

# COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the  
Congregation of the Mission



# Contents

Editorial	212
Induction as Visitor – Tuesday 13 March 2018 <i>Paschal Scallon</i>	213
Looking Forward: A Prospectus for the 2020s <i>Paschal Scallon</i>	217
Home thoughts from abroad <i>Paschal Scallon</i>	223
Reflections from CEVIM: Beirut, Lebanon, 2018 <i>Paschal Scallon</i>	237
Thoughts from the Meeting of Vincentian Seminarians of Europe <i>Paschal Scallon</i>	244
Saint Vincent de Paul Additional Correspondence, Conferences, Documents <i>John E Rybolt</i>	247
Vincentian Parish Missions: Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Seventeenth-Century France <i>James H Murphy</i>	255
The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican and the New Evangelisation <i>Pat Collins</i>	268
Ordination to the Priesthood of Rev Chinedu Enuh, CM <i>Most Rev John Sherrington</i>	276
Kevin Scallon: A Kind of Spiritual Memoir <i>Jack Finnegan</i>	279
Obituaries	
<i>Fr Brian Mullan CM</i>	300
<i>Fr Sean Johnston CM</i>	303
<i>Fr Denis Collins CM</i>	306
<i>Fr Cornelius (Con) Curtin CM</i>	308
<i>Fr Joseph (Joe) Cunningham CM</i>	312
<i>Fr Desmond Beirne CM</i>	315
<i>Fr Peter J Slevin CM</i>	319
<i>Fr Kevin J Scallon CM</i>	323
<i>Fr Francis (Frank) McMorrow CM</i>	327
<i>Fr James Vincent (Jimmy) Sheil CM</i>	330
<i>Fr Hugh McMahon CM</i>	334

## Editorial

This edition of *Colloque* comes as the world deals with the reality and challenges of the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020. Yet, again and again, as I read the articles, I am reminded that each generation must face its own challenges and find its own way forward. Articles by John Rybolt, James H Murphy and Pat Collins highlight this for us.

Our Visitor, Paschal Scallon, has outlined his vision for the province for the coming years and has also given some insightful, and humorous, ‘home thoughts from abroad’ over the past years.

Besides Paschal’s funeral homily for his uncle, I have chosen to publish a reflection by Jack Finnegan SDB who worked with Kevin for many years; although Kevin did write for *Colloque* some years ago, in large part the extent of his ministry to priests may have been hidden from many of us and Jack’s reflections honour his many years of labour.

This edition also includes the largest number of obituaries but, as I read them, I am moved most by the courage of my confreres, each in his own unique way, in responding to the call of the Lord of the Harvest and the demands of the mission; and we are blessed that each confrere died in the fullness of his years and bearing the fruits of his ministry.

We pray that we may all receive a double share of the spirit of those who have gone before us, and be inspired also by those who follow; our newest priest, Chinedu Enuh, has just passed his first anniversary of ordination and, albeit belatedly, we publish the homily given by Bishop John Sherrington on that day. Bishop John was a student, and later a lecturer, in All Hallows College.

# Induction as Visitor

Tuesday 13 March 2018

Paschal Scallan CM

## *Landscapes*

Dear Confreres, Eamon and members of the Provincial Council and guests: Mum, Gabriel, Margot, Niall, and, of course, Una and Linda.

This is a lovely occasion. It is an affirmation of life in our Community, an expression of continuity, a mutual act of faith – we in God and God in us – that the work begun in us by the Lord is still moving towards its fulfilment.

But while this evening is a lovely occasion it also marks a change for us and in facilitating it we recognise that change is part of our lives – as indeed it is for everyone – but we live for it, as it were, because we think of ourselves as missionaries and as missionaries our landscapes are always changing.

## *Milestones*

The years in which we are living mark a series of anniversaries and we Vincentians are within imagination range of a few of our own. These milestones remind us of people and places we have known and will remember in our landscape. The Vincentian Community in Ireland and Britain has more than 200 years behind it. We have been part of the most remarkable passage in Irish history especially in relation to the Church because the period since the early 1800s is paralleled perhaps only by the so called age of saints and scholars. In between we know the years to have been fraught and fractured.

The period referred to as ‘the long nineteenth century of the Church’ ended within our lifetimes. Few seem to mourn it, even among its staunchest defenders. For all its magnificent achievements, in medical care and in social provision, and especially where we have been concerned, in education, the legacy that seems almost to be brandished by detractors is the memory of a church that is said to have served only itself. Of course even a moderately careful reading of the history reveals much more than that.

As missionaries, however, we turn and we survey the landscape through which we have come and admirable though it is, it is behind us. The townlands from which we have come, the communities and parishes in which we have ministered, the campuses and schoolyards

appear more now in our looking back. It is true, we know where we have come from but we are unsure of where we have come to and the road ahead bemuses us.

### *Into Galilee*

If we are disciples and apostles of the risen Jesus, though, our road ahead leads into Galilee and like the disciples, our Galilee is home. Which is to say, before we know what the Lord is asking of us we go to find him where he first found us.

The reading from St Matthew's gospel which Una has proclaimed for us is a revelation. I asked Una to read for us because she has now served five Visitors of the Irish Province. I'm not sure Una will appreciate the comparison with Mary of Magdala who had seven demons driven out of her but Una and all our colleagues are harbingers of grace for us, the grace that is part of every service and communication that comes in support of the mission we receive and accept from the Lord.

St Matthew's account of the resurrection of Jesus describes the confusion, the apprehension but also the power and the possibility of discipleship. It is the word breaking into our experience that transforms the moment and ourselves. There are echoes in what St Matthew says of the moment of Jesus' transfiguration, the moment he appears in light earlier in the gospel even as he had set his face toward Jerusalem and the cross. In the bleakest moments of the disciples' experience, some of them see Jesus for who he is. In disappointment we may be given insight like Peter, James and John were at the transfiguration and Mary of Magdala and her companion, also Mary, were at the moment of the resurrection itself, that Christ is our light... a light for our eyes, a light for our hands and a light for our path. In Christ we learn who we are, what we are to do and where we are to go.

Returning to Galilee is no retreat. It is where the Lord wishes to speak to us. Jesus' followers thought it was all over and took some persuading otherwise. Even among the eleven we know some hesitated when they finally met Jesus.

But here's the point, it is the words of Jesus, about himself and about the disciples as well, that empower the disciples. This is more than recharging depleted energy. Jesus gives them authority, his authority, to baptise the whole world. And that authority, that empowerment endures because Christ is with them and us... to the end of the age.

The landscapes we have crossed, those places and ministries where we have met success and something less than that from time to time, are Judea and Samaria for us. Some of us may have wandered into the Decapolis but now we are called into Galilee to meet the Lord and to receive our great commission, to make disciples of all nations.

*There is no need for you to be afraid*

We have relatively little with which to venture out. But what we do have we can find perhaps where we possessed it first. The Galilee in which we first encountered Christ may well have been the hearth and home that reared us and we are grateful for the love that nurtured that faith in Christ from the earliest years of our lives, the faith in Christ that would find expression in us in the charism of St Vincent De Paul and St Louise de Marillac.

Because our shared Galilee is the Community, the companionship and collaboration of confreres in a common life with a common rule. This is the landscape in which all that the Spirit began in us at baptism has matured. This is where we will have heard the most frequently uttered words of Jesus presented in a fresh, and certainly in my case, in an electrifying way: 'Do not be afraid.'

And it is here I would like to say a special word of thanks to those who have always exemplified the Vincentian life for me: my father and uncles who met the Vins first in Armagh in the 1940s; my uncle Kevin who has always been an inspiration to me, so much so that as a child, I did the next best thing to getting a tattoo; I took his name at Confirmation.

Having mentioned all that women have been in the life of the early church and are still, I have to acknowledge my Mum, who, even though she married into a tribe of Northerners has kept her Dublin faith and whose highest of holy days are possibly the Novena of Grace.

I will forever be grateful to the Vins in Castleknock, some of the best of whom were St Paul's men.

And there are, of course, the confreres who took on the responsibility of formation in Celbridge. I will mention one name to say something about the Vincentian 'range' to which we were exposed in formation. I recall Diarmuid Moran, whose life in the Community spanned Castleknock, Gateacre, Armagh, St Paul's and Coventry before he settled in among the wildlife in Celbridge, for whom Grace was the good looking one two or three rows ahead of us in first arts. It was Diarmuid who told me once, though, 'Paschal, you have great faith.' And there is the Director who once told me in spiritual direction or communication as we called it, 'Paschal, you're firing on all cylinders today.' There were other words of 'prophecy' too of course, over which we shall now draw a veil.

But, if I may, I would like to acknowledge especially my own contemporaries in the Community. Eamon has been Provincial for six years but his first role in leadership where I was concerned was meeting him as Ange on my first evening in Celbridge. As Ange (which means 'angel') Eamon had to look after me in my first few days in the seminary. Eamon has always had grace.

We are the confreres we have become through the guidance of the Holy Spirit but Providence works through the influence we have on each other. We rejoice in each other, please God, as much as we can be stupefied by each other. And it is on that note, which is more positive than you might think, that I wish to acknowledge John, James, Joseph, Eugene, Sean and Stephen, as well as Jay and Dan. And I remember too this evening, Peter Byrne who was my classmate in Castleknock and who joined the Vins with me and spent four years with us, who died a few weeks ago.

### *Conclusion*

Even though there is a great urgency in the way the disciples are hurried back into Galilee, it is clear from what Jesus says to them that they will not be staying long. Our mission continues as we look beyond and move on. Like the disciples' mission our mission is global and there is movement in the international Vincentian Community to make the Congregation around the world more aware and active in this regard.

We are to speak to and act in the experience of people driven deeper into distress through poverty, debt, violence or migration. From the simplest gesture to the complexity of organised charity and relief, we are sent to find ways of communicating in real ways, saying to a world overcome with angst, Christ is risen, do not be afraid.

We hold to this and we hold it out for the hope of the world. We no longer have the institutions or the institutional supports that we may have imagined once would make this easy for us. There seem to be relatively few platforms that might resemble the rocky outcrops of ancient Galilee, on which we imagine we should stand and declaim.

In this respect, however, our life and mission coalesce. We are a community for mission and in hearing again among ourselves all that inspired us in the past, we can still be missionaries, witnesses to the grandeur of God whose greatness lies in mercy, born of understanding, solidarity and love.



# Looking Forward: A Prospectus for the 2020s

Paschal Scallon CM  
May 2019

In a letter to the President of CEVIM, Fr Ziad Haddad CM, in April 2019, the Superior General, Fr Tomaž Mavrič CM expressed his concern and that of the General Council at the continued decline in the numbers of Vincentian personnel in Europe, particularly in Western Europe.(1) Earlier in the year, I had met with Fr Tomaž in order to discuss *inter alia* various ideas on which I had been reflecting for some time especially concerning the recruitment of a small number of confreres from around the world to come and work in the Province of Ireland, which has experienced a profound and long term decline in its membership. To illustrate this, allow me to explain that in 2019 the Irish Province of the Congregation will celebrate the ordination to priesthood of one of its confreres and this will be the first such occasion since 1991, all of twenty-eight years ago! In that time, however, we have parted with between ninety and one hundred confreres.

At the end of our conversation, I offered to submit a ‘prospectus’ for the Irish Province comprising of my suggestions and the thinking behind them. It seems that there is a convergence of reflection, albeit at different levels, that is, local and much wider, on a continental scale. If what I have written in relation to the life of the Community in Ireland and Britain is of any help in the rest of Europe, then I gladly share what has preoccupied me for several years now.

## *An Overview*

The Province of Ireland of the Congregation of the Mission has existed since 1848 but there were ‘Lazarists’ and ‘Vincentians’ on mission in Ireland and Britain from the earliest years of the Community, sent by St Vincent himself in the 1640s. Later, in the nineteenth century, a small group of newly ordained diocesan priests came together in 1832 and lived together according to the Common Rules for nearly twenty years before affiliating to the Congregation in Paris, which was itself re-emerging after the trauma of the revolution in France. Today the Province of Ireland still maintains a mission in Britain and Ireland.

The purpose of the Province of Ireland is the same as that of the Congregation as a whole: ‘to follow Christ evangelizing the poor.’(2) Taking into account, therefore, all that our Constitutions and our traditions say to us, we seek to find ways in which the confreres of the

Province and those who join us from other Provinces from time to time, may be faithful to our enduring sense of vocation in the circumstances we find ourselves.

This reflection will consider what the Irish Province may expect in the coming years. Essentially, we are looking forward, doing our best to read the signs of the times, as the Gospel, the teachings of the Second Vatican Council and our Constitutions suggest. We do so in anticipation of adjustments we must make if we are to remain effective as ministers of the Gospel and as missionaries.<sup>(3)</sup> Circumstances and resources both constrain us and enable us. We are dealing with the legacies of our history and we seek to find ways of using what resources we have imaginatively and with discernment.

