

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

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Editorial

A journal is a place in which one keeps one reflections, thoughts, memories and ideas.

Some of them will comfort, some will challenge; some will be very personal, some for more public consumption. All of them give us a deeper insight into the writer.

In this edition of *Colloque*, we have a number of different styles: the very personal reflections of Jim McCormack and Joan Tindall; the reflective piece on prayer by Richard McCullen; the historic monographs of Tom Davitt (on Vincent and Justin de Jacobis and a reworking of his article on Edward Ferris). There are also writings from other sources that tell us a little more about ourselves and our history; Bernard Koch's article on the significance of the Folleville experience for Vincent and for his successors and, by kind permission of the *Irish Times*, a piece on Fr Pat Travers' time in the Irish College, Paris.

There are also the obituaries of Fr Tony Clune and Fr Tom Lane; that of Fr Tom Woods will follow later.

As always, I invite confreres to submit articles for consideration; they may be personal reflections, autobiographical pieces or studies. Each, in its own way, tells us something about who we are and who we hope to be... and it remains as a testament to who we have been and what we sought to be.

ADDENDUM;

I had just begun to edit this edition when the news came through of the sudden and very unexpected death of our Provincial, Fr Brian Moore, light of heaven to him.

Vincent De Paul, as seen by those who knew him

Tom Davitt CM

Mgr Jean Calvet, in a Bibliographical Note (1) at the end of his biography of Vincent, writes:

After that [the fourteen volumes of Pierre Coste's work] Vincent de Paul must be approached through his earliest biographer who understood him better than anyone. He makes no unconsidered statement, and no assertion of his should be contradicted without careful investigation. But, following the fashion of his period, he "polishes" the documents from which he quotes.

Louis Abelly was born in Paris in 1604 and shortly after his ordination he came into contact with Vincent de Paul and shared in his apostolate. For a short while he was Vicar General of Bayonne, and then returned to Paris as a Parish Priest, first in the suburbs and then from 1644 in the city. In 1664 (2) he became Bishop of Rodez, but resigned in 1666. He retired to Saint-Lazare, where he died twenty-five years later, and where he was buried. He wrote more than thirty works of theology and spirituality.

Vincent's physical appearance

Reading Abelly one is constantly aware that the author personally knew the man about whom he was writing. For example, he can give a physical description of him:

As far as physical appearance goes Fr Vincent was well-built, of medium height. His head was a bit fleshy, but well formed and quite proportionate to the rest of his body. His brow was broad and imposing, his face neither too fat nor too lean. His glance was mild, but he could give a piercing look. His hearing was keen. His bearing was grave but his gravity kind, and his facial expression candid and open. He was very easy to approach. (3)

Later on he returns to Vincent's facial appearance, saying that all who knew Vincent can back him up when he says that his normal expression was one of serenity, even in difficult situations or when receiving bad news. (4) In another context he adds that this serenity was there even when Vincent was under pressure from people crowding him

and looking for help. (5) He quotes someone else who knew Vincent, saying that even the inflexions of his voice made an impression on people listening, (6) and confreres who were accustomed to hearing him speak said that there was an enormous difference between actually hearing him and merely reading a transcript of what he had said. (7)

Abelly says that Vincent was of medium height. We can actually go a bit further than that. At the official recognition of his relics in 1830 his height was calculated as having been 1m, 62cm, roughly 5'6". (8) Coste, in *Monsieur Vincent*, gives his height as 1m 82cm. (9) In the *Annales de la Mission* for 1959-60 this is corrected back to 1m 62cm. (10) Apparently Coste had presumed that the thickness of the disks between the vertebrae had not been taken into account, whereas it had.

Vincent's personality

Abelly's work is over 1500 pages, so this talk presupposes knowledge of the basic outline of Vincent's life. I will try to present aspects of Vincent's life and character which Abelly noted, but which are not as well known as the generally accepted myth.

He gives much space to Vincent's approachability. He made himself always available to those who needed him, especially anyone experiencing difficulties. Such a person could approach Vincent, even if he was in a group; Vincent would take him aside to a corner of the room and give him his full attention. He could be approached by the same person three or four times in the space of an hour in some cases, and he was always equally willing to give attention, without showing any annoyance. One such confrere's written account was available to Abelly:

Fr Vincent always gave me great support and treated me very kindly when I was going through a bad time. I used constantly go and intrude on him, even when he was getting ready to celebrate Mass or pray his breviary. And when I had received an answer I would leave, and then turn round and go back in again, repeating this several times. This went on over a long period, and I never heard him say a harsh word; quite the opposite. He always answered me with great kindness, never putting me off as he could justifiably have done, since I was continually imposing upon him. Even when he had told me what to do, seeing I was still in doubt, he took the trouble to write out for me in his own hand what he had said, so that I would remember it better; for this reason he would get me to read it back to him out loud. Finally, no matter at what hour I went to him, and it was often very late, he always received me with the same goodness, listened to me, and answered with a kindness and charity which I cannot explain. (11)

Vincent adopted a rather different approach with Visitation nuns, but then his superiorship of that order was also somewhat different. One of the nuns wrote:

He didn't think it useful, or even expedient, that the nuns should have too frequent or too familiar communication with the superiors. When one of them wished to speak with him, and he didn't see any real necessity for it, he made her wait a long time, in order to force her to weigh up carefully what she had to say. (12)

These two very different accounts of Vincent's attitude to people are really illustrations of the same basic principle which governed his dealings with other people. He dealt with each person as an individual, according to his or her character, temperament and needs. This meant that, in fact, he had no standard approach. He treated each person differently because each person was different, but he was generally good-humoured and warm towards everyone. (13) He spoke Gascon, Picard and Basque with persons from those regions, and even tried a few words of German with Germans. (14)

If someone came along to tell him some bit of news which he already knew, he would listen carefully and never betray that he was aware of it. Abelly says that this was for two reasons, firstly to mortify his natural inclination to say "stale news", and secondly not to deprive the person of his satisfaction at being the bearer of news. (15) The same sort of mentality underlies his telling people "not to rub it in" to Jansenist sympathisers after the Constitution of Pope Innocent X was published, condemning Jansenism. Vincent himself went out to Port-Royal-des-Champs and spent several hours with "Les Messieurs de Port-Royal" on that occasion. (16)

The Visitation nun already quoted said that Vincent had a wonderful knack of deflating the pompous, and of doing it as if he were enjoying himself; and these people did not realise what he was up to. (17) This is one example of an unexpected side of Vincent which comes out in Abelly's work because he and his informants knew Vincent personally. It is, of course, only another instance of his principle of treating each person according to his or her personal characteristics.

With the downhearted he was always cheerful, trying to help them along, even having a bit of fun with them to amuse them. Some times he used to bring such persons up to his room to show a more personal kindness and cordiality. (18)

Vincent and his confreres

He normally took confreres to his room the evening before they set out on a journey, having a long talk with them about what they were being

sent off to do, or just for a brief farewell, and on their return he generally had them up there again.

One confrere who went up to Vincent's room got an unexpected reception. He told Vincent that he intended to leave the Congregation, so Vincent merely asked him when he was going, and whether he was going on foot or on horseback. The man had expected to meet with some opposition or some pleading to remain, and had been determined to stick to his decision to leave. Vincent's unexpected attitude made him change his mind and he stayed. (19)

Abelly says that Vincent very keenly felt the departure of a confrere from the Congregation, and that it affected him as if his guts were being ripped out. (20) But if a confrere had actually left Vincent adopted a different attitude. One such ex-confrere was being considered as a possible curate by a Parish Priest in Paris, and the Parish Priest wrote to Vincent for a reference for his proposed curate. Vincent wrote back:

I am not sufficiently acquainted, Father, with the priest about whom you write, for me to give a reference, although he was quite a while with us.

A senior confrere was present while Vincent dictated this letter, and he remarked that the Parish Priest would be surprised at reading that Vincent didn't know the priest in question very well. Vincent's reply was: "I see that well enough, but can I improve on our Lord who said about the damned who had prophesied in his name that he did not know them? Knowledge in that context implies approval. So please accept that I am following his example and way of speaking". (21)

In January 1649 Vincent made an attempt to influence politics, and went to Saint Germain-en-Laye to urge the Queen Regent to dismiss Cardinal Mazarin. He also urged the cardinal himself to retire from the scene. He was not successful in his attempt. In the circumstances, he decided that it would not be prudent to return to Paris. He took the opportunity to set out on a long journey, starting with a visit to Fr de Gondi, the former General of the Galleys, now an Oratorian priest, who was living in Villepreux. After that he planned to visit the houses of his two communities in Le Mans, Angers, Saint-Méen, Nantes, Luçon, Richelieu, Saintes, Cahors and Marseille. Circumstances forced him to alter some of this itinerary. While staying at the Saint-Lazare farm in Fréneville bad weather necessitated his remaining there for a month, so he gave a mission in the parish church of Valpuseaux. By March he was in Le Mans, and while crossing a river near Durtal his horse stumbled and threw him into the water. The confrere with him acted promptly and saved his life. Later on this confrere left the Congregation, against

Vincent's advice. He never accomplished the great things which he had planned to do, and he got into various sorts of trouble. After about a year he realised that Vincent had been correct in his advice, and in letter after letter he applied for re-admission into the Congregation. Vincent ignored all these letters for some time, but eventually answered that the man's past conduct made it clear that the good of the Congregation demanded that he be not re-admitted. The priest made one final effort and reminded Vincent that he had once saved his life in the river at Durtal. At once Vincent invited him to return to Saint-Lazare where he would be received with open arms. The man packed his bags to set out for Paris, but got suddenly ill and died before he could start the journey. (22)

Vincent's daily life

Vincent's bedroom was small, un-panelled and bare-floored, without a fireplace. There was a wooden, un-covered, table, two straw chairs, a bed with a straw mattress, blanket and bolster. It was not until about five years before his death that he could be persuaded to move into a room with a fireplace, and to accept a fire when it was thought necessary.

He was usually up at four o'clock, even though he often went to bed very late. He sometimes admitted that he got only about two hours of sleep on some nights. He was up at the first sound of the bell, and it is in this context in Abelly that occurs the sentence which has been the subject of humorous interpretation: "The second sound of the bell never found him in the same position as the first". He said some prayers on getting out of bed, then made his bed, bandaged his legs and still got to the church before many of the others.

In Saint-Lazare in his time the community morning prayer was in the big public church, and not in a *salle d'oraison* as was the custom later on in the rue de Sèvres. After the hour's prayer he went to the sacristy to make his preparation for Mass, often going to confession as well. He celebrated Mass in a pleasant medium tone of voice, carefully articulating all the words. He gave extra emphasis to certain words, expressions and prayers: the Confiteor, *In spiritu humilitatis*, (Lord God, we ask you to receive us...) *Nobis quoque peccatoribus*, (In Eucharistic Prayer 1 "For ourselves, too...") *Domine non sum dignus* (Lord, I am not worthy...) In reading the gospel he paid special attention to any passage starting *Amen, amen, dico vobis* (NAB: "I assure you...") After Mass he made his thanksgiving in the sacristy, and often liked to serve the Masses of other confreres. He also said part of his breviary then. All this usually kept him in the church till 7.30. Very rarely, and only for exceptional reasons, did he cut in on this time.

He spent a large part of the day seeing people from outside. For these

interviews he had a small room on the ground floor. A cold draught blew through this room, and someone once arranged a hanging to exclude the draught; Vincent had this removed. (23) In the evening he was available to confreres of the Saint-Lazare community. Most days he would get into the city once, or sometimes twice, to attend to the various affairs with which he was connected. Sometimes he would return very late, and as soon as he got back he would finish his breviary, always on his knees. He did not like to have to pray his breviary away from the house. After finishing his breviary he still had to attend to his letter writing and community matters, and this kept him up far into the night. Unless he was feeling genuinely unwell he never missed getting up the next morning at four o'clock. (24)

Not getting up at four for Morning Prayer was regarded by Vincent as one of two possible reasons for a confrere losing his vocation. The other reason was letting his hair grow too long! He wanted all confreres to have their hair cut short. If he saw someone with his hair touching his collar, he would take hold of the hair and pull it, laughing. This was to be taken as a hint to get it cut. Sometimes he would say this outright, even if others were present. (25)

Vincent didn't like refusing permissions, and he expected confreres to be able to read the signs and take a hint, so that he would not actually have to utter the refusal. One confrere who kept badgering him was told "Remind me of it again some other time". Abelly quotes a confrere as writing that although Vincent was hard on himself he was very kind and understanding towards others

...and tried to fall in with their wishes in any way he reasonably could. I once asked him for permission to go into town, and he refused me, though with reluctance. He told me (although I had no right to expect any reason from him, his will alone being law for me) that this was because several others had already gone out and I could be useful at home. Anyway, the next day he sent for me and urged me to go into town. (26)

A refusal was not always followed by a later concession of what had been refused. A superior wrote:

The evening before I left Paris to take up my appointment I spent quite a long time with him. During that time several people came to speak to him and I was amazed, as I always had been before, at how he sent each one away content. Among the many things people came to request there were two in particular. One was the release of a criminal who had committed a murder on the main road to

Saint-Denis, within the jurisdiction of Saint-Lazare. He received in a very friendly way a priest who had come to speak about this, and he showed him all possible kindness. But, as the matter did not depend solely on himself he pointed out how God worked through justice as well as mercy, and that the former must be served as well as the latter. He spoke of the circumstances of the murder which had been committed and of the justness of the punishments God had prescribed for such crimes. He did this in so kindly a manner that the good priest went off happy, having no come-back to what he had heard.

The second person was a layman who came to borrow money, but Vincent made a thousand excuses that the house was in no position to be able to lend money, and that he was really sorry that he could not be of any help on this occasion, and he spoke to him with such kindness and understanding that his refusal left no bad impression on this man, and he went away happy. (27)

How others perceived him

Vincent was regarded as among the wisest and shrewdest men of his day, and people came from all over the place to consult him. Commissions appointed to investigate various important matters always wanted to have him as one of their members. Almost every day all sorts of people turned up at Saint-Lazare to consult him. (28)

The nuncios Bagni and Piccolomini paid him the honour of coming several times to discuss important Church affairs. Many priests – Parish Priests, canons, abbots and even well-known prelates – often consulted him by letter when they could not come in person. Several members of religious orders also came to get his advice about the reform of their orders, and other important matters. (29)

He had friends everywhere and he cultivated these friendships. He used to say, with that quiet humour which he showed on occasion, that Saint-Lazare was rather like Noah's ark, with all sorts of animals, big and small, arriving. (30) Abelly lists some of the types of person to be seen in the refectory in Saint-Lazare, persons of every age and background, from town and country, rich and poor, students and professors, priests of all types and rank, members of the nobility, lawyers of all sorts, merchants and labourers, soldiers and right down to pages and lackeys. (31)

Abelly quotes an account of Vincent's method of dealing with someone who consulted him. He says it was written by "a very virtuous priest". One of the most annoying things about Abelly is that he hardly ever gives a person's name, or sufficient information to identify him.

This, of course, is probably because most of the persons in question were still alive at the time of the book's publication in 1664.

First and before everything else he raised his mind to God to seek his help, usually asking those who had come to consult him to do the same. By a short fervent prayer which he said with them he asked for light and grace to know the will of God in the things to be discussed. Secondly, he listened very carefully to what was being put forward, taking his time in reflecting on it, and turning it over. If he considered it necessary he asked for further clarification, to get everything involved into perspective. Thirdly, he took his time about giving his opinion. And if the matter warranted it he requested even more time to consider it, asking, however, that it be recommended to God. Fourthly, he was quite willing to have the advice of others sought, and he himself was ready to seek it, and he always deferred to it as far as justice and charity allowed. He more readily followed the opinions of others rather than his own. Fifthly and lastly, when he had to put forward his own opinion he did so in a very prudent yet humble way, pointing out what he thought should be done but letting the person make up his own mind, saying, for example, "here is such and such a reason which seems to indicate that such and such a resolution should be taken". If he was absolutely pressed to give a decision and to reveal his own mind he would do so in the same sort of way, saying "It seems to me that it would be good, or the proper thing, to do so and so, or to act in such and such a way". (32)

"Those who knew him", says Abelly, "know that no praise, threats, hopes, fears or slanders could ever budge him from his determination to do right". (33) An abbess, a member of a noble family, was locked up because of her scandalous life, by order of the Queen Regent, on the advice of Vincent. She asked Adrien le Bon, the former prior of Saint-Lazare, who was indebted to her in some way, to intercede with Vincent on her behalf. He did so most insistently but Vincent simply said he could not go against his conscience. The ex-prior argued that that Vincent was being ungrateful, having been given the Saint-Lazare property. Vincent countered by offering to hand it back if the prior thought him unworthy to have it. Le Bon gave up, and went away very dissatisfied. Within a few days he learned of the full extent of the abbess' scandalous life and returned to Vincent an apologetic on his knees. (34)

Vincent's failings

A very refreshing aspect of Abelly's biography of Vincent is that it reveals many of Vincent's failings, showing him to have been far more like the rest of men than the commonly accepted myth would have us believe. Sometimes this emerges indirectly. On one occasion Vincent was having a meal in an inn while travelling. He was served some dry codfish, so he asked for oil to make it more tasty. Later on he thought he might have scandalised his fellow-traveller, so he apologised. (35) Abelly quotes this because Vincent apologised, but the more revealing fact is how Vincent re-acted to un-appetising food.

He also used to forget appointments, leave letters unanswered and fail to do things which he had been asked to do. (36) After a night when illness had kept him awake he would often fall asleep the next day when someone, even someone important, was talking to him. Rather than explain the cause of his sleepiness he would attribute it to the fact that he was a "wretch", a favourite term for himself. (37)

Abelly says that if Vincent had any excess it was this tendency to over-do self-deprecation. Sometimes it boomeranged. Once, visiting some important person, he mentioned that in his youth he used to tend flocks out in the fields. His host, who was a bit of a wit, remarked that the great King David had done the same. "Fr Vincent was extremely embarrassed and completely deflated by the comeback". (38)

At the Council of Conscience Vincent said that too much notice was being taken of what he said, and he the son of a pig-keeper. The Prince de Condé retorted: "It's not just today that we have realised your worth", and later on, after some discussion of controversial matters, he said: "Look, Fr Vincent, you tell everybody, and spread it abroad everywhere, that you're an ignoramus, yet in a couple of words you can straighten out one of the greatest difficulties we have with the Protestants". (39)

Although he gave full scope to anyone speaking to him, especially someone from outside the house, to say all he wanted to, and so go away content, he never spoke about useless matters but turned the conversation away from such things; he avoided digressions even at meetings of a spiritual nature where he was present in connection with the poor, or other charitable purposes. He often used to say: "Right, let's get back to the matter in hand; let's finish off; let's see what's left; Sir, or Madam, is it alright with you if we finish, etc". (40)

Vincent's words

It is not surprising that Abelly refers to Vincent's style of giving conferences, but it is surprising that some of what he says does not come through in the versions of the conferences which we have.

He had a great way of using natural, perceptible, things to raise his mind to God. In doing this he never stopped at the bark, nor at the exterior appearance, nor even at the particular excellence of the created things, but used this merely as a stepping stone to the contemplation of the perfection of the Creator. The sight of the countryside covered with corn, or trees laden with fruit, made him reflect on the inexhaustible abundance of God's goodness, or praise and thank God's providential and fatherly care in providing food, and seeing to the conservation of his creatures. When he saw flowers, or anything else beautiful and pleasing, he used the opportunity to think of the infinite beauty and perfection of God, and to repeat in his heart these words, which were found written down in his own handwriting, "What is there comparable to the beauty of God, the principle of all beauty and perfection in creatures? Isn't it from him that all flowers, birds, the stars, the moon and the sun, borrow their splendour and beauty?" (41)

In view of this it is surprising that he never refers to the beauty brought about by artists and craftsmen. Abelly twice mentions that Vincent went to the Sainte Chapelle in the city, and presumably he went there more than just twice, but Vincent does not seem to have commented on the marvellous stained glass in that chapel.

Antoine Portail is mentioned as the man who most helped Vincent in the running of the Congregation, a man in whom Vincent had the most complete confidence. That is very different from the nincompoop shown in the film *Monsieur Vincent*. Portail is referred to in one of the sources quoted by Abelly:

I have heard one of the most senior priests of the Congregation, Fr Portail, who knew him and was with him constantly for more than forty-five or fifty years, say that Fr Vincent was one of the most perfect living images of Christ whom he had known on earth, and that he never heard him say, or saw him do, anything without referring it to him who gave himself as a model to men and who said to them: *Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis*. That is what Fr Vincent himself so often urged us to do. When there was question of sending me to this house where I now am he spoke to me and gave me valuable help. He especially impressed on me that when I'd have to speak or act I should reflect and ask myself: "How would our Lord have spoken or acted on such an occasion? In what way would he have done this or said that? O Lord, inspire me as to what I should say or do, because without you I cannot do anything on my own". (42)

This same priest also recorded that he was always very impressed by the extraordinarily apt use Vincent could make of our Lord's words and example. Abelly says that at the Tuesday Conferences Vincent often contributed very little, at the end, but that when he did say something it was based on Scripture, especially on the words and example of our Lord, which he seemed to penetrate and savour in a very special way. (43)

In view of the nature of the Congregation's work it is not too surprising that Vincent took an interest in the preparations for preaching which the students made; one of them recalled:

I remember that when I was studying theology he made everyone in the house who was trying to learn that sacred subject take his turn at preaching. When my day came round he was present, and I gave out what I had prepared with such a lot of study and care, and I thought I did very well. That evening he brought up my sermon for discussion and had it taken to pieces by more than twenty men whom I acknowledged as my masters. He rounded off the discussion with a charity which raised my courage again, saying that I must make an effort to preach in the style of Jesus Christ. Had he wanted to, this divine Saviour could have said marvellous things about our most abstruse mysteries, with ideas and expressions proportionate to them, since he was the Word and eternal Wisdom. Nevertheless, we know the way he did preach, simply and humbly, in order to suit the people and to give us the model and method of his holy word. (44)

Some of the best known expressions associated with Vincent come from Abelly, such as the one about Carthusians at home. In its original context it says slightly more than is conveyed when it is telescoped into an aphorism:

What happens to clocks also happens fairly often to men who work for the salvation of others and spend their time in the pastoral ministry. Clocks in their service of the public break down and wear out. Men in pastoral ministries have a special need to make up for the damage sustained in their everyday activity, by being careful about their interior recollection. In this context Fr Vincent used to say sometimes that the life of a missionary should be like that of a Carthusian while in the house and like that of an apostle while down the country, and that his ministry and work for the spiritual welfare of others will be either more or less successful in proportion to the care with which he looks after his own spiritual life. (45)

Other well-known expressions are: “As soon as the heart is empty of self God fills it”. (46) “Give me a man of prayer and he is fit for anything”, adding that the Congregation of the mission would last as long as the practice of prayer was faithfully kept up. (47) Another condition for the perpetuation of the Congregation was the practice of charity by the confreres towards each other. He once appointed detraction as the subject for the Friday conference for seven consecutive Fridays. (48)

Since he used to refer like that to the continuation of the Congregation it is not surprising that he had his own way of dealing with those who wanted to join it:

In the case of those who came to him with their minds already made up about joining the congregation he used to act with very great caution before accepting them. Normally he would collect information about them, such as how long they had had this idea, how they had arrived at it and in what circumstances; what their background was; what motives they had in wanting to become missionaries; whether they were ready to go to all the places, even the most distant foreign regions, to which they might be sent, and whether they would be prepared to put up with such and such a difficulty, pointing out some of those most likely to arise in the life they wanted to take up. He used to send them off several times without giving them a definite answer, and even leaving them with the impression that there was little hope of their being accepted, in order to test their vocation and virtue. Normally he would keep them away over a considerable period, making them come back several times so that he could get to know them better. He never gave them a definite answer, no matter what test he made of their dispositions and perseverance, until he had got them to make a retreat expressly to learn God’s will. After this, if they were still keen on their original intention, he would have them interviewed by some of the senior priests in the house, and if those men thought them suitable they would be received into the seminaire. (49)

In a conference to the confreres he developed one of the points just mentioned:

Are we ready to go to Poland, to Barbary, to the Indies, to sacrifice to him [Jesus Christ] our self-satisfaction and vices? If we are, let’s thank God. But if, on the other hand, there are some who are afraid of giving up their comforts, who are so touchy that they complain if the least thing is missing, and so soft that they want to change house and work because the air isn’t good or the food is poor, and they are too tied down to be able to go and come as they please. In one word,

Fathers, if some of us are still slaves to nature, attached to pleasures of the senses, like the miserable sinner speaking to you who is still worldly at the age of seventy, they should consider themselves unworthy of the apostolic life to which God has called them...(50)

In actual fact, of course, he did not indiscriminately appoint confreres to Poland, Barbary or Madagascar. He selected only those who considered that they were being called interiorly by God to this work, and who had approached him several times requesting to be sent on it. He was realistic enough to appreciate that one man called by God would do far better work than several whose motivation was tainted. (51) He used to blame lack of success on over-reliance on one's own capabilities: (52) "Jesus Christ must take a hand in the work". (53)

From early on in our lives in the Congregation we have all heard that Abelly felt the need, when quoting Vincent, to "improve" the original stylistically. Brother Bertrand Ducournau's reconstruction of one of Vincent's conferences to the confreres in Saint-Lazare has survived in Ducournau's own hand writing. His manuscripts of the other conferences were lost at the time of the Revolution, although copies made from them survived. Abelly had access to Ducournau's notes, so we can assess the changes which he thought necessary to improve Vincent's style. In the conference in question, on charity, given on 30 May 1659, Vincent was describing a contemplative person who was trying to concentrate exclusively on the love of God, with no reference to his neighbour, and contrasting him with a crude, uncouth fellow who tried in his own way to love the neighbour for the sake of God. Vincent then continued, according to Ducournau:

Which of these loves is the purer and less self-centred? Without doubt it is the second one, and so he fulfils the law more perfectly. (54)

Abelly had this version in front of him, yet this is what he wrote:

Tell me which of these two loves is the more perfect and less self-centred? Without doubt it is the second one. By uniting as it does the love of God and the love of the neighbour, or to better express it, by extending the love of God to take in love of the neighbour, and by relating the love of the neighbour to the love of God, he fulfils the law more perfectly than the first man. (55)

Vincent's way of seeing God's call to love the neighbour in particular circumstances is somewhat surprising. Crowds of poor people used

to come to Saint-Lazare for alms and food, and Abelly says that sometimes you would see up to five or six hundred. Two or three years before his death, Vincent stopped giving such help when, in an attempt to rid Paris of beggars, the city authorities forbade it after the founding of the General Hospital. Some of the poor people complained to Vincent, saying “Didn’t God command that alms be given to the poor?” His answer to that was “True enough, friends, but he also commanded us to obey the civil authorities”. During a subsequent very severe winter he relented in the case of some extremely poor families. (56)

Vincent and the Irish

He gave special attention to two Irish regiments and their dependents, which were recuperating in Troyes after two very hard campaigns. One of the confreres in Troyes notified him about them, and he immediately organised relief, and sent an Irish confrere to Troyes to help them. (57) In Paris also there were very many Irish people in poor circumstances, and again he entrusted their care to an Irish confrere. (58) Among those Irish in Paris were refugee priests, and he organised help for them and allocated “a good part” of the Saint-Lazare alms to them. He helped Irish students financially, sometimes by sending them to other French towns where the cost of living was lower than in Paris, recommending them to people whom he knew, and paying their fares. For many years he supported a blind Irish priest, paying a boy to lead him about. This priest and the boy were very often to be seen at meals in Saint-Lazare. (59)

See also: “Vincent de Paul’s Health Record”, in *Colloque* 35, Spring 1997, which is an expansion of a few paragraphs at the end of an earlier version of this talk.

NOTES

- 1 Page 299 in the French edition, page 296 in the English edition.
- 2 Coste says that Abelly became bishop of Rodez in 1662 (I 476). In *Monsieur Vincent* he gives the date as 1664 (vol. III, 546). Dodin in *San Vicente, Evangelizador de los Pobres* (Salamanca 1973) says he was appointed bishop on 9 June 1664, consecrated on 24 August, and his work on Vincent was published on 10 September (p. 18).
- 3 1.19. Abelly’s work has appeared in various editions. Because of this, page references would not be of much use. In all editions, though, the work is divided into three *Livres*; each one is divided into *chapitres*; some of these are further divided into *sections*; there are even further subdivisions. All references in these Notes are to the number of the *Livre*, followed by the number of the *chapitre*. Where necessary the number of the *section* is given. This system of division is carried over into the recent English

translation. All translations in this lecture are my own, made before the English translation was published.

- 4 2.12.12
- 5 3.1
- 6 3.9
- 7 3.4
- 8 [Vandamme] *Le Corps de Saint Vincent de Paul* (Abbeville, 1913), p. 99
- 9 Vol. 3, p. 499
- 10 Tome 114-115 (1949-50), p. 286
- 11 3.12.1
- 12 2.7
- 13 3.24
- 14 3.11.6
- 15 3.19
- 16 2.12
- 17 2.7
- 18 3.11.6
- 19 3.11.6
- 20 3.11.6
- 21 3.16. Section unique
- 22 3.17
- 23 3.18
- 24 1.49
- 25 3.24.1
- 26 3.24.1
- 27 3.16. Section unique
- 28 3.16
- 29 3.16
- 30 1.26
- 31 2.4.2
- 32 3.16 Section unique
- 33 3.22
- 34 3.22
- 35 3.13.1
- 36 15
- 37 1.51
- 38 3.13.1
- 39 3.13.1
- 40 3.24.2
- 41 3.6
- 42 3.8.2
- 43 2.3.1
- 44 3.16 section unique
- 45 2.1.1.3
- 46 1.9
- 47 3.7
- 48 3.11.6
- 49 1.35
- 50 2.2.10
- 51 3.24
- 52 3.3.2
- 53 3.24.3

54 Coste XII 261

55 3.11

56 3.11.3

57 2.11.3

58 3.11.3

59 3.11.5

In the Footsteps of Justin De Jacobis in Southern Italy

Tom Davitt CM

In 1971, on my return journey from Vietnam to Cork, I made a detour to Ethiopia and Eritrea to visit places associated with Justin De Jacobis. I was also there in 1997 on community business from Rome.

Justin spent one third of his life in Abyssinia, which means he spent two thirds of his life in Italy. Knowing the man who spent the first two thirds of his life in Italy helps us to know the man who spent the final third in Abyssinia.

In October 1975, in appreciation of my research on Justin, Fr James Cahalan, the Provincial, presented me with a ticket to Rome for Justin's canonisation. After the ceremonies in Rome, I was invited down to Naples to visit places associated with him. I stayed in the Provincial House, 51 via dei Vergini. This was the house in which he joined the community on 17 October 1818, just after his eighteenth birthday. Later he was superior of the house. On that first visit, and on my many subsequent ones, I used to wonder at night in bed if he was ever in that particular room, knowing that he must have passed along the corridor outside it.

In 1814 the De Jacobis family moved from San Fele to Naples. It would appear that the economic situation of the family had deteriorated for some reason and the sale of the property in San Fele became necessary. On 09 October 1834, in a letter to the Marchesa Elena Dell'Antoglietta, he mentioned in passing that about fifteen years previously the family finances had taken a downturn. (1) That would mean 1819, though the family had moved to Naples five years before that. Perhaps in 1819 they took a further downturn.

At the time of the canonization in Rome Fr Luigi Betta CM gave me a copy of a book which he had co-authored with Enrico Lucatelli. (2) In this book the address at which the De Jacobis family lived in Naples is given as 19 via dell'Avvocata. Naturally I took the opportunity of going to see and photograph it. It is a very narrow street, in what seemed to be a rather poor area of the city. Because of the narrowness of the street it was impossible to get a direct photograph of the facade. The address is not that of a private dwelling but of an apartment block, though not, I thought, down at the level of a tenement.

While the financial affairs of the family may have deteriorated it is worth remembering that two of Justin's brothers were able to get a good education and Nicola, the eldest, later published a *Dizionario univer-*

sale portatile, which Betta & Lucatello describe as “*portatile* only in name” as it was published in three volumes. Donato, the third eldest and closest in affection to Justin, became a lawyer, apparently a solicitor in our terminology, and handled all Justin’s financial affairs.

In 1836 Justin was recalled from the house in Lecce where he was superior, to the Provincial House in Naples, and after a few months there was appointed director of the seminaire, located in another house in the city, San Nicola da Tolentino. Naturally, I made a visit to this house before leaving Naples.

In the summer of 1982, at the end of my sabbatical year in Paris, I went to Italy to visit the places associated with Justin in his native Naples Province. On 11 July I left Paris on the overnight all-sleeper train *Il Palatino*, arriving in Rome the next morning at 10.10. At 18.00 I left for Naples on the Vesuvio, arriving at 20.10. Justin was a member of the Naples Province so my first night was in the Provincial House. For the rest of this Italian journey Stan Brindley was with me, but I cannot recall whether we met in Paris, Rome or Naples. I had a three-week pass on FS (Ferrovie dello Stato), as I spent three weeks touring Italy, but I do not remember the price or other details. The pass was not valid on some smaller railways in the south of Italy.

Giustino Pasquale Sebastiano De Jacobis was born on the ninth of October 1800 in the small village of San Fele in the mountains about 100 km from Naples. It has a population of about twelve hundred. In signing his name he sometimes wrote a capital D and sometimes a small one. In one of his letters he mentions that his family went back five centuries, and had always been landowners though not feudal lords. On the 13th we took the train from Naples to Salerno where we lunched, and then took another train to Bella Muro, a two-hour journey. From there we took a taxi to San Fele. The house in which Justin was born is still there. It had scaffolding around it, as it had been slightly damaged in a recent earthquake. We also visited the local church. In the small piazza of the village there is a statue to Justin. We returned to Naples after a round trip of about 270 km.

The following day we took a morning train from Naples to Bari, over on the Adriatic coast, and after two and a half hours there headed down the coast into the “heel” of the Italian peninsula to the town of Lecce, three hours away. We travelled 470 km that day.

I should mention that it was not possible to visit the places associated with Justin in the chronological order in which he went to them. We had to fit them in taking account of where they were situated and the means of transport for getting there.

Our reason for going to Lecce was that in January 1834 Justin was appointed superior in that house. It was the second most important house

in the Naples Province with a fairly large community. Its main ministry was missions and retreats in the area north and south of the town. Even though he was superior he continued giving missions and retreats. In a letter which he wrote from Lecce he mentioned that he accepted the view of missionaries that ten years is enough for any confrere to spend in that type of work. As superior his administration brought the house accounts out of the red. The Vincentian house in Lecce in Justin's time had been established in 1732 but it is now a prison. We stayed overnight in the new house, which has since closed. There was also an Apostolic School, on Via De Jacobis.

On the 15th, we left Lecce at 09.55 heading for Otranto, 40 km south on the coast, as the crow flies, but longer by the local trains, of which we needed three. We had two reasons for visiting Otranto. The first was because Justin had given a mission there, or possibly more than one. The second, minor, reason was that both of us had been working in St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, where the original building had been built in the 18th century for Horace Walpole to his own design. He had written a novel of the genre known as "gothic(k)", called *The Castle of Otranto*. Walpole had never been to Otranto, but came across the name somewhere and thought it suitable for the sort of novel he planned. Any time I have heard the title of the novel spoken the stress has been on the second syllable, but in Italian the stress is on the first. We visited the castle and sent a postcard of it to the community in Strawberry Hill. (3) We got back to Lecce in mid-afternoon and then "did" the town like any tourists.

The next day we visited Brindisi where he was ordained priest in the cathedral, an event commemorated by a plaque. We then went to Oria, his first appointment after ordination. The Vincentian house, founded in 1729, was on the Piazza Giustino De Jacobis, and was still in Vincentian occupation but has since closed. We returned to Bari, where we ceased to be pilgrims on the track of Justin De Jacobis and became tourists.

From Bari we took an overnight train to Reggio di Calabria from where, the following morning, we crossed over into Sicily and continued on to Palermo where, after a hair-raising taxi journey, we arrived at the Vincentian house at the other side of the city. Stan departed home from Palermo while I moved on to the community house in Catania, and did the usual things a tourist does in Sicily, plus the not so usual one of a trip to the little island of Stromboli.

On Friday July 23 I took an afternoon train south from Catania to Siracusa, where I had about an hour's wait before going on board an overnight direct train arriving in Rome just before midday on the Saturday, staying once again in the curia. That evening I went to *Aida* in the Terme di Caracalla. On Sunday I did a tour of the Alban hills, but I

do not recall who brought me. On Monday I returned to Naples for one more step on my Justin pilgrimage. But before that, on the Tuesday, I was an ordinary tourist for the day, “doing” Vesuvius and Pompei. Then I went to Sorrento, and checked out whether it is anything like Killiney Bay, as it is reputed to be. One can see, perhaps, why the original developer of housing in Killiney cashed in on a superficial resemblance.

On Wednesday the 28th I visited the former Carthusian church of San Martino, where one of Justin’s brothers, Michele Vincenzo, was a monk, and eventually prior, under the name of Don Giuseppe. I also made a return visit to 19, Via dell’Avvocata, the address to which the De Jacobis family moved in 1814.

That completed my “Justin Tour”. On the morning of the 29th I took the train to Turin and checked in to the community house, and had the rest of the day as a tourist. The next day I was a tourist in Milan, returning to the community house in Turin where I was the only confrere who turned up punctually for the evening meal! The next day I was a tourist in Genoa, visiting the community house which is the only house in continuous Vincentian occupation since Vincent’s time. It was an interesting experience to be in the superior’s room, where Jean Martin would have read the letters he received from Vincent. It was in this house that John McEnnery, from the diocese of Limerick, died of the plague in 1657 at the age of forty. The following day I went to San Remo. I spent the night again in Turin and on Monday 02 August I returned to Paris by train.

My travels in Italy added up to 9479 km, plus whatever I did by means other than trains.

NOTES

- 1 *Giustino De Jacobis: Scritti 2, Epistolario*, Roma 2003, p. 126
- 2 Lucatello E & Betta L: *L’Abuna Yaqob Mariam*, Roma 1975. The address in Naples is not given in the text, but on page 197 in an *Appendice*.
- 3 There is an Otranto Place in Sandycove, which is shown on the Ordnance Survey Map as far back as 1843. Peter Pearson mentions it in his *Between the Mountains and the Sea*, but gives no explanation of its origin or its name.

Fr Edward Ferris CM (1738-1809)

Thomas Davitt CM

This is an up-dated version of an earlier article (*Ed*)

Caragh Lake in Co Kerry fills the northern end of Glencar valley. When Edward Ferris arrived at Saint-Lazare in Paris on 29 January 1758 he said he had been born in Glencar just over twenty years previously, on 1 January 1738. (1)

He had served as a gentleman-cadet in the Irish Brigade of the French army. (2) From 1638, when John Skyddie and James Water, both from Cork, had joined the Congregation, there had been an unbroken Irish presence in it. At the time of Ferris's entry there were at least three Irish confreres: Thomas Barry from Dublin, who had joined in Rome and was working in Italy, Christopher Vaughan from Navan, and Thady O'Rourke from Tralee. There were three others who could easily have still been alive in 1758 but the dates of whose deaths are not recorded: Eugene Sullivan who was possibly another Kerryman, William Giffard who for some reason was known as Fitzharris, a Dubliner, and Brother Michael O'Daniel from Waterford. When Ferris entered, there were almost thirty seminarists in Saint-Lazare and seventy students. (3) Ferris took his vows on 30 January 1760 in the presence of Arnould Bossu, who had become Director of the seminaire just about the time he entered. Four months later another Irishman entered, Matthew O'Hea from the diocese of Ross. (4) On 27 March the following year Ferris received the four minor orders from the archbishop of Paris, Christopher de Beaumont, in the archbishop's residence. (5)

Early years in the Congregation; Toul

There is no record of the date of his ordination to the priesthood, nor of what appointments he held before September 1771. He was in Saint-Lazare on 15 August 1770 at the vows of Jean Hugot. (6) In September 1771, some months short of his thirty-fourth birthday, he was appointed superior of the seminary in Toul. (7) The original records of the seminary for this period do not appear to have survived but a history of the diocese contains some reference to Ferris. (8) His appointment as superior came at the height of a disagreement between his predecessor, Honoré-Nicolas Brocquevielle CM, and the bishop. Brocquevielle had been already on the seminary staff when the bishop chose him as his own spiritual director, appointed him Vicar General and asked the Congregation to appoint him Superior. From May 1765

he had been Visitor of the Province of Champagne. Martin says he was lax about standards for admission to orders and did not keep a check on what was being taught, on the behaviour of the students or on the spirit of the community. He is also supposed to have intrigued against the bishop. Unsuitable books were found in students' rooms, there were rumours of nocturnal escapades, and *une académie de joyeux viveurs* "*Epicuri de grege porcos*" organised by some of the students. Some parish priests notified the bishop about all this and as a result of enquiries made he reprimanded Brocquevielle, who then turned against him. The bishop asked the Congregation to remove him, and some other Vincentians, from the seminary. Ferris was his replacement as Superior, but in the opinion of Martin he was of too weak and indecisive character to initiate the necessary reforms. Felix Contassot CM criticises Martin for his lack of objectivity in portraying both Brocquevielle and Ferris, and suggests that he would have seen them both in a different light had he taken the trouble to consult Vincentian records. (9)

During Ferris' period as rector of the seminary in Toul there was a nun in the diocese who claimed to have had visions of Our Lord during which he complained that while there were feasts of Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart there was no feast of his Holy Soul. She convinced her Jesuit director that the visions were genuine and the bishop appointed Ferris and two others to investigate the matter. Their opinion was that what she claimed was contrary to the dogma of the incarnation and dangerous for devotion to the Blessed Eucharist, and that writings which had appeared about it contained many errors already condemned. This put an end to the matter without any scandal. (10)

In July 1774, Pagel de Ventoux, dean of Toul cathedral, asked Ferris, on behalf of the Vicars General, not to forbid the young men in the seminary to curl and powder their hair "as there was no need to back up their director Fr Fourcy in all the ridiculous demands he makes on the seminarians". (11)

Toul is about 25km from Nancy. In his evidence at the enquiry into the sacking of Saint-Lazare Ferris said he had a doctorate in theology from the University of Nancy. There are two problems about this. First, Vincentians at that time were not supposed to go for degrees, and second, the university did not have a faculty of theology. With regard to the first, the Congregation in the latter half of the eighteenth century was governed loosely enough and members did in fact take degrees. The doctorate in theology could be very easily obtained and in a disconcertingly short time. The licentiate, not the doctorate, was the significant degree.

Ferris' statement that his doctorate was from Nancy seems to be contradicted by the fact that Nancy did not confer theology degrees.

There was a theology faculty in the small town of Pont-à-Mousson; this town, Toul and Nancy are each about 25km from each other. As Pont-à-Mousson was such a small place it is possible that after Nancy became part of France in 1766 its degrees were loosely referred to as being from Nancy. (12)

Ferris may also have been Vicar General of Toul, as the *Maynooth College Calendar 1884-1885* says. Brocquevielle who preceded him as rector of the seminary and, under a new bishop, also succeeded him, was Vicar General on each occasion. (13)

Amiens

The new bishop of Toul arrived in September 1774 and Brocquevielle resumed his rectorate of the seminary; Ferris left for the seminary in Amiens. His patent as superior there is dated 4 November of that year; at some stage he also became Vicar General of the diocese. (14) The archives of the seminary for the period of his rectorate have not survived, but a certain amount of factual information is available. The building had been erected in 1740 and had 120 rooms. The library contained 6481 books divided into twelve sections, the first being banned books. (15) In March 1779 work began on the construction of a new kitchen building, as an inscription in the stonework commemorates. On 22 July the following year, at 2.15 in the afternoon, lightning destroyed the bell-tower; a student scratched the details into the stonework of the window in his room. Ferris had the tower rebuilt and in 1783 two members of the staff, Jean-Baptiste Bagnolle CM and Paul Brochois CM, donated a new chime of four bells inscribed with their names and that of the rector. Unlike others in the city these bells survived the Revolution, as the buildings were then being used as a military hospital. Ferris also commissioned several paintings for the reception rooms, some, or all, of which are supposed to have been painted by refugee Irish artists to whom he gave asylum in the seminary.

During his period in Amiens he also came into contact with another Irish priest, John Kavanagh from Gorey, who had been ordained in 1774 at the age of 24. He had gone to Nantes the following year for study and then became chaplain to a marquis. After that he saw active service as chaplain on board a French warship for a year and then became chaplain to a childless old couple near Angers. During Advent 1783 four confreres from Angers gave a mission in the village where he was. The superior, Claude Burel, who was on the mission, had entered the seminaire in Saint- Lazare about ten weeks before Ferris, and when he met Kavanagh he told him of the Irish rector in Amiens and suggested he should write to him. Kavanagh was hoping for a better position and he thought that the Vicar General and seminary rector might have

some influence. He wrote a long autobiographical letter in English and received in reply a rather short one in French, dated 9 January 1784:

Sir,

Allow me to make use of the language to which I have become accustomed in replying to the letter which you did me the honour of writing to me. Fr Burel is very kind to have spoken to you so favourably of me. For my part I am really embarrassed, so little do I deserve it. Why, Sir, do you not take your talents and zeal to our own country where the harvest is so great and the gospel workers so few in number? I would suggest this course rather than a position in the diocese of Amiens where the benefices are very poorly paid and there are a great many priests. At the start of this new year I wish you everything which could make you happy, and I beg you to believe that I am, with the greatest respect,

Your very humble

and very obedient servant

Ferris, Vic. Gen; Sup. of the seminary. (16)

Assistant General; the sack of St Lazare

While he was in Amiens Ferris was elected delegate of the Picardy province to attend three General Assemblies of the Congregation held in Paris in 1780, 1786 and 1788. (17) The 1788 Assembly was summoned after the death of the ninth Superior General, Antoine Jacquier. Jean-Félix Cayla de la Garde was elected as his successor. The election of his First Assistant, Alexis Pertuisot, took little time but then two further ballots failed to produce the required majority of votes for the Second Assistant. François Brunet and Ferris topped the poll so a third ballot just between these two was held and again neither reached the necessary quota; a fourth similarly failed so Brunet was declared elected Second Assistant on a simple majority of votes and Ferris became Third Assistant. (18) The Assembly ended on 18 June and Ferris changed his residence from Amiens to Saint-Lazare.

The following year on 13 July, the day before the fall of the Bastille, Saint-Lazare was attacked by a mob. Cayla described what happened in a letter dated 24 July:

At three o'clock in the morning a raging mob armed with guns, sabres and torches came to Saint-Lazare; the doors were broken down in less than a quarter of an hour. The pillage began with unheard-of fury and went on until five in the afternoon, carried on by waves of frenzied maniacs who followed each other in their thousands and whom nothing could frighten, since Paris was without

troops and defenceless. Everything was wrecked. In the house there is not a door left, not a window, table or bed. Every stick of furniture of any sort was stolen. Money from the Bursar's office was taken, as well as private money. We have lost most of our documents and legal deeds. The library suffered particularly badly. The refectory is just a heap of rubbish. All our supplies have disappeared. Wine was flowing all over the floor of the cellars and nearly a hundred of these wretches were drowned in it after getting drunk. Some others poisoned themselves in the dispensary, which has been reduced to just its bare walls. At about three in the afternoon fire broke out in the hayloft and all the buildings would have been destroyed only for the prompt help of the Fire Brigade. (19)

This letter makes no mention of Ferris either by name or title. Another memoir of the pillage, compiled from the accounts of eyewitnesses, contains this passage:

The Superior General and two of his Assistants escaped over the perimeter wall; a third who took the risk of going through the mob to summon help was brutally beaten up by them and seriously injured. (20)

Gabriel Perboyre CM in an article, published posthumously in the *Annales* in 1907, gives excerpts from documents on the pillage which are in the French National Archives. He identifies one of the two Assistants who escaped with Cayla as Brunet, and the one who was beaten up by the mob as Ferris:

Fr Ferris, who went out to look for help, was followed. Beaten up and covered with blood, he succeeded in escaping from this fierce brutality by moving in succession from one house to another, in each of which he found refuge. (21)

The pillage took place on Monday the 13th. On Thursday the 16th an enquiry into it opened, and the evidence of witnesses who were heard is preserved in the National Archives in Paris. Ferris brought the members of the enquiry up to his room, N° 58 on the first floor:

Having arrived at it we noticed that the door was all broken and when we went into the said room we found it completely wrecked with not a single stick of furniture undamaged; the frames as well as the panes of the windows were smashed, all the books removed, the room a shambles of papers and broken furniture, with about a dozen

books scattered here and there on the floor and the remainder either pitched out the windows or taken off the shelves and torn up. And the said Monsieur Deferris then told us that all his money had been stolen, to the amount of 20 *louis* belonging to himself and about 50 *louis* which he had been minding for some of the young men in the house, as well as his silver watch. His personal papers had also been stolen, in particular his baptism certificate, a loss which is all the more serious for him since he is a native of Ireland where the parish priests do not keep baptismal registers because of the troubled times they live in; on top of this, the certificate of his doctorate in theology from the university of Nancy, the papers showing he was Vicar General of the diocese of Amiens, and especially those attesting his service in the Irish Brigade, Clare's Regiment, Conway's Company, signed by Conway, captain of the said company and by Colonel Major Moore, and counter-signed by the Chevallier de Mezières, Lieutenant-General of the King's armies... (22)

François Clet also gave evidence and like Ferris reported the loss of his silver watch, personal money and students' money.

