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist student leaders, as well as students from other spiritual backgrounds, take turns beginning the meeting with a prayer and a communal sharing of food. After eating and socialising, a “check-in” follows in which all the students reflect on their service experience and assess their overall progress. The meeting continues with any business updates and “shout-outs” – announcements about faith, service, or justice opportunities happening that week at DePaul or in greater Chicago. Finally, the meeting ends with a 45-minute VIA portion that includes a reflection and interfaith dialogue, highlighting a theme experienced during one of the Ways. This portion is led by a senior VIA student leader.

While a diversity of themes is included each year, the core VIA themes covered during each yearly cycle tend to include the following.

Way of Appreciation

- Reflective Practice and Facilitation Techniques
- Human Dignity
- Compassion
- Humility and Servant Leadership

Way of Dialogue

- Social Analysis: Finding Meaning Beneath the Data
- Simplicity; Simple Living; Stewardship
- Praxis: Integrating Dialogue and Action/Conscientisation
- Suffering
- Responding to Misunderstanding

Way of Solidarity

- Finding Oneself in Solidarity
- Being vs Doing
- Forgiveness and Love
- St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac
- Community and Civic Responsibility Outcomes Sought

St Vincent de Paul organised his life around core values. Through his life-long commitment to these values, he was able to reach out and care for the poorest of the poor and to raise awareness about poverty issues in seventeenth-century France. By encouraging students to examine the core values that motivate them to engage in service, VIA provides a pedagogy for students to reflect on how they make meaning in their lives and where they find a sense of purpose. Through encouraging students to examine the connection between their own spirituality and their motivation for service, one intended outcome is that students will continue a commitment to spiritual growth and civic engagement long after graduation. Another goal is that students will be able to articulate the integration of faith, service, and justice in their lives while gaining an appreciation for the Vincentian focus on service to poor and developing a spirituality through this focus. Furthermore, the VIA program is intended to help students develop sound group facilitation skills, gain an appreciation for multi-faith prayer, sustain a commitment to social justice and civic engagement, and cultivate an ability to reflect on life purpose and meaning.

Evaluation

In terms of shaping the future direction of the VIA program, ongoing evaluations have recommended the need to develop pre- and post-VIA assessment methods for measuring spiritual growth and civic learning. Such instruments are currently being developed and will be implemented in the academic year 2006-2007. While pre- and post-VIA evaluations currently exist, they are based on qualitative data only. The need has also been identified to continue to deepen the interfaith application of each VIA theme, which is essential given the multi-faith context of the university. Achieving balance between the pastoral, business, and reflection portions of the weekly meeting continues to be a challenge. Finally, it has been proven increasingly important for the structure of VIA to remain flexible enough to respond to the signs of the times and to current events.

For four years the VIA framework has been utilised in multiple curricular and co-curricular settings at DePaul. For each of the last three years, the graduating seniors who have received the St Vincent de Paul Leadership Award – the highest recognition that DePaul bestows upon a student - have also been senior VIA student leaders. Now young alumni of DePaul, these awardees – whose accomplishments are noted below - have chosen paths in life that exemplify civic responsibility, spiritual growth, and a dedication to the marginalised. Having completed a post-graduate volunteer commitment with L'Arche community of disabled adults, Scott Jeansonne is now in his first year of medical school and

desires to work with underserved populations upon graduation. On completing an 18-month service commitment in Duran, Ecuador, with Rostro de Cristo, Meredith Dean has recently been hired by the Illinois Hunger Coalition to co-ordinate outreach in public schools. Initially, serving with the Vincentian Service Corps, Jason Gill is now engaged in a second year of full-time volunteer service, teaching with the Inner-City Teaching Corps in a south Chicago elementary school. Additional "VIA graduates" include Salvador Venegas, who helped open a Chicago Public School in the underserved Little Village neighbourhood in Chicago and continues to serve as a teacher and administrator; Jenan Mohajir, who volunteers to co-ordinate a speaker series for an Islamic educational foundation; and Eitan Gordon, who has served as the president of Hillel at DePaul.

Simulation

When this paper was presented at the 2006 Institute on College Student Values, a simulation of a scaled-down VIA session concluded the presentation. The simulation focused on the value of compassion. The following description reflects that simulation. The simulation began with a prayer from the Islamic Tradition. Food was then shared, and individual participants were invited to introduce themselves and share their progress. A summary of weekly business items and shout-outs then ensued, which led into the VIA portion of the meeting.

To frame a discussion about compassion, a volunteer read the following definition by Nouwen, McNeill and Morrison (1982):

The word compassion is derived from the Latin words 'patio' and 'cum', which together mean "to suffer with". Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human

The presenters then briefly made reference to how all the prominent spiritual traditions recognise the value of compassion and emphasise the basic connection between serving God and serving others. A volunteer was then invited to read the following excerpt (Wiesner, 1987):

The first characteristic of [the way of appreciation] is the experience of the poor. We observe their suffering, hear their cry, study

their character, actions, and situation. This exposure is essential to the development of this stage of the spiritual life... This contact may be serving in a soup kitchen, visiting a hospice for the dying, a trip to some Third World country, or prison ministry. Whatever form it takes, it is important for us, since we so easily protect ourselves from the harsh realities of hunger and oppression, from the smell of the slums, the potential violence of the night. We can, of course, experience some of this through books, films, and the like. But there is no substitute for immediate contact...

This experience leads to compassion, or at least can lead to compassion if we allow it to develop. We need to avoid putting obstacles in the way of compassion, by seeing the poverty and suffering of the poor as the result of laziness or ignorance, by washing our hands of the problem, or by claiming helplessness in the face of it. We need to nourish the sense of compassion by feeling with the poor as deeply as we can, by seeing compassion as God's attribute, the way God feels about the world.

The following example was then shared from the life of St Vincent to illustrate a time when St Vincent, moved by compassion, took action on behalf of justice:

In 1619, Vincent was serving as Royal Chaplain of the Galleys and was responsible for the spiritual well-being of the galley convicts of France. One day on visiting the convicts, Vincent was appalled to see the conditions that the prisoners were being held in. They were condemned to forced labour, packed into damp holes without light or air, and chained to posts so they could not sit or stand. Furthermore, they were completely subject to the whims of their jailers. On witnessing such inhumane treatment of other human beings, Vincent was so shaken that he appealed to the General of the Galleys asking to try to improve the conditions for the galley slaves, particularly those who were most sick.

As a result of his intervention, men were moved into a rented house and the Daughters of Charity and devout lay women came to care for them. Through his appeals for help, Vincent was also able to get donations to flood in. Moved by compassion, Vincent was able to stop many abuses to the galley slaves. (Pujo, 2003, p.78)

Participants were then invited to engage in a journal-writing exercise, reflecting on an experience of compassion in their own lives. During a VIA session the students would be asked to share with their peers an

experience of compassion which had occurred at their service site. However, a more in-depth reflection was not possible for this scaled-down simulation.

Finally, the group was invited to view a clip from the movie *Patch Adams*. The movie focused on Patch Adams, an unconventional medical school student who integrated unorthodox methods of relating to patients in his educational fieldwork. In the scene viewed, Patch was on trial in front of the medical school judicial board arguing for more compassionate treatment of patients.

The simulation then drew to a close with a brief discussion about the movie clip. Finally, the following questions were posed to the group.

- Who has been a model of compassion for you from your faith community or spiritual journey? Why? What in this person's life speaks to you?
- What are you doing to integrate this sense of compassion into your own life?

Conclusion

In conclusion, in creating the VIA program, it is important to recognise some of the key institutional factors that supported the emergence of VIA. Without these, it would not have been possible for VIA to develop. First, DePaul University has 10 learning goals. Three of these goals highlight the development of service-oriented, socially responsible values, and an ethical framework; knowledge and respect for individuals and groups who are different from us: and self reflection and life skills. Second, DePaul's Division of Student Affairs encourages the integration of faith, leadership and civic engagement in the DePaul student experience. Third, DePaul's President, Fr Dennis Holtschneider CM, has set as a priority the need for the university to enhance its Catholic identity while championing religious pluralism. A final institutional factor is the prominence of Vincentian values across the university. Many of the themes covered in the VIA curriculum correspond directly with the virtues that characterise Vincentian spirituality. Most of the student leaders who participate in VIA attribute the success of the programme to the fact that the weekly meetings allow them to reflect on questions of faith and meaning with trusted peers in a safe space. It is their unique time, away from their volunteers and the pressures of their service sites, to enter into dialectic between their service involvements and Vincentian values. As the student leaders reflect with one another, they begin to develop a shared narrative, while at the same time deepening their understanding of their own unique motivation for service and justice. It is through such regular structured interactions that the struggles and successes of civic engagement are shared and questions

of meaning examined. Simultaneously, it is through such gatherings that community is developed and trust is built. Ultimately, VIA invites students to journey together over the course of a year or more, growing spiritually and developing a commitment to lifelong service.

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Writing the Centenary Roll-book of the British Province, 1985

Letters from Sr Jean Miller DC to Sr Esther McDermott DC

*Reprinted from the original booklet
by kind permission of Sr Sarah King-Turner DC*

Boston Spa
Centenary Year

Dear Sister Esther,

Hello! And how is everyone? It seems ages since I left Mill Hill!

I arrived safely at Boston Spa and I have a nice quiet room where I can get on with the job I have been given to do. I have to copy out, into a special book, a list of all the women who have ever been in the British Province: their Christian names, surnames and their dates of birth, entry and death (for those already dead). There are eighty-six pages in all so I thought I had quite a task before me but, surprisingly, the work is turning out to be extremely interesting.

I have always heard that Semitic peoples put tremendous importance on to a person's name. If you know their name you have some sort of hold over them, and pronouncing a name causes the person to be in some way present, I know now that that is perfectly true. I started off just concentrating on writing properly, without thinking of anything else, but as I proceeded I became conscious of an atmosphere, and then, quite unbidden pictures came into my mind. I could see rows of beds with uprights and pleated white curtains, and the floor was scrubbed boards. Then I saw an old style refectory and a rather dark corridor with a twisting staircase at the end. The floor was stone flags and the woodwork was worn and shiny. At first I didn't see any sisters, but I knew they were there, very sure. Then I caught a glimpse of pleats and heels disappearing round a corner, and then a floppy cornette, etc. By this I was getting quite excited - just writing names of sisters I had never heard of!

The big excitement was when, among all those far off sisters I met one I nearly knew. Her name was Sr Alice Hall. She died abroad in 1909 but I knew where she had lived and I had seen her grave in the little crypt under the chapel in an old house in Tripoli. Then we built a new house in the country and pulled down the old house in the town-we

carefully collected all that remained of the old sisters buried in kind of pigeon holes in the walls of the crypt, and put it all into one casket. This we respectfully re-buried in the new cemetery on the top of a deep ravine where the jackals call at night. I was so excited that I wrote her name in the wrong column. I could hear her saying: "How very careless, Sister, kiss the floor!"

As time went on I began to feel with the sisters: the hardness of their work, the coldness and sleepiness in the morning at 4.30 am, the no respite and the sickness – the early deaths.