### *Today*

Today the Province of Ireland reflects the changes which have taken place in church and society in recent decades, especially since the Second Vatican Council. Since 1980 the number of confreres in the Irish Province has declined from 150 living in twenty different communities, almost evenly spread between Ireland and Britain, to thirty eight confreres today who live in eight communities.

In the short term, the Province of Ireland faces a process of readjustment that will allow us to take care of our elderly confreres and respond in some way to the pastoral challenges around us. We have thirty-eight confreres; whose average age is seventy four. Only five are under sixty years of age and of these one confrere is under forty. In a recently commissioned actuarial analysis of the Province of Ireland, it is projected that by 2038, for all practical purposes, the Province will no longer exist.<sup>(4)</sup> That is to say, should things remain unchanged, there will be eight or nine confreres, of whom only two will be below seventy five years of age. In addition, the financial resources of the Province will be exhausted and 'fully depleted' by 2041. It seems clear, therefore, that if there is to be a Province of the Congregation in Ireland and Britain in the future, it is time to reinvent ourselves through God's grace and our own God given abilities.

The reinvention or renewal of the Irish Province has far reaching implications but we may take courage in the knowledge that what is proposed has been in operation in the Congregation around the world for some time already.

In the early 1990s, the Superior General, Fr Bob Maloney, launched the International Mission Communities and by now many confreres from various Provinces have lived and worked together in places such as Bolivia and the Solomon Islands and other areas in which the Congregation had not been present before that. In fact, one of the

criteria for the Community going to these parts of the world was to go where confreres had not been before.

One mission, established at around the same time, seems particularly suitable as a model for the renewal of Provinces such as ours. I refer to the Vice-Province of Ss Cyril and Methodius which is based in Ukraine but which reaches into Belarus and Russia.(5) This Province was established in 2001 under the leadership of Fr Paul Roche and a group of missionaries from other Provinces, including Fr Tomaž Mavrič. The Vice-Province is well established at this stage and while it still relies for help from outside, it is making its own way and has a number of seminarians.

### *A Proposal*

In light of what has been achieved in the Vice-Province of Ss Cyril and Methodius, I propose something similar for the Province of Ireland. As I have alluded to already, in a meeting with the Superior General earlier this year, I asked Fr Tomaž to consider placing Britain and Ireland on the list of mission territories to which confreres from around the world may consider going on mission for a number of years.

My request to the Superior General was made, in part, in the context that in recent decades, Britain and Ireland, like so many other countries in the West, have seen the arrival of large numbers of people migrating from Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. In response to their particular pastoral needs, the Province of Ireland participates in chaplaincy work under the auspices of the Archdiocese of Dublin in Ireland and Westminster in London. Confreres from Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Philippines have been living and working in the Province for a number of years and our experience together has been very positive. It has also demonstrated I believe, that organised well, we can build on what has been happening.

There has been another development in the life of the Congregation in Britain which appears to be thriving but which operates to a large extent in parallel to the Province of Ireland. The Province of Nigeria has sent a number of confreres to work in parishes in England, in the Archdiocese of Southwark and the dioceses of Hallam and Salford. This has always seemed a very significant development to me but both Provinces remain independent of each other. Providence, however, may be preparing the ground for something more cohesive.

It is important to say that this proposal looks to expand on the international element of the Province which has emerged in recent years. It is not meant merely to replicate it. It is envisaged that we try and go beyond 'ethnic chaplaincies', for example, which, though they may be necessary for the foreseeable future, carry a risk of placing people in a sort of pastoral ghetto. A local church that is truly catholic will of

course be diverse but if it becomes scattered in ethnic groups; it risks compromising its integrity. It is also important to recognise, however, that in the way current ministries are organised in dioceses, there are salaries attached to various chaplaincies and frankly speaking, the mission needs such income.

### *The Challenges*

There is a multiplicity of pastoral needs in the West today and they are nuanced in the different nations and cultures that make up the West. In English speaking countries such as Ireland and Britain, the culture is profoundly shaped by a perspective or model which is often generically referred to as Anglo-Saxon. This has a bearing on economics, politics and social policy. It is rationalistic and deeply secular. It can also foster a vehement antipathy to religious faith and the traditions and practices that seek to express that faith.

As the understanding that informed the social or Christian democracy of Western Europe following the Second World War has faded, the result has been, arguably, a deeper exposure of human value in terms of utility. The redundancy that comes with the highs and lows of economic cycles has contributed to the atomisation and alienation of people who feel their worth is tied to productivity and consequently if they cannot work, they have no value and no place. This analysis is itself superseded by the prospect, becoming clear more recently, that many people may never work in the way previous generations did and may never enjoy the same standards of living.

The malaise affecting Western societies is beyond the scope of this short reflection but among its many poisonous fruits are angst and anger. And coupled with the sense with which previous generations in Europe have been imbued, that unparalleled levels of violence have strangled what Abraham Lincoln called 'the better angels of our nature,' we struggle with the very idea of God and recoil almost at any suggestion that God is good or interested.

The further internationalisation of the Irish Province, therefore, brings with it, I believe, a very challenging vocation to evangelise, to bring the good news of the Gospel to people who may be scandalised even by the thought that anyone could believe it to be true. Those who need to hear it most are those who are crushed by the imbalances in our society, those, who because of the now surely undisputed vastly disproportionate distribution of wealth and resources, are left empty handed and abandoned. If we are challenged as to why we should bother with such a task, we answer that we speak and act in contradiction to the assertion that the human person has no value unless he or she is productive, that the glory of God is the human person fully alive, as St Irenaeus put it.

Given the size and capacity of the Irish Province now, it is most likely that our mission will concentrate in London and Dublin. As cities London and Dublin are quite different, certainly in terms of scale, but as European capitals the realities on the ground are very similar. People migrate towards them as people always have to the metropolis and their needs are acute, especially the needs of those who arrive seeking refuge or asylum or simply employment.

Close to one of our principal houses in Dublin a new need is presenting itself. Due to the reorganisation of one of the main universities in the city, 20,000 students will soon be gathered on a new campus just a short walk away. It would be remiss of Vincentians in Dublin to ignore the pastoral obligations placed on us by such a development, and, in fact, we have already been in contact with the chaplaincy in the university and with the Archbishop to offer whatever help we can and one confrere is showing a particular interest in developing the connection. As time goes by we may need to position ourselves to be of the most benefit we can be and this will most likely require the services of a confrere from another Province.

### *Repositioning*

The imagery that comes most easily to mind in reflection on the best way forward for the Province of Ireland is 'repositioning'. For most of its history the Province of Ireland had responsibilities for large institutions such as seminaries, schools, teacher training colleges and retreat centres, as well as parishes. That has changed as these institutions have been amalgamated or have closed, or we have become fewer. Thus it has become necessary to reimagine how we might best respond to our vocation as missionaries now. I want to emphasize that we do not seek simply to prolong the life of the Province for its own sake. Inviting one or two or three confreres from other Provinces to join us will be for the sake of our brothers and sisters who need to hear the words of the Gospel and feel their effect. It is so that we can be part of the body of Christ, the voice of Christ, the healing of Christ. We seek to witness and to do it well.

A brief look at the *Catalogue* shows that, for the most part, the Provinces of Europe struggle to maintain a visible and viable presence in the centres in which we were once very powerfully present. What is true for the Province of Ireland is also true for other Provinces. We are obliged, therefore, to ask searching questions about our intentions. Do we prepare for an end that will see us roll up our tents in this part of the world and console ourselves that in other parts of the world at least, the Congregation is flourishing? Do we wander into the future with a vague sense that Lord will provide? Or can we face something truly integrated

that seeks to fold the young Congregation into the still living tradition of its heartland, reaching across the continent from Belfast to Beirut?

#### NOTES

1. Mavrič CM, Tomaž. Letter to Ziad Haddad CM (Rome, 1 April 2019).
2. Article 1; The purpose of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ evangelizing the poor. This purpose is achieved when, faithful to St Vincent, the members individually and collectively:
  1. make every effort to put on the spirit of Christ himself (CR I, 3) in order to acquire a holiness appropriate to their vocation (CR XII, 13);
  2. work at evangelizing the poor, especially the more abandoned;
  3. help the clergy and laity in their formation and lead them to a fuller participation in the evangelization of the poor. Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission, (Rome, CM Curia, 1984).
3. Article 2 With this purpose in view, the Congregation of the Mission, faithful to the gospel, and always attentive to the signs of the times and the more urgent calls of the Church, should take care to open up new ways and use new means adapted to the circumstances of time and place. Moreover, it should strive to evaluate and plan its works and ministries, and in this way remain in a continual state of renewal. (Constitutions and Statutes of the Congregation of the Mission).
4. Willis Towers Watson, The Vincentian Community of Ireland: Report of the Community's future income and expenditure (Dublin, The Irish Province of the Congregation of the Mission, 2019).
5. <https://cmdb.cmglobal.org/viewprovince.php?provinceid=SCM>

# Home thoughts from abroad

Reflections from General Assembly 2016, Chicago

Paschal Scallon CM

*Dear Confreres,*

Belgium have just beaten Hungary 4-0... I won't dwell on the other results of the day... suffice it to say Brexit ain't the only show in town!

Paul and I arrived in DePaul on Thursday evening allowing plenty of time for acclimatisation. Chicago is hot and it isn't only the jazz. Business begins tomorrow but already we're meeting the Confreres. There will be over 130 or so at the assembly I believe.

DePaul University at its Lincoln Park campus is very nice and compact and the air conditioning works... so much so that Paul sits in his room in his newly issued DePaul sweat shirt but with sandals and no socks.

There's no doubt it's exciting to be here but not as much as St Peter's in Fizzboro where Vice President Biden turned up for Mass today I'm told. The ambassador, a former Vincentian seminarian, phoned me here in the middle of the night to let me know they were 'invading' (his word) but as someone very wise in these matters once said, because I wasn't there I couldn't answer the phone. Anyway, the Secret Service closed down the North Circular Road and everyone was, I'm sure, very much at home.

I'd like to send a little synopsis of events at the assembly to you all each day, although there will probably be an official version... against which you can test the veracity of my account! Should I falter in this it will be because either I've been expelled from the Assembly or elected Superior General. If anyone would like to unsubscribe don't hesitate.

In the true spirit of these things, though, do remember us in your prayers. It is a very moving experience to be at the heart of the Congregation on an occasion like this and I hope Paul and I will be worthy of you and the trust you have reposed in us.

*Regards,  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

...OK, I promise, no more gratuitous references to Brexit; I have nothing but admiration for the French; the Scots are a proud and decent people but what about Iceland, eh? I just love those frozen desserts.

Day one of our assembly got off to an inauspicious start... we ran out of milk at breakfast which gave us the unlikely spectacle of the new Visitor of Austria-Germany, the stately Franz Kangler, serenading us with the old Herman's Hermits number...

*No milk today, my love has gone away  
The bottle stands forlorn, a symbol of the dawn  
No milk today, it seems a common sight  
But people passing by don't know the reason why*

*How could they know just what this message means?  
The end of my hopes, the end of all my dreams...*

It put Brexit in perspective I can tell you.

There was a solemn celebration of Mass at nine a.m. which saw the whole assembly very impressively vested and nearly filling St Vincent's church on campus. The music for the liturgy was astonishingly beautiful but it never fails to impress me on a level I should operate at more frequently to hear the sound of the Confreres singing the *Veni Creator*. I have to say, it's then I know I'm home.

Business was pretty brisk during the sessions once we mastered the technology allowing us to vote electronically. There are 111 of us at the moment but even the technology was struggling to keep up with whatever nonsense we were making of it for a while. One more Confrere has yet to arrive and another if his visa comes through... say a prayer.

We elected officers and commissions in very short order encroaching even on tomorrow's business which begged the question in some more efficient minds, should we finish with tomorrow's evening prayer and if so should we say morning prayer as well... just in case? Actually, today's business was a little tedious but we did all that was necessary and approved the directory with the preparatory commissions recommended amendments.

Paul Roche has just knocked on my door... time for common rec.

*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Day two and already one wonders if English is the only language with the maxim, 'brevity is the soul of wit...' probably not but we'll see.

Today the sharing began. We discussed some of the responses from the Provinces sent in in preparation for the assembly. We'll hear more



because further redactions will come back to us until we refine something to pass on to Confreres at home, but it was a very engaging day. Both 'yours trulies' were given the privilege of writing up our groups' reports which made for a pretty intense morning.

There is a very discernible emphasis, coming from the new and emerging Provinces (if I can call them that) on the Community's obligation to go to the poor. Evangelizare is the motto of the Assembly but addressing the needs of the poor is where the stress is being placed. This came out during the afternoon when a paper on the CM and the new evangelisation was read to the assembly and discussed afterwards. The progress of the assembly is at <http://ag2016.cmglobal.org>

*Keep the faith!*  
*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

The more I see of the cmglobal website the more I feel I'm engaged in a too little too late effort with these dispatches from the front. It's full of lovely pictures and any amount of reading but if you have only a passing familiarity with the Christmas edition of Vincentiana, then stick with the pass sums class right here.