The house had sustained about one million *livres* worth of material damage and Cayla in his circular of 24 July mentions that it could no longer support the former number of confreres and that other houses would have to come to its help financially and by taking some of the confreres. (23) Cayla and others had resumed residence in the wrecked house a few days after the outrage.

Five months later, in his New Year's letter of 1790, Cayla says that though the numbers are down the spirituality of the house is much better than before. A year later he writes:

No matter what our fears, no matter what probability there is of our being suppressed, our obligations do not change. We will be missionaries until the last moment...

He was still in Saint-Lazare when he wrote his circular for the New Year of 1792. None of these three circulars makes any mention of his Assistants by either name or title, though they do mention another Irish Vincentian, Robert Hanna of Newry, who was in Macao on his way to the mathematical academy in Peking.

The years following the Revolution

1792 was a year in which very practical problems arose for the confreres in Saint-Lazare. On 28 April the wearing of clerical dress outside of religious ceremonies was prohibited, and on 18 August the Congregation of

the Mission was suppressed. In the National Archives in Paris there is an interesting collection of documents from Saint-Lazare from July and August of that year, all dealing with money. (24) They are mainly notes signed by students, laybrothers or priests acknowledging receipt of money from Ferris for clothing; in some of them he is described as Superior of the house. From the time of St Vincent, the Superior General was always technically the Superior of Saint-Lazare but the actual day-to-day running of the house was in the hands of one of his Assistants. From these documents, and from a House of Commons report on Maynooth in 1808, it would appear that Ferris was regarded as the Superior of the house. Some of the community were not present in Saint-Lazare and others collected their money for them. A letter from Jean-Baptiste Varrain to Ignace Delorme in Saint-Lazare asks the latter to send on his laundry by the milkman, and continues:

If money is being handed out send it along as well if you can as I don't want to go back yet unless one is free to leave Paris again. You can tell Ferris that if a signature is necessary he has only to hold on to this letter until I get back. He'll see from this that I'm agreeable to that, for I'm afraid all the time that some trouble will break out and all will be lost. Send me what I ask as soon as you can, and come yourself if possible for I'd very much like to see you.

As well as these notes and this letter there are two formal documents dated 17 and 27 August 1792 "Year 4 of Liberty and 1 of Equality". The earlier one was drawn up the day before the Congregation was suppressed and its purpose was to record that the one hundred and one members of the community of Saint-Lazare met in the house to authorise the Bursar to give one hundred francs to each confrere to purchase civilian clothing, and to sign the document as evidence that "each individually makes himself responsible for what concerns him with regard to the Municipality, promising and binding for and against everything". Neither Cayla nor Brunet signed this document, but Ferris, Pertuisot and the Fourth Assistant, the Italian Carlo Domenico Sicardi, did. Ferris also signed as proxy for four others, including Brunet.

Ten days later, on the 27th, they met again for what was probably their last meeting as a community. The purpose of this meeting was also to distribute money in view of their decreed expulsion from the house. Once again the signature of Cayla is absent from the minutes and Ferris is the only one of the Assistants whose signature appears; once again he signed as proxy for Brunet. The absence of the signatures of the General and the other Assistants probably indicates that they were keeping away from the house. Five days later, on 1 September, another document was

drawn up attesting the fact that the ornate casket in which the body of St Vincent had been kept in Saint-Lazare had been requisitioned by the municipal authorities; once again the document was signed by Ferris but not by the General or any other Assistant.(25)

Lucien Misermont CM shows that Ferris did not take the oath of Libert - galit . (26) On Sunday 2 September Cayla and Brunet left Paris. (27) They and the other Assistants escaped the September Massacres of that day and the following. On the 6th, Cayla and Brunet were in Le Forez near Lyon but were back in Paris later, and before the end of the month they were in hiding, with Ferris, in the Ch teau d'Heilly in Picardy. (28) Cayla was from the south of France and before being elected General had worked only in that region. Brunet and Ferris had each been superior of the seminary in Amiens for quite long terms and it was probably their contacts which facilitated their going into hiding in the area. By 24 July 1793 they were in Ypres, from where Cayla wrote on that date. (29) On 13 September he wrote from Tournai (30) and by 9 December they were in Manheim in the Palatinate. (31) In November 1791, in view of the situation in France, he had erected the houses in the Palatinate into a separate province; the confreres were in charge of the observatory in Manheim. (32) In his circular of 1 January 1794 Cayla, writing from Manheim, mentions that Brunet and Ferris are with him, that he has not heard of Pertuisot for nearly a year and that Sicardi is superior of a house in Turin. He mentions that Pius VI had appointed an Italian confrere Benedetto Fenaja as Vicar General for as long as he was impeded in his functions, and he now officially notifies the Congregation that he has taken the reins of administration back into his own hands. (33)

Appointment to Maynooth

In May 1794 Cayla, and Ferris left Manheim for Rome, arriving there on 9 November; they were joined by Sicardi and Jacques-Antoine Lesueur the Secretary General. Rome was not an undisturbed city and they had in turn to leave two different houses of the Congregation. They stayed first in Sant' Andrea a Monte Cavallo and then in Monte Citorio. (34) Cayla's circulars of January and December 1795, January 1797 and January 1798 make no mention of any of the Assistants by either name or title, but during 1798 on an unrecorded date Pertuisot died; Brunet therefore became First Assistant and Ferris Second. However, something much more significant for Ferris also happened that year. On 17 January he was appointed Dean in Maynooth, the first holder of the office. (35) On 10 May Luke Concannon OP in Rome wrote to John Thomas Troy OP, archbishop of Dublin, about the new Dean:

We are old friends. He is an excellent good priest now turned of 60 yrs of age. The good man forgot his native language almost. I believe they'll make him General of his Congregation...Ferris was surprised the place was not offered to me. (36)

In spite of the date of the appointment it would seem that Ferris did not fully resign himself to accepting it until later in the year. On 21 September, Concannon wrote to Troy:

I informed you that Rd Mr Edward Ferris now cheerfully accepts the Post offered him at Maynooth. The change that lately happened in his Congregation made him determine. Almost all the houses of his Order are lost. Nobody can be fitter for the office given him in the College. Such has been his employment almost all his life. He's Vicr Genl of a B in France & was greatly esteemed there. He's now studying the English and hopes to get from the trustees the sum offered to help him through the journey. He'll set out from Italy next Spring. Perhaps we'll travel together.

On 12 January of the following year Concannon told the archbishop that "Abbé Ferris calls often to see me" and that he is waiting only for the means to start his journey, and Concannon suggests some financial arrangements. "Ferris is impatient to hear his fate & prays a speedy answer". Arrangements were soon made and Concannon could write on 10 March: "Abbé Edward Ferris is to depart from hence at the same time with me". But by 28 April neither of them had started:

Poor Abbé Ferris is without any lodging here...All my friends unani-
mously dissuade me from attempting to go home, the roads being
covered with hosts of warriors of different nations & the sea spread
with Privateers; tis next an impossibility to penetrate into the Emperor's
dominions, & notwithstanding all these difficulties Abbé Ferris has the
courage to set off and deprives me of the pleasure of travelling with him.
I will consign Dr Dillon's pallium to the Abbé, according to his Grace's
instructions to F Connolly tho' I greatly fear he'll be robbed of it & eve-
rything else on the way, in the present dangerous moment. (37)

Dean at Maynooth

This time he did depart and arrived safely in Maynooth where he was installed as Dean on 17 June 1799. (38)

By January 1800 the new Dean was making his presence felt. Eugene Conwell, one of the students, wrote to his uncle:

The discipline is much more severer [*sic*] than heretofore. There are many new regulations adopted by Mr Ferris. (39)

On 1 February Concannon mentioned in a letter to Troy that the “overplus” of the money which had been made available to Ferris for his travel was to be paid, on the instructions of the latter, to Cayla. Cayla, however, died eleven days later in Rome. No document naming a Vicar General was found among his papers so Brunet, who had become First Assistant on the death of Pertuisot, now became Vicar General according to the Constitutions. Some confreres claimed that, in view of the then unsettled state of Congregation affairs, such provisions of the Constitutions were no longer applicable. To settle this Pius VII officially confirmed Brunet in office and appointed a commission to look into the matter. This commission issued its report on 17 May 1800 and said that the Constitutions still stood. Brunet explained all this in a letter from Rome dated 25 May. He added in a postscript that on 21 June there had been found among Cayla’s papers the *schedula* signed and sealed and dated 30 October 1799 naming himself as Vicar General. (40)

Ferris was now First Assistant and this brought problems for Brunet. Of the original four Assistants Pertuisot was dead, he himself had become Vicar General and Ferris was in Maynooth; this meant that only Sicardi was available, and for many decisions of the Council the presence of at least two Assistants was required. On 23 May Brunet had written to a confrere about Cayla’s death and added:

I will have to get another Assistant in place of Mr Ferris, who has an excellent job where he can put 60 pounds sterling a year in his pocket. (41)

He did not mean “in place of Mr Ferris” to signify that Ferris would cease to be an Assistant, but that because of his non-availability another Assistant would be needed in Rome to make a quorum for the Council. He petitioned Pius VII on 25 July 1800 to name a new Assistant since one was dead and another *in remotissimis Hiberniae partibus existente*, and that he as Vicar General could not appoint a new Assistant without consulting at least two Assistants. He asked the Pope to appoint Benedetto Fenaja, Visitor of the Roman province; his request was granted. On 22 August he further requested, and was granted, that the summoning of a General Assembly to elect a new Superior General be postponed beyond the interval laid down in the Constitutions. (42)

The £60 that Ferris was earning apparently made a deep impression on Brunet, as he mentioned it in a number of letters. He wrote to Jean-Claude Vicherat CM in Algiers:

It is worth 60 pounds a year, together with lodging, food, heating, lighting, etc. (43)

In October 1800 he wrote to Giovanni Crisostomo Isolabella CM and, after mentioning Fenaja's appointment, said that Ferris had left Rome in the June of the previous year for his new post in Ireland which was "very advantageous for his purse". (44) His interest in Ferris' earnings had a practical side to it. Cayla and his Assistants had decided that they were not going to live in Rome at the expense of the Italian confreres, nor were they going to give the impression that the General and his Council were taking up permanent residence there. He wanted to make it quite clear that it was a temporary arrangement and that while there they would live on whatever money confreres in other places could send them. This was why Ferris arranged for the balance of his travel money to be paid to Cayla, and was almost certainly why he was allowed to take the post in Maynooth. (45)

Professor of Moral Theology

At a Meeting of the Maynooth Trustees on 4 November 1800 Ferris was promoted from the office of Dean, which he had held for almost eighteen months, to that of Professor of Moral Theology, though he was to continue to act as Dean until the following meeting of the Trustees. (46) Like his predecessor in his new post, Louis Delahogue, Ferris is described in the Dublin Directories of the period as also Professor of Scripture and Hebrew. (47) In 1808 he told the House of Commons enquiry on Maynooth that his salary was £106, with the same "perks" as when Dean. (48)

During his time in Maynooth, Ferris was not totally separated from the wider Vincentian community. In April 1801 Brunet again told Vicherat about the post Ferris held in "the magnificent rich college founded near Dublin", and said that perhaps he will be appointed a bishop in Ireland. (49)

In February 1802, Lazare-Marius Dumazel CM in Canton, China, wrote to Augustin Delgorgues CM in Altona, which at that time was in Denmark:

Letters from Rome give us the news... that Fr Fenaja, Visitor of the Roman province, has been appointed Assistant of the Congregation in place of Fr Ferris, who cannot carry out the functions of that office, being in Ireland. (50)

Vicherat apparently thought that he could profit from Ferris' large salary but in June Brunet had to disabuse him:

You say that Mr Ferris could come to your aid. It is not long since he wrote to London that he was very sorry that he could not help the confreres who are in London in rather large numbers because he was overwhelmed by a crowd of ruined relations. (51)

In April 1802 Denis Chaumont, Procurator in London of the Missions Étrangères de Paris (MEP), wrote to Jean-François Richenet CM in Canton, China:

I have sent to France the packet for Fr Boullangier, addressing it to Fr Philippe c/o the Ladies of Charity, rue du Vieux Colombier, Paris. I have sent to Fr Ferris the package meant for him, asking him to reply without delay. His answer could arrive in time for forwarding this year. (52)

In September of the same year Jean-Joseph Ghislain CM in Peking wrote to Boullangier in Paris:

(Fr Lamiot has just told me that it was not the General to whom he sent these items, but to Fr Ferris; he thinks you are no longer in England). (53)

One week later Ghislain wrote from Peking to François-Florentin Brunet CM, Vicar General, in Rome:

Last year the English company sounded us out about whether we would agree to send subjects of that country (from our Congregation, obviously), to Peking and the provinces, giving us to understand that many advantages would come from this, as well as special protection. Given the state in which I believed France to be, and not having any knowledge of your existence, Most Honoured Father, I wrote to Fr Ferris, pointing out that in the present circumstances this idea could not fail to be of great benefit to us. Fr Clet, however, thinks we must not trust it. (54)

Ferris may have been involved in one of his French confreres, exiled in England, getting a post in Maynooth. Gilbert-Olivier Le Grand CM had been superior of Bayeux seminary and in September 1792 he escaped to London. His whereabouts can be traced until 1796 but after that there does not seem to be any reference to him until May 1802 when an exiled priest of the MEP wrote from London to Rome that “Frs Ferris and Le Grand are getting on well”. On 25 September Le Grand was appointed Professor of Humanity in Maynooth. He taught Greek

and Latin there until 25 December of the same year. He was fifty-one years old. Dominique-François Hanon CM, rector of Amiens seminary, was trying to locate as many pre-Revolution confreres as possible. He made an undated note that Le Grand was in Dublin with Ferris. (55)

Priests who had fled France at the time of the Revolution seem to have kept in some sort of touch with each other and passed on news. Many of the early professors in Maynooth were French and some of their correspondence has survived. Cardinal Jean-Siffrein Maury, who was in Italy, used to write to Delahogue in Maynooth and in a letter of 2 April 1802 he said that Delahogue and Ferris would have to put up with the poor wine, and that many are very much worse off, and that they should be very glad they are somewhere where they are able to teach theology without hindrance to students who are “numerous, docile, hard-working, many of whom have talents which must be of great hope to their teachers”. (56)

In January 1804 Dumazel in Canton wrote to Delgorgues in Altona:

I am enclosing in the package to you a letter for Fr Ferris. I have no doubt at all that if you ask the excellent Lady Clifford to confide it to someone she knows in England our revered confrere will be sure to get it. Ask Her Ladyship to forgive the liberty I am taking in making use of her influence. (57)

In January 1805 Denis Chaumont in London wrote to Richenet in Canton:

Perhaps you addressed your letters directly to Fr Ferris. I have not received any for him. (58)

In February 1807 Chaumont again referred to Ferris in a letter to Richenet:

I do not know anything about Fr Ferris; I have no correspondence with Ireland. (59)

Troubles at Maynooth

Ferris' successor as Dean was Thomas Coen, and an anonymous author writing in 1808 contrasted the two of them; it would seem to be not free of bias:

Maynooth has rapidly declined both in discipline and learning notwithstanding the persevering efforts to the contrary of one of the

most virtuous and learned ecclesiastics that the Catholic Church can boast in any age or in any country. The person to whom we allude is the Rev. Dr Ferris... He was ordained a priest among a society of clergymen, known by the name of the Brothers of the Mission, whose revenues were then considerable, and who spread all over the world, great numbers of them being even in China. Dr Ferris by his extraordinary merit, his transcendent piety and his universal learning, raised himself to the highest consideration in the society, and his knowledge of human nature and human life soon pointed him out as the most proper person to assist in regulating its affairs. He was therefore appointed Vice-General of the order, which office he held until the period of the revolution... After an absence of forty-five years he at length returned to his native country, and from being a director of the greatest society in the world, next to the Jesuits, he became Dean of Maynooth college. The conduct of this great man in so humble a situation soon endeared him to the students. His humanity, his exemplary piety, and his rigid self-denials operated as the most eloquent lesson of morality. The amiability of his disposition, his tenderness of heart frequently displayed, and his elegant manners made him an object of love. The students worshipped his very name, they adored his virtues. To such a pitch of discipline did he raise the college that for sanctity of manners, Maynooth in 1800 and 1801 might be styled the Bangor of modern times. Alas, the scene is terribly changed, but Dr Ferris is no longer Dean. Will it be believed that he was succeeded in his office by an illiterate, vulgar student who was despised by his fellow scholars, for the meanness of his manners and the littleness of his talents, who was brought from the most uncivilised part of Connaught... (60)

In subsequent issues of the magazine many points from this article were taken up in the letters columns but none of them concerned Ferris.

In January 1803 simmering discontent among the students erupted into some sort of demonstration. One evening at the height of the tension

...Mr Ferris came down to the Hall (no other man could venture to do it) to explain Dr Flood's sentiments. He received a great deal of respect, but at last said that if they would not return to order that he would begin to separate them and left them thus. They told him that they only wanted their grievances redressed, and that his authority and that of the other Professors was suspended, as they had applied to a higher tribunal for that redress which their Professors refused them. (61)

Some of the students were disciplined as a result of this affair, and in March Ferris interceded with Bishop John Young of Limerick on behalf of three students of that diocese, writing a separate letter for each of them. (62) For Thomas Hogan, a subdeacon, and Edward Byrne, an acolyte, he wrote in Latin. Byrne was an *eximius adolescens, indole comptus, consuetudine mansuetus, moribus innoxius, ingenio capax, et inter capaciores ex suis condiscipulis annumerandus*. Hogan had *sese semper exhibuisse indole candidum, moribus et vita irreprehensibilem, studio assiduum, profectu nemini ex primis inter suos condiscipulis impari*. After that the two letters are almost identical. There was a lot of *materia combustibilis* around which needed only a spark to ignite, and once the student had got involved in the rebellion *falsus honor, agnoscendi suam errorem pudor, regrediendi crescens semper difficultas, et mutuae defensionis intentio* all came into play, but there was never *pravum ullum praeconceptum consilium*. After that he committed each student to the bishop's pastoral care, admitting that while the offence was grave it was a first offence. He signed each letter as "Ex-Dean, Professor of Theology".

For some reason which is not apparent he wrote his letter about the third student, Philip Sheehan, in English; it is dated 5 April, about a month after the other two, and has rather idiosyncratic punctuation and a few irregular spellings:

My Lord,

Young Mr Shean one of your subjects who fears above all things the incurring your displeasure; comes and prays me to give your Lordship the whole account of his conduct in this College, and especially concerning the late unfortunate Buisness: which I do with sincerity and candor. He was not present at the first act of disobedience to Mr Coen's command, but signed the list of calition, without well knowing its object, which was subscribed by the whole number of students then in the College, except two. This was the only active part he took in their proceedings; he was among the first to retract and make reparation. In the whole of his conduct he is applyed and regular; does well in class and will be I hope a good subject. His feelings and gratitude for your Lordship's bounty and favours are the proof of his good heart, and a prognostic of what he will be.

In regard to his ordination and that of his compagnons, without your Lordship's demissory, which is in itself a grievous violation of one of the most important laws of canonical discipline; the fault seems to be entirely attributed to the President, who was considered as cautious, and generally regarded as having full power from the Bishops concerning the ordination of their subjects. Yours relied on

this common opinion; he placed them on the list without taking from them any information; if living he should be the person brought to account. Nevertheless they are sincerely sorry of their mistake and want of caution; and as they have incurred the suspension from the functions of their orders, they will abstain, and do beg for the power of being absolved by their confessors under whatever penalty your Lordship will be pleased to impose. I profit of this occasion to manifest the profound respect and veneration with which I am your Lordship's

Most Humble and obed.t serv.t
Edward Ferris

Ferris' intervention was effective, as Sheehan mentions in a letter to Bishop Young on 19 May:

...as Dr Ferris has written to you on this subject and that you have been graciously pleased to revoke the sentence pronounced against us.

As well as these three letters of a rather formal nature a more ordinary letter written by Ferris has survived. (63) It is dated 16 August 1805 and was written from Maynooth to Timothy McCarthy, curate in Kilmallock, whom Ferris had known as a student; in this one he is more sparing of his punctuation:

Dear Revd Sir,

I cannot forget this occasion of calling to the memory of my beloved Tim his good old friend who did not forget him since he left the College and never will. He will be always happy to hear him happy that he is faithful to God and to his duty, edifying in all his conduct employing his time in study prayer and all kinds of good works instructing the ignorant visiting the sick comforting the afflicted assisting the poor for whom he will receive contributions according as his charity for them will impress this virtue in the hearts of others

The only comfort of a priest is in the internal peace of a pure irreproachable conscience and the practical feeling of a diffusive goodness, these two qualities are natural to my beloved Tim, what will be and do in him when assisted by divine Grace, he will strongly resist all contrary examples.

I had some thought of going to Kerry this vacation and a great desire of seeing you on the way. But reflection made, I am too old to project for the future of any other travel but that to my grave. When there and until there you will pray for me. We will meet I hope in eternal happiness.

Give my love and good wishes to M. O'Connor. Our dear Philip will acquaint you with all the doings and concernings this College.