One after another they died in their forties or fifties, or thirties or twenties, at four, seven, ten, eleven or thirty years vocation. It was the tough ones who saw the turn of sixty and the giants who made it to their golden jubilees or older. Esther, never again shall I complain of having a rough ride losing my health too young. I have been sure in clover and for a joy ride compared with what those old sisters have been telling me about. And those who went abroad, and never came back and were so forgotten that we don't even know the dates of deaths! Those lists of names spoke of toil and sweat and weariness, but at the same time the atmosphere that was coming was one of peace and calm and contentment, for all the unselfishness and sacrifice, I could just imagine the looks of puzzlement then complete incredulity if I had tried to speak to them, all the years, of personal human fulfilment. For them 'Faith' said it all.

Then there were the sisters who left the community, as I wrote their names I could sense the trauma of facing up to hostility and shocked disapproval: "Sister, you will be putting your immortal soul in danger". And the thought of fingers pointing at them when they returned home. Yet they went, either because they were sent, or just because they couldn't measure up to it any more.

As I turned the pages names began to turn up that were household memories when I was a young sister, I did not know these sisters personally but their reputations lived on and their famous deeds used to be told and retold for our edification and correction!). All this wonderful army of mighty women was marching nearer and nearer to our own time and calling, "This is your heritage!" The varying lengths of their lives were like the long and short strands in a rope that is strengthened by unevenness of the different lengths.

Then they began to come out of the dusk of the past, right into the open. The names I was writing were those of sisters I had actually known and lived with – the 'old sisters' when I was very young. I used to think they were frightfully old yet some of them weren't even as old as I am now (and no amount of arithmetic can alter that!) And I've still three-quarters of the names to write. I've written just twenty one pages

and my own name doesn't come until page 60!

I have given you just the outline of what the ghosts of the sisters of the past have been saying to me. All the old stories that have been conjured up, and all the emotions they have been stirred, would take too long, even for me, to record. What the next generations have yet to say I don't know. The names I wrote were of sisters who entered in 1900 so there still a lot to come.

So I will leave you with that for the present. Lots of love to everyone and to yourself

Jean DC

Dear Sister Esther,

To take up where I left off, I think I was talking about the sisters I knew as old sisters at the beginning of my vocation.

As I turned the pages and wrote more names, more and more sisters appeared whom I can remember well: elderly companions, sister servants, sisters in neighbouring houses, the sister servant who received me as a postulant etc. The spate of deaths had eased off and more and more sisters were celebrating their golden jubilees and living on. The growing crowd of those whom I knew and those living nearer and nearer to our own time seemed like the past to be catching up, rapidly catching with the present, and also made me realise how quickly the present was slipping into the past. Past and present were becoming one. This oneness, this continuity of the community was startling and melted in with 'Jesus Christ yesterday, today forever'.

All those names that I was writing, writing, writing were no longer speaking to me of the anguish and heroism of the early days but of a solid army of splendid women marching, marching, marching steadily forward under the one flag. The march was measured out by the music of their names; the regular one, three, four was drummed out by the ever repeated: 'Margaret, Catherine, Bridget, Anne', – 'Margaret, Catherine, Bridget, Anne'. The other names took up the notes of the other instruments; 'Frances, Ellen, Elizabeth, Jane' were beating out the refrain while the Anastasias, Philomenas, Georginas and Ediths played the twirly bits, and surely the highest note of all was Sybilla's song!

Names, names and more names, and, "I have called you by your name, you are mine" said the Lord. As each 25th March came round they answered that call, community names were dropped as the baptismal name followed the "I... vow to God" a fidelity, a solid fidelity without looking to left or right, as solid as that tramp of feet. Weary

feet often, in ill-fitting shoes, badly mended shoes, tramping up and down dark stairways and slum alleys, along long corridors in big, old-fashioned institutional houses, back and forth across dusty or muddy playgrounds on interminable 'guards'. They stuck at it those sisters did, that faithful sticking to duty was coming across loudly as I wrote and wrote and wrote those names.

Talking of names, a number of very interesting ones turned up. There were the six Markeys, blood sisters, all in the Community at the same time. On one occasion the 'Central' even unbended sufficiently to allow them to have a table all to themselves in the refectory when the six of them happened to be making the same retreat (I wonder who fixed that?) The sisters had nothing to do with the choosing of their retreats in those days. Oh well! The collars might have been well starched but the hearts that beat under them weren't all so starchy after all!

Then there were the Harrington twins, Margaret and Mary. They came from a family of twenty-two children. No wonder there was a niece about to carry on the name in the Community. I remember one of the twins in Liverpool during the war. She was as deaf as a post and had a hearing aid like a big soup ladle. You bawled into the bowl of it and still she heard nothing at all. She couldn't even hear the bombs raining upon the city unless one fell near enough to rock the house, then she would look up in mild surprise and ask, "Are they bombing us?"

Sister Mary Langdale walked onto my pages, the old directress immortalised by Langdale House. Many are the stories told about her. Another outstanding name was that of Sr Xavier Berkeley, that famous missionary in China, immortalised in the book by Sr Anne Hughes, who was a great old missionary herself. Then there was Sr Isabella Trapp whom I met in Egypt where she died. She was a relation of Maria Von Trapp of 'Sound of Music' fame. In spite of her Austrian origins, she was aggressively British and fiercely demanded my national credentials while pounding on the stone floor with her umbrella.

There were also the three Cleary sisters but all I know about them is that one of them died in a railway carriage; to the shock and discomfort of her travelling companion. I believe they stopped the train and laid her on the platform and boy scouts formed a cordon around her until an ambulance took her away.

Until Sr Fraser passed her 100th milestone there were only two others that I noticed, who made the century: Sister Mary Anne Harrington (not one of the twins) and Sister Chadwick who nearly got to 102. Perhaps in the future this will be a common event!

The next name to draw my attention was that of Sister Bowlby, Dorothy Bowlby, née Clerk, sister of Sr Vincent Clerk. St Louise must have had a warm spot and fellow-feeling for her and all the other widows

who, after their youthful joys of orange blossom and wedding bells and dreams of baby laughter about the house, had the traumatic experience of heartbreak at a graveside. Then they bravely gave themselves to Christ in service of other people's children, old and young. But if they wore the livery of Charity they also bore their husbands' names to the end, and surely great was the reunion in Heaven when eternity dawned for them. Apart from Sr Bowlby, I do not know the names of many of our widows. There was Sr Cronin; she lost her husband and two babies with the Spanish 'flu that followed the First World War. Apparently she used to talk about Gregory but never mentioned the children – perhaps she could not. There was also Sr Shorrocks, a very young widow, she was only twenty-five when she came to Community, and Sr Ross, in Australia. How many more of the names I am writing are those of widows I do not know, but, whoever they are we are proud to have them on our Roll, God love them all.

That is as far as I have got but as I heard that Sr Marie was going to Mill Hill tomorrow, I thought I would send this on to you.

Lots of love
Jean DC

Dear Sister Esther,

Here I am again to continue the story. Actually, the old sisters have not been speaking anything like as clearly now. Was it that as I got nearer to our own time and I have known personally many of the sisters whose names I was writing, the spell was broken - some of the names are not even ghosts as the sisters are still alive, a great age perhaps, but still this side of the grave.

But as I wrote on there was a certain sense of unease and trouble, nothing very great but a wrinkle all the same. Perhaps, this was because I was writing about a difficult period. The number of those leaving the Community was on the increase. This was period of the exodus, or purge, of the early '20's. I remember, when I was a young sister, the older sisters were still talking about it. It would seem that at one point there had been a Visitatrice who was a little too concerned with numbers and did not screen the applicants carefully enough. To all accounts; all and sundry were admitted with disastrous results. Then came a new Visitatrice who had the distasteful task of weeding out the unsuitable people who had crept in: "And let there not rest therein any stone that thy holy hand has not placed." There was row upon row and sisters were sent home. I am not sure if it always the right one that was sent home while the troublemaker was allowed to remain. Mistakes can happen,

and in the days when to excuse oneself was a grave fault, it was all too easy to get involved, drawn in to someone else's row and be left to pay the price. This, I remember all too well, was one of the great fears of my early days in Community.

The question that kept coming up while I laboured through this thorny patch of our past was one of Vocation. Those restless spirits who disturbed the peace, why did they come? Were they 'called' and only half-answered and so did not make the grade? Or did they come without vocations? And, if so, why? Can one come to Community without being called? Can one have a vocation and lose it? And those blamed in the wrong and dismissed, had they vocations? Or does the fact that the dismissal was allowed by God prove that they were not really meant to stay? Or to come in the first place? And what if one stays without a calling?

And today, when there is so much coming and going, such a lessening in stability in vocation, and one hears remarks like, "Of course, if it got too hard I would leave!" – what is one to think? Certainly there is no judgement to pass, none at all, but for ourselves, for myself, it seemed that all these names I was writing were crying out, "Look to your Vocation! Value your Vocation! Above all, love your Vocation and live it to the full". All that left me matter for profound thought.

As for Sister Boyle, the Visitatrice with the unpleasant task, she stayed in office only two years. The stress and strain of all those rows and departures were too much for her and she died aged only 61 and Sr Thomson, I think it was, took her place. However, Sr Boyle must have only started something for the large number of departures continued for a few years after her death as far as I could reckon. Though, except for one year, the number of entries didn't diminish, they kept on coming, thirty and forty each year, so that even if there were some departures, the numbers were growing. It was evidently a period of expansion for the Community in this Province. The sisters must have been giving the right kind of witness otherwise few would have come and more would have left.

This letter, Esther, has been fairly heavy going what with all the loss of vocation and consequent profound thought about vocation - its loss, its value and living it. But that had to be, I had to take what the past said to me and if that makes me question myself, that at least, I suppose, is a good thing.

Very much love,

Jean DC

Dear Esther,

As I am writing now, more and more I am leaving the last column empty for the date to be filled in at some later time: just now the sister is still with us, either in the Priory, or in some other of our houses up and down the country. It is our present old sisters whose names I am writing now. That is, we see them as old sisters, shuffling along the corridor with their sticks and zimmers, or with their hearing aids and bits of knitting as they sit nodding in their armchairs. But the dates that I am writing tell of other things. First is the date of birth, which was certainly soon followed by baptism. It was then that those lovely names that I am inscribing were given them (I had better not start on Baptism and Baptismal names or I would never get finished).

Passing over childhood, with lovely long hair and frilly pinafores, the next date brings me to the day they entered the Seminary. I can see a long procession of young women streaming endlessly through the Community gate. There may be crowd of them but each is so very much alone. A visit to Sister Directress's 'cabinet' and there - a fledgling Sister of Charity is sitting on one of the hard, long benches in the Seminary. This is a moment fraught with emotion! So many aspirations, so much generosity, fear too and perhaps misgivings and a few tears. Another sister has set out on the long trek that will bring her to old-sisterhood in our Centenary Year. Aspirations they had, naive perhaps, idealistic and fanciful no doubt, but aspirations and ideals all the same. Time and experience will pound and sift them, the frilly bits will fall off but the hard core of solid gold will remain. And they needed ideals to hold on to, their lives were often hard enough and pretty monotonous too. But they had come to serve the Poor and serve them they jolly well did, and lived like them too.