Today was interesting because Très Honoré Père gave his report. He gets twelve years off his chest in fairly robust style. The Confreres are the congregation's greatest asset, he said, but there's room for improvement. Read his report on cmglobal.org to avoid my adding needless and mindless colour. I thought it most refreshing but I knew we had been given a message. Why not? Nothing to lose and some of what he wants to see happen may just happen. He sees a reluctance, even a resistance in Provinces to globalising or internationalising (another *mot de jour* at GA2016).

Following THP and a power outage caused by a transformer malfunction which necessitated a move to another location, we heard from Très Honoré Mère. To be honest, while THM was most gracious, her address lacked something which I'll leave to your own assessment. After GGG, though, everything seemed too perfect in her description of the relationship between the two communities. You'll say, what else was the poor woman to say in a once every six-year spiff? And you're probably right; diplomacy, decorum... charity were the order of the day but I have a feeling the DCs have more to say to us.

*Good night...*  
*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

...another day, another dollar! Today was dominated by the report of the Econome Générale. I found it interesting in its outlining the number of Provinces regarded as self sustaining and those regarded as under resourced. The CM has resources, no question but in some corners of the Little Company even feeding the Confreres is a concern.

As you can imagine the time given over to discussion of the report was interesting. Both 'yours trulies' were at the crease before and after lunch.

There is unquestionably a willingness to share resources, finance and personnel, but the implications of this were not lost on us. It will mean the further internationalising of the Community. Some have already expressed concerns for what this means for individual Provinces' identity. Without it, however, those Provinces risk having no identity at all, either because their personnel will have gone the way of all flesh or candidates answering a sense of vocation will be sent away because there will be no way of keeping them.

There was much more than this said today and this is only my hearing of what was said reflected on to you. Again, I commend the GA2016 link on [cmglobal.org](http://cmglobal.org).

Please use caution in viewing photographs of Confreres you may recognise holding drinks in their hands. We were told they were only for a brochure on late adult and post operative healthcare.

*Happy days...*  
*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Early today the Moderator of the Assembly made a Freudian slip when instead of calling us members, he inadvertently addressed us as the 'martyrs of the assembly'... an easy mistake I might have said yesterday except that today turned my expectations around.

I mentioned the other day that there are moments of real tedium in all of this but today was different; today was special.

Once the usual housekeeping was taken care of, including a clarification on whether underwear qualifies for dry cleaning (it doesn't), we heard from a number of Confreres and commissions on various works which are being, it seems to me, more and more professionalised with ever more effective results. Programmes are better conceived of, planned for and executed. One of the initiatives referred to in this respect was the work of DePaul Ireland with a piece to camera from Kerry Anthony who runs DPI.

There was a very special 'explication' of the current Vincentian Family response to the refugee crisis in Europe. It was a powerful statement about 'bringing a collective Vincentian intelligence to the mission.' It almost made one wistful for the halcyon pioneering days in this field when Irish Vins and DCs in St Petersburg set up the Vincentian Refugee Centre, all ended by some benighted b\*\*\*\*\*d who has been rightly described as no more than a sacristy priest!

The best came almost at the last and was one of the most inspiring things about the Vins I've ever experienced. The Vice Province of Ss Cyril & Methodius had prepared a video showing the development and reach of the Vincentian Family in Kiev, Kharkiv and Odessa. The images of children in Romanian and Belyorussian orphanages from the 1990s are impressed on our minds but the work of DCs and others like DePaul Ukraine and the SVP, and the Confreres, have done much to reverse those abuses, at least in those places any Vins have managed to reach. Hungry, disabled, sick and homeless people being acknowledged, fed, bandaged and dignified and at the centre of it, like Elijah at rest, our own Pavel Ivanovich. Cyril & Methodius is now in the hands of Confreres from eastern Europe, as it always was I suppose, but Paul's achievement in his years there make him a true Hero of the Revolution and he's recognised as such. It made me proud that Paul has distinguished himself so much and has reflected such credit on the Irish Province.

There were other presentations concerning North Africa, Haiti and a proposal from THP about Vin students studying in the West to improve the possibilities of inculturation. Watch that space.

John Rybolt's history of the CM was made available for a very reasonable \$202 per set of seven. Amazon has single volumes going at £90 each. I ordered sets for Dublin and London. S'wonderful what you can do *in loco provincialis!*

*Good night.  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Opinion differs on the fare before us today. In the morning there was a series of presentations which ranged widely in terms of interest. The most interesting was the report of the Secretary General, Fr Giuseppe Turati. He showed the current state of the CM around the world and it was fascinating. Most Confreres still reside in Europe but the decline in numbers and/or the rise in age is very pronounced. Nothing new there. (I

wondered quite when Europe will lose its numerical dominance; that's not clear but it's coming).

Elsewhere the trends are much more encouraging and one sees easily enough why internationalisation is the flavour of the moment at the Curia. Making the resources of the community available where the growth is best is the priority of the outgoing administration.

One statistic that stayed with me showed how the current number of Confreres world-wide is actually quite stable, in that the number of CM students (received and in vows) just about offsets the number of Confreres leaving the community or dying. The overall number of CMs is around 3,200 and around 870x2 or so come and go. There is an underlying trend downwards, though, of around 2% p.a.

There was, as ever, much more but ma poor wee head could hardly handle all the graphs and pie charts. It will all be available though and in spite of the view from our end, the CM and its charism is alive.

Other business included a description of the offices of Superior General and the Assistants General. The idea was to facilitate our reflection on who might fit the bill but apart from leaving us with a sense that only Jesus need apply and even he might fail the administration criteria, I didn't feel much wiser. All the same, it is to the blind, the lame and the hault such as Roche and myself that the choice has been left.

Other presentations dealt with CIM, CIF and SIEV. SIEV was very interesting. All that is happening online makes these aspects of the CM outreach very exciting.

In conclusion, the result of the straw poll for the election of a new THP was published this afternoon. There were ten names but neither 'yours trulies' were among them. Prudence forbids me say more but now the huddling can really begin.

Retreat tomorrow (day of recollection really). I'm reading the Gospel at Mass so 'me bronicals' had better be clear.

*Good night.*

*Paschal*

*Hello Confreres,*

As I think I mentioned, today was a day of recollection before the voting for a new THP. Tomorrow is the 4th of July of course and a holiday but the rest of you, work hard won't you. The voting will be on Tuesday. I have decided on a candidate and I could tell you but what would be the point in that? I'll let the Daughters of Charity tell you all... and they will... just as soon as they've told Jesus.

Paul and I were out to dinner this evening with the Confreres of the eastern European Provinces associated with Cyril and Methodius... an Argentinian restaurant serving Uruguayan steaks... lovely!

*Good night.  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

By the time you read this it will be the 5th of July or 'holy \*\*\*\*, what have we done? Day'. If you'd like to know what that feels like ask the English or have a look at Exodus.

Anyway, today was what a *dies non* says on the tin. Brunch was at ten, Mass was at three and there was a barbecue and a congregational 'comeallye' at four which is just over and not a moment too soon. Roche and I were joined by our gallant allies in Europe, the Germans and the Austrians for a four verse rendition of Wild Rover... rest assured, we weren't the worst!

Tomorrow we vote... we'll be writing our thoroughly discerned preferences at about four p.m. Dublin/London time... say a prayer!

*Good night.  
Paschal*

Tomaž Mavrič on the third ballot with seventy six votes.  
Gaudemus!

*Dear Confreres,*

Well, the big moment arrived today and moved through most efficiently in the election of our new Superior General, Tomaž Mavrič. Pavel Ivanovich, given to this kind of thing, calculated that the second ballot, from distribution of ballot papers to the calling of the results, only took 17 minutes. The third ballot didn't take much longer, if that.

Most of us will remember Tomaž from his time in Ireland and his election today must be very satisfying. Tomaž has very warm feelings for the Irish Province and I think we may underestimate the contribution we have made to the lives and ministries of so many Confreres who have studied in Ireland and Britain, so generously assisted by Fr Bernard Meade who is something of a phenomenon in the stories these guys tell.

The election took place over three ballots and there were only really three runners: Mavrič, Naranjo (Colombia) and Zontak (General Curia via Slovakia).

The first ballot was inconclusive. I resisted the temptation to do my *Shoes of the Fisherman* imitation and cry out, 'Insufficient for election!'

The two thirds majority was seventy five. On the first, second and third ballots the voting went thusly:

Mavrič	46	64	76
Naranjo	24	31	29
Zontak	14	10	5
Alvarez	11	6	1
Delgado	10	1	1

Watching the blocs of votes move about was interesting. The Latin American vote was clearly not for shifting and the mantra, 'not another gringo', which I heard with my own ears at a previous assembly, is still strong it seems. Indeed, when I was in Madrid with the Phibsborough choirs in May, the desire for change was pointed out to me. It is arguable that the Hispanic vote should have long since produced a Superior General but it hasn't and only ever seems to get so far.

Tomaž, however, fits everyone's preference (well, almost). He was born in Argentina, grew up in Slovenia, has worked and studied in Ireland, Canada, Slovenia, Slovakia, Russia and Ukraine. He has a command of four languages and now he has to learn Italian.

The bad news (for some) is he's fifty-eight which means he's substantially younger than Seán (Peter Pan) Farrell. Seán, when the Superior General is younger than you... it's time for the medical... full metal jacket!

It's been a long day. Tomorrow Mass will be presided at by THP flanked by Pavel Ivanovich, who it must be said, looks awfully like a Greek Catholic bishop. Pavel Ivanovich wept openly as the election concluded and so did the others associated with C&M. And why not? In less than 20 years it has gone from marginal to the provision to the Congregation of a Superior General. In the words of the prophet, 'no small thing!'

This evening I bumped into GGG and asked him out for a pint after supper. We're just back, four of us, and he's in great form.

*Good night.*  
*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Down from the mountain top and on to Jerusalem...

Our attention today turned to the rest of the General Curia and the team that will back up Tomaž as Superior General. After Mass, at which

Tomaž presided and Paul was one of the main concelebrants, each of the continental groups held separate meetings to select several candidates from which pool a Vicar General and the Assistants General might be elected. This was our chance for you to get rid of us and we blew it; we'll both be home soon. Voting for the Vicar General takes place tomorrow.

In the afternoon the Assembly discussed a proposal from the General Curia concerning the formation of seminarians from Provinces where vocations are plentiful who will work where Confreres are thin on the ground. The proposal is mainly concerned with their inculturation in the societies in which they will minister and the sense that the sooner this begins the better. There was less support than GGG had hoped for. Reservations were expressed about who would be chosen and what effect would that have on those not chosen. Venues and staffing were also on people's minds. It is seen as a practical example of the internationalisation of the CM, where resources of personnel and facilities are made available in a more balanced way. It isn't clear if this will go to a vote but it will have to if it is to have any chance of being implemented.

This evening we all went on a dinner cruise on Lake Michigan. It was a lovely evening, all Chicago skyline, lovely food and a fireworks display.

I am attaching some pics. I'm hopeless at remembering this sort of stuff so here's a fourth of July cowboy, Brother Mark, whose artwork adorns many a gable end here.

*Good night.  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

It's been an interesting week and an exciting week. I expected it would be. The counting of the votes in the two elections we've had so far were actually some of those moments it is both shocking and thrilling to watch. Today we re-elected the Vicar General, Javier Alvarez, and like the election of the Superior General it was like doing a jigsaw where some of the pieces just won't fit. Counting the votes, as they're called, is very satisfying, but watching a bloc of votes remain fixed to a candidate even after two ballots when it's clear which way things are going is astonishing. I don't know what it is; proof of original sin maybe.

*Good night.  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

The General Curia now looks like this (in order of election):

Javier Alvarez, *VG, 2nd term*

Aarón Gutiérrez, *Mexico*

Mathew Kallammakal, *2nd term*

Yosief Zeracristos, *2nd term*

Miles Heinen, *formerly VSO*

It took all day to do this and there was general agreement that a reasonable global spread had been achieved. It also gives Tomaž the measure of continuity he told us he wanted.

So week two ends, actually not quite, breakfast at seven a.m. tomorrow, first session at eight a.m... We have Mass with Archbishop Cupich later tomorrow morning. Very tired now.

*Good night.*

*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

It would be disloyal of me, perhaps, to suggest that someone's lost the plot, and God forbid, anyone would...

You must forgive me because as I've already intimated to another party elsewhere, I've been out with a cousin and my slip may be showing, as it were!

I thought I should clarify that, as another Confrere, in response to my communications, has suggested that their tone is directly proportionate to my engagement with the hospitality industry here in Chicago. May the thought perish on his lips and may his tongue cleave to his mouth whether he forgets Jerusalem or not!