I am

Your old tenderly affectionate friend and servant Edwd Ferris

Memories of Ferris in Maynooth

In 1875 John Kenny, Dean of Killaloe, wrote, for Charles W Russell, President of Maynooth, some reminiscences of his time in Maynooth; Russell passed these on to Malachy O'Callaghan C.M., President of Castleknock College. Kenny had this to say about Ferris:

...The class book when he was Professor of Moral Theology was Antoine but in his lectures Dr Ferris was much more rigid than Antoine; Collet was his favourite author. In many of his opinions which were strictly followed by many of the students of Maynooth he prescribed a course of moral action scarcely pursued I believe by anybody at the present day. Dr Ferris when at Maynooth pursued Conventual habits; he uniformly arose at 4 in the morning, celebrated Mass at 5, after which he sometimes remained in the chapel for more than an hour at prayer; then he retired to his room where he remained until the Community Mass from which he was never absent; during his time he was the only superior in the house who never even by chance incurred the displeasure of a single student. He naturally made himself a general favourite and indeed the adoption by many of the principles inculcated by him [*sic*]. Dr Ferris was a native of Kerry. After his lamented death a small box came into my possession from which it appeared that the Dr was a graduate in many Universities, was Vicar General to many Bishops, and Professor in several Colleges in France. This passed into the hands of the Rev. Eugene McCarthy who was afterwards P.P. of Newtownsands Co. Kerry and is long since dead. From these documents a summary of the Dr's life was prepared and intended for the monument erected to his memory... I had the rare happiness of serving Mass for Dr Ferris from the Quatuor Tense of Advent 1808 until his death. (64)

Walter Meyler, Dean of Dublin, used to say that the French priests who were on the staff in Maynooth in Ferris's time complained about the noise he made getting up at four each morning, saying that he was not content with being a saint himself but wanted to make his next door neighbours saints as well! (65)

On 11 June 1853 the *Catholic Telegraph and Advocate* of Cincinnati, Ohio, published a short piece headed "Maynooth College" which is solely about Ferris. It is signed "Milesius", clearly a former student

of Maynooth, and is rather effusive in praise of its subject; it is also factually inaccurate in places. The name of Ferris “is spoken of with veneration even at this day...Many (who are still living) and who were under his superintendance will recollect with feelings of grateful love the counsel with which he directed and the wisdom with which he enlightened their minds At his tomb the pious student often drops a tear of gratitude”. (66)

One student who would not seem to fit Milesius’ picture was John Cousins. His evidence to the enquiry on Maynooth conducted by the Commissioners of Irish Education in 1824 contained a passage on Ferris; he was the only witness who mentioned him. In the early part of his evidence Cousins said he was in Maynooth from 1799 till 1805, the year of his ordination. In 1811 he left the priesthood and became a minister of the Church of Ireland:

There was a professor, Dr Ferris. Very much esteemed & respected by the students as a pious man, and some circumstances connected with his lectures would lead me to conclude that he had a leaning to Jansenism. The Jesuits & the Jansenists are two opposite parties: the Jesuits opposed the Jansenists in France & crushed them there. Maynooth was probably suspected for a leaning to Jansenism in my time, and upon that ground I would conclude that the Roman Catholic bishops might have patronised the Jesuits and got up the establishment at Clongowes for the purpose of checking that disposition. I was going to mention a circumstance with respect to Mr Ferris: a question was put to him in class on the merits of saints, and his observation was that the merits of saints was [*sic*] no more than a drop of water compared with the ocean; he could not have gone further, consistent with the Roman Catholic doctrine, in crying down the merits of saints; and I understand that this is one of the doctrines of the Jansenists. (67)

His death

The only work published by Ferris appears to have been a 16 page booklet *De Ideis Innatis*, published in 1809, the year of his death. (68) He was five weeks short of his 72nd birthday when he died. The official account of his death, compiled by Dr Francis Power, Vice-President of the college, reads as follows:

On Sunday 26th November 1809, departed this life, the Reverend Edward Ferris, Priest of the Diocese of Kerry, D.D., first assistant to the Superior-General of the Lazarists in France; Vicar-General

of the Dioceses of Toul and Amiens; Dean and Professor of Moral Theology in the Roman Catholic College of St Patrick, Maynooth. On Tuesday, 28th, following, his mortal remains, pursuant to his directions, were, with due solemnity, conveyed to and deposited in the old Church of Lara Brien. R.I.P. (69)

James Bernard Clinch composed the following sonnet:

Ferris rest here, O name most sad, most sweet;
 Thus ancient relics of the priesthood lie.
 Henceforth be chilled for ever, heart that beat
 For God, for friendship and for misery.
 Here eyes of cherub on the mercy seat
 Soliciting the penitential sigh
 Be dim; and thus be stretched ye comely feet,
 Evangelists of pardon from on high.
 Yet still thy kind and awful spirit hears
 Each stifled groan of this my last Adieu.
 And smilingly thou numberest the tears
 That fain would hide thee from my parting view.
 I kissed this marble forehead and withdrew.
 Friend of my heart, we'll meet when Christ appears.

Thomas McNamara CM made the following note about this poem: "A venerable clergyman, who preserved the foregoing lines, in giving them to a member of the Congregation of the Mission more than fifty years afterwards said 'I saw Mr Clinch, the author of them, kiss the forehead of dear Ferris immediately after the office, before the coffin was closed'". (70)

McNamara has also noted that shortly before his death Ferris was persuaded by the Maynooth students to allow his portrait to be taken, and that copies of this were brought away from the college by each student on his ordination. He says that at the date he was writing, 1867, almost sixty years after Ferris' death, copies were still to be seen in many presbyteries in Ireland. An oil-painting of him still hangs in one of the refectories in Maynooth. (71)

On 27 March 1810 Chaumont wrote from London to Richenet in China:

I am sorry to have to inform you of the death of your esteemed confrere Fr Ferris. Dr Eloy is going to replace him in Menouth College in Ireland. (72)

Ferris and the Irish Province

When the Congregation of the Mission was eventually established in Ireland the early confreres were not unaware of their predecessor. John Gowan CM gave a mission in Castletownbere in 1852 or 1853 and while there he met a young grand-niece of Ferris, and many years later wrote a note recording the fact. (73)

In 1875 Malachy O'Callaghan CM, who was then President of Castleknock, had Ferris' remains exhumed from Laragh Bryan and re-interred in the community cemetery in Castleknock. The original grave slab was also transferred and an extra sentence added to the Latin inscription. (74) The epitaph has been translated as follows:

To the Honour of God, the Most High

A column of mourning students, bearing him on their shoulders in filial homage, laid to rest here on 26th November 1809, in the hope of a blessed resurrection, the Reverend Edward Ferris, a priest from the diocese of Kerry, First Assistant of the Congregation of the Mission in France, Vicar General of the diocese of Amiens, Master in the discipline of Sacred Theology and Professor in the Roman Catholic College [Maynooth], renowned for every priestly quality. This eminent man died at the age of 72.

May he Rest in Peace

His remains were first interred [in Laragh Bryan] near Maynooth, and were transferred from there on 19th October 1875, fittingly brought back here to be among his confreres.

A fragment of the original tombstone, unfortunately without indication of its provenance, was enshrined in the wall of the entrance hall of De Paul House, Celbridge, with a plaque commemorating the blessing of this foundation stone by Fr James Richardson, Superior General, on 1 March 1977. On the occasion of our leaving De Paul house this fragment of stone was recovered and was kept in the Provincial Archives until restored to Castleknock in 2009.

To mark the 200th anniversary of his death this year (2009) the president of the college, Fr Peter Slevin CM, had the original grave slab, very weathered and cracked in many places, replaced by a new one, with the original inscription. The English translation of the inscription given above is on a new stone, attached to the wall above the grave. The old slab is to be restored, as far as possible, and will be erected in a yet to be decided location.

To the best of my knowledge there is no further material to be found in the archives of the CM General Curia in Rome, where I was archivist

for four years, nor in the archives of the Roman province. With regard to the CM archives in Paris it is hard to be absolutely certain. There is a huge amount of material there, and also from time to time archival material surfaces in that house from places other than the archives. Mgr Patrick Corish told me in a letter in 1989 that there is nothing in the archives in Maynooth not already made known. Mary Purcell did a lot of research with a view to writing a biography of Edward's notorious brother Richard (75), but she told me that she did not discover anything not already known about Edward. Present-day members of the Ferris family whom I have contacted have been unable to supply anything further.

NOTES

- 1 The record of his entry has "Glancair", one of several variant spellings. Although the entire valley is named Glencar there is also a townland of this name in it. Mary Purcell discovered that EF's brother Richard used to say that he was born in Tought, Co. Kerry. This would seem to be Toogh, or Knockane, a parish of which Glencar forms a part. The surname is almost totally confined to the region around Killorglin, and the family's original stronghold was Ballymalis, about 4½ miles east of the town. There were still substantial landholders of this name in the area at the start of the 19th century. Mary Purcell made available to me a report she had obtained from the Genealogical Office in Dublin. Fr Michael Manning of the diocese of Kerry clarified topographical details.
- 2 EF's evidence at the enquiry into the sacking of Saint-Lazare, the Vincentian motherhouse in Paris, is preserved in the Archives Nationales in Paris. The reference is Z2 4684:1. I obtained a photocopy for our archives.
- 3 Louis de Bras CM, superior general, in his circular letter of 1 January 1759, in *Recueil des Principales Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux CM*, I, 605. (Henceforth *Recueil*).
- 4 Barry died in Macerata, Italy, in 1789 aged 70. O'Rourke died in Beauvais in 1762 aged 65. Vaughan died in Les Invalides, Paris, where the Vincentians were chaplains, in 1763 aged 85. Giffard at one stage was stationed in Angers, and O'Hea was in Lyon. No details of the appointments held by the others are available.
- 5 Manuscript *Dictionnaire du Personnel: Première série 1625-1800*, vol. DUD-F, in CM archives in Paris. (Henceforth CMAP, and similarly for Rome and Dublin CMAR, CMAD).
- 6 *Registre des vœux*, CMAP.
- 7 *Catalogue des Patentes des Supérieurs*, CMAP.
- 8 Martin: *Histoire des diocèses de Toul, de Nancy et de Saint-Die*, three volumes 1900-1903. Material on EF is scattered between pages 574 and 621 of vol. 3. In the Archives of the Département de Meurthe et Moselle I did not find anything on EF not already known.
- 9 In a typescript history of Toul seminary, in CMAP.
- 10 Martin p. 554.
- 11 Martin p. 619. Fr Fourcy was probably Louis Foursy CM (1732-80).
- 12 Raymond Chalumeau CM, archivist in Paris, and the Conservateur of the Bibliothèque Municipale in Nancy, each independently suggested to me the Pont-à-Mousson hypothesis.
- 13 *Maynooth College Calendar 1884-1885*, p.159, prints a note made at the time of EF's

- death by Dr Francis Power, Vice-President of the college, which says that EF was VG of Toul.
- 14 Cf. note 2 above.
- 15 In CMAP there are two manuscript volumes, undated, *Histoire du Grand Séminaire d'Amiens*, by Alphonse Vandamme CM, in which EF's rectorship is dealt with in pp. 214-219. The information about the library is on page 229 of *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie*, tome XIII, 1892. Malachy O'Callaghan CM in *Annales de la CM*, 45 (1880) p. 189 says that documentary evidence about the period of EF's rectorship in Amiens is not available. MO'C, who had been a pupil at the original St Vincent's Seminary, 34 Usher's Quay, Dublin, and then at Castleknock, did a lot of research on EF, including contacting survivors who had known him in Maynooth. The article was published anonymously, but Patrick Boyle CM, in *Annales* 68 (1903), p.13, says it was by MO'C.
- 16 The Kavanagh diary is in the archives of the Passionists, Mount Argus, Dublin. A microfilm version is in the National Library, Dublin. The EF material is on Positive 7660. Kavanagh is buried in the graveyard around the church in Greenane, Glenmalur, Co, Wicklow. When signing letters and documents EF never used F as the initial letter of his surname
- 17 In *Recueil II*, p. 203, EF's name is omitted from the list of delegates at the 1788 Assembly. The original *acta* of the Assembly show that he was present. I made photocopies of relevant sections of these *acta*, including the final page with the signatures of EF, Louis-Joseph François who was later martyred and beatified, and François-Régis Clet who was later martyred in China and canonised.
- 18 *Acta*, CMAR.
- 19 *Recueil II* p.222. There are about half a dozen books from the old Saint-Lazare library in the library of the Irish College in Paris.
- 20 *Recueil II*, p. 570
- 21 *Annales*, 72 (1907), pp. 302-304. GP was a cousin of Jean-Gabriel Perboyre CM, martyred in China and later canonised. He wrote extensively in the *Annales* about Vincentian history, especially the period of the French Revolution.
- 22 Cf note 2 above.
- 23 *Recueil, II*, pp 195 and 222.
- 24 Archives Nationales, Paris, S 6698.
- 25 *Le Corps de Saint Vincent*, Paris 1913, p. 71. This was written by Alphonse Vandamme CM, but published anonymously.
- 26 Misermont : *Saint-Lazare et le Serment de Liberté-Égalité*, Perigueux 1914, pp 8 and 17.
- 27 *Recueil, II*, 269.
- 28 *Annales*, 73, p.335 for Le Forez, and *Dict. Pers.* (as above in note 5) for Château d'Heilly.
- 29 *Recueil, II*, p. 197.
- 30 *Recueil, II*, p. 243.
- 31 *Recueil, II*, p. 197.
- 32 *Recueil, II*, pp. 220 and 234.
- 33 *Recueil, II*, p. 245
- 34 This information is given in a large manuscript volume in the archives of the Vincentian province of Rome entitled *Memorie della Congregazione della Missione dalla Morte di Monsieur Cayla Sup. Gen. X all'elezione di Monsieur du Wailly Sup. Gen. XI*, Tom. X (Ref. No. 14.5.15).
- 35 *Journal of the Meetings of the Trustees, St Patrick's College, Maynooth*, 17 January 1798. EF was first called "Prefect"; later the title was changed to "Dean".
- 36 The letters from Concannon to Troy are in the Dublin Diocesan Archives. LC was later

- appointed archbishop of New York but died before he left Italy.
- 37 The Dillon referred to was Edward Dillon, bishop of Kilmacduagh; he was later transferred to the metropolitan see of Tuam, hence the reference to the pallium.
- 38 *Annales*, 45, p. 194.
- 39 Eugene Conwell: *Letters from Maynooth*, edited by Brother Luke, Dundalk 1942, 2nd edition, p.28.
- 40 *Recueil II*, pp. 270-1.
- 41 From a manuscript in CMAP headed *Copie de la lettre de M. Brunet, 23 May 1800*, from Montecitorio, Rome. It starts simply "Monsieur", so the addressee is not known.
- 42 See *Acta Apostolica, Bullae, Brevia et Rescripta in Gratiam CM*, Paris 1900, pp. 80-83, for a complete list of all papal documents about the governing of the Congregation up to 16 January 1827 when Leo XII appointed Pierre de Wailly as Superior General. He died the following year and in 1829 there was a General Assembly, the first since 1788; Dominique Salhorgne was elected 12th Superior General.
- 43 From a handwritten copy in CMAP; no indication is given as to where the original was, or is.
- 44 O'Callaghan, *Annales* 45, p. 192. I have been unable to find the original in either CMAP or CMAR.
- 45 *Ibid.* pp. 192-3.
- 46 *Journal of the Maynooth Trustees*, 4 November 1800.
- 47 *Maynooth College Calendar 1884-1885*, p.166.
- 48 *Papers presented to the House of Commons relating to the Royal College of St Patrick*, 1800, p. 30.
- 49 O'Callaghan, *Annales* 45, p. 193.
- 50 *Mémoires de la Congrégation de la Mission: La Chine*, Tome II, Paris 1912. The extract cited is on page 280. Dumazel was born in 1785 and spent all his priestly life in China, where he died in 1818. Delgorgues was born in 1760 and died in Paris in 1828. Benedetto Fenaja was born in Rome in 1736 and was one of the succession of Vicars General of the CM in the years after the French Revolution. He died, a bishop, in Paris in 1812.
- 51 O'Callaghan, *Annales*, 45, p. 195.
- 52 CMAR. Richenet was born in 1759, arrived in China 1801, returned to France 1815 and became an Assistant General. He died in 1836. For two interesting items about him see *Colloque* 5, p.34 and 6, p. 30. Fr Philippe must refer to Jean-Baptiste Philippe (1752-1811) who had been director of the Daughters of Charity before the Revolution, and after their re-establishment was again involved with them. The DC motherhouse was in the rue du Vieux Colombier, Paris, for a time. Joseph-Mansuet Boullangier CM was born in 1758. He was bursar in the Séminaire de Saint-Firmin in Paris in 1789, and on the eve of the September Massacres there he was forcibly pulled out of the kitchen by the butcher's boy and others, and so escaped the massacre.
- 53 See *Mémoires de la Congrégation de la Mission*, tome VIII, Paris 1866, p. 89, where the quoted lines are printed in brackets. Jean-Joseph Ghislain was born in Belgium in 1751 and spent all his priestly life in China, where he died in 1812. Louis Lamiot was born in the diocese of Arras in 1767, was ordained in Macao in 1791 and died there in 1831.
- 54 This extract is on page 95 of the volume mentioned in the previous note. It is part of a very long letter. Brunet was born in 1731 and died in Paris in 1806. For François-Régis Clet see note 17 above.
- 55 *In Dictionnaire du Personnel de la CM 1625-1800*, a large manuscript work in CMAP, there is a note, attributed to Chanoine Le Mâle of Bayeux, on Le Grand's movements from 1791 in Bayeux to 1796 in London. Also in CMAP are the Hanon note and a copy of the extract from the archives of the MEP. Le Grand does not figure in any of the

- articles which Jerome Twomey CM wrote about *émigré* French Vincentians in England, nor in the supplementary notes to JT's article written by Fernand Combaluzier CM, in *Annales* 123 (1958). In Healy: *Maynooth College; Its Centenary History*, 1895, p. 718 there is a note saying that nothing in the college records indicates whether Le Grand was a priest or layman.
- 56 This letter is in the archives of the diocese of Clogher, together with other Delahogue papers; I did not find there any other reference to Ferris.
- 57 This letter is on page 304 in the volume mentioned in note 50. Lady Clifford was a prominent English noblewoman. She was in Altona at this time. A historian told me that "she had a finger in every ecclesiastical pie".
- 58 CMAR.
- 59 *Ibid.*
- 60 *The Irish Magazine and Monthly Asylum for Neglected Biography*, March 1808, pp. 100ff. The same magazine, in May 1808, carried a frontispiece an engraving of EF. In its issue for December 1809 it reported EF's death and reprinted most of the March 1808 article, without adding anything new. In its issue for January 1810 it carried an obituary on Fr Paul O'Brien, Professor of Irish in Maynooth, which contained the following: "Maynooth, at that period, may be said to be in its meridian splendour; the celebrated Flood was its president, Clinch graced the chair of rhetoric, and the great, the learned, Ferris was its dean".
- 61 Conwell, *op. cit.*, p. 51.
- 62 These letters are in the archives of the diocese of Limerick.
- 63 John Begley, Parish Priest of Kilmallock, sent a copy of this letter to Patrick Boyle CM in 1929. He said that he had got the original about 1925 from a grand-nephew of a Fr McCormack who had been a curate of Fr Tim McCarthy at the time of the latter's death. Enquiries have failed to discover what became of Begley's papers after his death. His letter to Boyle is in CMAD.
- 64 The Kenny original is in CMAD. The Collet referred to is Pierre Collet CM, who published a very important life of St Vincent de Paul in 1748. He wrote over fifty books, mainly theological. On the death of Tournely he completed his course of moral theology and of the fifty-three volumes of the work seventeen are by Collet. He was a professor in Saint-Lazare when EF was a student.
- 65 O'Callaghan, *Annales* 45, p. 197. Meyler entered Maynooth in 1799 at the age of seventeen. He was ordained there in 1807 for Ferns, his native diocese. In 1808 he transferred to Dublin and ministered in the old metropolitan chapel in Liffey Street, and then in the new Pro-Cathedral. In 1833 he was moved to Westland Row, and remained there until his death in 1864; he had been named Dean in 1839. He had been in Maynooth for eight of the ten years which EF spent there.
- 66 I have obtained a photostat of the article for CMAD. In Healy: *Maynooth College: Its Centenary History*, 1895, p. 205, it is suggested that Milesius was Miles Gaffney, Dean in Maynooth from 1834 till 1855, when he left to join the Jesuits.
- 67 *Eighth Report of the Commissioners of Irish Education Enquiry*, London 1827, p. 357.
- 68 I have not been able to find a copy of this book anywhere.
- 69 Quoted in *Maynooth College Calendar 1884-85*, p. 159. In France the Vincentians are known as Les Lazaristes, from the name of their former motherhouse Saint-Lazare.
- 70 JBC, a layman, was Professor of Belles Lettres in Maynooth from October 1795. In 1798 he became Professor of Rhetoric, and later also of Humanity. He resigned in 1802. This sonnet, with the accompanying note, have been inserted, presumably by the author, into TMcN's manuscript history of the origins of the Irish Province of the Vincentians.
- 71 O'Callaghan, *Annales* 45, p. 197. Details of clothing in this portrait are different from those in the engraving done for *The Irish Magazine*. As the engraving was published in

1808 it was obviously done from life. It is not clear whether the portrait was also done from life, or was posthumously done from the engraving. It would seem more likely that it was copies of the engraving which the students took with them.

- 72 CMAR. The phonetic spelling of Maynooth is interesting. According to Healy's *Maynooth College. Its Centenary History*, Dublin 1895, Eloy did not succeed Ferris. Ferris was Dean 1798-1801 (p. 702), and Professor of Moral Theology 1801-1809 (p. 708). François Eloy was Vicar General of an unspecified diocese in France and was Professor of Sacred Scripture 1808-09 (p. 712), and of Ecclesiastical History 1808-09 (p. 714). He resigned both posts on 5 July 1809 (pp. 712, 714). Ferris died on 26 November 1809.
- 73 Original in CMAD.
- 74 The Latin version printed on page 39 of *Castleknock College Centenary Record 1835-1935* has been inaccurately transcribed in places. The correct version is printed on page 316 of *St Vincent de Paul and the Vincentians in Ireland Scotland and England, A.D. 1638-1909*, by Patrick Boyle CM, London 1909.
- 75 Mary Purcell eventually abandoned her hope of writing a full biography of Richard because there were many points about which she could not discover adequate evidence. She therefore collected what she had already researched into a long article which was printed in the *Journal of the Kerry Archaeological and Historical Society*, N^o 18, 1985, pages 5-77: *Richard Ferris, 1754-1828*. It was also available as a booklet.

Prayer in the Congregation

A talk given at the CIF course, Paris

Richard McCullen CM

Introduction

It was the historian Daniel-Rops who remarked about St Vincent that the great charitable works he launched surround him like a forest, while his humility envelops him like a fog and consequently one can experience a certain difficulty in seeing the monumental man that is Vincent de Paul in his totality. The man -and the saint - would seem to be too big for the screens of our minds. However, difficult it may be to measure the dimensions of this spiritual giant, the source of his prodigious energies and activities are open for all to see. They lie in the intensity of his own personal union with Jesus Christ, through whom he had access to the Father, and the throne of grace where he was able to receive “mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” (1) His great works of charity and the breadth of his apostolates are evidence that he did receive much mercy and grace in time of need.

The works of his hands are his greatest monument to both the intensity of his union with God and to his devotion to prayer. It must be said however, that he was not directly nor precisely communicative about his own inner life of prayer. Of its intensity there can be no doubt: it can be gleaned from the burning sincerity of his spontaneous observations in his conferences and in his voluminous correspondence. The fruit cannot flourish unless it abide in the vine;” I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing.”(2) A gloss on that text fell from his lips when at a conference on one occasion he remarked; “One knows those who do their prayer well, not merely in the way they recount it, but still more by their actions and by their behaviour by which they show the fruit they draw from it.” (3)

Looking back on the decades of years that have passed since I first entered the Congregation and what my experience of prayer has been, – I came to the conclusion that the entries into the Lord’s book of judgment on my prayer must appear in his eyes often shallow, superficial and hollow.

Although it is a fictitious dialogue (and very recently I saw how another speaker has referred to it) there is a short dialogue in the 1948 film entitled ‘Monsieur Vincent’ with Pierre Fresnay as Monsieur

Vincent. St Vincent is already an elderly man, and Queen Anne of Austria is evoking some of the great work for the poor that St. Vincent has done in his lifetime. St Vincent mutters ‘I have done nothing...’ The Queen continues to list some of the institutions and works that he has established – the Ladies of Charity, the Daughters of Charity, The Tuesday Conferences... Again St Vincent mutters “I have done nothing...” At this point the Queen becomes impatient with him, and says “If you, M Vincent, say that you have done nothing in your lifetime - what must the rest of us do?” The Saint suddenly lifts his head and with piercing black eyes looks at the Queen and speaks one word “D’avantage.” “More”...

There are few of us (at least speaking personally) who, on looking back over our years in the Congregation, would not agree that more time could have been to reflective prayer, more attention to the quality of my prayer, more honesty in relating the mountain of prayer to the market place of action, more time to assessing the performance of the previous day’s actions and reactions, more time to taming what St Teresa of Avila calls “the fool of the house” and St Vincent “the vagabond”, namely, imagination. So what I have to offer you on my experience of prayer will not be particularly enriching, representing as it does the shallowness and superficiality of much of my own.

Prayer; in the context of the end of the Congregation

The articles on prayer in our Constitutions (4) must be seen and considered in the context of the entire body of our Constitutions and Statutes – and in the light of the traditions of our community. If you want a summary of our Constitutions and their contents in nuclear form – then one has to go no further than the very first article of our Constitutions which treats of the end or purpose of our Congregation. The article could be said to subsume all the rest.