Like the Poor they had no privacy. They shared everything; sleeping quarters, clothes and work - the 'commonwork' they used to call it. As they were always "in each other's pockets" of necessity they had to be tolerant and patient; "enduring" might be a better word.

If they were not out among the Poor, and many of them were, in slums that were really slums, they had the Poor all around them in their own houses. Thus, sleeping in a kind of box off a children's dormitory, an orphanage sister had neither comfort nor convenience, was always on call, supported the noise of the children's coughing, snoring and moving about, and the smells of an overcrowded room with wet beds and dirty socks, etc. Sisters in institutions of all kinds were similarly surrounded by their Poor. Often it could not have been easy to "turn the medal"!

Of course now we have made a great many changes for the better. We no longer have dirt and smells in our houses, and we have privacy and all kinds of personal and personalized things, but let us look carefully

to see if our old sisters have not a lot to teach us. Change was necessary and thank God it has come, but are our ideals and aspirations always better than those of the old sisters? Have we always changed the right things or have we sometimes done away with rich values along with worthless practices? Perhaps, in this Centenary year, our old sisters are telling us to look back and in for values and ideals, rather than out and elsewhere.

Community is like a stream flowing down towards the sea. Sometimes its waters may look muddy. There may be mud in the stream but it is worth digging and sieving. We may find lumps of gold in the mud!

All the best

Jean DC

Dear Sister Esther,

Yesterday I had a great thrill. As I was writing and writing, my Seminary companions began to appear and then, right down at the bottom of the page, I wrote my own name. That brought me to a halt, I felt so overawed, somewhat as I did years ago under my first cornette, I felt a bit stunned being there in that illustrious list after all those wonderful ghosts and fine old sisters. This, I reflected, is the work of the Lord, praise be his holy Name.

Just think of it, the fledging Daughter of Charity on that hard old Seminary bench was myself! And there, sitting beside me were: Sister Twist from the Infirmary, Sister Steer from across the road, Sister Ryan from down the way and Sister Vavasour just joined us from Scotland. Sister Andrew had just become Sr Gertrude and was remarking her clothes.

When young sisters came on retreat Sister Munks was among them and, a little later, Sister Verling came over from Ireland. Up in the secretariat was Sister Augustine. Of course, she was a habit sister so we only looked at her from a respectful distance and didn't speak.

Just think of it, pushing on towards fifty years later these same people are still circulating round Mill Hill! When I get back I shall have to poke them hard to make sure they are not ghosts! Sister Polley wasn't there but they were still talking about her 'gone to Australia', and now she is back in her old haunts. And there were lots of others besides.

Things have changed though. Those were the days of our youth and beauty, innocence and blisters (with all the work we did), naive ideals and housemaid's knees, bell-ringing and bobbing, blacking and brushing, not to mention pre-matinal lighting the furnace and, of course,

rounders in the refectory. We coffee-grained the corridor, squeegeed the vaiselle, white stoned the steps and scrubbed white the dormitory and stairs. We drank huge mugs of cocoa and wiped our plates clean with pieces of bread, with our serviettes tucked under our chins. There were permissions and pardons, and fichus to patch. There were reflections on the Gospel and Jimmy Cuse on Fridays and, of course, the floor to be kissed in season and out of season every day of the year!

Whatever else we should have learnt and didn't learn, we DID learn, to love the Community and be proud to belong to it. Perhaps, later on, with the knocks and shocks, there was a fading of first fervour and we didn't always see the Community in such a good light. This, however, was all in a lifetime because you don't live your Vocation until you have come up against it, and you don't love the Community until, realistically, you have seen it with all its flaws (to which we all contribute). Otherwise you would be loving a myth and living a dream and paddling your canoe through cuckoo land. Then, when the full cycle has turned, you come back to your first love and pray;

"There is one thing I ask of the lord, for this I long, to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Amen.

There, Esther, I'll leave you for now

Much love

Jean DC

Dear Sister Esther,

I wrote and wrote, on through the war-troubled early years of my vocation: then into calmer times and on into more mature days. As the years went by I became aware of a certain restlessness and a kind of uneasiness. All the Community was agog, astir with a vague apprehension or expectation accompanied with a feeling of disbelief in face of what seemed to be the impossible. Then the impossible gave place to the inevitable. Then, presently I heard like a long sigh arising from every quarter of the world where a Daughter of Charity was known by her white cornette. The sigh grew louder, then died and there came the hushed sound of a silent flapping of wings as, like an immense flock of birds, thousand and thousands of cornettes took off and disappeared over the horizon into the land of Days-gone-by. A new throng of blue-coiffed Daughters arose and the march went on.

Now I was writing the names of a new generation of Daughters, Daughters who had never worn the cornette. Daughters who, if they knew nothing of its weight and awkwardness of the tunnel vision it

conferred, knew nothing either of the immense thrill of wearing the cornette. It was beautiful but it had to go, its time was up. It had become an anachronism. So we wave it good-bye, with a little nostalgia perhaps, but without real regret.

Yes, the march went on. The sixties were catching up with the seventies and another restlessness was in the air. Great was the heart-searching, reflection, consultation and prayer. Decisions were made. Great events were about to take place. Two new Provinces were about to be born. First, it was the Australians who hoisted their own flag. Thanks to the generosity and courage of the first pioneers from over here and the bravery of the girls who came all the way over to make their Seminary so far from home, the Daughters were now firmly rooted in Australian soil, and a hundred native-born Australians were working by the side of those from the home Province. With the blessing of Heaven it was now time for them to stand on their own and the Australian Province was marked on the map.

Then the Irish Province also came into existence. Praise the Lord! But the Irish sisters did not all go, many stayed. As an Englishwoman, with a dash of Scots, may I speak for all our English and Scottish sisters to express our gratitude to our Irish sisters who stayed. The other side of the fence is always greener, and what could have been greener than the rich green of that lovely country the other side of the water? But with an immense love and generosity they stayed. We could not have gone it alone and we thank them, I am sure that the great crowd of Irish sisters whose names, along side of their Scottish and English companions, have filled the pages I have been writing, must be proud of their younger sisters so self-forgetful in their service of the Poor this side of the water.

May this threefold union of hearts continue to flourish as bravely as the little Shamrock over beyond, and stand always for the same great truth.

“Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name. May they be one, Father may they be one in us, as you are in me and I am in you. May they be so completely one that the world may realise that it was you who sent me and that I have loved them as much as you loved me.” Amen.

This, Esther, really is the end! I would never have imagined that lists of names and dates could have evoked so much and stirred so much in me. Every name was a person, a real, whole person and just three dates spoke of a whole life. It was tremendous privilege to have written these names and dates in our Centenary Roll. It has been a really wonderful experience that has done more to me than I can possibly tell you.

So, once again, very much love as ever

*Jean
Miller*

Vincent de Paul: Approaches to Government

Dr Alison Forrestal

This text is reprinted by kind permission of the author, who teaches in the Department of History, National University of Ireland, Galway.

It is the text of an address which she gave to the Trustees of the DePaul Foundation in Paris, earlier this year.

In 1626, the government of the Congregation of the Mission was not an especially complex task. As an urgent priority, this small foundation of four priests had been placed on a sound legal and financial footing under the terms of the contract signed one year earlier by Vincent de Paul and his longterm employers, the Gondis. This guaranteed the Congregation a capital sum of 45000 livres, the income from which should be devoted maintaining at least six priests who would perform missions every five years on the rural Gondi lands and amongst galley convicts. The youthful association's legitimacy and security was further safeguarded when the archbishop of Paris formally approved its foundation in April 1626, and granted it the medieval college of Bons-Enfants three months later. However, one month before the royal letters patent for the Congregation were issued in May 1627, the foundation contract was modified, and the alterations to it bear the marks of a superior who was already being obliged to consider the future expansion of the still tiny association as well as the potential pitfalls that might bedevil it in the future. Now, excepting the plan for five yearly missions on their lands, the Gondi family agreed to withdraw all contractual clauses that had ascribed them any power over the Congregation's missions as well as over 'the manner of life' of its members. Significantly, the initial contract's instruction that the Congregation's superior should be elected triennially once de Paul died was revoked in favour of an order that the election of superiors should be left 'to the Regulations or Constitutions that will be made and drawn up' by him.

An already changing situation

By this time, de Paul had joined his companions in Bons-Enfants, and the path was now clear to establish a distinctive structure for the Congregation that was not so tightly bound to its patron founders. From a tiny and quite inauspicious beginning, the group expanded at first slowly, then with pace: landmarks included its acquisition of a new base for operations at Saint-Lazare in 1632, papal approval of the Congregation

in 1633 and the distribution of its Rules and Constitutions in 1658. By the time of de Paul's death, its infrastructure included twenty-four establishments in France, mainly established from 1638, and it had sent members to Italy, Savoy, Poland, Ireland, Scotland, North Africa and Madagascar. Recruitment flourished from the mid-1630s, with at least four hundred and twenty-six members during de Paul's superior generalship, while an extensive network of patrons had been cultivated wherever the Congregation operated. In addition, the association allied with two other 'Vincentian' organisations, the Ladies of Charity and the Daughters of Charity. De Paul maintained a vigilant eye on the activities of these female organisations, in collaboration with Louise de Marillac and a succession of able presidents of the Ladies, and the Daughters remained formally under the authority of the superior general of the Congregation. Excluding their Parisian bases, the Daughters had forty-two establishments in France by 1660, and it is reasonable to assume that branches of the Ladies of Charity existed alongside them as well as in other areas in which the Congregation operated.

The constellation of Congregation, Daughters and Ladies ensured that the range of activities that required the superior general's input moved far beyond the guidance of a small community and the delivery of rural missions: it extended to the administration of seminaries, running of retreats and charitable initiatives. When Vincent de Paul gazed outward from Saint-Lazare in the twilight of his long career, how did he explain this dramatic and sustained growth? He would surely have assumed that divine providence was the principal architect of the steps and events that had enabled the three organisations to emerge initially, to expand and to consolidate. As he consistently reminded himself and others, the fate of humans, their institutions and their work remained entirely in the gift of providence. This, he believed, was the fundamental maxim of faith (de Paul to René Alméras, 11 September 1649) that gave direction and purpose to his own life, the lives of his comrades and the work of the Congregation and its fellow associations of charity. It necessitated trusting abandonment to God's will, and acceptance of success and failure as elements of the history of salvation.

Providence

Yet, a worldview based on providence did not spawn feelings of utter powerlessness, pessimism or inertia. Firstly, in refusing to judge events solely by the world's normal standards of accomplishment, de Paul was able to interpret them according to the Christian teachings of hope, struggle and salvation. Secondly, he scrupulously reminded himself and others that he approved 'of the maxim that all licit and possible means should be used for the glory of God' provided, of course, that 'we expect

everything from His Divine Providence, as though we had no human means.' (de Paul to Marc Coglée, 24 April 1652). While initiatives in government, therefore, were not direct means of celebrating the 'glory of God', they would play a crucial role in providing the mechanisms and structures that would allow de Paul and his associates to do so.