Anyway, today we had something akin to what the poem says was naming of parts: a series of reports so slung together and presented to the Assembly in such a fashion as to render us numb. It seemed such a pity that the presenters, who probably worked for months on their presentations, should have received such shrift from the organisers. It was said to me later that in order for the assembly to appreciate what groups like MISEVI are doing, we should have heard them one at a time, that is one each day.

The day did not start well anyway. We began to hear about the first draft of the Assembly document from that commission without having the text to hand. It took over an hour for copies to appear, so, when you're told, *sans texte*, that one section has fourteen points, you realise



starting a Saturday at seven a.m. was not the worst part of the day. If you think my comments are saucy you should have heard John Rybolt up in the translator's booth.

Later, we celebrated Mass with Archbishop Cupich, who seems a very charming man. He's just been appointed to the Congregation for Bishops, so the outstanding appointments in Ireland may get new attention.

In the afternoon I went with Greg Brett, the Visitor of Oceania, to see the museum of the history of Chicago, probably the TV3 of museums in town but I loved it.

After that it was all downhill.

*Good night.  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Today was lovely... it began late; that is, at eight! Still, I managed to reach breakfast at 8.30, which meant I didn't have to talk to anyone, not because I couldn't face them; they just weren't there... bliss it was...

We celebrated Mass with the parishioners of St Vincent de Paul parish at ten a.m. and it was full on. They sang an introit which John Rybolt had discovered in the bowels of the archive in the Maison Mère and it was staggeringly beautiful. I'd love to hear it sung in St Peter's, and/or of course, Castleknock, more my business now. At the end of Mass, we sang the Salve and the Confreres just surpassed themselves.

Afterwards there were refreshments served for CMs and parishioners and I met a lady called Siobhan from London who remembers the Confreres from Goodmayes, so Jimmy Shiel, take a bow! I also met a guy whose MA dissertation I had supervised in All Hallows, fadó fadó. Rob Gilmore remembers AH with a lot of affection, so Confreres, take a bow. He's working in campus ministry in DePaul now. He is married to Liz and they're expecting their first baby in December. They brought me out for brunch and, as ever, you just can't beat eggs benedict.

The rest of the day was free but the first draft of the Assembly document was sitting on my desk. It needs attention. This evening, Paul and I went for dinner with our Nigerian brothers, Cyril Mbata, Urban Osuji and another who is studying at DePaul, Collins Ekpe. Roche was in his element.

Altogether, a very productive non-productive day.

*Good night.  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Something rather sad happened today. Ex-THP, GGG was invited to address the assembly. He has been very involved since he handed over to Tomaž but it became clear he had been asked or had planned to speak about the wrapping up of the Province of Holland.

Last year, at the end of July, Holland became a mission under the Superior General and it must have been decided to use the General Assembly to pay tribute to all that the Confreres had done over the years, in the Netherlands, in Indonesia, Ethiopia, Central America and China. Each of the Visitors of those Provinces rose to speak about the work of the Dutch after Fr Harrie Jaspers, representing the Dutch mission at the Assembly, spoke of what had been his Province and how it had declined even as all its work overseas had thrived.

It felt as though we were at the reading of a will.

I hadn't expected to hear so much or indeed to be as struck by what I heard. Actually, many of the Confreres were quite deeply affected by the moment. And while our sympathy went out to the Dutch I was afraid I was looking at a preview of future events just like it.

*Good night.*

*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

We came to an impasse today. With only three days left, we have hardly covered a third of the first draft of the Assembly document. It is as though we, or some of us, are trying to say everything that can be said about the CM and the result is the danger of a document that might just as well be handed to the internal seminaire. Personally, I think Confreres with mileage deserve better. So, I asked this from the floor and thought I'd be shunned. I asked,

“Why are we trying to say so much?” It seems to me that a very significant move has taken place in the CM over the past twenty five years. Something which began as a ‘peripheral’ development in the life and ministry of the CM, namely the international missions, has moved centre stage in the life of the Community. It must seem, therefore, that we have an opportunity to proclaim something engaging, exciting, provocative to the Confreres in our Provinces. I fear that in trying to say so much we will really end up saying nothing at all.

After I stopped talking I felt like I'd ruined the party and felt rather unsettled until, some while later, one of the other delegates endorsed

my contribution, and another and, at the break, one man told me I had saved their lives!!! The verbosity is horrendous. Expressing ourselves like this shows we lack focus and perhaps have no idea what we want to say really.

And that's a shame because if it's true the CM and its structures are becoming more fluid as we try to adjust to what's happening in the world, and as Roche says, reflect what's happening in the world especially in relation to migration, then platitudes are not going to help and may serve only to aggravate Confreres at home and alienate us from processes such as a General Assembly.

I'm sure I'm not the first Confrere from an anglophone country to feel exasperated at the idiom in which others express themselves but there's more than that at issue here.

I'm convinced there has been a change in direction working its way through the culture of the Community in the past three decades, at leadership level for a long time but breaking through at Provincial level more recently, not least in the Irish Province. Provinces are becoming more elastic and not only because of 'reconfiguration' but also because Provinces and particular international missions are setting up within the territories of other Provinces often without prior consultation but with the assent of the General Curia.

Such developments, of course, are hardly ideal and smoother ways of doing business need to be established but the situation on the ground presents us with a denouement in which I believe providence offers us opportunities. Somehow, in the midst of our half built projects and among the ashes of others, a small voice is saying, 'Now is the favourable time.'

I attach a photo of one of the stoles made for the assembly which were a gift from either the Provinces of Colombia or Peru or both.

*Good night.  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Earlier in this assembly I was able to say when we passed important milestones: the day the sharing began for example, or, better, the voting. Today we got to the first draft of the 'Final Document'. I had spent the weekend perusing it. I was at a loss.

Imagine my relief then this morning when the first draft disappeared almost as fast as snow off a ditch once we were put to work. Yours truly was nominated as secretary of the group so I had to pay attention. Sort

of a pity that, because it puts at risk much of the regard one might have had for Confreres when one actually hears what they're saying.

The day's work went well, though. We're keen not to trundle out some stuff that any Vin, anywhere might write anytime. Although, with so many voices saying so many things this 113-man committee could yet turn out a five hump camel, hoping it will win the Derby.

But, you did hear it from me first and just in case it gets lost; this assembly has been about the internationalisation of the CM and the challenging of what the outgoing General Curia identifies as 'provincialism'. I thought that word a bit rough, unkind, given its pejorative connotations in ordinary usage but it has entered our lexicon now and challenges our parochialism with its sharp edges.

I think I mentioned already that I invested in two sets of the history of the CM. They were sent out today through DePaul and should arrive in a few weeks. One is for GB and the other should go to wherever we decide to locate our Vincentian library in Dublin.

On another note... there has been some speculation about the venue for the next assembly. In an idle moment I thought of Dublin but then I remembered this... <https://youtu.be/di6yX3yVAtM>

*Good night.*  
*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

It's four o'clock in the morning, been up since two, left DePaul for the airport at three. The assembly is over and I'm leavin' on a jet plane.

The last day of the assembly was a scramble. Yours truly was asked to help with making a reasonable translation of the final document. I did my best but it's still spanglish. The age old tension between the Latin tendency to embellish beyond belief and the Anglo tendency to be concise beyond brief really was evident.

Anyway, it's over and we have a new General. Praise the Lord! Thank you, everyone who responded to my emails. I appreciated your encouragement very much.

*Good morning.*  
*Paschal*

# Reflections from CEVIM: Beirut, Lebanon, 2018

Paschal Scallon CM

*Greetings Confreres,*

Having had a very gratifying response to the email updates from the General Assembly in 2016, I thought you'd like to hear from CEVIM 2018 in Beirut.

All I ever really knew about Beirut was that in the glory days of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, Beirut was the Paris of the Mediterranean, the Pearl of the Orient (or was that Manila?), the tomb of post-colonial carve ups: India, Africa, Fermanagh!

It was also, I have an adolescent pride in remembering, the home of either the most or second-most bombed hotel in the world, namely the Commodore, outdone only by the Europa in... Belfast.

Today, Beirut is recovered(ing) and Belfast glories in the *Titanic* but as the man said, if it weren't for the brilliance of Harland and Wolff, the *Titanic* wouldn't be where she is today!

Dublin to Beirut might be quicker by camel but Turkish Airlines is a wonderful alternative. I was offered an upgrade for €200 and many's the moment when the curtain between first and cattle class swayed to the left or right as the plane banked sharply over Bosnia... and Herzegovina... I wished I'd haggled. I wished afterwards, the way you do, that I'd said, '50 and I'll take it off your hands!' Business class was empty and cattle class was stuffed!

Today, Sunday, was nice and quiet, a lovely cooling breeze wafting across the terrace garden of the Provincial House. There was coffee... even the paper cups are small (no Maxwell House porter barrels here, no sir!)... and little Easter pastries on which the Fathers might revive themselves because its Orthodox Easter here and as far as I can see everyone seems to have had a second go of the ceremonies... so the cakes were crucial.

The principal event came this evening when the Vincentian world here celebrated the golden jubilee of Archbishop Georges Bou Jaoudé CM. He joined the Community in 1961 and was ordained in 1968. I'm not sure when he became a bishop.

The Eucharist was according to the Maronite rite, in Arabic (and in Syriac at the Consecration). I understood hardly a word... except Amin... but during the proclamation of the Gospel I did hear and understand, 'Salaam alaikum'. Of all the post-resurrection narratives, Jesus

saying, 'Peace be with you' captures everything. It seems to me, behind all the rest of everything, what the Lord strains to say and we struggle to understand.

Dinner followed and it was lovely. Most of the Visitors have arrived except for one or two, including our good friend from Hungary, Szabolcs Barta, who stayed with us in Phibsborough a couple of years ago. I'm looking forward to seeing him again.

*Salaam alaikum.*  
*Paschal*

*Greetings Confreres,*

Today was a holiday in Lebanon. The feast of the Annunciation is big here as those of us who arrived early found when we were brought to see the shrine of St Charbel Maklouf, a Maronite hermit who lived in the mountains above Byblos, a very historic harbour town north of Beirut.

A certain Confrere tells a wonderful story about his visit to this shrine some years ago and one can see how it would make an impression but actually, it ain't the stones, or the cells or even the shrine itself. It's something we see in Knock or Lourdes, Rome or even Phibsborough... it's the draw. The shrine was packed and it was young families with very small children.

The shrine is in a Christian zone but I was told that within that zone two villages are controlled by Hezbollah. It seemed to me all the more remarkable that on a major Christian festival so many would visit or go on pilgrimage to a place that seems to a foreigner so exposed. But, of course, maybe that's the point, it suits everyone to make whatever settlement is in place work and everyone reaps the benefits. There are checkpoints but no one's being thrown out.

In fact, if anything, there's a building boom. Towns and villages are splurging. The shoreline north from Beirut rears up in very steep mountains like the back of a sofa, and it is covered with a blanket of building. An Bord Pleanála would be hopelessly redundant here! There's archaeology and it's all around but they've had the builders in and it looks like the grass is afraid.

Byblos was interesting but in thirty degrees of heat you can only take in so many cannon balls stuck in the city walls. Byblos claims, though, to have developed a proto alphabet from which various others developed... again thirty degrees of heat and I may have got some of my spellings wrong.

The heat didn't put us off our stroke at lunch however. Someone in the restaurant asked, apparently, 'Why are there no women with all those men?' It seemed wiser to stay with the calamari which was delicious and the rosé wine, which was delicious too.

Some business was done when we got back... but we had to stop... for supper. We had been talking about the internal seminaire and if you can't keep a timetable talking about that, what's the point?

*Happy feast day... only nine months to Christmas.  
Paschal*

*Greetings Confreres,*

Today the rubber hit the road. Following morning ablutions and devotions, and breakfast which, being consistent in a continental sort of way, is a waste of time; we started in on our programme.

There was more discussion of the still emerging common European formation programme. The idea is that having completed at least three years in their own Provinces (studying/working) and integrating with the Community in the Province, the candidate might then join the common European Seminaire, currently alternating between Italy and Spain. This is the model our students Chinedu and John have been following. There is great enthusiasm for this but alas few candidates. This year's seminaire, which we hope John will join, will have between four and seven candidates. It starts in September but you can start your prayers now.

A common Theology programme is probably still some time off. It's difficult to say why but if I understand correctly there are differences of opinion on whether the theologate should be entirely Vincentian or a mixed campus with diocesans and members of other communities... such as... women for example (nobody actually said that... but... you know...)

We also discussed the CEVIM website... you can wait for the ten-page article in *Vincentina*.