Of all the articles of our Constitutions more time and thought was given to the formulation of this first article than to any other. The crafting of that first article with its three short subsections were given much time during the two sessions of the first post-Vatican II General Assembly – 1968/1969 – as well as at the General Assemblies of 1974 and of 1980 – before the wording of that first article was approved and passed by the delegates at those assemblies.

The difficulty was occasioned, firstly, by a certain reluctance to change the end of the Congregation as formulated by St Vincent. He had proposed a three-fold end; firstly, the purpose or end was to study our own perfection, namely, to practise to the best of our ability the virtues which the great Master has by word and example to teach us, 20 to preach the Gospel to the poor chiefly the country people. 30 to help

ecclesiastics in the acquiring the knowledge and the virtues which their state demands.

It was felt that it was more precise to have one comprehensive end. And after hours and hours of debate followed by the composition of carefully prepared and revised drafts over and over again – a definitive version was approved. The final version was only approved at the General Assembly of 1980, – a process that had begun, as I have already noted, with the first session of the General Assembly of 1968.

Much discussion centred on the phrase ‘evangelisation of the poor.’ It was and is a key phrase. So much so that if one was to ask any member of our Congregation what was the end or purpose of the Congregation of the Mission – the short answer would be “the evangelization of the poor.” True enough, but hardly precise enough. The opening sentence must be read carefully. For the end of the Congregation is not immediately the evangelization of the poor.

What the Assembly and the Holy See approved was that the end of the CM is the following of Christ evangelizing the poor. Sometimes in the intervening years I have felt that by giving the short answer – the end of the Congregation is the evangelisation of the poor – the emphasis is put on the work and not on the person that gives meaning to the work, – Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. The person of Jesus Christ must come before the work of Jesus Christ. And the formulation states that truth. Certainly the person of Jesus Christ was supreme for St Vincent. One of the first truths I learned from our Director in the Internal seminar when he presented and began to comment on the book of Common Rules – was how much St Vincent emphasised that each chapter began with an evocation of the person of Jesus.

Prayer; its importance for the life of the Congregation

In St Vincent’s vision of the Congregation Jesus Christ – crucified and Risen – is the Alpha and Omega of its existence. To quote St Vincent’s own phrase “Jesus Christ is the Rule of the Mission” and since it is by faith and prayer that we relate to the person of Jesus Christ, then the Congregation will continue to exist as long as the practice of prayer exists in the community. The Congregation of the Mission, he once said, will last as long as the practice of prayer is faithfully adhered to, because prayer is an unassailable rampart which will protect missionaries from all kinds of attack. “It is a mystical arsenal, like the tower of David, which will give them all sorts of arms, not only to defend themselves but also to attack and to rout all the enemies of the glory of God and the salvation of souls.” (5)

Although the pages of St Vincent’s writings and correspondence are peppered with references to prayer – its importance and its efficacy, –

one will not find him entering deeply into the theology of prayer. That is not to say that St. Vincent had not studied the theology of prayer. There are sufficient indirect references to the topic that reveal that he was familiar with some of the great writers on prayer.

Prayer: gift and mystery

When the late Pope John Paul II looked back on his life as a priest, he wrote a short book on the occasion of the golden jubilee of his priesthood which he entitled 'Gift and Mystery'. I would hazard a guess that for M Vincent, Prayer was both Gift and Mystery.

No doubt – like any thoughtful Christian – St Vincent in his mature years would from time to time have reminded himself of that April day in 1581 when in the parish church of Dax the waters of baptism were poured on his infant head. Immediately, the Spirit of God took up residence in his soul, and the first spark of the agapé of God which would in later life burn so brightly and warmly in his soul, was enkindled. The agapé of God, wrote St Paul in his letter to the Romans has been poured into our heart by the Spirit that has been given to use..." (6)

Later on in his life he would have reflected upon and prayed that very striking statement from St Paul in his letter to the Romans. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us." (7) Or, there is also that equally astounding sentence in his Letter to the Galatians: We are adopted sons with full rights. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls "Abba! Father!" (8)

Prayer is both a gift of extraordinary value and a mystery of unfathomable depth. Through prayer we are in direct contact with the living, eternal and all-loving God. And when you say 'God' you say 'Mystery'. And mystery in theological language is a revealed truth which we cannot comprehend.

So Christian prayer is both a mystery and a reality of unfathomable depth. Pope Benedict, speaking in Prague in September some weeks ago, remarked that, for Christians, "Truth has a name: God. And goodness has a face: Jesus Christ". In prayer we try to place ourselves – as we say – in the presence of God, that is, in the presence of truth. And the truth of God is mystery. In prayer we also seek goodness. The face of goodness is Jesus Christ. In the presence of Truth and in the presence of Goodness we are immersed in the mystery of God. Significantly, St Augustine considered humility to be the core of Christ's mystery

One of the many definitions of prayer is that it is a loving awareness of the presence of God. A true mystic will have an acute and an abiding awareness of the enveloping presence of God. The first act of meditation according to St Vincent is to make oneself aware of the presence of

God and he suggests that it be done – to quote his words at the repetition of prayer on the 16th August 1655 – according to one of the four ways the Blessed Francis de Sales teaches. (9) An habitual awareness of the presence of God throughout the day can be a measure of one’s progress in prayer. In the very first paragraph of our Constitutions the person of Christ is explicitly mentioned four times in two very short paragraphs. (10)

Prayer; Revolutionised by the Sacrament of Baptism

It is the person of Christ Jesus, the Lord, who has revolutionized for the whole of humanity the experience of what it is to pray. It is Christ Jesus, the Lord, who has revealed to us humans a new depth of mystery in the experience of praying. And like all the revelations of God – it is an enriching and empowering mystery, the depths of which we will never fathom in this life. Christ Jesus, the Lord, has revealed and assured us of two new dimensions to the experience of speaking to God in prayer, and of which St Vincent was undoubtedly conscious.

Through baptism we are we plunged into sharing in a created way in the inner intimate life of the Trinity. Are we not baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

- *THE FIRST NEW DIMENSION TO PRAYER* BY reason of BAPTISM is to introduce and incorporate us into the mystery of the inner life of God. We are children, adopted children of the loving Father from whom every gift comes, and invited and empowered to share in the perpetual and unceasing dialogue share in the dialogue of the three Persons of the Trinity. Our Lord reminds us that “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and *we will come* to him and make our home with him”. (11) For St Paul it is clear that He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, “according to the good pleasure of his will...” (12)
- *THE SECOND NEW DIMENSION* to prayer which the Incarnate Word of God revealed to humanity is that as an adopted child of our Heavenly Father the Christian never prays alone. So you are no longer a slave but a child, writes St Paul, and if a child then also an heir, through God. (13) It is one of the deeply distinctive features that marks a prayer offered by a Christian from one uttered by a non-Christian. It is St Paul who assures the Christians of Rome, that it is the Holy Spirit within us who helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. (14)

In a word, we do not know what to pray for, nor how to pray but the Spirit of God – who in the words of the Church’s Pentecost Sequence is ‘the soul’s delightful Guest’ – is ever prompting, whispering, nudging, suggesting, motivating, stimulating and inspiring us to speak to Christ, the Lord, and through him to our loving Father, who is all ears for his children. It is why we do well to set aside a little time every day at the beginning of our meditation to allow the Spirit of God to speak to us.

Divine Adoption; its foundational relevance to the charism of St Vincent

One may ask how that basic scriptural insight, namely that through baptism we become adopted children of our Father in Heaven and joint heirs of the Kingdom with Christ, is related to the spirituality that St Vincent proposed to us in order to realize the end of the Congregation? ‘Because we are children of God’; one may ask if that was the reason why St Vincent laid such stress on the evangelical virtue of simplicity for those who would be pupils at his school? In the hierarchy of the five virtues which constitute the spirit of our Congregation – evangelical simplicity is given the primacy, both for the Congregation of the Mission and for the Daughters of Charity.

Furthermore, he made the striking statement on two occasions that simplicity was ‘his gospel.’ God has given me such an appreciation of simplicity that I call it my gospel. (15) And on another occasion: “Simplicity is the virtue I love the most and to which, I think, I pay the most attention in my actions; and if it is permissible for me to say so, I would say that I am practicing it with some progress by the mercy of God”. (16) In the Common Rules, one of the most important of the Gospel maxims for St Vincent is “that God likes to deal with the simple, and that he conceals the secrets of heaven from the wise and prudent of this world and reveals them to little ones”. (17) In the final chapter of the Common Rules, he returns again to the subject of evangelical simplicity. He regards it as the principal and most characteristic virtue of missionaries, seeing it as all important in the proclaiming of the word of God to the people. (18) In the context of preaching, St Vincent invokes evangelical simplicity frequently.

The virtue of evangelical simplicity is a wide and comprehensive one, as he himself stated and St Vincent found many practical forms of application, particularly in the manner of preaching, where emphasis was laid on simplicity of style of speaking and a shunning of all forms of speech and of words that concealed rather than revealed the truth of God and the teaching of the Church.

I know well that simplicity in general is taken as truth, or purity of intention: truth in so far as it make our words and other expressions conform to our thoughts; purity of intention, because it makes all our

acts tend straight to God. But when one takes simplicity as a particular virtue and in the proper sense, it includes not just purity and truth but also the property it has of excluding from our words and actions all deceitfulness, ruses and duplicity. (19)

In this reflection I am considering simplicity in its most radical form of truth, and a determination to act at all times with God alone in view – a phrase, as I have already mentioned, very dear to our Founder.

Seeing that gospel simplicity was so pivotal for M Vincent, we may ask if are we to see it as the principal means by which he fanned into a flame the fire of charity that he had received in baptism and that in time would earn for him the title ‘Apostle of Charity.’

...virtues, whose excellence is unfathomable. (20)

We may surmise that St Vincent’s prayer would have developed into the prayer of an infinitely loved child, so much did he emphasise at all times the importance of the virtue of evangelical simplicity. His vision of God through his ever firmer faith would have led him into a vision similar to that of 19th century Jesuit poet who wrote:

Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men’s faces.

One might indeed ask if St Vincent de Paul could be considered as a precursor of St Thérèse of Lisieux in his espousal of a *Little Way*?

Simplicity was a cardinal virtue for St Vincent, increasingly so as the years advanced. Very markedly so in his addresses to the community during his final years, the evangelical virtue of simplicity with that of humility is stressed;

Let’s give ourselves sincerely to God, let’s work hard to acquire virtue, particularly humility – yes humility; let’s earnestly ask God to be pleased to give this virtue to the Little Company of the Mission. Humility – yes, humility – I repeat, humility. (21)

Both of these virtues were hall-marks of the short life of her whom we know as *The Little Flower*. Littleness before God and others was everything for St Thérèse. St Vincent, for his part, had an almost inordinate love for the word ‘little.’ His Congregation was a ‘Little Company’, the method of preaching to be followed by his priests he styled ‘the Little Method.’ His recurrent illnesses were referred to as ‘my little fever.’ I like to cite a few sentences that he addressed in a letter to St Louise. Let me present it in a fully literal translation; “My little indisposition is not my ordinary little fever, but a little pain in the leg. It was caused by a little kick from a horse, and a little swelling which had commenced a

week or two before that. It is such a little thing that were it not for the little tenderness it is causing I would not fail to go into town". (22)

Conclusion;

To conclude and to sum up: in any reflection on a person's prayer we commence with the fundamental truths of our faith, namely, that every Christian is one who by reason of baptism possesses in the depths of his/her being, the Spirit of God who empowers each one to address with confidence and as a much loved child, the eternal, loving God.

Hence the Christian never prays alone. The prayer of the Christian is an admission into a loving dialogue with the persons of the Holy Trinity. It is inspired and supported by the indwelling Spirit of God. Let me leave you with a fragment of a letter that St Vincent wrote to a priest:

Your heart is too good to be placed in such bad hands as mine. I am also aware that you have given it to me only to commend it to Our Lord, to whom it belongs and toward whose love you want it to tend constantly. From this time on, may that loving heart belong only to Jesus Christ, fully and always, in time and in eternity! Please ask Him to give me a share of the candor and simplicity of your heart because I have very great need of these virtues, whose excellence is unfathomable. (23)

NOTES

- 1 Hebrews 4:16
- 2 John 15:5
- 3 SV 11 34
- 4 Articles 40-50
- 5 SV 11: p. 83-84; French or Vol. 11: p.76 Eng tr.
- 6 Romans 5:5
- 7 Romans 8:26
- 8 Gal 4:5-6
- 9 St Vincent at this repetition of prayer comments briefly on some of the 'acts' of prayer outlined by St Francis de Sales. SV 11: 232 ff. English edition.
- 10 Cf. *Constitutions* Chapter IV n. 40
- 11 John 14:23
- 12 Ephesians 1:3-5
- 13 Galatians 4:6-7
- 14 Romans 8: 26-27
- 15 SV 9: 606, SV 1:284
- 16 SV 1: Eng. 1:265 (Eng) ; letter 188
- 17 Gal. 4:5-6
- 18 *Common Rules* 12:5
- 19 SV 12:172 (French)

20 SV 6: Letter 2176, English Edition.

21 SV. 11:340-342 French edit. and 346-349 Eng edit.

22 SV 108, Letter 69

23 SV 6: Letter 2176, English Edition.

Folleville 1617 – What was its impact?

Bernard Koch CM

This is a translation, by the editor, of a piece written by Fr Koch and submitted to Colloque at the suggestion of Fr Richard McCullen

For many years the Congregation of the Mission has marked the 25th January, 1617, as being the date of the first mission sermon of St Vincent and the origin of the congregation eight years before the foundation contract of the congregation. This celebration rests on a phrase of M Vincent himself. Yet what was it in reality, in its facts and in the spirit of St Vincent. The first printed text which offers the sermon of Wednesday, 20th January, 1617 at Folville as the first sermon of the mission is taken from a conference of M Vincent and inserted without a date by Abelly in his first *Life of the Venerable Servant of God* in chapter 8 of the first book, page 34. But as it's not dated, it tells us little of what happened and was actually said by M Vincent; we can only draw on dated texts.

So let us open the work of M Coste, year by year... We must first state that we can only draw on the texts which remain in our possession, knowing that the Sack of St. Lazare on 13th July, 1789, caused between two thirds and four fifths of what was kept in the archives to disappear: of almost 8,000 letters known to M Collet before the Revolution there now remains only about 2,500; of the weekly conferences to the Missioners and to the Sisters, many of which were taken down more or less regularly (from 1640 by the Sisters and from 1650 by the missioners) there only remain 120 Conferences to the Sisters and 145 Conferences and Repetition of Prayers to the Missioners. Whatever he was able to say or write in the lost documents is inaccessible to us and we cannot draw on it... But what remains to us merits consideration; it is still an imposing volume.

Contrary to what has been written, the earliest texts which have come down to us attest that he had preached and undertaken general confession long before 1617 in the Gondi lands. Abelly states explicitly (1): "He was evangelising and catechising the Gondi peasants well before 1617". Of the texts of St Vincent from this period, preserved by him, only 4 have come down to us.

- A major sermon on the catechism, with its outline sketched at the beginning, not given by Coste, allowing us to claim that it was given at Joigny at the end of March or beginning of April 1716 at the request of M de Gondi on the occasion of his taking possession of

- his seigniorial seat (SV, XIII, 25-30).
- Two sermons on Communion between 1613 and 1616 (XIII, 31-37).
 - and, still more pertinent, a request for power with regard to General Confession dated Monday, 20th June, 1616, addressed to the Vicar-General of Sens with the affirmative response on the same sheet, seven months before Folleville (SV, I, 20-21),

This corroborates Abelly's account, so why do we continue to claim that it was the peasant of Gannes who led him to discover the spiritual misery of the countryside? He had discovered it well before that.

Nearly a year beforehand, in the spring of 1616, we discover, in his sermon on the catechism, what the young Vincent already knew; the role played by lay people in the church, in particular by the nobility, by virtue of the power which they had had since the Pragmatic Sanction of Bourges promulgated by Charles VII (coming from an assembly of the clergy with representatives of Pope Eugene IV which accorded to the Kings the power to "recommend" to the Pope and Bishops those to be nominated or elected to ecclesiastical posts and an overseeing role for nobles on the exercise of ministry). We know that he had been named as parish priest of Gamaches near Rouen on Friday, 28th February, 1614 put forward by Emmanuel de Gondi: "The benefice of the parochial church of Gamaches in the deanery of that name in the diocese of Rouen, left vacant by the death of Master Robert Salles, priest, its last rector and happy possessor, was made by M Guyon, Vicar-General of Rouen to the gentleman, Master Vincent de Paul, priest of the diocese of Dax, present and accepting, verified by exam and found sufficient, by offer of the generous and powerful gentleman, the Lord Emmanuel de Gondy, Count of Joigny, Baron du Plessis etc."

The parish of Gamaches was a dependency of the Parony of Plessis-Ecouis and it was by the same M Gondy that he was named Canon of Ecouis on 27th May, 1615 (SV, XIII, 19-22). Vincent himself tells us that it was the same M Gondy that gave him the mission of preaching his sermon on the catechism; this time he did not alter his phrase and M Coste has published it: "I have not entered the pulpit to preach a sermon to you as you are accustomed to, but to tell you something about the catechism because my lord the count desires this with the permission of you kind parish priest M le Curé...with the intention of discussing matters of faith with them such as they are here, knowing that God has not only established their lordships to receive the respect and rents of their subjects but to administer justice for them to maintain religion and to make them love, serve and honour God and to learn His holy will.

At Folleville, his principal impact was upon Madame de Gondi, since it was she who had discovered the spiritual misery of a man from one of

her villages, Gannes, and doubtless of other people, which M Vincent himself had known since 1614 without speaking about it, in order to respect the privacy of conscience of the faithful. This discovery urged Madame to support and encourage Vincent in the mission in revealing to him from herself what he, bound by the secrecy of the confessional could not say.

In fact, at Folleville, it was Mme de Gondi who was the ‘Lord’, being Baroness of Montmirail, Lady of Folleville etc. What do we read in the declarations of Vincent?...the following, which were said at an interval of three years and which are similar to what he said from the pulpit in 1616. The first from 25th January, 1655; “This good lady...considering the peril in which these poor souls were, decided, in order to remedy this evil to have a sermon preached to them dealing with the manner of making a good general confession and the necessity there was to make at least one of these during one’s life” (SV, XI, 170). The second on 17th May, 1658, “One day I was called to go and hear the confession of a poor man who was dangerously ill and who had the reputation of being the best or at least one of the best men in his village. He found however, that he was weighed down by sins which he had never dared to admit in confession, which he admitted himself completely later in the presence of the noble “Mme La Générale of the Galleys” saying to her “Madame, I was damned if I had not made the general confession because of the grave sins that I had dared not confess”. This man died soon afterwards and the same lady having recognised in this the necessity for general confession desired that I would give a sermon the following day on this subject” (SV, XII, 7-8).

He was to say it again many other times; we know that during the Sack of St Lazare on 13th July, 1789, books and archives were thrown out the windows and an enormous part of them disappeared, with little remaining when the missionaries returned. Here also, it is Madame who gave him the task of preaching this sermon and she also took part in what followed.

The other impact was on M Vincent himself, not only in offering confirmation for the role of the nobility – throughout his life, he took care to maintain links with the nobles and the local authorities – but also by an apparently totally new discovery; one did not undertake the mission alone but with other priests in a team. It took a long time before he came to highlight this date. But on the two occasions when he speaks of it, he underlines this necessity; on the 17th May 1658 we note:

The said lady, having recognised in this the necessity for general confessions, desired that I should preach the next day on this topic. I did so and God gave it so many blessings that all of the inhabitants

of the place immediately made general confession, and such was the demand, that it was necessary to have two Jesuit fathers come to help me to hear confessions, to preach and to catechise; which was the reason that we continued the same practice in the other parishes in the lands of said lady for several years until she finally desired to support priests to continue the mission.

It has been said that it is through humility that Vincent declares several times that none of this came from him. Certainly, he never sought to push himself forward but it is also important to recognise the role played by Monsieur in 1616 and by Madame in 1617. “Decided”, “desired”, “wished”; such repetition shows us the real situation – he was the real initiator, but he received his mission and confirmation from the Lords of these places.

One confirmation both of his humility and hesitation and of the decisive role of Mme de Gondi is found in her will of 25th February, 1619. It was not to Vincent that she left the means of assuring the future of the missions but to the Jesuits or the Oratorians, Vincent not feeling himself up to the task of ensuring in a lasting way a body of missionaries.

Item The said lady gives, leaves and wills one thousand livres in rent to be taken from fruits and revenue in her lands in Picardie, Montmirail and Champagne, to be used for the sick poor of the Association of Charity which is or will be established in these said lands and to have the Jesuit Fathers or Fathers of the Oratory go on mission once a year in order to bring plenary indulgences and to instruct and catechise the people during their stay in these said places.

In this paragraph we note the linking of the Conferences or Associations of Charities with the preaching. This was the proper style of the missions of M Vincent and their necessary conclusion which made their fruits endure. This was not the style of the missionary institutes and Jesuits and Oratorians avoided it.

It was thus that she succeeded in persuading Vincent to undertake to found such an association himself. So it turns out that 25th January marks neither the discovery by Vincent of the moral misery of the people, nor the beginning of his mission, but the beginning of the Congregation of the Mission, even if it was only financially founded on 17th April, 1625 and realistically by the Contract of Association with the first four missionaries on 4th September, 1626, but in fact it is from this date 25th January that M Vincent gave his missions along with companions in the apostolate. The first phrase of M Vincent in

the Repetition of Prayer on 25th January, 1655 which is the only text which remains to us commemorating this date is clear even though it is “subtle”. M Vincent told us at the end of the Repetition of Prayer that the company had come together for four “ends”; the first to thank God, for the same company in general since it had pleased God to begin the mission on such a day as the day of the conversion of St. Paul, the finest sermon having been given by him to encourage the people to make general confession at the request of Madame la Générale of the Galleys to which sermon God had given many blessings” (SV,XI, 169).

It does not say “was the beginning of the Missions” but “was the beginning of the Mission”, we note that the capital letter was not inserted at that time, it only dates from the printing of the 20th Century so it does not signify anything in itself; what is significant is the use of the singular rather than the plural.

We could compare this with the starting dates for people who live “unofficially” for nine months before being born and receiving their identity.

Therefore, it is really the anniversary of their coming into existence that the Priests and Brothers of the Mission celebrate; something more significant than the Contract of Foundation which really only sanctioned or made official what had existed in practice for 8 years.

The Irish College, Paris

Mary Morrissy

From “An Irishwoman’s Diary”, THE IRISH TIMES 9th July 2011

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It’s a courtyard in the French style. From the street outside, the tourist passes through a stone archway wide enough for a coach and four and into an expansive sun-trap, sheltered on three sides by the wings of an 18th-century hotel-style mansion.

Deep red bistro chairs and tables are scattered across the tended gravel; crows bicker in the burgeoning foliage of the chestnut trees. Paris and its clamour seems a world away.

Only the bell in the clock-tower that marks the hours, plus the names of 29 Irish dioceses inscribed on decorative plaques around the walls, give the clue that this seemingly quintessential Parisian space was once a closely guarded piece of Catholic Ireland. And never more so than during the Second World War when this elegant courtyard was pressed into service – as a potato patch.

At that time it was the Irish College, a seminary set up for the training of Irish priests forced abroad for their education by the strictures of the Penal Laws. In 1939 the superior of the college, Sligo-born Vincentian Father Pat Travers, waved the 70 student priests off on their summer holidays. There were rumours of war, but neither he nor his charges could have believed that it was the end of an era for their alma mater on the Rue des Irlandais. They would never return and the college itself would pass out of Irish hands.

Fr Travers settled into what should have been a quiet off-season. Except the off-season lasted nearly six years, during which he and a cook were the only occupants of the college that had operated since 1775 in the heart of Paris’s Latin quarter, a stone’s throw from the Pantheon. And it was far from quiet.