Government placed de Paul in the position of figurehead, inspiration and model, but also required him to become a wellspring of spiritual and practical support and direction, and the fosterer of collegiality, common purpose, discipline, initiative and confidence. Their exhibition was coloured profoundly by the spiritual values and goals that he envisaged to be central to Christian vocations and to Christian engagement with the world. De Paul's undeniable prowess in developing the Congregation and its sister bodies rested on an acute understanding of human psychology and a consistent acceptance of key spiritual principles. In other words, his governing methods kept a close eye on both natural or human and supernatural or divine principles. He did not see these as opposing but as complementary and co-operative.

Creatively cautious

Characteristically, as a result, de Paul moved cautiously in developing governmental structures and techniques, reflecting carefully on the benefits and risks of innovations and drawing heavily on his and the Congregation's experiences, the experiences of similar organisations and the advice of trusted confidants. In its basic governing structure, the Congregation operated hierarchically; when each local house was established, it replicated the organisation's universal structure. The Congregation did not operate on a 'one man, one vote' or democratic basis in important matters. From its inception, a superior general headed the Congregation, and governmental levels and offices, similar to those of traditional religious orders, were incorporated as its operative complexity evolved. Most noticeably, when new houses were established, de Paul appointed a superior, who reported directly to him, and the superior appointed a range of officers with special responsibilities. Each superior was advised by two experienced assistants, appointed by the superior general or the house visitor, just as de Paul sought the guidance of assistants and an extraordinary assembly of superiors and seasoned members for major decisions. The house superiors who sat on this council acted as the representatives of their communities, and were told to take into account the needs of all those under their care in making and contributing to decisions. Further, as de Paul recommended in 1632 and had witnessed in other religious associations, provincial visitors travelled a circuit to houses in the four provinces (established in 1642) in order to identify problems and good practice and to offer supportive

recommendations for the future. They were also required to meet triennially to monitor general progress and to counter the superior general's 'infractions', if necessary (1651 council, *Correspondence XIII*A).

The challenge of a charismatic leader

As the system of government evolved, de Paul provided a charismatic connection between the Congregation, Daughters and Ladies; his governmental approach never permitted systematic or impersonal organisation to overshadow personal relationships. However, his close relationship with Louise de Marillac and his regular meetings with the Daughters and some branches of the Ladies could have resulted in their remaining entirely dependent on his personal custodianship, perhaps with detrimental results when he died. This was a particular threat to the perpetuation of the Ladies. This association operated democratically, with each member voting on options proffered. Many of the local associations were not formally under the Congregation's authority; de Paul relied on Congregation superiors as well as patchy and intermittent visits by de Marillac to maintain practical links with them. Equally, the only formal connection between individual associations lay in their adherence to basic common rules. It was therefore a more autonomous and fragmented body than the Daughters; de Paul probably endorsed the self-contained model so individual divisions could prosper even when the Congregation or Filles were not permanently within close range. But this strategy did not always work and a few failed to thrive without energetic promotion and steerage from outside. However, in general, and crucially, the consolidation of the Ladies and Daughters did not destroy the valuable spiritual affinities and practical links that attached them to the Congregation. Beyond the Daughter's formal affiliation to the Congregation, there are two principal reasons for this: firstly, de Paul ensured that the three collectives retained a fundamental unity of purpose; secondly, he devoted enormous energy to the nurture of effective leaders within them.

Unity of purpose

De Paul understood unity of purpose to be an essential component of each of the three groups with which he worked, as well as being a thread that bound all three together. He could not allow that he formed the only or main connection between them, nor was it sufficient to state simply that all three sought the glory of God. He needed to clarify the general terms of that objective: the imitation of Jesus through the work of salvation. Yet he also needed to highlight aspects of it that each group could embrace as their specific and special value, model and mandate: the Congregation members as ministers of rural evangelisation, and the

Daughters and Ladies servants of God through maternal nurture of the sick and poor. In this way, despite differences in the type of functions carried out (missions, seminaries, nursing, fundraising and so on) and in the social, ecclesiastical or sexual status of their members, they could all share a common sense of identity and familial fraternity.

This balance between the particular and the general was naturally easiest to perpetuate within the Congregation and Daughters, within which de Paul acted for years as the paternal founding authority. However, in Paris, he was careful to nurture the Ladies' sense of inclusion and shared possession, through regular meetings to reflect on their spiritual motivations, review their projects, share with them the ways in which their funds were being used and consult them on potential initiatives. This was a form of flattery that offered the Ladies an authentic influence tying them even more closely to the work of charitable welfare. Their assertive input also permitted them significant control over their schemes and balanced their relationship with the Congregation and Daughters. At the same time, it indicated that de Paul did not just admire their deep financial pockets, but valued the practical common sense and the spiritual intelligence that were such essential elements of their contribution to the charitable imperative that sought to meet Jesus in the vulnerable:

While waiting to be able to share your letters with the Ladies who are helping the people in the ruined border areas and to find out from them whether you might extend your distribution to the Huguenots (Protestants), as well as... to the poor people who can work... their original intention was to assist only those who cannot work...

(de Paul to Marc Coglée, 26 April 1651)

The role of the leader

In this episode, de Paul implicitly trained a local superior in the importance of recognising and endorsing the active and special contribution made by lay volunteers. He also tutored him on the best means of ensuring their continued benevolence. On one occasion, he offered Coglée meticulous instructions on composing a written request for funds to the Ladies. The attention to persuasive detail is compelling, but it illustrates de Paul's assumption that those with responsibility for taking initiatives should possess all relevant information. Therefore, Coglée was asked to provide complete information on the person involved, her previous good character and work, her present hardships in terms of income, age and health, and future intentions; he should suggest a sum of money that would be sufficient to answer her needs (de Paul to Marc Coglée, 6 October 1655). Clearly, de Paul was very familiar with the

merits of this particular case, and it is indicative of the conscientious gathering, collation and transmission of massive amounts of information that characterised his career.

To foster their sense of corporate loyalty, de Paul dispersed the vivid language of familial affection liberally through his correspondence to the three associations. He often read letters from the outposts aloud to residents of Saint-Lazare, disclosing highs and lows of Congregation life, and acted as a conduit for developments that affected all members at least indirectly. When writing to Congregation members living far from the motherhouse in Paris, he frequently concluded his letters with the assurance that he and all those at Saint-Lazare were praying for the health, safety and success of their brethren. For example:

We have prayed in common and privately for the preservation of your sick men, especially for M. Dufour, who is in danger. *Mon Dieu!* Monsieur, how anxious I am about him and how I fear losing such a good servant of God.

(de Paul to Marc Coglée, 4 December 1650)

A few days before de Paul expressed his concern, he wrote an inspirational letter to Dufour's superior, Marc Coglée, who was encountering distressing challenges in war torn Sedan:

I shall continue to recommend to the Company that they place your needs before God ...If your family redoubles its courage and fidelity for the good use of the common affliction and the consolation of the souls His Providence places in its path, this will be the means of drawing down blessings on the town and on yourselves.

(de Paul to Marc Coglée, 26 November 1650)

In this excerpt, it is clear that de Paul sought to bolster the energy and courage of Coglée and his fellows by reminding them that they should be inspired by the hopes and prayers of colleagues who understood and shared their objectives. He also advocated that the family endure their trials and tribulations in unity and in anticipation of future consolation. Vitality, he firmly positioned their Sedanese family within the familial circle of the Congregation and then placed both within the larger protective ambit of the earthly and heavenly family of God and men.

Jesus Christ is the core

At the core of de Paul's ability to situate government within a familial identity, however, was his presentation of Jesus Christ as the primary unifying force of the family. Before concluding a letter to Lambert aux

Couteaux, superior of the far-flung house in Warsaw, with a heartfelt admission that he missed his associate, he commented:

We are just about finished with preparations for ordination, and the solemnity of Christmas is almost upon us. I ask Our Lord to grant you the grace of entering fully into the love and practice of the virtues resplendent in his holy birth and to be more than ever the life of your life and the unifying bond of your little family, whom I embrace tenderly.

(de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, 21 December 1651)

Once again, de Paul entwined the life of the individual with that of the larger family of the Congregation, and subjected both firmly to the creative impulse of Jesus in their actions. Additionally, he explicitly suggested that Jesus should be the model for Congregation life, so that his virtues would become the badges of an exemplary priest and the collective marks of the association. It is certain, as a result, that he considered Jesus to be, specifically, the archetype from which the Congregation should draw its values for government. Importantly too, by presenting Jesus as a unifying bond, he found a way to circumvent early modern social barriers that might preclude him from using familiar familial language when addressing the Ladies of Charity. This particular concept dislodged attention from his personal relationship with the Ladies in favour of their relationship with the divine. Advantageously, it also enabled him to link the three organisations with which he worked by a shared value which gave them direction and a sense a combined purpose, even as they assumed a variety of tasks over a wide geography.

Mentoring other leaders

As the three organisations expanded, the importance of maintaining their particular priorities in work as well as a sense of common mission became a more pressing problem. In order to ensure that the members of the three groups continued to carry out the work to which they had dedicated themselves while keeping sight of their collective goal, de Paul knew that it was absolutely essential to nurture leaders on whom he could rely to live up to and perpetuate these values. He prepared individuals such as de Marillac and Lambert aux Couteaux to assume mantles of responsibility that he would not be able to wear indefinitely and, as they gained experience and confidence, he regarded them increasingly as collaborators rather than as subordinate administrators. His confidence in de Marillac was such that he relied upon her to maintain absolute steadiness amongst her Daughters and in the management of their work (de Paul to Louise de Marillac, 14 August 1646). Rather

than simply being a dogmatic authority, their dialogues indicate that he acted primarily as a constantly available source of honest spiritual and practical advice, who encouraged Marillac to trust her ability to initiate, judge and supervise (sounding board). Importantly, de Paul earned Marillac's respect for his opinion by his generous availability, frankness and edifying example of piety and leadership; this proved just as influential as the existence of a formal constitutional link between their organisations. As they deepened their collaboration, each assumed complementary roles in government and de Paul kept a lighter rein on her actions. For example, he urged de Marillac to ensure that the contractual agreement for the Daughters' first venture into a provincial hospital in 1640 clearly elaborated their duties and rights in order to ensure the viability of the project; having been led through the process once, Marillac was able to use this document as a prototype for the subsequent agreements that she engineered (de Paul to Marillac, 11 January 1640 and 22 January 1640).

The Daughters operated routinely as an internally cohesive association whose members, under their superior's eye, were encouraged to contribute to the cultivation of spiritual norms and a rule of life as well as to physical work. De Paul's willingness to view its members' vocations as spiritually valid and fruitful meant that he did not tend to emphasise the subsidiary aspects of their liaison with the Congregation. Rather, he chose to emphasise the particular charisms that made the groups complementary, mutually beneficial and even dependent on one another, as well as their shared focus on emulating Jesus in distinctive ways.