Fr Miles Heinen (the predictive text on my phone automatically wrote 'Heineken' just there... even the technology's getting in on the crack... either that or Facebook is reading my mind). Anyway, Miles gave a very interesting paper on the working out of the plan for inter Provincial solidarity. This was circulated earlier to the Provinces by the Curia and is a very balanced attempt, firstly to gauge what are the resources of the CM world-wide and what are the needs. When internationalisation along these lines was mentioned at the General Assembly two years ago there were knowing but worried looks exchanged between certain delegates...

some may even have been thinking, 'Look, you can have the Confreres, just leave the money!'

After lunch, a very excellent assortment of delicacies including a really delicious soup we were on the road again, this time to visit the Papal Nuncio, or, more precisely, the First Secretary and the Patriarch. It was gas... like in all the best period pieces you've sat down to in front of the telly on a rainy Sunday afternoon, in both locations we sat in two rows along the walls facing each other while the host, flanked by the Visitor of the Orient on one side and our Vicar General, Fr Alvarez on the other, sat along the other wall... on thrones.

We listened to their personal analyses of the situation in the Lebanon and drank strong coffee and consumed sweets and other meats. At the Nunciature, the First Secretary spoke really interestingly about the theological significance of Lebanon in the Middle East today. Beyond politics, which of course is the gearbox of the whole thing, Lebanon, he said, can show the rest of the Middle East how it is possible to live in reconciled diversity. He mentioned Syria especially – as he might – to say that there is a double reconciliation to be offered here. Syria has treated Lebanon badly, interfering in its politics (even assassinating its leaders) and occupying large sections of the country. Now the shoe is on the other foot and there are thought to be almost two million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. Forgiving past outrages and then welcoming the victims of the Syrian disaster leaves Lebanon and its people with a huge spiritual challenge among all the others.

The Patriarch was like I imagine an Irish Bishop might have been when it was oddly thought that to be Irish and Catholic was a given. He spoke about how it is impossible to be Lebanese and not religious, whether Christian, Muslim or Druze. Apparently you have to go to Cyprus if you want a civil marriage. The state is locked in to relationship with the different faiths for the sake of peace. It sounds kind of familiar but I think the Irish experience was different. There seems to be an urgency in maintaining the status quo as it has emerged here, as if one element fails the whole country reverts to the 1970s.

In the evening we were guests at an oratorio in Arabic in honour of St Vincent. It was most enjoyable even though I couldn't understand a word... maybe 'malik' in reference to Louis XIII. It had a lovely lyrical quality and the guttural Arabic pronunciation gave a sort of percussive feel. I suggested to Miles Heineken that he might invite all concerned to perform in Holy Trinity Church in Dallas but I don't think he feels the time is right.

*Good night.*  
*Paschal*



*Hello Confreres,*

Today was one of the most fascinatingly informative I've had in years, a real learning.

Our morning sessions were addressed by Dr Nayla Tabbara of the Adyan Foundation (working for solidarity in diversity) who spoke to us first about contemporary Islam and, in a second talk on 'New Theological Approaches in Islam'. I can only say I was riveted. Me ecumenicals got their best airing in ages! Messing aside, do look these up in Vincentiana. I'm told they will appear. I'm really hoping because I didn't take a single note.

After lunch we were off again, further up into the heart of the Mount Lebanon area to visit a Druze centre. The mountains here are ear-poppingly high and three- and four-storey houses perch on ledges.

Thank you, everyone, who has sent responses.

*So, feeling rather banjoed, I wish you good night.  
Paschal*

*Hello Confreres,*

It was the turn of the Catholics to justify themselves today. That is to say, we heard another in-depth presentation on Catholic missiology among Muslims today. Again, I was fascinated because while ecumenism at home does deal with inter-faith and inter-church ecumenism, as well indeed as the issues arising from secular-religious affairs, inter-faith ecumenism at more than a theoretical level is actually still at an early stage and coincides with the arrival of Muslims in Ireland in larger numbers than before (just under 65,000 at the last census in 2016). In 2006 the number of Muslims in Ireland was around 30,000.

The speaker this morning was a Fr Fadi Daou, a professor also associated with the Adyan Foundation. This time I took pages and pages of notes but suffice it to say the challenges are the same as with inter-church ecumenism in Ireland. He was especially challenging when he got started on how things work in Lebanon. For example, in order to maintain its position in Lebanese society, one or other of the communities, Christian, Muslim or Druze is prepared to ignore basic principles. Lebanese citizenship is a case in point. In Lebanon this passes through the father in a family. If a woman marries a foreigner the children may not have Lebanese citizenship. This law is in place to prevent Christian women 'marrying out', particularly marrying Palestinians as the chances are the children will be Muslim and eventually Christians will become a minority. They already are as it happens due to emigration. And it is the Christian Patriarchate itself, the occupant of which is

a Cardinal of the Catholic Church, who insists on this law being left on the books.

When I asked Fr Daou at lunch how this contradiction can stand, he explained that when he raises it he is indulged because the religious (and civil) authorities appreciate that he does good work on inter-faith dialogue. It's not what you're saying, it's how you say it that counts and even though Fr Daou seems perfectly sincere in his observations and his prophetic analysis, he shrugs his shoulders and smiles at the inconsistencies. There is nothing more he can do except continue teaching and educating people into a new and transformed way of relationship with others.

Fr Daou was very refreshing on how Catholic missiology in the light of Vatican II has changed from conquest to accompaniment, the missionary activity being in the relationship one forms with the other rather than in the capture a celebration of baptism may represent.

As missionaries/Missionaries, simply being among people is to be part of the approach God makes toward everyone; the Holy Spirit makes the transformation. The challenge for missionaries is how we reflect or reveal the presence of God. The Monks at Tibhirine in Algeria, who were murdered during the civil war there, were shown as examples of this approach.

This is not new to any of us but there are moments when one is open and ready to hear it again and as missionaries I wonder if we can really ever tire of it. One of the most reinvigorating, even startling things Fr Daou said, in the context of missionary work in Islamic countries, was: one has to love Muslims, respecting and esteeming them as is their due, but one must also love Islam for what it is, the faith of people who describe themselves as those who have submitted to God.

A personal observation is that Christians say they are part of the people of Israel and Israel means those who wrestle with God... just saying!

Anyway, that's enough of me banging on.

*Good night.*  
*Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

Yesterday was the last day of CEVIM 2018 and I'm ready for the off. My flight, however, is on Tuesday. A little over-excitement at the booking stage maybe. I shall not waste a moment, though; downtown Beirut awaits, having seen, that is, all the worthiness a pious type like myself can bear!

Yesterday's business might be abbreviated; 'How the Vincentians conquered the Middle East!' Having heard about Islam and Christian Muslim relations over the previous two days, yesterday we heard about the Vincentian contribution to all that's been going on here over the centuries.

It seems to come down to our presence in Antoura since 1780 or so, when we got a jump on the Jesuits after their suppression and the mission they had established in Antoura needed someone to step in.

In the afternoon we actually visited Antoura and all I can say is; it's simply massive. There is something like 4,000 students and 460 teachers and 250 other staff. The fleet of buses, all liveried in the school colours, is just huge, and all parked up they look like a Dublin bus depot on a strike day.

There is a grave beneath the small original chapel containing the remains of the early missionaries, SJ and CM, and one of the deceased is Richard Hogan CM.

St Joseph's, Antoura, we were told became one of the most important schools in the Ottoman Empire which collapsed in 1918 at the end of World War I, as we know. Before that, the Vins took on the education of Christians so they might climb the ladder in the Muslim world. Christians lived under penal laws, very like the ones in Ireland which excluded Catholics, but education was their way into second-in-command positions all over the Middle East. This class made themselves indispensable to the ruling Muslims and Christians in Lebanon and especially flourished. Our guide around Antoura made very sure to impress all this on us but there was a lot of hyperbole, so... you know... I was still coping with buses!

We were treated to a marvelous banquet dinner in the school which formally brought the week's proceedings to a close. The other Visitors have been steadily leaving since the early hours.

Oh, and you can take this as you like, I nearly signed off without telling you that I was almost elected President of CEVIM!!!

I felt a sharp stab of alarm when my name came out of the hat on the first ballot and through three ballots I was in second place. On the fourth ballot, it was a straight vote between Ziad Haddad, the Visitor here in Lebanon, and myself but he got it in the end. Fair dues! He speaks several languages and has a certain flair...

Anyway, that's that. It has been a wonderful experience and of course a privilege to represent the Irish Province.

*Your devoted Confrere,  
Paschal*

# Thoughts from the Meeting of Vincentian Seminarians of Europe

August 2018

Paschal Scallon CM

*Good evening Confreres,*

The first time I came to Villebon was in 1982. I remember it as a frighteningly hot summer but these happen so much more frequently here than in either Ireland or Britain, so it may not have been all that remarkable. This year's heatwave at home wasn't as bad.

I remember there was a community of elderly Confreres in the house but a lot of the time it seemed there was hardly anyone here at all so I rattled around on my own.

Tom Davitt was in Paris in the Irish College trying to put manners on the archives and Eamon Devlin was in the Maison-Mère doing some work on his BA thesis. The stars aligned when Mick Prior arrived en route to Jerusalem to begin his work there and, one day, Tom arranged a trip for us to Port Royal. It was a long... hot... day. There was a train... a lot of walking... and a picnic. One Confrere, never one to dress up for dinner I imagine, dressed down for luncheon that day. Thankfully there are no photographs. Great times!

From what I can gather there hasn't been a meeting of European Vincentian seminarians before. A few years ago there was a meeting of recently ordained Vins in Europe but that seems to be as far as events like this have gone.

With the International Seminaire well established at this stage and the next one about to begin outside Turin in September, in which our Confrere John Ashu will take part, it seems like natural growth for a meeting of all the seminarians at whatever stage of formation to take place.

There will be thirty or so students attending. I'm not sure that includes every student in Europe (the Poles may have an extra division sitting in a forest in reserve) and some Provinces are not represented, but this seems to have serious backing. Several members of the General Curia are here and the Superior General is to take part along with the Superior General of the DCs. When one considers that within living memory thirty or so students might have made up half the student body of a single Province, it would seem imperative to assemble a similar number if now they represent the student body of the entire continent!

*Good night.*

*Paschal*

*Hello Confreres,*

My attention was divided, I have to admit, over the past day or so. As relieved as I told myself I was that I didn't have to attend the Papal Mass in the Park on account of being in Villebon, I snuck away yesterday for a luxuriant gawp, chez ma soeur not far from Villebon. Always lovely watching telly with family and spotting Confreres.

Back to the seminaire this morning, though. Morning prayer at seven followed by a quick breakfast and then on to a bus for visits to Gannes, Folleville and Montdidier (where Perboyre went to school).

I love Folleville, which is not to say I've been there often but a visit every ten years or so has been good for my soul and today hopefully will be too.

I kept thinking about the Phoenix Park Mass all the same. The pictures were disconcerting, the tone of the coverage of the Mass a bit underwhelmed and the weather seemed just awful even if it was warm. I felt disappointed except for one thing I hadn't expected. When the Pope gave his homily he preached from the lectern and not from the chair. I don't think the commentary referred to it (the very poignant penitential rite had caught their attention) but I was mesmerised. This was, it seemed to me, an ordinary priest giving a Sunday homily, not the Bishop of Rome or the Patriarch of the West (neither title carrying much heft during the visit anyway, given the emphasis in the coverage on all that has changed).

I was struck by it in the moment but when I stood in front of the pulpit in Folleville earlier today, it seemed, in the limited space of my own mind anyway, a prophetic gesture on the Holy Father's part. Vincent traced everything back to the sermon he preached at Folleville and the Congregation has enshrined that beginning in the way we have preserved the site. Part of the renewal of things in Ireland will be our doing the core work well and for us that involves communicating the word of God in eloquent simplicity, as missionaries, men who have something to say and who know how to say it.

We're having a barbecue this evening. We can... because it's dry here, and warm...

*Your devoted Confrere,  
Paschal*

*Dear Confreres,*

We're almost there! I say this with a diminishing, though wary sense of alarm. Yesterday we went to visit various sites in Paris associated with

St Vincent and I ended up walking nineteen kilometers. I always knew there would be pressure in this job but... is there a shoe allowance?

It was a lovely day even so. I had to serve as translator during visits to the museum in the Maison Mère and the archives where Fr Lautissier very graciously showed us bits and pieces and answered one or two too, too brutally frank questions from seminarians who, how shall I say, are still enjoying their twenties...

We had Mass of course in the chapel and what a wonderful sound the Confreres from the Province of the Orient make singing and praying in Arabic. There are three seminarians here from the Levant (another word they use of themselves).

Today we have an embarrassment of Superiors General. Fr Tomaž and Sr Kathleen are with us and I have to say, the Internationalisation agenda is very prominent. Very like the Archbishop of Dublin saying to priests working in parish clusters that they are not assigned to particular parishes but to the cluster, Tomaž is saying that we should be thinking beyond our own Provinces. This may be primarily for the seminarians coming through as they seem to be familiar with each other, many of them having been in the international seminaire or studying theology in Piacenza or Rome. It's for the rest of us too, though, because our Provinces appear to need 'cross fertilisation' and the process won't wait until guys currently in initial formation 'come of age' as it were.