Within days of the occupation of Paris, a German officer called to the door insisting on requisitioning the college for his troops. Fr Travers insisted equally that the college was Irish property and so exempt from German authority because Ireland had chosen to remain outside the war. A long and heated discussion ensued. “I think,” Fr Travers wrote later, “the officer got tired of the argument. At any rate,” he added rather disingenuously, “he went away under the impression that we were expecting our students back in September.”

In August 1940, Fr Travers received another German visitor - of

a completely different tenor. Speaking perfect English, this German officer told Fr Travers he had lived in Carlow before the war working as an organist and music professor. He was involved in intelligence work which made Fr Travers wary. Luckily, his unnamed visitor would arrive under cover of night, so that Fr Travers did not have to justify this strange and unorthodox wartime friendship. Their discussions were wide-ranging, but mostly Fr Travers's German friend was puzzled by Ireland's neutrality and ebullient about victory. A tour of duty on the Russian front and the Allied landings in Normandy changed that. After Dunkirk, Fr Travers never saw his secret friend again.

The priest's third communication from the Nazis was a summons to broadcast on Radio Paris. But Fr Travers was not about to become another Lord Haw-Haw. "I thought it better not to reply," Fr Travers said, "and the matter was not pursued further." As the war progressed, food became the lone priest's single biggest worry. And here Fr Travers showed himself to be another kind of green hero. While the college boasted quite a bit of ground – enough for a tennis court and handball alley - most of it was hard surface. But the croquet court was under grass, so he set about digging it up. He struck up a friendship with a gardener in the nearby Luxembourg Gardens "as decent a Frenchman as I ever came across".

The gardener acquired eight lorry-loads of good soil and four consignments of decayed leaves, which Fr Travers used as manure for his plot. During the winter of 1940 and spring of 1941 he sowed potatoes and set up a seed-bed where he grew tomatoes, lettuce, cucumber, marrows and Brussels sprouts. He gave away much of it to his neighbours or used it to barter for things he needed. The Irish College cook pickled the excess for use in the winter.

The following year, Fr Travers diversified into chickens but these were not a success. Five of them died over the winter and the survivor was not a good layer. The cook suggested the priest should try his hand at rabbits and soon, as is the way with rabbits, they had as many as 40 or 50. "It was sometimes said that I lived by rearing these," Fr Travers said. "That's not strictly true," he went on in a neat side-step. "The cook carried out that part of our industry and was very successful."

As the war progressed, bombing raids became a nightly occurrence. Hiding in the cellar of the college, Fr Travers recalled his terror. "The college seemed to be rocking above me... Besides the bursting bombs and shells the noise of the planes as they dived down on the target was terrific." When the liberation of Paris finally came, Fr Travers' solitary existence was changed almost overnight. The college was used to repatriate first French, then Dutch and finally Polish prisoners of war. Then with the bishops' permission, he acceded to an American request to use

the college as a clearing centre for refugees of American extraction.

Meanwhile, Fr Travers worked on in his garden. "I harvested my potatoes and tomatoes," he said, "the latter were just ripening during the liberation". The Irish College never operated again as a seminary for Irish priests. After the war, the property was leased to the Polish church which used it until 1997 (Pope John Paul II completed some of his training there). The building was extensively renovated and reopened in 2002 as the Centre Culturel Irlandais, a flagship for Irish art and literature in the French capital.

As for the green-fingered Fr Travers, he eventually made it home in late 1945. He served in Ireland until his death in 1987.

NOTE

During the summer of 1981, the four CM students then studying French at Maynooth (Jay Shanahan, Eamon Devlin, Jerome Ó Drisceoil and Eugene Curran) stayed at the Irish College. While there, we met with an old couple, les Dreché, who remembered Fr Travers from the period of the war. When we returned to Ireland, we mentioned it to him and he recalled them but did not speak further of his time at the College.

Mo Scéal Féin

Jim McCormack CM

[Virginia Woolf brilliantly remarks somewhere that “if you are going to write, you have to kill the angel of the house.” In what follows you may find evidences of slain angels.]

Existence and identity are indeed deep mysteries. For a lot of the time I have scarcely known who I was, what I was, why I was, or even where I was. Thus, firmly contextualised, let me proceed.

I’ve moved along the platform, minded the gap, shaken the bottle, always read the label, taken the rough with the smooth, broken into small groups, flossed on the half-hour, raised up fallen women, bitten bullets, bared my breast half a dozen times to the surgeon’s scalpel, pulled myself together – and here I am, seventy years of age in wonderment as to how I have survived to where I’m at currently.

Astrologically, for what it’s worth, I’m a Taurus, though a snake by Chinese zodiacal computation; a creature revered by the Chinese for its wisdom. Whatever about that, with facetious Mercury acting the lig in Leo, and with my ruler Venus entering my communication zone, and advising me to cut loose from a situation I had out-grown [that would have been the womb] what there was of me began to inch down the birth canal in 1941, emerging on a meteorologically unsettled Friday to put my genius at the world’s disposal. The outcome of World War II was as uncertain at the time as was my own.

Perhaps it was because I emerged during a World War [into a situation that was a stressful time for my mother] that I arrived with a somewhat anxious disposition; though the wider family tree is a more probable suspect. Popular anthropology used to speak of us coming down from the trees; though in the light of modern psychology we know that it’s just as true to say that the trees came down with us - that’s to say our family trees. Of course we are all products of our family trees and of the “stuff” we carry in our genes – which has kept shrinks in a state of frugal comfort since Freud first split that particular atom. It has been suggested to me by one who delves deeply in such matters that I didn’t want to be born – but then, who does *ante factum*? Anyway, the anxiety over the years has morphed into an indeterminate low-level existential unease.

At all events, whether it was the war or the genes, the world has always been a scary place for me – and still is. Because of this I forced

myself to travel, alone if possible; and I have been to so many parts of the world – China [six times], Africa, Japan, the Philippines, America, Antarctica, Australia, the former Soviet Union, and so on, and so on. No matter where I went I felt I didn't belong in the world. This is still the case, and I don't think it has anything to do with heaven being our true homeland.

As to how I understand myself in terms of personality, psyche, and so forth, a *necessary* [read that word again] point of departure for any speculation you care to make about me is that I have seldom, if ever, felt comfortable in my skin; in fact I have always loathed my body, and almost daily for as long as I can remember, have cursed evolution for inflicting me with it.. Of course this is a commonplace human reaction, especially among women, who go to such extremes to alter their physical appearance.

Another aspect of my psychological make-up that must be factored in [and which has been obvious to those who have lived with me] is that my *anima* strongly predominates over my *animus* – at times a source of embarrassment, though there have also been compensations [a lot of life's energies has gone into taming this particular shrew - the Shakespearean allusion will not be lost on some of you]. Arising from the eclipse of the *animus*, and looking back on life, I have often had a strong sense of having been bullied. My closest friends and confidants have always been women, though I have felt no calling to married life [one of the most poignant sights nowadays is catching a glimpse of an old flame struggling with her zimmer in a £1 shop].

As for the rest, I like to think of myself as having an affinity with Hamlet. I rather like the following reflection on Hamlet's character, though I am well-aware that to presume to apply any of it to myself will seem to be insufferably arrogant. I have that much self-insight. Anyway, here goes:

Hamlet was the most gifted character ever to have been portrayed in literature. He successfully feigns insanity, convincing those around him. But his real problem is that he is terrifyingly sane. He sees through everybody and every-thing, but, fatally, can never make up his mind nor see into the future.

Bryan Appleyard, *ST Supplement*, April 4th 2010, p.7

OK, so I'm arrogant – you always knew that, so let it be.

I have often been asked why I became a priest and the simple answer is that I don't know. As a youngster it just seemed the natural thing to do [perhaps that's how "vocation" works, or maybe I was just deluded]. I never really thought of being anything else. I don't recall that the choice

of priesthood was activated by any religious idealism, such as spreading the Gospel, or the like. Nor did any person play a significant role or influence me in this choice. As to why I joined a Religious Community, that is a lot easier to answer. Because the world was such a hostile place, and I wasn't meant to be in it, I sensed that I would need to be protected and taken care of; so if becoming a priest seemed the obvious thing to do, then the next step of joining a Community followed naturally. I do not regret these decisions – quite the contrary; though I don't think of myself as a cleric, and have a dislike of clericalism and much of its discourse; and generally am not comfortable in clerical company.

It's crucial in life to get the big decisions right. I was offered a chance in life and I pursued it purposefully. From my earliest days I have always been a bookworm, and my basic choices facilitated and promoted a natural aptitude I had for study and academic work; while also serving to focus and give shape to those transcendental intimations which we all have.

My most significant spiritual experience? Beyond doubt, being “baptised in the Holy Spirit”, during my association with Charismatic Renewal. I should say something about that. It dates to the 1970s when I would have been in my 30s. I was studying abroad at the time, and was at a low spiritual ebb. As far as I can recall, priesthood meant next to nothing to me then. I remember that I couldn't pray, and was very unhappy as I was caught up in a quite ridiculous infatuation [of course, all infatuations *ipso facto* are ridiculous – the object of mine reckoned that I was unhinged, as indeed in a way I was]. And though I couldn't pray in any conventional sense, I do remember pleading earnestly with the Lord to do something about this situation, and especially to give me the gift of prayer. My plea was answered by a heart-attack, but more importantly, somehow I was steered towards Charismatic Renewal which was *the* buzz spirituality movement in the 1970s. I dragged my feet towards it with a good deal of scepticism, but at some point I asked to be prayed over, and it proved to be a real turning-point in my life – a maturing and especially healing experience in all sorts of ways. I was loosened up extraordinarily with regard to prayer, relationships, and public speaking [both at the lectern and at the dais.] I even began to own priesthood rather more proactively. It also put an end to recurring nightmares and suicidal tendencies. Thanks be to God that little spring of living water continues to flow more than thirty years after the initial experience.

As to what gave me the greatest buzz when I was in the full of my health – that would probably have been standing in front of a 3rd level class and giving a performance. Increasingly, I came to thinking of giving a lecture as a theatrical performance, and if I was “in the zone”

and in full flow, I found it very satisfying to unleash myself in that way. Like everyone else I remember mind-numbing teachers/lecturers, so I was determined not to bore students whatever else.

Nowadays, what gives me a buzz is horse racing, especially the Cheltenham Festival; and there's also still a buzz in taking a companionable lady to a restaurant and treating her generously – in fact being generous in any circumstances gives me satisfaction, for generosity is the most attractive of all human qualities

Tail-piece – having been embodied for just over seventy years, I have come to the conclusion that the three most incomprehensible aspects of creation are firstly, the female psyche, [which would require a separate tract – but then, that has already been magnificently achieved, beyond compare, by e.g. George Eliot in *Middlemarch*]; secondly, the humiliating arbitrarinesses of sexual appetency, and thirdly, the machinations of the bowel. As you may know, it's closely argued in the circles in which Tantric moral theologians rotate, that the bowel is the root of all evil. The reasons for this, though loosely adumbrated in the earliest archaeological shards and palimpsests, nevertheless remain in the domain of mystery; so let us leave them there without further ado, except to remark in passing that the world would have been a very different place if Martin Luther hadn't been plugged so often and for so long. Mao tse dung, by definition, was fated to struggle in the powder room – [please don't e-mail me about this; thank you]; furthermore, Napoleon Bonaparte was a martyr to anal piles, and was crucially distracted by these on the day he met his Waterloo. On such seeming commonplaces do the great events of history and the happiness of millions pivot.

A Sprinkling of Memories; Before I Forget

Sr Joan Tindall DC

Early Childhood and School Days

I don't know whether my mother wanted a girl or not when I was born. She never said. Subsequently, of course, I knew she wanted me. Both my parents did – was I not fruit of their love for each other?

The house where I was born was Burrill House, Park Grove, Knaresborough, near Scriven village. My parents must have moved there not long before that as they were living at Crossgates when my brother, Teddy, was a little boy. He was six years older than me. My first recollection was of the house in Park Grove when I was four or five. Camilla, my sister, was born when I was three.

I saw the light of day on the 12th June 1921 and was christened Joan, Mary, Elizabeth. No one seemed to know where the third name came from, it seems that it was added by the nurse who took me to be baptised.

I wasn't much of a Mary, nor an Elizabeth, but Joan... Joan of Arc had been a soldier and I hero-worshipped her.

I remember my years from 8 to 11 as being happy and carefree. I revelled in "Just William" stories and modelled my life on his – one of gangs, and outlaws and make-belief. I moved from being the hero of the small school, the leader of the gang, to being the hero pilot of World War I flying fighter planes – wearing a leather helmet and goggles that had belonged to my father, flying a make-belief plane made of an electric "screen" fire and a joy stick. I had it rigged up in my bedroom and I spent hours at it.

I had a den in the attic at my Auntie's house in Harrogate. I don't think I was a gangster – I was a freedom fighter – dashing up and down the stairs with a pistol in my belt.

1932 was the year I went to boarding school at the Convent of the Holy Child Jesus in Harrogate. I remember little of my first impressions. The nuns will have eyed me as a challenge to their abilities to make a "lady" out of me!

Although I am writing about me, I wouldn't be who I am if it hadn't been for my mother and father. I like to think that what is nice about me comes from them. My mother, Annie Leondra (known as Leo) was born in 1890. She died on the 4th March 1937 after a long illness. I was 15 at the time and still at school. I don't remember much about her last illness. Camilla and I were at boarding school and were only brought out now and again to see her. She was in bed at 10 Parliament Street (my

Auntie's house over my father's shop in Harrogate) for what seemed to be months, attended day and night by a private nurse. I don't know whether she knew when we came to see her or not. Neither Camilla nor I saw her when she died. One of my uncles came to bring me to the church for the Requiem Mass and the funeral, but he left Camilla in school. They must have thought that was the kindest thing to do. He went back afterwards to bring her to the reception after the funeral.

My father, John Albert, known as Bert, was born in 1885 and died in 1959. He had one brother and three sisters. He had always wanted to be a motor mechanic and had a passion for cars and motor bikes. He had been able to indulge this during the First World War when he served in the Royal Flying Corps as an aircraft mechanic. He had had to make the choice of running a garage or running a jewellery business when his uncle Antonio Fattorini died, his older brother Charlie having gone to be a priest. So it came to be that he took over the shop that he was destined to pass on in time to his son and to his grandsons.

When I was Seventeen

The year was 1937-38 and a new chapter in my life began. School days in Harrogate were behind me and a new adventure awaited me. My father, as always wishing to do the best he could for each of us, had arranged that I should go for a year to finish my schooling in France, to a school run by the Sisters of Charity of Our Lady of Evron in Le Mans. My cousin was at school with these nuns in Filey and I think my father must have heard of their school in France from a French family who exchanged holidays with my cousin's family. I stayed with this family, the Martins, in Le Mans during the holidays.

I remember my father asking me one night at supper how I would like to travel to France. "On the Queen Mary, of course," I answered (that liner being all the latest having just made its maiden voyage to America.) "That's good," he replied, "I just arranged two cabins for us to cross overnight from Southampton to Cherbourg." I remember I enjoyed that voyage and my first few days in France: they were an experience that I wrote about at length in my diary. We spent a couple of days in Cherbourg and then Lisieux on our way to Le Mans.

The year I spent at this school, St Julien, in France, was happy and carefree. The nuns, a Madame Monica and a Miss O'Meara – one of them English and the other Irish – were very kind to me and looked after me well. At that time in France, nuns who were engaged in education were not allowed to wear a religious habit but wore a simple black dress instead, nor were they called "Ma Soeur", but "Madame."

When I returned to England towards the end of 1938, the rumblings of war were already being heard.

I can't remember exactly when I first thought of becoming a Sister of Charity. Certainly it was before I went to France. I was in my mid-teens. I was at boarding school in England with the SHCJ nuns but I was not attracted to them – they were all teachers and I had no desire to be a teacher. What I do remember was passing by a pamphlet rack in the school one day and seeing a CTS booklet about the Sisters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul and I took it to read. That was it! Although I had never seen or spoken to a Sister of Charity, that is what I was going to be. I nurtured this desire for the remaining years at school, and then on through the years of the war.

The War Years

When the war came in September 1939, I was at home looking after the house for my father and brother, my sister was still at school. And it was because my father had no one to look after him that I was exempt from national service and had to wait a further three years before I received my call-up papers for service in the WAAF. This was the culmination of my ambitions – to be a soldier!

In the meantime, I joined the Women's Voluntary Service and experienced the evacuation of children from the bombed areas of London. They would arrive in Knaresborough on the train weary and hungry after travelling all day, lonely and frightened not knowing where they were going. They had left their parents and family, they had left their home to face the unknown. All they had were the clothes they stood up in, a small suitcase, a gas mask round their shoulder and a luggage label with their name on it pinned on the lapel of their coat. We welcomed them as best we could with a hot meal and then they were sent to the families they were to stay with.

Eventually, my call-up papers arrived on 23rd December 1942, I embarked on a train for Gloucester! I arrived at the RAF recruitment camp with a large group of other girls, all of us feeling homesick two days before Christmas.

We were quickly introduced to the way of life, supplied with uniform and given a rank and number. I was ACW2 472406, on 3s/4d a day. We were then posted to Morecambe for what was known as "square-bashing". This was drill and marching and discipline. How to salute and who to salute! The Boarding Houses and Bed and Breakfast places benefited from the hundreds of WAAFs who passed through during this time. After this, I went to RAF Mildenhall in Norfolk to await my Transport Driver training.

Later, I returned to Morecambe to do this. I took my test on a 3 ton lorry and passed out with an Advanced Driving Licence and a notch up in rank to ACW1. Some months later, I was promoted to LACW.

I was then posted to B100 bomber squadron at RAF Lakenheath, which at that time was a satellite station of Mildenhall. I was lucky to have been posted to a squadron rather than a station because it meant I was able to remain with and move about with the squadron throughout my service. These were huge four-engined Stirling bombers, with a crew of eight men who went out every night on bombing sorties over Germany. At one time, I was assigned to driving the Engineer Officer on round the airfield, at another time I was engaged in ferrying the air crews out and back from their planes when they were going over Germany. It would entail an agonising wait in the middle of the night, out on the airfield, for the planes to return, to pick up their crews. One, two, three... we counted them back. But, where was this one? How long should we wait? They didn't come back. There was a scramble then to go and collect their belongings from their huts for safe-keeping. Many a girl's heart was broken on those nights!

The camp was made up of clusters of Nissen huts on different sites. The women and the men had their living quarters quite apart. As did the officers and the non-commissioned officers and other ranks. We lived in a Nissen hut, about 12 or 14 of us, with no privacy at all. We each had a bed and a locker and a shelf – not much more, unless we acquired a couple of discarded bomb boxes to lock things away in. There was a coke burning stove which we lit every night in the centre of the hut to provide warmth. Ablutions took place in a separate block outside. The beds were basic iron beds with a mattress divided into three sections familiarly called “biscuits”, 2 or 3 blankets, a pair of sheets and one pillow. This bedding would be folded up and stacked at the head of the bed each morning. Kit inspection took place regularly and woe betide anyone who didn't have their things clean and neat and tidy with buttons polished.

As D-Day approached, the squadron switched from bombing raids to towing gliders with troops over to the continent. They landed the gliders over northern France.

Following that, we were engaged in flying supplies of arms and ammunition to the French Maquis, the Resistance fighters, in occupied France. Every moonlit night was taken advantage of to drop these supplies by parachute on reception of a signal from the ground.

From Lakenheath, the squadron was posted to RAF North Creak, which is just a mile from Walsingham. The time I spent there gave me a great devotion to Our Lady of Walsingham. I always believe that Our Lady worked a miracle for me in response to my prayers whilst I was there. I had the opportunity to spend time at the shrine, which was then simply the Slipper Chapel with no facilities for pilgrimages. Whilst I was there I met Anne who had married a Walsingham man and had a small child. She was Srs Teresa and Enda Healy's sister and had herself

spent a short time as a Sister of Charity before leaving the Community.

When the war in Europe was over, the aircrew of these bombers took members of their ground crews for a daylight flight over Germany and the Ruhr to witness the damage they had been enabled to do. I was fortunate enough to get a place on one of these flights (it cost me a tin of milk “knocked” off the back of the catering lorry which I was at that time driving). We flew low down over Cologne and I can still see the huge bomb craters that had gone through the roof of the Cathedral and the damage done to the bridges there – and the people, war-weary and beaten, queuing for food in the streets.

It was here, in North Creake, that I switched from ferrying the aircrews to collecting the daily rations from the bakers and other purveyors for the camp. Although my jobs were varied according to need and I would be required to drive anything or anyone in a car, minibus or a lorry. Food rationing was severe, but there were always ways and means of supplementing one’s diet from the local farmers who would kindly sell some of their eggs “under the counter”. We would scour the countryside seeking these friendly people.

My last posting was to RAF Watton, a peace-time camp near Norwich. I left the squadron behind. I left the war-time camp behind and the Nissen hut and the carefree life, to prepare to re-enter “civvy street”. In 1946, I was demobbed and returned home.

I lost no time in going to see Sr Catherine Brunicardi in Boston Spa, which was not far from where I lived, to meet a Sister of Charity for the first time and find out how I should go about entering the Community.

In Community

Sr Vincent Whitty died in the Priory on 16th April, 1947. She was in her late 60s. Her funeral took place the first day after I arrived in the Seminary. I didn’t know anything about Sr Vincent, nor have I learnt anything since but I knew she must have been a faithful Servant of the Poor and a good Sister of Charity. I took her there and then as my patron and prayed to her that day that I would be as faithful to my vocation as she had been. Very often when I have visited Mill Hill since then I have gone down to the cemetery and prayed to her to intercede for me, to obtain for me that fidelity that I had so much admired in her that day of her funeral – that day when I was beginning my new Life.

Any self-confidence that the Air Force had put into me, the Seminary attempted to knock out of me! My philosophy during that year was: “stick it out until you get the Habit and are placed in a House”. But God, in his sense of humour, placed me in the Provincial House refectory and I remained part of the Seminary community for six months after my prise d’Habit!

I learnt later that they intended to place me in Child Care, but fortunately this did not materialise and I was sent to Southend, Darlington, to obtain my School Certificate in preparation for Teacher Training. This I did and obtained a good result with high marks in French. The next stop was Carlisle Place in 1950 in the Secondary Modern School to get some teaching practice with the 11-plus age group with a view to going to Coloma College.

My year in Carlisle Place was an experience. It began by me having to change my community name from Anne to Pauline. Sr Gabriel Langford was my first Sister Servant and she told me that my patron would be St Paul who taught about Jesus to the non-believers, likening the “tearaways” from Pimlico to being in need of some religion.

I had never been attracted to teaching – in fact I didn’t have a bent towards anything in particular, but certainly not that! I evidently didn’t prove to be teaching material because College was cancelled. But I had enjoyed my time with the children. We used have a free afternoon once a week and I would take them to St James’ Park. They would practise all morning how to curtsy in case they met Prince Charles out in his pram! He was only a baby then. I also remember taking them out to Mill Hill – the whole class – for a picnic in the Provincial House garden. A business friend of my father had given me a donation for this purpose. We went down to the field by the cemetery first and they all began to run and run and shout and scream and chase the sheep. The sheep were exhausted before the girls were! I suppose the freedom of the green fields compared to the constricted streets of London exhilarated them and set them off.

Off to a Life’s Work

In August of that year, 1950, I started my life’s work. Sr Joseph McGee was the Visitatrice and I was placed in the Secretariat. As there was already a “Pauline” in the Economat, I resumed the name of “Anne”. Sister Clare MacDonald was First Secretary and was very kind to me; she took seriously the task of preparing me for my First Vows, which I made in May 1952.

In those days, there were special rules for the office (for every office) which were read in common every month. Those for the Secretariat stated that a secretary is a “pen”, in other words merely an instrument in the background to convey the Visitatrice’s wishes. In Mill Hill we didn’t use pens, we had manual typewriters, but when I was placed in the Mother House Secretariat in the late fifties, I was literally a “pen” as all letters were written by hand. I spent hours trying to adopt a “community” handwriting – without a lot of success.