The importance of flexibility

One of the principal governmental skills that de Paul displayed was a willingness to integrate flexibility into the governmental system. In the Congregation, it proved crucial to provide a stable and sustainable structure for management that was sufficiently elastic to react to specific, often unfamiliar, situations and circumstances arising from its relations with the Daughters and Ladies and with local ecclesiastical and secular authorities. So, it was crucial that de Paul ensured that he was as well informed as possible about local circumstances and individuals before offering thoughtful insights and suggestions for resolving difficulties. He often made preliminary queries to acquaint himself with details and context (de Paul to Jean Martin, 24 August 1657), without concern for the fact that he revealed his ignorance in doing so. De Paul did not value authority as innately praiseworthy; instead, the point of his position of authority was to ensure that the Congregation and its sister associations could perpetuate the reign of Jesus wherever they operated. He used his written discourses with superiors as a didactic device to dem-

onstrate this modest attitude. He anxiously coached officers to avoid the simplistic temptation to turn the means into the end, or to believe that the end would justify the use of autocratic or underhand means. Governors and the system of government should correlate to the exemplary virtues of Jesus, the true means and end of the Congregation and its affiliate groups. For this reason, de Paul suspected Marc Coglée's motivation in establishing good relations with the Jesuits in Sedan in 1652:

You did the right thing in establishing good relations with the Jesuits in Charleville, but saying that you did so in order that they might support us when people speak ill of us to them is a very base motive and a far cry from the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to which we should consider God alone in our actions... You [have] your own reputation in view... This is vanity.
(de Paul to Marc Coglée, 25 September 1652)

In a conference with the Daughters in 1647, de Paul coached them to assess choices by measuring in what way they contributed to God's glory, the interest of the Daughters and the welfare of the interested parties (Council of 19 June 1647, *Correspondence XIIIIB*). In Coglée's case, de Paul acknowledged the good result of his action, which contributed to the Congregation's ability to maintain equilibrational relations in Sedan and to operate more efficiently there. But the decision was fundamentally flawed. It did not contribute to God's glory, the Congregation's interest or anybody's welfare because it was inspired by the 'base motive' of vanity. De Paul made his point explicitly and bluntly, but assumed a classic approach that he adopted when forced to exert his authority through criticism: he began his censure with praise of the action itself, before proceeding to a devastating deconstruction of the motivation that polluted it. De Paul did not offer criticism independently of constructive suggestions and gentle support, but sought to encourage his officers to learn from their mistakes. This tactic effectively reduced the risk that a superior would become depressed or disillusioned with his failures. By offering optimistic celebration of the leadership displayed in sound decisions, de Paul provided the superior with heartening evidence of his progress in office, while setting an attainable goal towards which to aim in the future.

De Paul often returned to two key influences upon his approach to government: Christ as the model and the sovereignty of providence. Both drove his wish to instill in Coglée the consoling belief he was under God's care, that he was an instrument in the divine plan and that he could respond confidently to the call to be so through grace. De Paul reiterated in his letters to his superiors that they did not work alone and

that their work was important because it served a higher purpose than mere oversight of rules and quarrels. Yet, as divine instruments, any success they accomplished in their work was due entirely to God (de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, 21 December 1651). He added the cautionary reminder that they must remain entirely humble and trustful of God's responsibility for achievements:

Yesterday I received your letter... which gave me great consolation, not only because it is one of your letters, which all have the same effect, but also because of your fine leadership – or rather God's leadership over you.

(de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, 12 April 1652)

This note succeeded de Paul's effort a few months earlier to warn Lambert that he should expect setbacks as superior in Warsaw:

Entrust yourself confidently to His guidance and prepare your own guidance for all sorts of events in order to make good use of any that will be unfavourable to you. I have no doubt that you will experience some.

(de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, 21 December 1651)

Lambert was, by this stage, a very experienced officer, having acted as superior of four other establishments. De Paul surely alerted him to pitfalls that awaited an unwary superior partly because Lambert had only recently arrived in Warsaw (1651). But part of de Paul's policy in governing and in training governors was to repeat the general principles of trust in providence, faithfulness to Christ's example, edifying and compassionate discipline and informed assessment that should become automatic elements of their decision making. Here is a further principle in relation to supervision, the lesson that inability to take action, while superficially frustrating, could be beneficial:

If God does not allow you to do either a little or a great deal for others, you will be doing enough by adoring His ways and remaining at peace... God often wants to build lasting benefits on the patience of those who undertake them; that is why He tries them in many ways.

(de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, 21 December 1651)

The importance of training

Superiors in the Congregation and Daughters (Sister Servants) generally went through a form of training that included residence in several

houses and tenure as officers. De Paul pursued the policy of transforming potential into wise experience zealously from the beginning. De Marillac was a veteran of the Ladies of Charity before acting as visitor to its branches, and first superior of the Daughters. A similar pattern of experience and preparation for promotion was evident in the career of the able René Alméras, chosen by the Congregation assembly as de Paul's successor in 1661. De Paul groomed this former state councilor for government, placing him in a variety of locations and roles in order to give him first hand experience of all facets of the Congregation's work and to foster his skills of judgement, initiative and leadership. Before he became de Paul's assistant, he was superior in two establishments, distributed poor relief in Picardy and Champagne, performed visitations, and took charge of retreatants.

It became standard practice for superiors to have performed special functions in Saint-Lazare and to return there at intervals to refresh their skills. Saint-Lazare loomed very large in the perpetuation of governmental principles, and de Paul resorted regularly to it to illustrate effective organisation and regulation. In 1657, he warned Jean Martin, superior in Turin, against deviating from the Congregation's longstanding and formal restriction of its preaching and confession:

You must also point out [to the Marchese (patron of the Turin house)] that the inhabitants are laying down a condition contrary to our customs, which is to preach and hear confessions in the town. We cannot submit to this because of the consequences and because of the Rule that forbids us to do so. You know that at Saint-Lazare we do not preach or hear the confessions of people living in the city.

(de Paul to Jean Martin, 5 October 1657)

Saint-Lazare was the hub of Congregation government; the superior general resided there, it functioned as an oasis of rejuvenation for Congregation superiors and other members, and it provided the model that ensured uniformity of structure and operation throughout the organisation. For this reason, it was a natural refuge for those in need of reassuring direction or disciplinary correction (de Paul to Donat Crowley, 28 August 1655). However, although de Paul sought to instill uniform discipline in the Congregation, his personal style was that of a concerned advocate for the wellbeing of his charges. At times, he worried that he and his superiors had not placed an individual in a location or office for which they were suited; the effective governor should consider the character and gifts of each person in their community, assigning them to duties that would allow them to make a full

contribution to their vocation, house and local society. So, in 1652, he hesitated to send Jean Ennery on a mission to Corsica as Étienne Blatiron, the superior in Genoa, suggested:

I do not think he is gentle enough for that region, where the people are uncouth and used to being rough.
(de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, 16 August 1652).

However, he was elated when Blatiron displayed solid initiative in his second recommendation. Nicolas Duport, de Paul agreed, possessed the qualities of zeal, judgement, prudence, discretion, gentleness and cordiality that were essential for this region (de Paul to Étienne Blatiron, 19 January 1652).

Focussing on the mission

In instructing Jean Martin, de Paul told him to correct a local patron rather than undermine the universally applicable rules of the Congregation. It was important that a community make every effort to establish good relations locally, but effective government required that decision makers be prepared to turn down an offer which although immediately attractive could prove detrimental in the longer term; the Congregation Rules warned against the vice of 'undisciplined enthusiasm' that would forfeit the association's independence to local pressures of unrestrained fervour and social prestige. For this reason, de Paul generally sought to clarify all obligations for resources and duties before the Congregation or Daughters traveled to a new establishment. He also tended to favour initially modest foundations while the Congregation tested the resources and requirements of a new environment, as well as a variety of funding sources in case one or more collapsed. Crucially, when the mutual obligations of initiatives were not firmly established, projects suffered. He apparently felt impelled to withdraw the Congregation from Alet when the bishop did not fulfill his promise to provide them with a residence in which they could practise the Congregation's common rule (Nicolas Pavillon to de Paul, October 1642). Indeed, de Paul emphasised the superior's role in confidently enforcing judgements for, as he remarked to Edme Jolly, many proposals went 'up in smoke', because good intentions were not followed through energetically (de Paul to Edmonde Jolly, 28 December 1657). Once again, de Paul provided examples of this resolution in his own negotiations. His painstaking efforts to justify his opinions did not always meet with approval, but while normally open to respectfully considering views contrary to his own he was often obliged simply to forbid or reject them. So, house superiors might bypass the opinions of their assistants, as de Paul told Charles Ozenne,

superior in Warsaw, in 1655:

Everything should be directed only by the Superior and his two assistants, so that, if the Superior is of a mind different from that of the assistants, he can and must act according to his own if, before God, he judges it to be best.
(de Paul to Charles Ozenne, 2 April 1655)

However, they should anticipate hostility in order to steel themselves against it:

We should be ready to accept [suffering] so that, when it comes, we will not be surprised or saddened by it... envisage upsetting situations that may arise, to struggle against them, and to train ourselves for combat until we feel we are in command of the situation.
(de Paul to Coglée, 13 August 1650)

Having trained governing officers to make judgements based on the interests of God, the Congregation and concerned parties, de Paul was surely unsurprised when they used their experience, common sense and reflection to question whether it was desirable to introduce vows into the Congregation. Seeking counsel within and outside the Congregation, de Paul considered several options on the taking of vows for twelve years, and watched attentively for pitfalls as some members voluntarily took simple vows binding them to the Congregation. He deliberately followed the same procedure when seeking to produce a definitive Rule for the association, on the basis that Jesus 'put things into practice before He made them part of His teaching.' However, when de Paul convened an extraordinary assembly of superiors and other experienced members in 1651 to resolve the issue of vows, he encountered vociferous opposition. In particular, Étienne Blatiron's tenure in Genoa had convinced him that the vows would never prove acceptable to Italians, who would invariably assume that they demonstrated that the Congregation was a traditional religious order. This cultural division did not persuade de Paul who, having allowed the assembly's fourteen members to air their views, overruled the arguments of the five who opposed the vows outright and the four who expressed strong reservations, and concluded that it was God's will that they should be formally introduced (1651 council, *Correspondence*, XIII)

Striking a balance

In this episode, so pivotal for the Congregation's future, de Paul proved uncompromising and relied heavily on his authority as superior general. He judged that the vows were beneficial to the cohesion and stability

of the Congregation: the vote demonstrated that they accorded with the interests of all concerned parties, divine and human. However, he occasionally reminded his superiors that intractability was not necessarily a desirable quality; while certain principles and practices should invariably be safeguarded, they should use their initiative to adapt rules and customs if possible and suitable for local needs. Concurrently, they should weigh the benefits and risks of principled intransigence against those of pliable adaptation so that they might not forsake opportunities and resources. Striking a balance was not straightforward in fundamental matters; de Paul was not ordinarily in favour of the Congregation assuming parochial benefices, but he accepted that this was necessary in denominationally divided and war torn Sedan if it was to have any hope of establishing the funding essential to its mission there. When the Congregations' patrons in Turin continued to urge the house to preach and administer confession in this episcopal town, de Paul was twice forced to reiterate that this was impossible. But he then noted that the refusal conflicted with the wish of the local bishop, to whom the Congregation owed 'absolute obedience in external affairs. He concluded that, temporarily, the functions could be performed until the questions might be resolved by the higher authority of the pope (de Paul to Jean Martin, 9 November 1657; same to same, 30 November 1657). De Paul struggled, and really did not manage, to reconcile several conflicting claims in this situation: the need to please sponsors, the principle of obedience to bishops and the stipulation that forbade preaching and confession in episcopal towns.