It is the first time I have met Tomaž since my appointment as Provincial and he was very gracious.

The working day ended with a celebration of Mass at which Tomaž presided. Our new deacon, Chinedu, assisted him and John, who begins the internal seminaire next month, led the singing. The day has just actually ended with a truly superb festive dinner.

And so, c'est fini... for another three or four years... suggestions for the next venue are already in the air... and I didn't rule out ANY of them... Imagine, though, the experience of having, perhaps twice in your formation, the opportunity of meeting Vincentian students from other Provinces... the sheer, blooming, catholicity of it!

*Good night.  
Paschal*

# Saint Vincent de Paul Additional Correspondence, Conferences, Documents

John E Rybolt CM

*Fr John E Rybolt, CM,*

*discusses his recent work on the writings of Saint Vincent de Paul*

The search for documents from, to, or about Saint Vincent de Paul continues. This new collection of additional correspondence, conferences, and documents, is part of that search. Its purpose is to offer researchers the opportunity to correct and update already published materials, as well as to share with others newly discovered and unpublished materials. This collection, housed at DePaul University, Chicago, will be the principal point of reference for new Vincent materials, dating principally from his lifetime.

## *Original documents*

It will help to know what has happened to the original documents since the seventeenth century. In general, the secretarial office of the Congregation at Saint Lazare did not prepare complete copies of outgoing (or active) correspondence. His secretaries, and occasionally M Vincent himself, summarized his letters. These were copied in turn and are today found in what are known today as the Registers, kept in the archives of the Mission, Paris. On the rare occasions when an original is uncovered that can be compared with the entry in the Register, the differences between them are clearly seen. Still, the texts found only in the Registers are important and are often their only source.

In addition to these summaries, others, such as Bertrand Ducournau and Raymond Demortier, both members of the Congregation, also made extracts from letters and conferences, and arranged them thematically, a common practice at the time. Acting out of devotion to the founder, they hoped that these would nourish the spiritual formation of readers. This method, however, had the negative result of separating the founder's thinking from its context (of place, time, and addressee). René Alméras, M Vincent's successor in office, is credited with drawing up fourteen notebooks of these extracts. Of these, only three remain. Pierre Coste used them for his magisterial collection of correspondence, followed by conferences and documents. Ducournau's summaries figure in this collection; Demortier's are unknown.

The saint's two earliest biographers, Louis Abelly and Pierre Collet CM had numerous documents at hand whose originals are currently lost unknown. Collet claimed to have known between 6,000 and 7,000 of these letters. What happened to them? In the eighteenth century, the method at the time was not to collect the letters as such but to classify either the contents or themes of entire letters or at least excerpts from them. The originals then were apparently discarded.

Some were clearly lost through natural causes: damaged through water, fire, bookworms, or vermin; others were simply thrown away, perhaps out of ignorance. This is evident from the fact that the majority of the saint's existing letters date from the last five years of his life. Undoubtedly, his last correspondents saved them because of their reverence for him.

Many blame their loss on the looting of Saint Lazare on 13 July 1789, the day before the attack on the Bastille fortress in Paris. This seems less likely, since the looters did not have access to the most important materials at Saint Lazare, apart from many land and financial records in the office of the treasurer. Besides, in the three years between that date and the final expulsion of the Congregation from Saint Lazare in 1792, the leaders of the Congregation confided their documentary hoard to others for safekeeping and possible return. This was certainly true of other relics of the founder, particularly his physical remains. These latter were initially given for safekeeping to the congregation's attorney. In addition, a large number of documents and other materials, such as the founder's clothing, had been sent in secret to Turin where they remain.

After the restoration of the Missioners in France in 1807, the returning members gradually tried to recover the remaining documents. In this case, they sought out documents that M Vincent had sent out from Paris as to other houses of the Congregation outside of France, particularly Turin and Warsaw. The confreres at the time generally regarded the saint's writings as relics, to be looked at but rarely read, and sometimes to be kept in reliquaries shaped like framed pictures. Many of these continued to serve in the nineteenth century as they did in the two previous centuries as sources for sayings or maxims. These were copied, again apart from their context, and put into collections suitable for meditation and reflection.

A large number of documents were the saint's letters written to popes, bishops, royalty, magistrates, friends, the Daughters of Charity, and colleagues. Those in France were gradually confided to the National Archives or to the departmental archives where Vincentian houses were located in 1792.

Less interest has been paid to letters sent to M Vincent. As a result, fewer of these exist. Their contents can often be deduced from his answers to those now vanished letters.



Others documents, both his active (outgoing) and passive (incoming) correspondence, entered the marketplace for collectors of old documents, particularly after his canonization. Some documents are still being offered for sale; of these, some have never been previously known.

A further selection of materials consists of materials about Saint Vincent de Paul. In this collection, these are items dating from his lifetime. Some are long and some short, but the most important of these is the series of several notebooks which Brother Louis Robineau, the saint's secretary, prepared. They concerned aspects of his life, arranged probably in view of M Vincent's canonization. Virtually unknown and inaccessible, the text was published in French for the first time in 1991(1), to be followed by George Baldacchino CM who prepared a corrected and updated version but did not publish it. Here, that updated version in French is presented along with a translation into English. Another collection is from Joseph Guichard CM. He gathered biographical information about the founder's contemporaries and friends, as well as citations from books mentioning him that were published during his lifetime. Both are valuable for broadening background information about M Vincent that is otherwise unknown.

The most important source for some of these documents is the *Minutier central*, a section of the French National Archives in Paris which contains the documents drawn up and preserved by official notaries.

#### *Pé martin and Coste*

A few publications of the saint's output date from the early 19th century, after the legal restoration in France of the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission. These publications were prepared for use within the two communities and were generally not made public. This happened under the leadership M Jean-Baptiste Etienne, Superior General. Following the old tradition, they were published in thematic, not chronological, order.

By the end of the nineteenth century, attention shifted from regarding the founder's letters as relics or as sources of maxims and pious thoughts to seeing them as documents in themselves.

Jean-Baptiste Pé martin CM, secretary of the Congregation, undertook the publication of letters, conferences, and documents beginning in 1880. He established the style for the systematic classification of Vincent's texts. As much as possible, he published complete texts instead of simple extracts. His interest and that of others led to a more systematic examination of archival holdings in France. The official published *Inventaires* of departmental and other archives have enabled scholars to locate, copy, study, and publish many previously unknown

documents. Fr Guichard studied these documents carefully and identified some of them, but without copying them in full. His listings have been copied and translated in this collection.

Fr Pémartin deserves credit for his patient research to locate and publish for the first time many Vincentian texts, which he edited principally for members of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity. It was his mistaken opinion that 'there is henceforth little chance that [the published letters] will be increased in any notable way'(2). Even he, however, uncovered other previously unknown texts in the course of his editorial work. He published about one hundred new letters in a supplemental volume issued after his initial volumes appeared. All this work, it should be noted, was done anonymously in keeping with Vincentian tradition.

At the urging of the new Superior General, Eugène Boré, a renowned scholar, Pémartin arranged his materials in chronological order. In addition, but probably regrettably, he decided to modernize the original French spelling in the letters, to make them 'more intelligible to everyone.'(3) The result was that modern readers were cut off, at least in part, from the saint's own vocabulary and style. He included among the letters both the founder's active and passive correspondence. He numbered them consecutively, but his decision to format in italics the letters received by the saint led to some confusion in numbering and counting, and to some visual difficulty in reading large amounts of texts in italics.

Pémartin's published work gradually became difficult to find because of its restricted print run. Coste undertook to update his predecessor's work. He generally followed Pémartin's format, but he increased the number of items available as many had come to light. Like Pémartin, he added a few items to his large collection in a supplement at the end of volume eight. In addition, further discoveries of originals allowed the improvement of texts already known from defective copies. Coste followed Pémartin in his use of chronological order and modernized spelling; however, Coste began a new enumeration which has become today's standard. For unknown reasons, he omitted some items that had been in Pémartin's edition, and he failed to delve deeply into the second edition (1667-1668) of Abelly's biography. The texts which Coste omitted have been included in this collection. Coste also felt compelled to bowdlerize the saint's texts, omitting passages dealing with matters of morals for fear of scandalizing sensitive readers. These few texts were published in the English translation. Even Abelly, as is well known, decided to improve the saint's original text, exercising an editor's supposed prerogative to present M Vincent in a more elegant guise. Several of these instances have been included in this collection

by way of comparison among differing versions. They show Abelly's editorial choices.

Following Coste, André Dodin CM published what he called volume fifteen, an issue of *Mission et Charité* 19-20 (January-June 1970), a journal he founded and edited. The letters there are in chronological order and in modern spelling. Dodin gave them a separate enumeration, an unfortunate decision, since these were thereby removed from their context.

M Baldacchino gathered yet more items, eventually published in a number of *Bulletin des Lazaristes de France*, no. 210, May 2010. This is sometimes referred to as volume 16, although this designation is missing in the final publication. M Baldacchino published these texts in chronological order, but with an enumeration that supplemented Coste, such as '562 bis'. He also followed the tradition of employing modern French spelling.

An omission from this collection is the conferences to the ordinands. Saint Vincent did not deliver them personally, as far as is known, but their content and presentation certainly expresses his thinking. He gave conferences to ordinands, especially in his younger life, but none of the texts has been preserved. Existing conferences have been gathered and edited but only the first of three projected volumes was published (Gerard Carroll, *Un portrait du prêtre*, Paris, 2005). Because of their length and variety, their translation is a major task. Perhaps they can be added to this collection at a future date.

### *Further discoveries*

Despite the previous research and the anticipated conclusion that every existing document had already been uncovered, more materials have appeared, thanks to the research of numerous scholars. Although this present collection was originally conceived as only unpublished letters, conferences, and documents, some of this material has already been published, generally in obscure places. Other documents, already published, are here in a more complete or corrected version.

Although commercially unpublished on paper, others have also become available in typed versions. This is especially the case of the work of Fr Guichard. Bernard Koch CM has made great advances thanks to his knowledge of the period of Saint Vincent. Fr Koch's detailed transcriptions and presentations have enriched our knowledge. More recently, a team of scholars headed by Professor Alison Forrestal, of the National University of Ireland, Galway, working in the archives of Propaganda Fide in Rome, also uncovered many new texts of interest. Those dealing directly with M Vincent or the Congregation

are published here in their Latin or Italian original form, with English translations.

A further source has been found in the Archives of the Mission, Paris. Several manuscripts contain complete or partial copies of the saint's conferences. These are identified below. A few items appeared in *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission*, and in *Vincentiana*. In these cases, what is new here is an English translation of these texts and accompanying notes.

Very little material pertaining to the Daughters of Charity has been uncovered. Though much has already been published, more can probably be found.

#### *Format of this collection*

This collection was prepared in the original languages (mainly French or Latin), and in English translation. It employs the numbering that Pierre Coste established. For his work, he made a new enumeration, similar to, but not repeating, Pémartin's. In this collection, the identification number is preceded by the letter A, for Additional, and the number is often followed by a lower-case letter, employing the system used in Baldacchino's publication in 2010, and the English translation of Coste, such as 1709a. An example of the resulting number is: A33a, meaning that the text should follow item thirty three in Coste's listing.

The enumeration here is divided into the same categories that Coste employed: letters, conferences, and documents.

*Letters:* Dated letters are identified following Coste's enumeration. Undated letters follow a separate sequence beginning with 01, e A12. A new category was added: Letters among confreres, written during or shortly after the lifetime of the founder. They also follow in sequential order from 01, and are placed in chronological order, since all of them can be dated. Some of the remaining letters are corrected or completed versions of earlier publications by Coste and others.

*Conferences:* Most of the new texts are only fragments of conferences, not complete ones. These are divided into those which are dated, using Coste's enumeration; or undated, which are placed in simple numerical order. Of these, several appear in a new or corrected version, based on early manuscripts. Following those are items in a new category devoted to Sayings or Sentences. These are found principally in the second edition of Abelly (1667), in Collet, and in a few other sources. These resemble the Paroles (Words) that André Dodin published in French in his edition of the conferences prepared for the tercentenary of Saint Vincent's death, 1960.(4) A Spanish edition(5) and an English edition,(6) entitled Maxims, is in volume twelve. As much as possible,

the sayings included here do not copy the *Paroles* that Dodin's editorial team of students prepared.

*Documents:* These comprise the largest part of this collection. They are usually by or about the founder and the Congregation. Here, they are divided as follows, according to Coste's ordering:

Part I: Vincent de Paul, subdivided into dated and undated documents, with the same style of enumeration as for the Letters and Conferences; as well as Guichard's series of studies on the contemporaries and friends of M Vincent.

Part II: Congregation of the Mission: subdivided into dated and undated.