During those eight years, Sr Joseph McGee finished her turn of

office and Sr Margaret Whalen succeeded her. Sr Margaret had been my first Directress and although she was very kind at heart she was stern. Customs in those days were nonsensical and she treated me as if I were still a Seminary Sister. I remember once she had sent a circular round the Province asking for Sisters to volunteer for a particular foreign mission. Why hadn't I volunteered? Because, I told her, I did not feel I had a vocation for the missions. This then brought a lecture on my head for my want of generosity. I took this very much to heart and later, when I went on my first visit to the Mother-House to make a retreat and accompany a group of Seminary Sisters who were going to spend some weeks there before receiving the Habit, I told Most Honoured Mother I wished to volunteer for the missions. On my return to Mill Hill, I proudly told Sr Margaret what I had done. This then brought another tirade on my head for daring to do such a thing!

In the early 1950s, I went into St Vincent's, Ladbroke Terrace, a private Nursing Home run by our Sisters, on two successive years for major operations. Here again, Sr Margaret was strict. In assuring me that she would help me to quickly recover, she told me that the first thing I was to remember was that I resumed life as normal and that I never talked about my operations!

For all that, I loved and admired Sr Margaret and my years with her were very happy ones. She was always very kind. She couldn't allow herself to show weakness, even in her last illness, but kindness was always there.

I typed *Echos*, I typed circulars, I sent out Death Notices – endlessly it seemed. I typed all these things on stencils and duplicated them on a Gestetner machine.

The Mother House

1958 brought my first big change. At the time it didn't seem to be anything other than the norm of community life and a use of the French I had learnt at school in France, but looking back on it a pattern would emerge. I was changed to the Secretariat in the Mother House to assist and eventually replace Sr Mary Rafferty, the then English Secretary, who was ailing.

Here again, I found understanding and encouragement from the First Secretary, Marcelle Bourraux, who was also my Sister Servant. When I had any queries, whether personal or about work, she would ask me what did I think I should do, what would be my opinion – a thing I had never been asked before! Then she would either tell me to go ahead or tell me what she thought should be done, I began to grow, to feel responsible, to get back my confidence.

There were about twenty Sister Secretaries of different nationalities

in the Secretariat, representing their different Provinces. There were French, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Hungarian and so on. We each had a desk with a sloping top for writing letters. All were in one large room. We made recreation together twice a day – in French – and on the whole got on very well together. This is where I learnt to make rosaries.

I was very happy in Paris. All the correspondence with the Province passed through me and I was responsible for its translation and for passing it through the right channels and back again. Although I said earlier that I had to write the Mother General's replies by hand, this only applied where individual Sisters were concerned in our Province and the American Provinces, the official letters with the Visitatrice were typed on a portable typewriter. Sr Mary Basil, when Secretary for the American Provinces, had received a special permission, which Sr Rafferty had taken advantage of, to use a typewriter. Because it was so special we had to use it in a separate office upstairs and not in the general Secretariat where it would disturb the others. Sr Marie Dubuisson (the American Secretary when I was there) and I shared this office, Sr Mary Basil at that time being the English-speaking General Councillor. She, too, was very good to me.

I was also responsible for the Sisters from our Province who came four times a year for retreats. I would translate the conferences for them, take them to see the Superiors (Mother Lepicard was the Mother General at the time) translate for them when necessary and generally look after them. After the retreat, I would take them round Paris. Although the Seminary Sisters were not entirely my responsibility – they were not even allowed to speak to Habit Sisters nor us to them – I still had an interest in them if and when they needed anything. I used to say to them: "Look at me closely and whenever you see me about, smile at me." In that way, if I saw a Seminary Sister smiling at me, I knew she was one of ours and I returned her smile. Otherwise they all looked the same – hundreds of them! After they received the Habit, I would take them round the Community places in Paris and see them back home again to Mill Hill.

Sr Mary Rafferty had retired from doing active work at the English Desk by now, but she was often in and out and gave me great support. Then one day she had a nasty stroke and had to retire altogether to the Infirmary.

Another of my tasks was to help with the English groups who visited the Chapel. This wasn't very onerous as Sr Margaret Booker, who was placed in the office at the front door, saw to the hands-on part.

I had my last visit from my father whilst I was there. He stopped over in Paris for a few days with my uncle on their way back from Lourdes and Lisieux. Shortly after that he died suddenly of a heart attack whilst

driving his car back to my brother's house after his day's work at the shop. We didn't go home in those days, even for compassionate reasons, so there was no question of me going to the funeral.

The only time I returned to England during the years I was in the Mother House, was to accompany Mother Lepicard on a visit to the Province.

One day during the course of my work, I was going through the Archives of the English Desk and came across an interesting letter. I cannot now remember the date of it, but it was written by the wife of a Church of England vicar in Bristol to the Sister Servant of the Sisters' house in Dieppe. She was explaining how she had gathered together some like-minded women and they had formed a community to serve the poor in their area. She was asking if she could have a pattern of our Habit for them to wear. The Sister Servant addressed the letter on to the then Mother General in Paris for advice. Unfortunately, there was no record of a reply having been sent. I mention this now, because these good women have developed into the community of the Anglican Sisters of Charity with whom we are in contact today many years later. In 1964, when I was in Mill Hill as Provincial Bursar, they wrote to me asking if they could have a pattern of the new coiffe that we finally adopted when we began to show our hair. Needless to say we were happy to send them one! I gave the original letter to one of the Sisters who were following a course in Damascus House when I was there. I hope they kept it.

Vatican II

Then came Pope John XXIII and the announcement of Vatican II.

There was a problem in the Little Company at that time which no one had had the courage to tackle, nor indeed had anyone wanted to disturb it. It was the position of the Spanish communities, now known familiarly as the "Voilé Sisters". When the Community had been disbanded in France, at the time of the French Revolution in the late 1700s, the Sisters in Spain had been left stranded. The Bishops in the dioceses of Spain in which they were situated then took them under their wing, but this meant that they had to become "nuns" and answerable to their diocesan Bishop. Over time their Habit had been modified and the French Cornette adapted to take a veil; hence the name.

I am not sure at what point they came back into the fold when the Community was re-established in France in the early 1800s under Fr Etienne, the Superior General. But I do know that in my early days in Paris we would see some of them now and again when they visited the Mother House. They were still in their black Habits with a veil and were grouped into one large Province.

The problem had now to be faced of bringing uniformity to the Community, which would entail a common Habit and a re-organisation of Provinces. The Sisters in the French Cornette had returned to Spain at some point and formed a Province, so there was one Province of the French Sisters and one Province of the “Voilé Sisters”.

Mother Lepicard struggled to implement some of these changes being recommended, especially that of a uniform Habit, in the run up to the Council. Several suggestions for replacing the Cornette were made and each of these was modelled by a Secretariat Sister, photographed and sent round in great confidence to the Visitatrices for consultation. I was used as one of these models and I tried to imagine Sr Whalen’s face when my photograph fell out of the envelope on to her desk!

It fell to Mother Guillemin eventually to resolve the problem and it was not until 1964 that the Community world-wide changed to a uniform Habit.

1960 was the Tercentenary Year of the deaths of St Vincent and St Louise. I was privileged to be there when their shrines were moved temporarily from the chapels at the rue de Sèvres and the rue du Bac to Notre Dame Cathedral for the ceremonies. We were able to see the relics close up before they went, as the shrines were opened and the clothes that their relics were dressed in were cleaned and tidied up.

Another privilege I had whilst in Paris was to go to Rome in 1961 for the beatification of Mother Seton by Pope John XXIII. I accompanied Sr Whalen and other Sisters from the Province. Three of us stayed in a hotel and shared one bedroom. One of the Sisters put up an umbrella on the end of her bed for what privacy she could get! St Peter’s was a sight to behold, filled with Cornettes as we had not yet changed the Habit!

I loved my time at the Mother House. The privilege of being at the heart of the Community, of being in the place that Our Lady graced with her presence when she appeared to St Catherine in the chapel and gave the Community a mission to spread her love and her medal over the whole world. There is no place on earth – no place so isolated – no place so poor – no place so lacking in the knowledge and love of God that a Daughter of Charity cannot go to.

At Pentecost 1962, the Visitatrices assembled in the Mother House as Mother Lepicard’s term of office had ended. Mother Guillemin was elected. She was the Sister Servant of the Centrale des Oeuvres at the time and a very forward-looking woman. Being the youngest in the Secretariat, I had to help to bring over her office files. I remember accompanying her along the rue de Sèvres on one of these trips, carrying her typewriter.

I also remember participating in the “kissing of hands” which took place in the Mother House Chapel on her election. It was an age-old

Community custom for the Sisters of Paris to gather in the chapel to offer their obedience to the newly elected Mother General, who would sit in the chair in which Our Lady had sat and each Sister came forward and kissed her right hand.

It was in the October of that same year, 1962, that the Council of Vatican II opened and, later in 1964, Mother Guillemain was appointed an “auditor” at the Council.

It was that same year also that I was called back to my Province to replace Sr Gertrude Andrew as First Secretary to Sr Margaret Whalen.

Provincial House Secretariat

Fr James Cahalan CM was appointed Director of the Province about this time and Sr Margaret was making great efforts to keep up with the mental upheaval being caused by the changes flowing out from Rome. Community Customs that had been held sacred for years were falling apart and being replaced by more practical and sensible ways of acting. In all this Fr Cahalan was a tremendous support and was indefatigable in helping the Sisters of the province to come to terms with it all.

One of the first things he did was to buy a car! He drove for miles round the Province – England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales – visiting the Houses and the Sisters, listening to them and encouraging them. Informality was his trademark. A bar of chocolate and his Breviary on the passenger seat of the car was his sustenance – we had to regularly clear out the packets of sandwiches that Sisters had given him and that he hadn’t bothered to eat.

And so he persuaded Sr Margaret to use a car. Once more I came into my own! At first we used Fr Cahalan’s ‘hand-me-down’ but then Sr Margaret bought her own.

In the early days, before the Province was divided, we went over to Ireland in the car and Sr Mary Brennan, who was the Vice-Visitatrice at that time, bought Sr Margaret an Irish Driving License as Sister had expressed a wish to learn to drive.

How was I to teach her? It was dangerous on the public road as she had great difficulty in steering the car, let alone changing gear, so I thought the beach at Termonfeckin would be ideal – plenty of space and no traffic. The first time we attempted it was the last! The sand was so soft that as Sister accelerated, the rear wheels went down deeper and deeper – and the sea was coming in nearer and nearer. So I had to leave her there and go and took for help. I found it in the form of the local curate with a car full of children! He kindly went down and sorted us out. A humiliating start and a blessing that he did not know who we were. In the end Sr Margaret never really mastered the driving.

In 1966, Sr Gertrude Andrew returned to Mill Hill as the Provincial.

Fr Cahalan was still there, to be followed shortly by Fr Felix McAtarsney. The Habit had been changed in 1964 but now changes were to be made in the Community-wide Book of Customs and adapted to the customs and usage of the different countries in which the Provinces were situated. Sr Gertrude tackled all these with courage and vision. She was a woman for her time; far-seeing, broad-thinking and encouraging. From narrow, constricting customs she took us to a more reasonable and human way of living. It was a privilege to work with her in this.

Even so, in all my years with Sr Gertrude I never experienced her as a “warm” person. She never took time for herself, she was continually “working” – always taking copious notes. I drove her many miles around the province during her visits to the Houses, and conversation was to a minimum. She would be reading or writing up her notes. If we stopped for a break, that is what it was, not a leisure activity!

In April 1972, I celebrated my Silver Jubilee of vocation; or rather companions celebrated it for me by having a Mass offered to me in the Mother House Chapel. I still treasure the card signed Sr Genevieve (Blanc), Sr Frances (Marsden), Sr Augustine (Horgan) and Sr Carole (Mallock).

Out in the Province

My next move came later in 1972 when I was changed to St Louise’s Hostel in Medway Street, London, near Westminster Cathedral. It was a large hostel for young girls coming to work in London, many of them from Ireland and abroad. We were a large community, with Sisters working outside in different parishes as well as in the hostel. Towards the end of my time there, the building was in need of quite a lot of repair work. Sr Ellen Flynn will remember sweeping the water out of the boiler house each evening – the water from the leaking boilers would be almost knee deep every night. Many the nights, too, we would have to sweep the water down the stairs from overflowing bathrooms on the top floor.

It was here that I met Sr Miriam Clare Roseler, an American Franciscan Sister, who was looking for somewhere in London to bring a group of her students on an educational tour of Europe, which she did each year until she retired. I offered to accommodate them and when Medway Street closed she took them to Blandford Street. We kept in touch with each other for many years after that, even after she retired from teaching and she visited me in Birmingham, Liverpool and Mill Hill. She used to write poetry and she sent me many of her poems, many of which I have kept. She died suddenly in June 2004.

In 1975, it was decided to withdraw from the work and we had to close it down and move into the smaller house across the garden in

Horseferry Road. The Irish Centre took St Louise's over and continued to run as a hostel for girls.

From Medway Street, I moved to St Joseph's Hostel in Princip Street, Birmingham, as Sister Servant. This was a hostel for working girls and women. There was also a Night Shelter attached which Sr Veronica Pater ably managed. One evening two women presented themselves – or so they would have liked us to think, except that one was a boyfriend in disguise. Sr Veronica quickly sorted them out!

We had a bigger community of Sisters here with outside works such as visiting in several parishes, and doing District Nursing and social work. Sr Ann Conlin managed the hostel and the housekeeping. She was accompanied everywhere by Sally, the dog. We had a Renault Four car which Sr Ann drove and Sally would sit upright on the passenger seat next to her, looking around for all the world like a young lady. She had long curly hair and could easily be mistaken for one from a distance.

One morning when we opened the front door, there was a cardboard box on the step containing a lovely little ginger kitten. We took it in, as we did with all waifs and strays, and it joined Sr Ann and Sally in the hostel.

I spent five years in Princip Street altogether with periods each year of working at the Mother House with an international group of English-speaking Sisters, compiling and translating the new Constitutions. Each of the different language groups had to have a common translation between them. I was also involved in the compilation and translation of a book of Directives for the Sister Servants. I enjoyed this work and was at home in the Mother House.

Then May 1980 brought the great privilege of the visit of our Holy Father Pope John Paul II to the Mother House Chapel in honour of the 150th anniversary of the Apparitions of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. I had the honour of a personal invitation to be present there for this. It was a wonderful experience.

It was also whilst I was in Princip Street that I had the privilege of attending the first three-month Renewal Course at Hawkstone Hall. I think Sr Mary Shanahan and I were sent as guinea pigs to experience what these courses were to be like. I benefited very much from it and after that many Sisters have followed these renewal courses.

August 1980 saw me packing my bags again, this time for Liverpool. Christopher Grange was to be my next home. This work for the adult blind had been started by the father of the Christopher Taylor that I knew, and run by a voluntary committee of Catholic gentlemen. It was originally located in Brunswick Road in the city of Liverpool, but had had to move out because of city redevelopment and was now a purpose built building situated in the West Derby area near to the School for

the Blind, its sister work. By this time Christopher Taylor himself had taken over from his father and the new premises were called after him. Christopher was a troubled soul and at times would sit in my office and pour out his woes. He had everything that life could give him except peace within himself.

Here again, I had the experience of a large community with elderly Sisters as elderly Sisters as well as the 'working' Sisters. Some of the elderly Sisters needed "care" especially with personal cleanliness and at one time the only way we could get one of them to take a bath was to put her in the "walk-in" bath fully clothed, turn the water on around her and then undress her!

During my time here, changes were beginning to be introduced. Due to the Community not having a nursing Sister available to replace the Sister who was in charge of the Infirmary when she was changed, the first lay nurse was appointed in charge, and later a second one joined her. These were the first lay staff to be appointed in charge of a Unit. The other Units all had a Sister, although most of the Care Workers were lay people.

I still continued my visits to Paris working with Sisters from other English speaking Provinces on translation work following the work of the General Assemblies.

Whilst in Christopher Grange I had my first and only flight in a helicopter. Christopher Taylor had sold some of the surplus land between the Grange and the School to Barretts Housing and Sr Marie Kingston (who was the Sister Servant in the school at the time) and I were invited to the official handover and reception with the officials of the building firm. They had arrived in their helicopter and later offered the guests flights over the city and docks of Liverpool. Of course, the two of us took advantage of that. The aircraft was not as noisy as I had expected it to be and the passenger section was luxurious with drinks and nibbles available.

After Christopher died, Jim McArdle took over the Chairmanship. He was one of the first "married Deacons" to be ordained in the Liverpool Archdiocese. When I congratulated him he expressed his happiness, but then said there was one thing he found difficult and that was that now after the many years of his married life, it was the first time he did not kneel with his wife at Mass. His place was now standing at the altar whilst his wife knelt alone in the pew.

But these years were not all work and no play. Each year Sr Margaret Marsden and I would take our rest together and, having the use of a car, we toured England and Scotland from north to south and east to west. We visited the Lake District, the Yorkshire Moors, East Anglia, the cider country round Hereford, Cornwall and the south; we covered Wales –

the coastline, the hills and mountains in the north and the mines in the south. We took the ferry to Caldey Island to see the monks. We went round the lochs and the mountains and valleys of Scotland. We also visited Nunraw. We would stay in B&Bs and rest houses; sometimes it would be self-catering, other times we would be with our Sisters.

Also, my family was very good to me. My brother, Teddy and his family, and my sister Camilla and her family, would take two houses in Abersoch, North Wales, in the summer each year for sailing – they built their own small yachts – and would invite me to spend some time there with them. It would usually be in August when the children were on holiday. We went sailing and swimming and generally enjoyed ourselves and took it easy.

My four years in Christopher Grange came to an end in 1984 when I was called once more to the Provincial House to serve as Provincial Bursar. I recall Sr Joan Dwyer, who was then Provincial, phoning me when I was on my rest in Wales to ask me to come to Mill I Hill. I replaced Sr Barbara Smith who had done great work building the office up and putting it on to a more business-like footing.

Provincial Bursar and Provincial Council

Sr Louise Hynes and Sr Anne Fitzgerald were my two companions. Then the first lay person, Mrs Anne Lewis, joined us. Mrs. Joan Smith was already helping us by doing the wages for our staff in Provincial House but she was at that time the secretary in the Orphanage. Mrs Mary Stannard was the next to arrive. She is always amused to this day by the fact that she will say that she employed herself. When she came for an interview it was she who interviewed me instead of the other way round!

At this time the Provincial Council had set up an Advisory Committee of lay professional people. There was a surveyor, an architect and an accountant, all professionals in their field. They were genuinely interested in our work and gave us of their expertise and their time. Another Advisory Committee was set up in Scotland as the law in Scotland was different in some cases from that of England.

Another innovation just at this time was a specially designed course set up by the South West London College in Tooting for Administrators of Non Profit-Making Organisation. I think the CMRS was at the back of it as it was the Bursars of the Religious Orders who attended. Sr Louise and I went every week for 9 months. We were initiated into the subtleties of the latest computer systems, as well as financial management and administration, charity law, etc etc. I was very affirmed by this – not that I felt that I didn't learn anything, but to find that our Community is really at the top of the range amongst the best and most

efficiently run Communities.

I like to think that the main contribution that I brought to my time as Bursar was working on major alterations to the Provincial House and some of its out-buildings. The accommodation, the working areas and the living quarters were all upgraded and made more functional. A Provincialate was formed in the Seminary block for the members of the Provincial Council where they could meet and live together as a community. The Seminary itself became the Heritage Room.

To crown these renovations, my brother, who had been very interested in the work, presented the Provincial House with an antique wall clock to hang in the front hall. This clock dates from the early 1800s, almost the same period as the house – a truly fitting tribute to the Provincial House.

In 1987, Sr Joan Dwyer's term of office as Provincial came to an end and Sr Margaret Barrett replaced her. I was privileged to be then appointed to the Provincial Council. I continued in the office of Bursar until 1990 when my term expired.

In 1989, I accompanied Sr Margaret to Sierra Leone to investigate the possibilities of a new mission there in Freetown. Canon Veale, who was from Mill Hill and knew the Community, was out there and he had asked for Sisters to take on the work of a girls' home which he had started. We were met at the airport by some ladies Canon Veale had sent and accommodated with some nuns in their hostel. Unfortunately, Sr Margaret's luggage had accidentally been left on the plane and she didn't get it until the next day when the plane called back on its way to London. In the meantime, she had to put up with what I could let her have from my things. But she made light of it.

Sr Margaret was hesitant about the work of the girls' home but could see the possibilities of opening a mission there. We met the Bishop and were invited to have lunch with him. We only stayed about a week but it was my first visit to Africa and my first impression was that the weather was never in doubt and was lovely all the time! The first morning we were there we were to attend a funeral and I remember thinking on waking up how blessed we were with fine weather for it. It was also my first experience of mosquitoes and sleeping under a net. Even though I covered myself with anti-mosquito cream I still got bitten. Altogether it was a wonderful experience.

The following year I had another memorable visit to Africa, this time to Ethiopia. Sr Margaret, as an exercise of renewal, had asked the Sisters in the Province to re-express the hopes and desires for their vocation in what she called their "Dream", and the Councillors went round to the Houses sharing with each sister. I was asked to go and share this with our Sisters in Ethiopia. Some of the Ethiopian Sisters wanted to do this

as well and I was very impressed by them and humbled too.

Sr Phyllis Peters, a Sister from the United States, was going out on Mission to Ethiopia for the first time and so she and I travelled together. We had to change Planes in Frankfurt and had the good fortune there to be upgraded to Club Class on our next flight. We took full advantage of the extra perks this gave us.

Sr Zoë O'Neill was the Regional Superior at that time in Ethiopia and she couldn't have been more welcoming. She took me round all the Houses herself, except those in the north which, owing to the war, we could not visit. We went by road and by air. One airport was on the side of a mountain and the plane took off from the end of the runway into "nothingness". If the pilot hadn't risen into the air we would have fallen down into a chasm. We visited some of the priests and wherever we went where the Sisters were we had a great welcome. I experienced Coffee Ceremonies wherever we went in Addis and I saw the work in the schools, and with the women and home industries, and those who were in prison in the countryside. Altogether, it was inspiring to see what the Sisters were doing and how welcome we were.

In 1990, I said farewell once more to the Provincial House and moved to Milton Street in Darlington where Sr Joan Conroy was the Sister Servant. She also taught in school there. My work continued on the Council with the care of the Houses in the North East of the Province and the care of the elderly Sisters around the Province.

In 1992, we moved from Milton Street and the House was closed. We took up residence in a part of St Clare's Abbey belonging to the Poor Clares in Darlington and I was appointed the Sister Servant. Sr Joan continued her work in the school. We were able to attend Mass every day in the nuns' chapel.

During my remaining three years on the Council I enjoyed the privilege of visiting the elderly Sisters throughout the province and clocked up many hundreds of miles driving round the Houses. On one of my visits to St Catherine's in Lanark, I was talking with one of the elderly Sisters and she was sharing with me her difficulties in praying – as she was in a wheel chair she was limited in her activities – "There is a limit," she said, "to the number of rosaries you can say!" (And nowadays that I am in my old age I am finding the same!).

We had many happy visits to the west of Ireland with Sr Margaret. Her family had a holiday home over in Iniscrone near Ballina and we would all go together it would be for a few days and stay there. Sometimes it would be for a few days holiday, sometimes for meetings and Council work.

As we had cars with us we could visit the countryside. We went to the coast and enjoyed the beaches. Another time we went over to Achill

Island and I remember getting some beautiful small statues of Our Lady from there.

In the latter days of my work on the Council I had to get Sr Margaret Barrett a new car. The most economical time to change one's car was considered to be at three years or 30,000 miles – Sr Margaret had covered 50,000 miles in the three years, to the amazement of the car salesman! I exchanged her car for a new one and we were given the registration number HxxxELL! After many amused stares from other drivers overtaking us on the motorway – we were still at that time dressed like nuns – we soon changed the number. At one point as we drew into a service station for a break and were parking the car, a motorist came up behind us and shouted “Stay there, just stand there,” and he whipped out a camera to take a photo of us standing by the car ‘HELL’. I would love to have seen that photo, but we didn't know who he was.

In the early months of 1992, the Communist regime in Romania collapsed and the countries of Western Europe were sending aid to the people of that country. Our Sisters over there were short of food and the other necessities of life. They were still working in hospitals and orphanages. I received a phone call one evening from Margaret asking me if I would like to drive over there with two companions bringing a minibus of emergency supplies for them. I jumped at the opportunity. So Sr Maria Mangan, Sr Rita Quin and myself set off for Oradea on the 11th April 1992, the Saturday before Holy Week.