Accepting human nature

One of the difficulties of addressing governmental dilemmas such as this was that de Paul or his colleagues on the ground were not able to anticipate every event or were not sufficiently familiar with local culture, politics or history. For example, Lambert aux Couteaux had to inform de Paul that the proposal to provide the Congregation in Warsaw with a German church had come to nothing. De Paul was unperturbed, stating that 'I always suspected that the people involved would raise some objections to it unless they were much better than we are in France.' (de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, 17 May 1652). For de Paul, human nature tended to raise the same problems wherever the Congregation operated, but he had to accept that political and patriotic rivalries could throw obstacles in its path that were unforeseen to its local or central authorities.

De Paul regularly expressed his anxiety that those in authority did not reduce their role to instilling discipline through rigorous application of regulations that were elaborated in writing for communities and

specific positions as the Congregation expanded; he described how superiors should positively nurture their charges through well judged methods appropriate to the situation. Therefore, in cases of discipline, a superior should initially admonish the individual, and de Paul, as we have seen, advocated gentle, cordial and timely correction, cushioned by fraternal comfort and constructive remedies for conversion. But he did suggest that it was sometimes useful to involve the community in the disciplinary process; first, if private admonitions were not effective; second, if the individual possessed a markedly good character but was sensitive and easily hurt, a 'recommendation given in general' to the community would be sufficient. This was sound advice, surely based on de Paul's own governing experience, for he knew that a person singled out for admonishment might wilt, deny or react defensively. A tactful warning issued to the collective made the same point but in a less provocative manner.

De Paul's sensitivity to the ways in which personalities should inform tactics of government was related to his willingness to listen to the views of others, to seek wide and wise advice when deliberating and to establish consensus as far as possible. His secretary, Robineau, observed that he treated everyone with respect, a trait that was a result of de Paul's willingness to see Christ in all mankind, no matter what their moral or social state. De Paul was alert to the risk in ascribing greater influence to individuals because of their social and economic status:

Those who direct the houses of the Company must not look upon anyone as their inferior but rather as their brother... They should, therefore, be treated with humility, gentleness, forbearance, cordiality, and love... It is not the spirit of the Mission to make courtesy calls on prominent persons in the places where we are established.

(de Paul to Marc Coglée, 13 August 1650)

Furthermore, Robineau recorded an incident in which de Paul sought his opinion on the project to establish a general hospital for the poor in Paris before devoting three hours to elaborating in writing the benefits and risks of the proposal. This project required very careful reflection on de Paul's part, for he had serious practical and moral misgivings about involving the Congregation (Robineau, 129-30). At this time, he had a reminder of how easy it was to err, even having sought sound advice. In 1658, he fought a claim made on a large farm in Orsigny that had been donated to the Congregation in 1644, having been assured by eight lawyers and a procurator that the Congregation's case was watertight. On losing the case, de Paul refused to take a civil case against

the litigants, and warned Congregation members that to do so would damage the association's reputation and could not be accommodated with its much more important mission of reconciliation and edification. As such, the material loss was negligible when compared to placing the Congregation's ethos and driving purpose, its lifeblood, in jeopardy (*Correspondence*, VII).

Seeking the opinion of all

It was judicious of de Paul to seek to involve coadjutor brothers such as Robineau in the plans for the Congregation's development because it gave them further investment in the association, but it also counteracted the possibility that those who felt that their voices went unheard would become aggrieved. De Paul advised Coglée of this policy of inclusion at length:

I often consult even the Brothers and ask their advice on questions involving their duties. When this is done with the necessary prudence, the authority of God... is in no way disadvantaged. On the contrary, the good order which ensues makes it more worthy of love and respect.

(de Paul to Marc Coglée, 9 July 1650).

As a corollary of this rule of consultation, the governmental system that de Paul promoted allowed any member of the Congregation to have direct recourse to the superior general. While this accessibility clearly implied that the house superior was a subsidiary officer, despite de Paul's insistence on their authority, it opened a valuable alternative avenue to those who disagreed with their superior or simply felt unable to open their conscience to him, as the Rules required. De Paul did not offer this route because he wished to undermine the liberty of his superiors to manage their communities, but he knew that mediation and communication were essential to the healthy functioning of the governmental system from top to bottom; this safety mechanism enabled individuals to feel that they were not helpless within an inflexible hierarchy of authority. De Paul was exceptionally attentive to ensuring that it did not become a path for the gossip, the embittered or the spy, however. Here is an outstanding example of his ability to act as moderator and conciliator in government, taken from a case in which a young priest experienced a personality clash with his superior. In his response to a situation so unsettling to the individuals immediately involved and to the harmony of the community de Paul was careful to diffuse any resentment or patronage that the complainant might feel when the superior general wrote to him about his problem. Equally, de Paul

ensured that he balanced his criticisms with recognition and praise of the complainants' work and a ringing affirmation of his affection for him. Equally, he balanced his forthcoming critique and recommendations with praise of the complainant's work and a ringing affirmation of affection. However, he refused to undermine the position of the superior before his charge, and requested that the complainant submit to he who personified the goodwill, authority and wisdom of Jesus:

Our Lord approves of the trust you have in your Superior as the representative of His Divine Person, He will inspire him to say whatever is most appropriate for you.
(de Paul to Congregation priest, 20 February 1650)

To rally Jean Martin, who judged his ability to act as superior in Turin very harshly, de Paul wrote bracingly:

You win over [your men] through your advice and example... if there are a few who are not keen on learning the language well and helping you, you must remember, Monsieur, that there is no Superior in the world who does not have a great deal to put up with from the persons he governs... even Our Lord himself.

Furthermore, de Paul reassured Martin by telling him that he would soon benefit from the presence of the visitor, the governmental officer whose circuits supplemented the local routine of government. Jean Berthe, de Paul wrote optimistically, would edify by his presence and encourage by his advice. In particular, he would be able to offer a concrete recommendation on Martin's suggestion that the Congregation should establish a seminary in Turin (de Paul to Jean Martin, 9 November 1657). In doing so, the visitor would demonstrate the key constituents of government as de Paul fostered them: guardianship of fundamental rules and customs that articulated the organisation and purpose of the Congregation and were transferable to all environments, flexible guidance of individuals and the community in a spirit of familial unity and recognition, and nurture of the individual skills and virtues that benefited the entire organisation.

Fr Desmond P Cleere CM

Fr Desmond Cleere was already a priest for 20 years when the Community adopted the use of the vernacular for the praying of the Divine Office. Over that span of time he had come to memorise several lines of the Latin Vulgate psalms, and could quote them appositely and with ease. One of them was a verse from psalm 121 which ran *Fiat pax in moenibus tuis et abundantia in turribus tuis*. In the modern Grail version it is; “May peace reign in your walls and in your palaces peace!”

When writing to him in later years I noticed how fond he was of opening or signing off his letters with the simple phrase ‘*Pax in moenibus tuis!*’ (May you have peace within your walls). I cannot recall if he ever added the latter part of the verse about having ‘abundance in your towers (or palaces)’. Certainly he had much time to contemplate the walls and the towers of Glenart Castle where we seminarians were housed for the four years of our theological course, and where he lectured on systematic theology and on the New Testament.

In September 1945 eleven candidates for the seminaire arrived in St Joseph’s Blackrock, where Desmond Cleere was already in major Orders and would be ordained to the Priesthood in the following May. Were we not aware of the fact that he had not been ordained a priest, we could quite easily have concluded that he was. For Desmond, if he did not look older than his years, had a solidity of frame and body and a ‘gravitas’ in his bearing and in his facial expression that bespoke a man of greater years and maturity.

Immediately after his ordination he was sent to do postgraduate studies in Maynooth and in Rome. As the moderator of his doctoral thesis (on an aspect of St Augustine’s theology) he had the Dominican professor Michael Brown who subsequently became papal theologian, Master-General of the Order and Cardinal. On his return to Ireland, Desmond was appointed to St Joseph’s Blackrock and in following year to Glenart. Those of us who studied under him will remember the conscientious care with which he prepared his classes in Scripture. While he cannot but have been aware of the rapid developments that were taking place in the world of Scriptural studies in the wake of the publication of Pope Pius XII’s encyclical *Divine Afflante Spiritu*, he would not claim to have been a fully qualified Biblicist. Before Ordination, Desmond had as lecturer in Scripture Dr Donal Herlihy (later bishop of Ferns) who was universally recognised as a competent Biblicist and who had tutored Desmond in the Hebrew language.

What many of us felt most indebted to Desmond for was his personal love of the word of God, which at every turn he tried to impart to us. Along with the psalms it was the Letter to the Hebrews that seemed to have impacted deeply on him. On the first occasion he had for expounding the Letter to the Hebrews, he devoted an entire summer to studying the text and the theme of this letter, and its relationship to our sharing in the common and pastoral Priesthood of Christ. It would be a life-long love of his. Perhaps it was his personal appropriation of the spirituality of that Letter that qualified him to be such a successful spiritual director in the Westminster major Seminary of Ware. In 1967 Cardinal Heenan, the archbishop, had requested from the Visitor a spiritual director for that seminary – and Desmond was to spend nine years there (1967-1976). Some of the Westminster priests still speak appreciatively of his work in Ware, where he was much appreciated by the seminarians for the wisdom and experience of young people that he had gained as a lecturer in theology in the College of Education of St Mary's, Strawberry Hill. Then after three years as spiritual Director in Maynooth, much of the remainder of his life would be spent on the English mission – in our parishes of Mill Hill and Dunstable.

Returning to his earlier years in Glenart – we came to know the human qualities of Desmond Cleere. Serious minded as he was, he had a dry sense of humour which he could use it to good effect. He enjoyed puncturing with a remark some of the causes which we younger men at the time would promote with what he might consider an excess of elation. Thus when in the early Fifties Monsignor Knox published a new translation of the Bible, Desmond welcomed it, but not uncritically. Some of us – perhaps with a youthful passion for novelty and change – were over enthusiastic about it. Desmond would delight in finding one of those texts favoured and used by missionaries with rhetorical effect in their sermons. Often the resonance and poetry of the old and familiar Douay version would be lost in the Knox version. Desmond would read the old version in a resonant tone of voice (he was blessed with an attractive tenor voice); What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26) Then in a rather flat prosaic tone the modern Knox translation. How is a man the better for it, if he gains the whole world at the cost of losing his own soul? For a man's soul what price can be high enough. Looking up from the pages of the versions, he would mutter, "That's taking the bread and butter out of the mouths of our missionaries...."

Life in Glenart for all the spaciousness of its beautiful grounds was lived in a closed environment. Desmond loved his game of golf and on a Sunday evening a game of cards in the home of a family whom

he had known from his school days in Castleknock. He liked to exit quietly from the house on a Sunday afternoon, and, as he would hope, unobserved by the students. He saw it as a perennial challenge to do so. The contest was unequal. One pair of eyes was no match for twenty-five. Indeed living with him later as a staff member, he would say to me with an ironic smile that he never felt 'safe' at any time from the prying eyes of students even in the most private of places of the castle we were inhabiting...