Part III: Confraternities of Charity: subdivided into dated and undated.

Part IV: Daughters of Charity (all are dated).

Part V: Ladies of Charity (all are dated).

Most of the texts in this collection are in French. These have been published as is, that is, using the original spelling where possible. A few are in Latin and even fewer in Italian. Several also have French translations. The notes and sources are presented in French. The majority of the texts are short, but a few are much longer, such as the Codex Sarzana, the first edition of the Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission and a draft of its constitutions; the rules of the Internal Seminary (novitiate); the two mission catechisms; and Coste's 'Minor events' text. A few notices of early confreres have also been uncovered and translated.

All the texts, including titles, notes, and indications of sources are also translated into English.

In summary, these additional texts total about 650.

As for the future, this is an open-ended online collection. These texts allow for the correction of the presented texts and the addition of new ones.

Some texts already available are currently too difficult to decipher, either because of their physical condition or the style of handwriting. As they are deciphered they will be added to this collection. Others are in archives that have not yet made copies available for transcription and translation.

The editor expresses his gratitude to the many archivists and other scholars who alerted him the existence of unknown texts over the last many years devoted to assembling and preparing this collection.

## NOTES:

1. André Dodin, ed, *Monsieur Vincent raconté par son secrétaire*, Paris, 1991,
2. [Pémarin], *Lettres de S Vincent de Paul... tome premier* (Paris, 1880); Preface to vol 1 of letters, p iii.
3. [Pémarin], *Lettres*, Preface, p. vii.
4. *Entretiens spirituels de saint Vincent de Paul*, Paris, 1960 : Paroles, pp. 987-1017 ; and Avis et Maximes, pp 1023-1031.
5. *San Vicente de Paul. Obras Completas*, Salamanca, 1974. Vol 11B separates the full conferences from partial conferences, sentences from Abelly (1664), and counsels and maxims.
6. *Saint Vincent de Paul. Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*. Hyde Park, New York, 1985, volume 12, supplement, no 23: "Maxims of Saint Vincent."

# Vincentian Parish Missions: Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Seventeenth-Century France

James H Murphy CM

In 1972 Professor Emmet Larkin of the University of Chicago published what would turn out to be a landmark article in the *American Historical Review* entitled, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75.' He seemed to argue for what at the time appeared to be an extraordinary proposition, though perhaps less so today. He argued that the high level of Catholic religious practice seen in Ireland in the twentieth century only fully dated from the third quarter of the nineteenth century. Before that Irish people were Catholics and did value the sacraments though only sporadically and they also practiced a good deal of folk religion. Though an attempt had been made in the seventeenth century to introduce the norms of the Council of Trent into Ireland the disorganization and disruption of Church life due to the turbulence of the times and the penal laws against Catholics meant that it had not taken hold.

Over the half century since Larkin's article other scholars have addressed the issue and a standard version of the Devotional Revolution thesis has emerged. The story begins in the mid eighteenth-century where the issue was seen oddly as being about an excess of priests. The solution to this problem was twofold, regulations severely limiting the number of diocesan priests bishops could ordain and efforts to curtail what was considered to be the excessive numbers of mendicant friars by requiring them to be educated, in part, on the continent. The number of friars went into steep decline but so too, alarmingly, did the numbers of diocesan priests when the Irish seminaries based on the continent that produced so many of them closed due to the French revolution. The ratio of priests to people took a further downward dip as the population of Ireland increased exponentially in the lead up to the Famine.

The immediate solution was the practice of station masses, whereby priests periodically offered mass and heard confessions at various points in their parishes. This was introduced as a measure to meet the pastoral gap caused by the fewness of priests and the limited capacity of existing chapels to accommodate significant numbers at mass. After the Famine, with a reduced Catholic population, with growing numbers of clergy and more churches and under the leadership of the determined Paul Cardinal Cullen (1803-78), a dramatic growth in religious practice

and adherence to the norms of Church life as laid down by the Council of Trent (1545-'62), a Devotional Revolution, as Larkin dubbed it, took place.

There have been three distinctive features of the Devotional Revolution debate over the years, a focus on statistics, a debate over whether the Devotional Revolution might have begun earlier than Larkin claimed and a speculation as to the reasons, other than religious reasons, as to why it took place. Concerning the third of these, Larkin speculated in his original article that the embrace of Tridentine Catholicism as a form of national identity served as a substitute for the loss of the Irish language.(1) Over the years other theories came along though all of them saw the trauma of the Great Famine as causative. They included the collapse in folk religion and the desire of small farmers to increase land holdings by adopting the stem-family system, thus enforcing celibacy on some family members, an enforcement made easier by the injunctions of religion on sexual expression. It was argued that the Famine left small farmers terrified at the idea that their few acres might not be able to sustain them in hard times and determined at least to keep the farm they had intact if not to increase its size. Before the Famine it had been common practice to subdivide farms among children, as the potato crop appeared to grow so abundantly. After the Famine the farm was left to one male heir. If there was enough money it might be possible to provide one female with a dowry to marry and perhaps another male to open a shop or a pub in the local village or town. Otherwise there were three options. Children might enter the priesthood or religious life, emigrate or remain as unmarried workers on the farm. The latter had to remain celibate as there was no way they could afford a family. It was argued that this was the reason why society embraced Catholic sexual morality though not injunctions on alcohol, as the latter provided an outlet for people deprived of marriage and family.

These speculations, however, the product of the functionalist trend of their times, have largely fallen out of the debate. Indeed, in his later years, as he projected a new though never to be written book on the Devotional Revolution, Larkin came to frame the causes of the change in terms of the analysis of the times, the 'spiritual destitution' of people whose souls were in mortal danger and in hazard of being lost. He did write one brief piece that would have been part of that work and that was published after his death. It was about the parish-mission movement. Parish missions were perhaps the principal mechanism of the Devotional Revolution and were periods of several weeks when priests from a religious congregation would attempt to catechize individuals and bring a parish up to the best practices of the Tridentine Church. Towards the end of that article, and with reference to the



Vincentians, who were the institutional pioneers of the parish missions, Larkin wrote that '[t]he extraordinary reaction of the penitents attending the early Vincentian missions in regard to their need for the sacrament of confession indicated that the root cause was the pervasive and widespread pastoral and spiritual destitution among all classes of the Catholic community in Ireland in the 1840s.'<sup>(2)</sup>

Larkin's original article was very much concerned with the statistical dimension to the argument and with the priest to people ratio which he deemed of great significance as the lower the ratio the more effective the pastoral outreach of the Church. His position on the low rates of religious practice before the Famine was reinforced by the work of David Miller on mass attendance and has become one of the more solid dimensions of the Devotional Revolution narrative.<sup>(3)</sup>

Finally, there was the question of the timing of the Devotional Revolution. Of course attempts were made to introduce Tridentine reforms to Ireland in the seventeenth century but they had not really taken, except in urban areas on the east coast. Another significant issue was the geographical factor. Undoubtedly, urban and eastern areas were more conforming to Tridentine Catholicism than rural and western areas. The great achievement of the Devotional Revolution was clearly its effect on rural Ireland. Bearing all this in mind there have been claims that the process was a continuous one from the mid eighteenth-century, that the 1790s were key years or that the early nineteenth-century was the decisive time. Certainly, the decades before 1850 saw the foundation of quite a few new religious congregations that would add energy to the life of the Church, many of them of religious sisters. Tellingly, Larkin's posthumous last article on the beginnings of the Devotional Revolution, which deal with the individual efforts of a Dublin priest in the 1820s and 1830s and the collective efforts of the Irish Vincentians in the 1830s and 1840s to bring parish missions to Ireland, dealt with the period before his original designation of 1850 as the starting point. In conversation with the present author, Larkin would concede until a few years before his death that perhaps his Devotional Revolution was, after all, a revolution with a lower-case rather than a capital 'r'. However, in the year or so immediately before his death in 2012, as he contemplated the 1850-75 period once more, he returned in conversation to his original belief. Though there had been harbingers of the Devotional Revolution before 1850 it could not have happened without the double statistical trend of a declining general population and an increasing clerical population.

In the rest of this article I would like to look at the Vincentian experience in all of this, comparing what happened in nineteenth-century Ireland with what happened in France two hundred years before. It

ought not only to raise new questions for the nineteenth-century but also to show how what happened then was shaped by patterns established two centuries earlier.

The Irish Vincentians were a highly regarded congregation in the years of the Devotional Revolution, as they were in the vanguard of the parish mission movement. When Paul Cullen (archbishop of Armagh, 1849-52, and of Dublin, 1852-78) arrived in Dublin in 1850 he initially stayed with the Vincentians at Castleknock. Larkin repeatedly refers to Philip Dowley, visitor (provincial superior) of the Vincentians, as one of Cullen's closest advisers.<sup>(4)</sup> The influence of the Irish Vincentians extended to the global, English-speaking Church which was reliant on the Irish diaspora, as Colin Barr has shown in his recent book.<sup>(5)</sup> Thus when PF Moran (1830-1911), Cullen's nephew, arrived in Australia as Cardinal Archbishop of Sydney in 1885 he brought several Irish Vincentians with him to begin the work of parish missions there. Bishops, both Vincentian and secular, who had been educated at the Vincentian school at Castleknock, served in places such as southern Africa and New Zealand while Castleknock provided archbishops for Madras in India, Chicago and Philadelphia in the United States and Toronto in Canada, as well as bishops to places that included remote New Zealand. Thus, ironically, the American Vincentians' foundation in Chicago, DePaul University, owes its existence to the fact that Archbishop Feehan (1829-1902) had been to Castleknock.

Irishmen, *émigrés* in Counter-Reformation Europe, had been members of the Lazarists in France from close to the beginnings, though only a few were sent to Ireland to preach missions, mostly notably in the 1640s.<sup>(6)</sup> Edward Ferris (1738-1809), a priest from Co Kerry, was in charge at Saint Lazare when it was sacked the day before the storming of the Bastille in 1789. In addition, he provided at least a symbolic link to the foundation of the Vincentians in Ireland in the 1830s, firstly as an independent community for the preaching of missions in the Vincentian tradition, and then as an integral part of the international Congregation of the Mission. Fleeing from France because of the Revolution Ferris spent most of the rest of his life working at Maynooth College, a new seminary for the education of priests that had been founded with the help of a government anxious not to have Irish Catholic priests any longer be educated on the continent, as hitherto, where they might be subject to revolutionary thinking.

Twenty-three years after Ferris's death and perhaps in part inspired by his memory, a group of clerical students at Maynooth decided that after ordination they would devote themselves to preaching parish missions.<sup>(7)</sup> They were encouraged by a number of the staff members of the college, most notably the dean, Philip Dowley (1788-1864), who

promised to direct the group if they could become established. Because of the practicalities of the situation they were forced initially to find various forms of activity that would enable them to finance themselves. In 1833 they opened and maintained for several years a day school at Usher's Quay in central Dublin, and in 1835 a college at Castleknock, several miles away, on the far side of the Phoenix Park. They were encouraged by the then Archbishop of Dublin, Daniel Murray (1768-1852) who wanted their college to be an ecclesiastical seminary. Indeed, it did fulfil that function for several decades, providing the earlier years of seminary education for students who would then go on to Maynooth, though over time the college essentially became a regular boarding school for lay pupils, particularly after the foundation of the Dublin diocesan seminary in 1854.

One indicator of how trusted the Irish Vincentians came to be by the Irish episcopacy was that they enjoyed the confidence both of Murray and, as we have seen, of his successor, Cullen, who otherwise had very different outlooks. Murray's biographer, referring to the Vincentians, wrote that 'if our illustrious Archbishop could show no other claims upon the undying love and veneration of his children than the fact of having established this invaluable congregation of apostles amongst us, that alone ought to suffice.'<sup>(8)</sup> This was quite an assessment given the fact that Murray had encouraged the foundation of several important religious congregations including the Sisters of Mercy and Irish Sisters of Charity.

Interestingly, most congregations of women active in Ireland were nineteenth-century Irish foundations whereas most male clerical orders and congregations were importations or reimportations of continental communities. The Irish Vincentians were an anomaly within this anomalous pattern. Members of the Irish Vincentians began to join the international Congregation of the Mission from 1839 and their houses became a formal province of the Congregation in 1848. This might lead to the erroneous conclusion that the Irish Vincentians ought to be classified as yet another branch of a continental order or congregation. Yet this was not so. Firstly, the Vincentians were technically not a religious congregation at all but a company of secular priests living in community, making them closer in culture to the diocesan clergy. Secondly, as we have seen, the Irish Vincentians originated as a movement within the Irish diocesan clergy. Being close to diocesan bishops and clergy was an advantage to the Vincentians. These points highlight the fact that though the Irish diocesan clergy were far from united – Cardinal Cullen hated Maynooth, for example – the Devotional Revolution in Ireland was firmly under episcopal control. This feature will appear all the more distinctive when we later consider seventeenth-century France where reforming initiatives came from outside the episcopacy.