I have written an account of this separately which you can read, suffice it to say we crossed over to France on the ferry and drove constantly, eating and sleeping on the move. We were afraid to leave the minibus unattended at any time of the day or night in case it was broken into and its contents stolen. We passed Liege, Cologne, Frankfurt, Nuremburg; we crossed Austria to the Hungarian border and on to Romania until we reached Oradea on the Monday. The joy of the Sisters was something to be experienced; all the bags of food, the cartons of tins, the material for Habits, the medicines – all was carried this way and that by willing hands and put away. No sooner was the food off the minibus than it was being parcelled on to a trolley for redistribution to the other two houses of the Sisters and the Vincentians. There was no calculating what to keep and what to give away – it was no sooner received than it was shared.

On the Wednesday we said Goodbye. Again we drove all day, but this time we could take it more easily and we stayed overnight for the next two nights in motels. On the Good Friday we went into Cologne to visit the Cathedral and say our Morning prayer. I recalled that day in 1945 when I had flown over the city with the RAF and seen so much damage.

It had been repaired now. I said a fervent prayer of thanksgiving.

That evening we were home in Mill Hill. Our journey had taken us just a week. We had covered 3,000 miles. We experienced a way of life that we could never have imagined; a poverty beyond our comprehension, but for all that a freedom of spirit among the Sisters, that could only come from within.

Back to Mill Hill again

In 1993 my term on the Council ended, and I was called down to Mill Hill again and placed in St Vincent's Presbytery on the Ridgeway. The Vincentian Fathers had now left the Presbytery, Fr O'Dowd having moved into the Lodge at the Priory, and we had taken it over to use as a Seminary with Sr Eileen Glancy as the Directress. She worked closely with Fr Sean Farrell who had a couple of Vincentian Seminarians in Damascus House,

Damascus House was a Retreat and Conference Centre at that time and I was to replace Kay Trivett as the Booking Secretary as Kay was leaving in order to enter the Community. I lived in St Vincent's and went down to Damascus House daily to work.

We were a very happy community and Mary Mitchell was our Seminary Sister. She was not a young person but she had a deep and strong desire to work in Ethiopia and I think – like me in my young days – she stuck it out for that one aim! And these many years since she is still doing wonderful work out there,

I used to go down each day to Damascus House to deal with the bookings for conferences, retreats and other group activities. There were so many interesting groups coming and so much good work being done amongst them. One group in particular I remember and always pray for was the Company of Mission Priests, a group of celibate Anglican priests who follow the spirit of St Vincent in their mission work. Fr Fergus Kelly, who was then in charge of Damascus House, was very interested in them and friendly towards them. They would come each year to Damascus House for their retreat. The year that the Church of England decided to admit women to the priesthood was particularly agonising for them, as it was for many in the Anglican Church at that time. They gathered at Damascus House to decide their future, and we agonised with them. Some decided to come over to Rome and were ordained as Catholic priests, while others remained with their Company. When the Vincentian Partnership was formed a few years later, they joined it as members, as did the Anglican Sisters of Charity in Bristol.

1995 brought the centenary year of Westminster Cathedral. There were many celebrations throughout the year, but one particular one remains in my memory and that was being present for Solemn Vespers

in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen. That the Queen had accepted Cardinal Hume's invitation to be present and that I had an invitation to be there was privilege enough, but to have had an aisle seat and to have seen her walking up the aisle with the Cardinal was wonderful. This visit of the Queen to the Cathedral was the first time since the Reformation that a reigning monarch had been present at a Roman Catholic service. She sat in a special chair, created especially for the occasion in rosewood and ivory, in a cleared space at the foot of the sanctuary. That chair is now displayed in St George's chapel within the Cathedral.

I was only three years in St Vincent's because Mary Mitchell had finished her Seminary by that time and there was no one to follow her. I continued my work in Damascus House and was placed in the community there.

Here I found a new life, sharing it with the community of the Vincentians; a broadening and pleasant experience.

It was here that I became involved with the Vincentian Volunteers, a venture set up jointly by our Community, the Vincentians and the St Vincent de Paul Society in England & Wales and in Scotland. We were becoming conscious at this time of our common Vincentian heritage and were beginning to work together. One of the first products of this sharing was a youth association called the Vincentian Volunteers. These are a group of young men and women students interested in taking what today they call a "Gap Year" either before or immediately following their time at University. They spend a year doing charitable work voluntarily and are given pocket money to keep themselves. They live in mixed "communities" and follow a year's programme. A Sister is appointed as their Director and organises and provides the programme while one of the Vincentian Fathers assists her and acts as chaplain. There is a Board of Trustees and a Management Committee. My role was to be the Secretary first of all to the Management and later to the Trustees. I happily spent a number of years doing this.

1997 was my Golden Jubilee year. By that time Sr Ellen Flynn was the Director and Sister Servant in Damascus House and Fr Eugene Curran was co-director. They gave me a wonderful celebration and my sister and her family came down to stay. The Damascus House staff put on a wonderful meal and the chef made a cake in the form of a book and decorated it lavishly. One of my nephews made a video of the occasion. Looking at it now, ten years on, it brings back many memories of friends I haven't seen for years and whose friendship gave me so much.

One of my nephews was at that time doing construction work for his firm in Portugal and was accommodated out there with his family. He invited his mother (my sister-in-law) and myself to go out there for a

week to stay with them. I had a lovely visit with them.

Another treat for my Jubilee was a visit to the Mother House in Paris. Sr Margaret Marsden came with me and we spent a week visiting all the shrines and different places dear to the Community. I had asked for this privilege as I felt it would be the last time that I would have the opportunity of going to the Mother House and walking once more in the footsteps of Vincent and Louise and our early Sisters.

That summer I was making my retreat in St Leonards when the news came over the radio that Princess Diana had been killed in a road accident. When I got back to Mill Hill I went to Buckingham Palace to see the flowers that had been left there and at Clarence House as tributes to her. It was an extraordinary sight. I have never seen so many flowers. They were spread all along the roadside and the pavements and in front of the Palace, stretching the length between the two places like one huge carpet.

The following year, 1998, brought the news that Damascus House would have to close. Neither the Vincentians nor ourselves had the personnel to continue the work. And so, once more, I was moving on.

And so to Rest... St Vincent's, Southport

I came here to retire, but I didn't come to be idle!

I was able to bring the computer I was using with me which enabled me to continue my secretary work for the Vincentian Volunteers and to generally make myself useful. I am also near my sister who lives in Preston and am able to visit and spend the day with her from time to time.

Southport has many attractions – the shops, the walks along the promenade, the theatres, the surrounding villages and countryside – but at this time for me especially a Further Education College. Over four or five years, I attended courses in computing. I followed not only the elementary programmes, but more advanced courses and obtained the ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence). I also branched out into digital imagery, conferencing and the internet. Although I don't have all these programmes on my computer, I was able to attend the computer centre for the students at the College for a couple of hours a day and I went regularly. One day I was sitting at a computer next to an elderly lady like myself and we got talking; "Why are you doing this course?" she asked me. So I told her I wanted to keep my brain lively. "Why are you doing it?" I asked her; "Oh, I have to," she replied, "my grandchildren expect me to know it".

But one privilege remained – to make my retreat in Dax, the birthplace of St Vincent. This I was able to do in 2001. During the course of the retreat, we visited all the places associated with St Vincent: the

Berceau, Buglose, and especially the family house where he grew up. We also went to Lourdes.

That year, 2001, was also my eightieth birthday year and my birthday fell during the retreat. Even though we were on retreat, Fr Michael McCullough (who was giving the retreat) decided we should celebrate it. Sr Lucy Hurley also had her birthday – her 60th – about this time so we had a joint celebration and everyone enjoyed it.

Now, I have come to my Diamond jubilee Year, 2007, and when I look back over my life I thank God for the many graces I have received, and for those I hope others have received through me, and for the beautiful memories I have.

Although I was never placed in the direct Service of the Poor, I like to think that my service to my Sisters in the Community helped them to serve their poor, perhaps more efficiently, perhaps more easily. I thank God for the Sisters I have lived with: young Sisters, those who have grown and blossomed into wonderful Daughters of Charity, serving and loving the poor whether at home or on the missions; older Sisters also who had spent their lives serving others – I like to feel that in some way my service of God's poor had its roots in theirs.

Now, here in Southport, my service of the poor is through my prayers and through my striving to give myself more completely to the Lord.

I didn't go to the ceremonies of farewell to the Provincial House which were held there. I carry my memories in my heart. I hope to go back there when I die. I would like to rest in the place and amongst those Sisters where it all began – where I spent so many years at the heart of the Province. I have asked for my body to be cremated and the ashes to be buried or just scattered in the cemetery amongst the Sisters there.

Amen

I'd like the memory of me
To be a happy one.

I'd like to leave an after
Glow of smiles when
Life is done.

I'd like to leave an echo
Whispering softly
Down the ways.

Of happy times and
Laughing times and
Bright sunny days.

I'd like the tears of those
Who grieve, to dry
Before the sun
Of happy memories that I
Leave when life is done.

Anthony Clune CM

Patrick Anthony Clune was born into a family of nine on the north-side suburbs of Dublin in 1927. His family roots were in Co Clare and in his youth Tony had spent some enjoyable holidays there. Most of the rest of us were 'townies', and rarely felt courageous enough to challenge him on methods of farming and other views that he expounded. When someone occasionally asked him about sources for his opinions on agriculture – the questioner was invariably referred to the farm in Co Clare. It was there that knowledge and experience had embraced. Could one improve on that?

Both his parents were deeply religious and Fr Tony often spoke appreciatively of their goodness and the depth of their faith. It was not surprising then that the Clune Family from Donnycarney were blessed with vocations to the Consecrated Life and to the Pastoral priesthood. Two of Tony's sisters joined the Community of Religious Sisters who had primary and secondary schools in Roslyn Park, Sandymount, where they were educated. Happily both are still living and active in their Community houses in Liverpool. One of Tony's older brothers – Frank – is a retired priest of the diocese of Wagga Wagga, Australia, and an alumnus of All Hallows. It was during a once-in-a-lifetime visit of one of his Religious sisters to Fr Frank in Australia that Tony passed away on 25th July 2011. May he rest now in the peace of God.

We here in St Paul's had witnessed and appreciated the practical devotion and dedication of Tony's third sister – Rita – to his welfare during his long illness. Rita lives in Raheny. Unfailingly and several times a week, over a span of 11 years, she drove the 10-mile journey to New Park Care Centre to keep eye on Tony's condition and to supply some of those small needs that a less loving eye might fail to notice. Rita was the youngest in the family – his 'little sister,' as Tony saw her – who, when growing up needed protection and advice from her older siblings. It was a role that Tony was eager to assume. During his long illness – when totally dependent on others – the roles were reversed. It was touchingly poignant to see how Rita in a motherly way could intuitively guess the little comforts that would bring surprise and joy into his life. At times Rita could even provokingly joke Tony – then unable to speak- and see him respond with an approving smile and an expressive glinting eye.

Before joining our Community, Tony had worked for a few years in a firm of Insurance brokers. He came to St Joseph's Blackrock as a 'late' vocation - at an age which was below the average age of candidates entering seminaries today. Being 'a late vocation' gave Tony a certain

aura of worldly, practical experience which the rest of us a few years younger lacked. He reminded me on one occasion that if ever I was buying a second-hand car my opening bid should be a silent one. 'Walk slowly around the car first without uttering a word. When doing so kick each of the four tyres in turn...' (To date I have not had the opportunity of estimating the value of this business counsel.)

People meeting Fr Tony for the first time could not fail to notice his broad, cheerful smile and hearty laugh. His nature was genuinely sympathetic to the suffering of others and particularly to those bereaved by the deaths of family members or afflicted with serious illness.

In the 65 years of priesthood ministry, Tony worked in a number of our Vincentian parishes and engaged in the apostolate of preaching parish missions. Throughout Ireland, England and Scotland, he would have delivered numberless homilies and sermons and reconciled many with God in the sacrament of reconciliation. For a lengthy period in the Sixties and Seventies he gave himself to the challenging apostolate known as the Irish Emigrant mission in England. The priests of the Emigrant Mission, drawn from different dioceses and religious congregations, proclaimed the Gospel in parishes where Irish men sought work on building sites and in the construction of motorways in the UK. The building site was the field on which the priests sowed the word of God. Often the ground was stony.

Although living conditions at times could be hard – and the external results of the priests' efforts scanty – the mission in a certain way suited Tony, for while touching base with his community from time to time, he was easier in his skin when he was not asked to be a player on a tightly knit team.

After 17 years working in the Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy, he was appointed to the parish of St Stephen's Warrington. The parish was a large modern housing estate – a spillover from the city of Liverpool. Besides the large parish Church, St Stephens already built, plans were being made for two other smaller subsidiary churches one of which Tony succeeded in establishing.

The Archbishop of Liverpool at the time was Derek Worlock, a leading and prominent pioneer of the ecumenical movement in the UK. "Better Together" was the title of the book he published about his life and vision of ecumenism in the post-Vatican II era. The practical realization of visions can often be difficult, and Fr Tony, while subscribing to the ideal of shared churches and tabernacles with Anglicans, was also convinced that "good fences make good neighbours." Therein lay his difficulty. Deeply rooted in the theology of 'the one true Church', Tony saw some of the proposed fences as weak and inadequately earthed. Principles, as he saw them, were in danger of being compromised.

Confusion had begun to sprout, and a consequence of it was that relationships with 'the sister Church' became somewhat tense.

In his years of retirement here in St Paul's, Tony cultivated a wide range of interests in the social and political questions of the day through the modern media of radio and television. His volunteering to be a confessor in Knock during summer periods deepened his interest in Marian apparitions and stimulated him to read about other shrines in the world where she whom St Vincent salutes in his rule as "the Mother of God and Mother of us all" was honoured.

Quite suddenly in April 2001 there fell upon him a crippling blow. A heavy stroke partially paralyzed him and almost totally diminished his powers of speaking and reading. There followed eleven years of an imposed silence of speech with a greatly limited ability to communicate. Even with such limitations the staff of the Nursing Home came to know and love him for his warm humanity.

The mystery of the Why of his long illness remains and must tempt us, Job-like, to question the loving wisdom of our God.

Some of them have been here for years,
Carried from bed to bath,

Envious of those who move like snails on frames
Or manipulate chairs with fingers.

What is the great picture?
That comforts you, Lord,
When you look at them?

Padraig Daly OSA, *The Ward*

Richard McCullen CM

PATRICK ANTHONY CLUNE

Born: Donnycarney, Dublin, 5 September 1927
Entered CM: 7 September 1949
Final Vows: 8 September 1954
Ordination: 26 May 1956 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,
by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

Appointments:

1956-'57: St Patrick's College, Armagh
1957-'59: Sacred Heart Parish, Mill Hill
1959-'63: Hereford Parish
1963-'66: St Peter's, Phibsboro'
1966-'78: Irish Immigrant Chaplaincy, England
– Edmonton
– Hinkley Point
– Wolverhampton
– Birmingham
1978-'83: Burnt Oak Parish, London
1983-'90: St Stephen's, Warrington
1990-'93: St Cedd's, Goodmayes
1993-2011: St Paul's, Raheny

Died: 25 July 2011
Buried: Deansgrange Cemetery

Thomas Lane CM

Homily given at the funeral Mass

I warmly welcome you all to this Requiem Mass as we gather to say goodbye to Father Tom Lane. Before we begin the Mass we have a short ritual to highlight the important things in Fr Tom's life. Kitty Fahy, who worked with Tom for almost 50 years, will place an All Hallows stole on the coffin. It's a symbol of Tom's devotion to All Hallows for over 50 years. Michael Daly, who also worked with Tom for almost 50 years, will place Tom's bible on the coffin as a symbol of Tom's commitment to preaching the word of God. Moya Curran, a Dominican sister who was invited onto the lecturing staff by Father Tom almost 50 years ago, will place a copy of the Vincentian constitutions on the coffin as a reminder of Tom's loving commitment to the work of the Congregation of the Mission. Margaret Doyle, who is currently a member of staff and typed up all of Tom's books from Tom's long hand writing, now places the books on the coffin.

In our saying goodbye to Tom, we thank God for Tom's giftedness as priest, theologian, teacher and preacher. We thank God for his life and work. Tom's Priestly ministry covered a wide range of activities: All Hallows professor; president of All Hallows; Director of Damascus House Retreat Centre in London; spiritual director in the Beda Seminary in Rome; director of countless priests' and sisters' retreats in Ireland, England, the United States, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia; spiritual director and confidante for many people in different parts of the world.

I welcome very warmly Tom's sister, Sheila, her family (many of whom have travelled from West Cork to be with us and Sheila's friends. I extend a very warm welcome to Bishop Raymond Boland from Kansas City and his brother, Bishop Kevin from Savannah. They were both students of Father Tom and Tom would be very pleased and very honoured that they are here today for his funeral Mass. A very warm céad míle fáilte too to Bishop Jim Moriarity of Kildare and Loughlin. I welcome Father John Sherrington, currently Parish Priest in the Diocese of Nottingham, former student and teacher in All Hallows seminary and soon to be ordained bishop in the Diocese of Westminster. John, congratulations on your appointment; you are most welcome back to your Alma Mater.

I extend a very warm céad míle fáilte to Mgr Joseph Quinn, currently administrator in the Shrine of Our Lady in Knock where, as you know, Tom worked for many years. I welcome many former students of the

seminary who have traveled from all over Ireland and from England and Scotland to be with us. I welcome representatives of different communities of religious sisters, especially, Daughters of Charity and sisters of the Holy Faith to whom Tom ministered during his 52 years of priesthood. I welcome Vincentian confreres, from Ireland, England, Ethiopia and Nigeria especially Father Brian Moore Provincial. I welcome the present staff and many former members of staff of All Hallows especially those who worked with Tom for many years. A special word of thanks to the housekeeping staff who cared for Tom so devotedly especially during his latter years.

We have quite a representative gathering of people here today but judging by the emails I have received since news of Tom's death broke on Sunday evening there are hundreds in different parts of the world who would love to be with us and who are joining us in spirit.

HOMILY

It is accomplished. Jesus bowed his head and gave up his spirit

Last Sunday evening at about 8 o'clock, I visited Father Tom Lane in the Bons Secours Hospital, in Glasnevin. He had been in hospital since June 1st and was slowly but surely, day by day, moving to the end. He was in a coma for a few days and it was clear that the end was approaching. Then very unexpectedly and without any warning Tom stopped breathing, raised himself up as if reaching out to something, opened his eyes for a fraction of a second and then bowed his head. In a moment he was gone. It was his final surrender. Like Jesus on the cross in today's gospel he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

Tom's time of surrender came very quickly and very easily in the end. For me, for his sister Sheila and for those around his bedside it was an extraordinary moment of peaceful surrender. The first reading reminds us that in God's Providence there is a time for everything. Tom's time for surrendering his life could have come 20 years ago when he had a very serious stroke; it could have come at any time in the last two years when he gave up his work in Knock Shrine because of ill health. It could have come at any time over the last 3 months which he spent in hospital. Eventually his time came last Sunday evening on the Feast of St Augustine.

The second reading of today's Mass from St Paul's letter to Timothy is almost like a summing up of Tom's life: St Paul is speaking in the evening of his life.

As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation and the time has come for me to depart. I have fought the good fight to the end;

I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith. All there is for me now is the crown of uprightness which the Lord the upright judge will give me on that day.

In all the years I have known Tom, I have never seen him giving up until his final peaceful surrender last Sunday evening. He certainly fought the good fight. Since his stroke he has traveled around the world at least twice giving priests retreats and parish missions in all the continents. He has written three books; *A Priesthood in Tune*, *The Cry of Christians* and a book on *Our Lady of Knock*. All the books were written in long hand with his left hand. He was a real example of the triumph of the human spirit in the face of adversity. I will always remember Father Gene Kirk's account of Tom Lane struggling with much impaired mobility up the side of a mountain in one of Lima's shanty towns to visit Gene- a past student of Tom's here in All Hallows. Gene's story epitomized Tom's steely determination to keep going against all the odds and never give up. How Tom accomplished so much, especially since his stroke over 21 years ago, I don't know! I suppose he was blessed with extraordinary good health-the disabling stroke not with standing- a great mind, a deep faith and a great big generous heart.

I have always admired Tom's zeal. I have admired his other qualities as well but his apostolic zeal was a real example to me and to those of us who lived with Tom. Tom was zealous to a heroic degree. Tom simply never counted the cost to himself when it came to doing anything for the furtherance of God's Kingdom. Tom gave and gave and gave, late at night and early morning, without a break and very often without a holiday. Nothing was ever too much trouble when it came to preaching the word or a work of service.

Sheila tells me that Tom spent much time over the past three months contemplating the crucifix on the wall of his hospital room. No doubt he was identifying in a very personal way with the five wounds of Christ on the cross about which Tom had often preached so eloquently.

When I reflect on Tom's living out of the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ, not just over the past two years, when he was really ailing, but over the past 21 years since his stroke, I am left with the sheer mystery of it all. The mystery of life and death; the mystery of suffering. When you ask the question : Why do bad things happen to good people you are left with an empty silence by way of answer. The only attempt at an answer lies at the foot of the Cross of Jesus. The suffering and death of Jesus was the road to resurrection and new life for Jesus. As it was for Jesus so it is for Tom and so it is for all of us;

When the body of our earthly dwelling lies in death we gain an everlasting dwelling place in Heaven. In him who rose from the dead our hope of resurrection dawned. The sadness of death gives way to

the bright promise of immortality. Lord for your faithful people life is changed not ended.

There is so much more I could say about Tom. His daily commitment to meditation and morning prayer, his giftedness as a communicator and teacher, his devotion to the evangelization of the poor, his unstinting support for Vincentian Community life, his loyalty to the church with all its faults and failings, his commitment to saying two Sunday Masses whenever he was at home in Bonneybrook, Dublin. The Parish priest of Bonnybrook, Fr Frank Duggan, is here in the congregation today. His support for various dramatic productions in the seminary. His zealous commitment to the nurturing of vocations is also worthy of mention. In season and out of season Tom persisted in the urgent need to attract vocations to the priesthood in the Vincentian Community when many had lost heart or given up the search for people to join us.

Tom spent 38 years of his priestly life in All Hallows. I am continually reminded of the love, affection and esteem with which Tom is held among former students, some of whom are here with us today and many of whom have traveled long distances from England and other places to be here. One past student said to me last night, there is great sadness tonight all over the world where there are All Hallows men. Over the last few days I have received many, many messages by email from past students. I cannot read them all. But I chose one to share with you today...

I have just learned of the very sad news of Fr Tom Lanes passing; Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dílis. I was very fond of the man. He was a great teacher and priest and although I only had him for etiquette and latin classes, I remember and recall his wonderful wit and sense of humour. He taught me more about the priesthood by the way he lived his life. He accepted me as a student in all Hallows in 1980 and I am forever in his debt. He came and conducted a parish retreat in my parish some years ago and those days were filled with pearls of wisdom and sense of humour. He will be in my prayers till the Master himself calls me home.

To his sister Sheila and to the extended family we offer our sincere sympathy. May he rest in peace.

As for me, my life is already being poured away as a libation and the time has come for me to depart. I have fought the good fight to the end; I have run the race to the finish; I have kept the faith. All there is for me now is the crown of uprightness which the Lord the upright judge will give me on that day.

Mark Noonan CM

THOMAS LANE

Born: Macroom, Co Cork, 04 June 1928
Entered the CM: 07 September 1945
Final Vows: 08 September 1947
Ordained priest: 30 May 1953 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe
by Most Reverend Patrick Dunne,
Bishop of Nara, auxillary bishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS:

1953 – '58: All Hallows College, Drumcondra
1958 – '60: Casa Internazionale, CM, Rome
1960 – '82: All Hallows College (Rector from 1970)
1982 – '91: Damascus House. London
1991 – 2011: All Hallows College
1998 – 2000: Spiritual Director, Bede College, Rome
2000 – 2009: Knock Shrine, Co Mayo

Died: 28 August 2011
Buried: All Hallows College