Desmond Cleere not just as an academic teacher. As one aware of his own weaknesses, he proved himself to be a very Christ-like and sympathetic confessor. To those who had a tendency to scrupulosity he could show infinite patience. Invariably he succeeded in communicating to a penitent an assurance and confidence such as was becoming for an adopted son of our loving and compassionate Father in Heaven.

It was here in St Paul's, Raheny, that Desmond began what was to be his long 'goodbye' to life on earth. A form of Alzheimer's disease slowly invaded his mind. Painfully he descended into a very dark and strange valley of confusion and forgetfulness. Somewhat like a launched satellite his personality seemed to distance itself from us, as it swung into an orbit that we could not reach. O the mind, mind has mountains; cliffs of fall/Frightful, sheer, no-man fathomed... The clear tenor voice remained strong for a time and delighted the Daughters of Charity when they prayed their evening prayer in Rickard House. Lines of the psalms in Latin and in English would streak from time to time across the sky of his consciousness and remind us of a life of prayer that had been lived earnestly over the six decades of his priesthood. In his lonely alienation, he was cared for as a child – lovingly, patiently and – indeed – heroically by the staff of Rickard House. Then on 16th October 2007, Desmond Patrick Cleere scaled the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem and found peace within them and abundance in its towers. *Fiat pax in moenibus tuis et abundantia in turribus tuis!*

Richard McCullen CM

Desmond Cleere CM

Born: Kilkenny, 16 January 1920
Entered the CM: 7 September 1938
Vows: 8 September 1940
Ordained Priest: 28 May 1946 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by
Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS;

1946-'48: St Patrick's College, Maynooth / Rome – studies
1948-'49: St Joseph's, Blackrock
1949-'60: St Kevin's, Glenart
1960-'67: St Mary's, Strawberry Hill
1967-'76: St Edmund's Seminary, Ware
1976-'78: Sacred Heart, Mill Hill
1978-'81: St Patrick's College, Maynooth
1981-'96: St Mary's, Dunstable
1996-2002: Chaplain – Marillac Hospital, Warley
2002-'06: St Paul's, Raheny

Died; 16 October 2006 (in Rickard House)
Buried; Glasnevin

Charles Gardiner CM

With some people the emphasis is always on what they did. With Charlie, one instinctively thinks of what he was. Through the years, he was a consistent person with his own special style, as recognisably the same person I first met at school as years later when he paid his final visit to Mill Hill three months before he died.

Slender build, always with the slightest of stoops, long narrow face, mobile lips, observant eyes under neat wavy hair. Strong wiry build, long tapering capable hands. A body built for action, but not particularly a games person, though a competent tennis player when younger. He enjoyed almost any form of physical work, often to the limit of his strength. Walking, too, he enjoyed, though at a fast rate, often unaware that others could not keep up.

A mind full of contradictions. One of the mysteries of his life was reading. He was seldom seen to read yet seemed to have absorbed much that could only be gained through reading. Almost innocent of Latin yet a with a mind stocked with Latin botanical names which seemed to cause him no trouble at all. An obviously excellent mathematician who, nevertheless, struggled to gain his academic qualifications, a trial which he bore with a certain stoicism.

A night time person. With a seemingly endless capacity to watch both late-night films and nature documentaries and to absorb what they presented. His mind was stocked with information, enabling him to bring out jewels of instruction about the abstruse and obscure in the areas in which he was interested

He had a capacity for detail which shaped his interest in computers, which increasingly occupied him in the last twenty years five of his life. He did not write much, nor was he given to keeping accounts, so word processing and accounting programmes did not occupy him. What fascinated him was the devising of programmes. It was the technical challenge that attracted him, rather than the more pedestrian use. But, late at night the night owl in him had him crouched before the screen playing some computer game.

Those hands were skilled in the use of a range of tools. He always wanted to fit the room he occupied with extra shelving or even, in one instance, with a complete wardrobe. But these additions always had a Heath Robinson quality about them and were never quite completed, for he had no interest in the external appearance of the things he made and had little interest in his material surroundings. What mattered was that a thing should work and serve the purpose he had in mind. One marvelled

to see the neatness of his personal appearance emerging from a room in chaos. Drawers would lie open, odd shoes scattered haphazardly around, a desk in disarray and money – to which again he had no great attachment – deposited seemingly at random.

After God, his abiding life-centre was his family. Both his mother and father came from large families. He had two sisters and two brothers, who all married and had families. In a mind which seemed to have no capacity for history, and lacked even a skeleton framework of the past, he knew the exact relationship of even the remotest of cousins, in a family network which must have extended to several hundreds. He was proud of them, and interested in all their doings, with that affectionate curiosity and retentiveness that characterised him when dealing with things that mattered to him. Weddings and baptisms were the cement on which his family relationships were held together and as family chaplain he was always available for these occasions.

For many years he acted as support to Fr Joe McCann in the ‘Sing Out’ at St Paul’s. Stage scenery was something that suited his DIY instincts. And he developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of the younger generation of Clontarf boys, somehow always linked in his mind to his knowledge of their sisters and their lives. And this ‘distaff’ approach was to be seen also in his work for nurses in Clonsilla Hospital where he acted as chaplain for some years while in Castleknock. For the rest of his life he was in demand as a celebrant for their weddings and as a seemingly unstoppable baptiser of their children.

He worked in three parishes in England, first in St Cedd’s, Goodmayes, then in St Vincent’s, Sheffield, where he was parish priest and, finally, in Sacred Heart in Mill Hill. In each, he showed the same capacity to forge warm family friendships, backed by a detailed knowledge of the doings of the family, a knowledge which was regularly topped up as he visited through the years. Through all of this the linking thread was a deep interest in and concern for people. They sensed it and mourned, as we all do, at his passing.

Philip Walshe CM

Charles Gardiner CM

Born: Ballina, Co Mayo, 3 June 1929
Entered the CM: 7 September 1946
Vows: 8 September 1948
Ordained Priest: 30 May 1954 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by
Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS:

1954-'67: St Paul's, Raheny
1967-'69: St Cedd's, Goodmayes
1969-'71: St Mary's, Strawberry Hill
1971-'81: St Paul's, Raheny
1981-'88: St Vincent's, Castleknock
1988-'96: St Vincent's, Sheffield
1996-'99: Sacred Heart, Mill Hill
1999-2006 St Paul's, Raheny

Died; 20 October 2006
Buried; Deansgrange

Francis Mullan CM

Frank Mullan's career was a many sided one. He began his clerical studies as a student in Maynooth for his home diocese of Derry. Midway through his course he transferred to the Vincentians, having obtained an honours degree in Classics. He often noted that his career had moved in decades, changing appointments as a new decade dawned. After ordination in 1950, his initial appointment was to the newly established school of St Paul's in Raheny. Ten years later he was asked to head up the Vincentian Mission in Nigeria, where we were invited to work with the Kiltegan Fathers in the Diocese of Calabar in Southern Nigeria. He was there for 10 years until the Civil War forced him to return home. The next 10 years were spent between Blackrock, Glenart and Celbridge, where he worked mainly as Superior. In Glenart, however, he was involved in organising renewal courses, for which he had a special talent. During this time he also served as Director of the Daughters of Charity in England and Ireland.

The next decade was divided between being appointed Provincial ('80-'86) based in Cabra Road and as Parish Priest in Dunstable (3 years). The next 16 years included a return to St Paul's for three years, followed by 10 years in the North of Ireland – divided between Harryville, Ballymena, and our new house in Belfast. His last 2 years were spent in St Peter's where he died.

His was truly an eventful and varied life, lived fully right up to the end. He gave witness to Cardinal Newman's idea that a classical education was an excellent foundation for many other things. This was in spite of being diagnosed with a degenerative heart condition quite a number of years previously which should have proved terminal a long time before it did, but he didn't give in too easily!

Frank was a very academic person by nature and nurture. He was at home in the world of books yet, at the same time, he was a very human person, capable of loving and of sustained concern for people in need. He showed this in regard to his two priest brothers, especially in their prolonged illnesses. He related well to people and was able to enter into their lives. He had a dry but very real sense of humour, often expressed in a wry remark. He hoped for the best but was ready to settle for much less. He was a man of vision, but ready to listen to the ideas of others and often accept them even when his own would seem to have been better. He was a person of great courage, in the face of adversity, which he proved on more than one occasion. In getting the Nigerian Mission off the ground he showed great qualities of leadership.

He was a community man ready to make time for it, even when it involved engaging in long conversations, which sometimes extended from one day to the next! He was ever ready to take part in a game of golf even when it didn't involve his winning. From him I learnt to appreciate a good steak and a bottle of Valpolicella wine on our return from Nigeria! He was a man of prayer, to which he attached a great importance. It was the cornerstone of his life. The Word of God was very significant for him. I remember his great interest when I happened to come across an interpretation of a Psalm, which he said was new to him, Psalm 109 "he shall drink from a stream by the wayside and therefore he shall lift up his head". In spite of his many achievements and gifts he was a very humble person, and never set out to impress. He was a man who spoke the truth as he saw it, not to gain popularity and never in a needlessly hurtful way. He had the courage of his convictions.

Frank's first appointment was to St Paul's (the first of a number of places he helped to set up) as Dean of Studies. There he ran a tight ship but also had a good relationship with the young students who came to respect him and his fairness and integrity. In the annals of St Paul's he looms large.

Yet, among his many undertakings, I believe that Nigeria was very close to his heart and remained so even when he was forced to leave at the end of the civil war. He made a great hit with the Kiltegan Fathers who had invited us out to Nigeria and with whom we worked. He was much in demand for Priests' retreats both with them and other groups such as the Holy Ghost Fathers, as well as various groups of sisters. He was a worthy flag bearer for the Vincentians in Nigeria. He showed his courage and determination by staying on when the Civil war broke out, though he could easily have found an excuse to leave. Instead he chose to remain and even move up-country so as to be with, and assist, the people who formed the bulk of our community in Ikot Ekpene, as well as to maintain the Vincentian presence there! When the war came to an end he was detained along with many other priests and sisters working in the area. At first he had reason to fear for his life. Later, in Court, he was shown leniency because he recalled, when questioned, his presence at the installation in Ikot Ekpene of Cardinal Ekanden. In the end, he had to be bailed out to prevent his detention in jail. He took it all with equanimity. His eventual forced departure left the Vincentian Community as orphans.

Subsequently, in the midst of other activities, he became Director of the Daughters of Charity in England and Ireland. He must have handled this well because immediately afterwards he became Provincial of the Irish Province of the Vincentians! But by all accounts he left a lasting impression on the Daughters he encountered as he seems to have been

held in high esteem ever afterwards. No doubt they appreciated his carefully crafted talks as well as his regular visits to their houses where he made himself available for advice and counselling when requested.

For a change of scenery, some years later, he went up to take care of the Church in Harryville, Ballymena. Even though this was relatively home country for him, it was no easy assignment. It was the heart of "Paisley-land" and the people there had no hesitation in coming out to express their lack of appreciation for Catholic priests and a community in their midst; by chanting outside the Church during Masses and forming a ring around it to deter parishioners, as well as resorting to throwing stones on occasions. Frank said that his experience of civil war in Biafra was a good preparation for his stay there. But he took the motto of "no surrender". From there he eventually moved up to the relative peace and quiet of the Falls Road.

His last years were spent in Phibsboro', not just as an idle spectator but taking part in whatever he was capable of, including local visitations. He had a special interest in the Youth Work going on, perhaps a recall of his days in St Paul's. He remained a pastoral man to the end, with a lively interest in everything.

Frank was a music lover. He always liked to listen to classical music in his car as he drove along. He even took to the violin on occasion, and was no mean performer.

He had a strong commitment to the Vincent de Paul Society, which he manifested in various ways at various times. He was always willing to make himself available to them when called to do so.

"*Gigantes errant in diebus illis*": You wonder if his like will be found again. He was a very committed priest and a fine Vincentian. He was also a very good friend to have and a shining light, no doubt shining now in Heaven.

Roderic Crowley CM

FRANCIS MULLAN

Born: Coleraine, Co Derry, 6 October 1925
 Entered the CM: 10 October 1945
 Ordained Priest: 28 May 1950 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by
 Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS:

1950-'60 St Paul's College, Raheny, Dublin
 1960-'68 Ikot Ekepe, Cross River State, Nigeria
 1968-'70 Uzoagba, Owerri, Nigeria
 1970-'78 St Joseph's Blackrock, Co Dublin
 1978-'80 De Paul House, Celbridge
 1980-'86 Provincial
 1987-'90 St Mary's Dunstable, Parish Priest
 1990-'93 St Paul's, Raheny
 1993-'97 Harryville, Ballymena
 1997-2003 99 Cliftonville Road, Belfast, serving in St John's
 and other Diocesan parishes of Down and Connor
 2003-2006 St Peter's, Phibsboro

Died; 29 December 2006
 Buried; Glasnevin

Brian Doyle CM

And Jesus said:

Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me.

Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward;

And whoever welcomes an upright person because he is upright will receive the reward of an upright person.

And whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you none of these will lose their reward.

Now when Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and proclaim his message in their cities.

.....

A few days ago before Fr Brian died, someone was recalling for me the years Brian spent in London as Director of Damascus House, the Vincentian retreat centre in Mill Hill London. Fr Brian was just 5 years ordained when he was entrusted with the setting up of what was to become in England and beyond a well-known and very successful and popular venue for retreats, conferences and lectures. In itself an acknowledgment of the many talents people recognised him to have. To him fell the challenging task of not only converting a one-time orphanage into a hospitable retreat centre but also of finding ways and means for organising the many programmes of lectures, speakers and conferences that eventually became a well-known feature of Damascus House in Mill Hill London. "Damascus House"; the title was an inspired one, and Fr Brian readily acknowledged that it was one of own his brothers who suggested it to him.

What the person who spoke with me some days ago about Brian's years as Director of Damascus House was his ability to greet each individual person who came to the door of Damascus House with a warmth and charm as if that person was the only one who really mattered. During his years there – and a decade later in All Hallows – he must have received hundreds of people - elderly, middle aged and young, poor and well-to-do, laity, religious, priests, bishops . The greeting and engaging smile was always the same. "Welcome to Damascus House." *Whoever welcomes you, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward.* And St. Paul echoed those words of our Lord some thirty years later when he wrote to the Christians in Roman

Welcome one another just as Christ has welcomed you. – Rom. 15:7

This evening we are welcoming Brian's own mortal remains into this church where on so many occasions over a period of seven years he welcomed parishioners – at times in grief – at other times in great joy, seeking God's blessing on their marriage vows, at the baptism of their children – and in the daily celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass.

Welcome. The Irish custom of bringing the remains of our loved ones to the Church for a night before committing to them burial has a symbolism that may easily escape us. The real and great Liturgy is being celebrated in Heaven. Our ceremonies, as St Vincent on one occasion remarked, are only shadows but they are shadows of great realities. Here in this life we try to harmonise our hearts and voices with the words and music of that prayer the Church proposes to us as we carry the remains of our deceased from the Church. *May the choirs of angels welcome you. May the angels lead you into paradise, may the martyrs come to welcome you, and take you to the holy city, the new and eternal Jerusalem.*

Yes, our liturgy this evening is about shortening for Brian the journey between Damascus and the New and Eternal Jerusalem. Damascus – a city that calls up the conversion of St Paul. In deed we pass our days in Damascus. It is in Damascus, we fragile creatures spend our lives struggling to follow Christ. And like our experience of Dublin's city traffic, we keep stopping and starting again, feeling frustrated with ourselves and with others, road rage at times, falling and getting up again.

Then at death the Lord graciously invites us to leave the city of Damascus for the new and eternal Jerusalem. The route is unknown to us. None of us here have yet travelled that particular road. So we follow our loved ones with our prayers – that they may have a swift journey, as they free themselves from the corruption of sin and death. What we can be sure of is that the Traveller who joined the two disciples on the road to Emmaus will be at our side all the way, to make all things clear to us, and on arrival to greet us with "Well done, good and faithful servant. Welcome to the New Jerusalem..." To quote the opening words of that most beautiful of religious poems by George Herbert we read :

*Love bade me welcome,
but I drew back guilty of dust and sin.....
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear ,
I cannot look on thee.'...
'You must sit down', says Love,' and taste my meat,'
So I did sit and eat.*

.....

Welcome to Damascus House !

Welcome, Brian, to the new and eternal Jerusalem !

Richard McCullen CM

Homily given at the Funeral Mass

Death seems to have a way of reducing everyone to silence. Words are very inadequate to express the mystery of someone we know and love slipping into eternity. Yet despite the inadequacy of our words it is not that difficult to express and name some the emotions we are experiencing today.

Our sense of grief, loss and great sadness; perhaps tinged with a feeling of relief that Fr Brian's suffering is ended and he is at peace. Confronted with the reality of death we often search for meaning and comfort in our faith and in that rich harvest of memories that death always evokes. I have been struck by the number of times in the last few days that our conversations have begun with the words do you remember when what he said.... do you remember when he did....

Such memories are deeply personal, unique and they endure and help sustain us. For Sr Elizabeth, Una, Liam, Eamonn and Pdraig treasured memories of a brother whose bond of care and friendship with them was so deep and so much a part of the very fabric of their families and their lives. We are left with memories of Brian as man who was blessed with talent, energy and creativity, a gracious host and good friend.

Common to all of us I think, is our memory of him as the master story-teller. Someone once said God made us because he loved stories, and he certainly graced Brian with that gift in abundance – a gift for mimicry and of turning a momentary encounter into a short story; often with the punch line delivered at his own expense. Even in sickness he never lost that gift. Recently commenting on his weight loss he recalled the experience of purchasing a suit in London in his younger days. Asked by the assistant for his waist measurement, he optimistically suggested 34 or 35 inches. As the assistant measured him, the tape stretched past, 35, 36, 37 and hovered somewhere between 38 and 40 inches. Rising, the assistant announced “do you know what sir? You're a finer man than you think” !!!!

It is fitting as we gather today at the invitation of Jesus to “do this in memory of me” that we give thanks for the love and friendship Fr Brian

shared with us. We pray for consolation and comfort in our own pain and loss and pray for Fr Brian, that he will experience the gentle forgiveness of our God. The central truth proclaimed in our funeral liturgy today is that in death for your faithful people life is changed not ended.

Brian was no stranger to change, in the gentle ambience of the hospice twelve days ago he celebrated 40 years of priesthood. A span of time in which he witnessed extraordinary change in our world, in our church and in his own life. It began for him in 1967 in small faith community of Houghton Regis in Dunstable where he helped a fledgling parish community discover its gifts and talents and to grow. He was changed to begin and develop Damascus House in London as a Retreat Centre; a period that Fr McCullen described with eloquence at our service last evening. A time when with the help of talented Daughters of Charity and fellow Vincentians, it became a place of innovation and imagination and a template for welcome and hospitality. Changed once more, he moved across London to Strawberry Hill as chaplain to third level students and from there returned to Dublin to join the evolving phase of the new All Hallows College. Changed once more he came to Phibsboro – a coming home for him. The poet Yeats said “*every man should find his holy land where he first crept upon the floor*”, he was returning to a place where he first turned his face to God in childhood prayer, where with his late brother Fr Michael, Liam, Pdraig and Eamonn he served Mass as a boy. As parish priest here he gathered the people, he broke the bread and he told the story.

Returning to London, Fr Brian entered a phase and period in his life when he needed no reminding that the Stations of the Cross are in the present tense. A time of dramatic change for him. Struck down with a debilitating and crippling stroke, he began the slow journey to recovery and what Fr Brian described as a new journey of discovery. At the heart of that journey was his experience of the paradox of the gospel that when I am weak then am I strong. Discovery of the truth, that a fractured and fragile body and even a dented spirit can be a powerful expression of the presence of God. It was that discovery that sustained him through a heart attack and further surgery and to finally facing the news that he had cancer and was facing death.

Brian was honest in his response to that news, he knew the future was a mystery and heaven was unseen and that the only response he could make was to let God be God. Those of us who visited him in hospital and in the hospice and who thought perhaps we might be consoling or ministering to him; gradually learned that it was the other way around. He was teaching us something very important not only about the art of dying but of the art of living also.

Sometimes in our hectic and busy lives we can suspend ourselves on

a cross of our own making, with one arm in the past trying to change it and one arm in the future trying to arrange it and forgetting that God is always in the now.

In the readings of the liturgy which he choose for us, he was leaving us a reminder of the few certainties he was left with. The beautiful message God speaks to us through the prophet Hosea this morning; God is always faithful to his people, whenever we are weak and stray, when we get lost and distracted and wander from the path. God never ceases to care. “How could I ever forget you” is His cry. And that extraordinary promise of Jesus in the gospel today “And after I have gone and prepared a place for I shall return to take you with me, so that where I am you may be too”.

At quarter to eleven on Sunday evening, with his sister Eileen holding his hand, Fr Brian experienced that most profound change of all; meeting God face to face. He did so I believe, knowing that when life has stolen our youth, robbed us of beauty, sapped our energy and when sickness has taken our very life in death – even then the final chapter has not been written or the final sentence has not been spoken, because it will be spoken by God and it will be spoken in love.

There is an old Irish phrase which describes death as: “Múcadh an coinneall ar breachadh an lae” – the quenching of the candle at the dawning of the day; we pray that all of us who mourn and grieve may find hope and consolation knowing that for Brian it was the dawning of a new and everlasting day.

Lord, free Brian from sin and take him to Yourself
 Give him a drop of the gentle dew of heaven
 And a drink from the spring of your grace
 Do the same for us at the hour of our death.

Aidan Galvin CM

BRIAN DOYLE CM

Born: Phibsboro', Dublin, 18 June 1942
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1959
 Vows: 8 September 1964
 Ordained Priest: 20 May 1967 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, by
 Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS:

1967-'72: St Mary's, Dunstable
 1972-'82: Damascus House, Mill Hill, London
 1982-'85: St Mary's, Strawberry Hill
 1985-'88: All Hallows College
 1988-'89: Sabbatical – Australia
 1989-'96: St Peter's, Phibsboro'
 1996-'97: St Patrick's, Drumcondra
 1997-'98: Sabbatical – Toronto
 1998-2003: Isleworth
 2003-'07: St Paul's, Raheny

Died; 3 June 2007
 Buried; Glasnevin