Castleknock became a centre of piety, with pastoral outreach to surrounding areas modelling Tridentine ideals and, as we have seen, with its clerical graduates filling important roles in Ireland and abroad. The Vincentian parish mission impetus, however, was centred around their other Dublin house, St Peter's Church, Phibsborough, which was entrusted to Thomas MacNamara (1808-92) in 1838.<sup>(9)</sup> In 1842 the first mission in Ireland since the mid seventeenth-century took place at Athy, Co Kildare. Many clergy and bishops were initially resistant to what they took to be an affront to their pastoral effectiveness, but parish missions were endorsed by the Synod of Thurles in 1850, presided over by Cullen, and over the coming decades the Vincentians conducted as many as five or six missions a year, some lasting two months each and focusing on the personal conversion of individuals, through preaching and the administration of the sacraments, as well as on building up the structures of the Tridentine parish by establishing schools, churches, and confraternities. The Vincentians were pioneers in the work which was soon taken up by other communities such as the Jesuits, Rosminians, Redemptorists, and Passionists. In the three decades after 1850 almost all the nearly 1,000 parishes in Ireland had had a parish mission, some of them for a second or even a third time. Thomas MacNamara directed the Vincentian effort and turned Phibsborough into a house for the missionary work.

The Vincentian missions often took place in opposition to the latter stages of the 'Protestant crusade', a movement since the 1820s by evangelicals to win Catholic converts, especially in the west and south of Ireland, and it was this that gave them a special impetus. Perhaps the most significant mission, led by MacNamara himself, was at Dingle, Co Kerry (August-September 1846), where there had been a flourishing 'colony' of Protestant converts which had come to public attention as a result of several court cases. Urged on by associates of Daniel O'Connell but not initially by the local clergy, MacNamara's missionaries succeeded in galvanizing the local Catholic community in opposition to the evangelicals, ultimately causing the closure of the 'colony'. The 'Protestant crusade' often offered a presenting issue for a mission, though Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) had never encouraged confrontation with Protestants in his day.

The real work of the parish mission, indeed, was two-fold, the evangelization and catechesis of individuals through preaching and administering the sacraments, particularly confession, and the reinforcement of the structures of the Tridentine Church. The latter involved a move away from folk religion and included a focus on the parish church – resulting in the building of many new churches – the founding of lay charitable and devotional organizations known as confraternities,

and the fostering of Roman devotions such as the rosary and the stations of the cross.

By the 1860s, however, the Irish Vincentians had become seriously divided between those who favoured the work of education and those who preferred the parish missions, with MacNamara's brief and fractious reign as visitor (1864-66) an indication that the tide was turning away from the parish missions whose task had in some ways been seen to have been accomplished. By 1877 the Superior General was receiving reports from Ireland that 'Missions, although very useful, do not seem to be as fervent as they were in the beginning. They have lost some of their vitality according to what I have heard.'<sup>10</sup>

Foreign missions, missions *ad gentes*, have received a good deal of notice, with the sixteenth-century St Francis Xavier (1506-53) a prominent exponent of evangelization in Asia at the start of the Counter Reformation. Missions within Europe have received less attention. Though they became an instrument of bringing the reforms of the Counter-Reformation Council of Trent they began in the later medieval period. However, in the sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries missions were extensively used by the Jesuits and Capuchins.

The Counter Reformation was implemented in France some decades after it made an impact in other European countries, largely before the debilitating effects of the wars of religion between Catholics and Huguenots, as Protestants were called there, that only ended with the accession to the throne of Henry IV (1553-1610) in 1589. Vincent de Paul was one of its greatest promoters, associated with the founding of three groups, the Congregation of the Mission (1625), whose work eventually involved not only the preaching of parish missions but the formation of the clergy in seminaries, the Ladies of Charity (1617) and the Daughters of Charity (1633). The latter two groups were focused on work for the poor and reflective of the social strata of society at the time, with the Ladies of Charity largely providing financial support from an upper social stratum and the Daughters of Charity made up of country girls engaged directly with relief work. What follows is an effort to use features of the seventeenth-century French experience, particularly that of de Paul and his circle, to shine a light on the Irish Vincentians during the Devotional Revolution in nineteenth-century Ireland.

One noteworthy feature of the French reform movement was that it was associated both with a broadly-defined, cultural-political movement for the advancement of France as a Catholic country, whose adherents were known as the *dévots*, and with a vibrant movement in spirituality, known as the French School, that was associated with Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629). De Paul was connected with both these movements. Though the Devotional Revolution in Ireland certainly assisted

in consolidating Ireland as a Catholic country Irish politics largely compartmentalized explicit Catholic interest in areas such as education and later health care. The discouragement of any theological education for the laity by the Irish Catholic Church added to this. Some have seen a *dévo*t organization such as the Company of the Blessed Sacrament as a precursor to Catholic Action two centuries and more later and so perhaps the nearest Irish equivalent would be the twentieth-century Legion of Mary, which often came under clerical suspicion in the inter-war years before being acclaimed as a model for lay involvement in the public sphere in the era of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). The question of the operative spirituality behind the Devotional Revolution in Ireland is a relatively unexplored one. There was certainly no native school of spiritual thought and little work has been done on the sources of influence on the clergy in a place such as Maynooth.

If reform in nineteenth-century Ireland was in clerical hands from the start, this was by contrast with seventeenth-century France where royal and aristocratic patronage of Church reformers was a key factor, both in financial terms and as an element in the reforming work itself. Thus de Paul's work might never have flourished had it not been for the support of Phillippe-Emmanuel and Françoise-Marguerite de Gondi. Beginning as a tutor to their children they encouraged de Paul in various pastoral initiatives on their estates that laid the foundations for his work in charity and parish missions.

In nineteenth-century Ireland there were few great Catholic landowners who could act as patrons in the manner of the de Gondis in financial terms, though Cullen's own family, in its own way, was a financial backer of Castleknock. As for the lay people being participants in the reforming process itself it may be that there were years in mid-century when the religious change was in doubt and was not welcomed by clergy used to an older dispensation. Lay initiative may have been a factor. For example, two memoirs of the Vincentian missions exist, one by Thomas MacNamara himself. They make clear that the initiative for the landmark Dingle mission came from two laymen, Robert Byrne, a Co Kerry newspaper editor who had been involved in a libel case with the local Protestant missionaries, and David Piggot, the lawyer who defended him and who was soon to become Chief Baron of the Court of Exchequer. It was they who enlisted the help of O'Connell to put pressure on a very reluctant local bishop and parish priest to allow the mission. Indeed, during the initial stage of the mission the local clergy refused to cooperate with the Vincentians. It may be, therefore, that lay initiative is more significant than hitherto thought, at least during the establishment of the Devotional Revolution Church in Ireland. This was certainly true for the Vincentian mission house in Lanark in Scotland in

1859, which was founded on the initiative and with the financial backing of Robert Monteith, as wealthy land owner and Catholic convert.

It is telling that the Dingle mission looms so large in the Irish Vincentian story. Though not the first mission it attained the status of a foundational myth. Such myths fulfil a useful function for groups set on specific goals. It certainly has a parallel in de Paul's story two centuries earlier. Though the Congregation of the Mission was founded in 1625, de Paul marked the 25 January as its foundation day because, in 1617, he had conducted a mission at a place called Folleville that had had a formative effect on him.

One thing the Irish Vincentians did not have to learn was the basic pattern of the parish mission. De Paul, as we have noted, had seen to that two centuries before. Then again, the groups that gave parish missions were – or became in the case of the Vincentians – branches of international religious congregations which afforded them a stability that saw them through the period. Thus when the Irish Vincentians fell into internecine conflict in the 1860s they were saved by the intervention of their superior general in Paris. John Hand (1807-46), a member of the original Vincentian group, had left them to found the missionary seminary of All Hallows College in 1842 under an independent group of directors. When they fell into conflict in the 1890s the college was removed from their care and given into the hands of the Vincentians.

In both these ways, then, the Irish parish mission movement and the Devotional Revolution were indebted to *Grand Siècle* France where not only were parish missions developed and honed, but new forms of Counter-Reformation religious life and, indeed, diocesan organization were developed, adapting initiatives in other countries in the previous century in the earlier days of the Counter Reformation. Diocesan structures needed to be reformed. Only in 1615 did the French Church accept the decrees of the Council of Trent. Clergy had owed little to bishops for their positions and parish benefices were generally procured independently. Thus in 1611, de Paul became the *curé* of Clichy when the previous benefice holder resigned in his favour.

Priests had always been divided into two camps, secular clergy, most notably diocesan clergy, and religious, observing a communal life and bound by vows. In terms of male religious life France had been endowed with numerous foundations of religious, both monastic and mendicant, most of which had been decimated by the wars of religion. Monks had always been focused on their own internal life, while the mendicants from the Middle Ages, the Franciscans and Dominicans, had had a mission to the world though independent of dioceses and parishes. Though monks had long since vanished from nineteenth-century Ireland the mendicant friars were still a presence but were in disarray in terms of



organization and communal life. Nor were the Jesuits, an early product of the Counter Reformation, much trusted in either period though for different reasons. Cardinal Cullen, the arch-Romanizer, disliked them, while two centuries earlier in France they were feared for being too close to Rome in the more independently-minded Gallican Church. The way forward concerning a form of active religious life in France, adapted for the times and concerned with reform at diocesan and parish level, was the formation of new congregations which were as close to being secular as possible and could be seen as ancillary to the diocesan clergy rather than as rivals to them. Bérulle founded the first of these and they included the Eudists and Sulpicians. De Paul's Congregation of the Mission was perhaps the most successful and least 'religious' of all, describing itself as a community of secular priests living in community with private vows. Nonetheless, de Paul did encounter opposition in Paris as his new congregation took over premises such as Saint Lazare, previously held by religious orders. It was thus telling that these more secular congregations led the way in reform in France, in work that involved close cooperation with the secular clergy in parishes and dioceses, and equally that the Irish Vincentians were among those leading the way in Ireland, with other congregations following in their wake. Indeed, when the mendicant orders began to reorganize themselves in Ireland in the mid nineteenth-century their new churches, if anything, acted as chapels of ease, backing up the work of the parish church and its clergy.

Quite a lot is known about the format of the parish mission in both periods. Late in life Thomas MacNamara, as has been noted, wrote an invaluable memoir which includes a great deal of material on this.<sup>(11)</sup> The format of the mission would appear to have been congruent with the patten established by de Paul in the seventeenth century, though de Paul had put all his emphasis on missions in poorer, rural areas. This was a practice not strictly followed by the Irish Vincentians though many of their missions were in country parishes.

There were, of course, parish missions before de Paul but he seems to have moulded them according to his own particular views. Thus one distinct feature of the Lazarist mission was its lack of ostentation. The Jesuits had sometimes favoured more flamboyant display and preferred sermons to catechesis. The Lazarist mission focused on individual conversion through simple preaching and catechesis and on the sacrament of confession rather than on ostentatious public events. Thus there were no great public demonstrations, no torchlight procession of penitents and the like. The emphasis of the Lazarist mission was on individual conversion rather than on the conversion of the community. And it was this pattern that the Irish Vincentians established as normative for their



time, though they were also concerned with parish structures such as confraternities that carried forward their work. In this they were opting for a non-demonstrative style when more demonstrative options were available. Daniel O'Connell's monster meetings for repeal of the Act of Union in the 1840s and Fr Mathew's temperance rallies had, after all, been large, rather flamboyant occasions. And some of the other missionaries certainly showed greater tendencies towards theatricality. Thus in 1855 during a parish mission at Kingstown, Co Dublin, the Redemptorist Vladimir Pecherin (1807-85) presided over a burning of 'evil' books, being brought to trial as a result when it was alleged that he had burned a bible, though he was acquitted. In spite of such incidents, however, the Irish Vincentians seem to have established a tone of restraint that was adhered to by other groups who followed in their wake.

Another area of interest concerns the degree of moral severity operative in the judgment of missionaries in sermons and in the confessional during the time. The Redemptorist founder St Alphonsus Liguori had worked against rigourism and in 1825 Pope Leo XII had called for priests to be less severe in the confessional. Nonetheless, the perception persists that the Church of the Devotional Revolution was a morally severe one. Indeed, it was the Irish Redemptorists, who ironically came to have a reputation for severity that was perhaps approved of by the Maynooth-trained diocesan clergy, who eventually overtook the Vincentians as the principal conductors of parish missions in Ireland.

Ancillary to the parish missions Vincent de Paul sought to advance Tridentine reform through interaction with the clergy. The episcopacy in his day was moribund. Indeed, de Paul obtained and appointed in 1643 on the Council of Conscience, the royal body that nominated bishops, though his achievements there may have been limited. Nothing like this situation obtained two centuries later in Ireland. Though it came with plenty of grass-roots energy the Devotional Revolution was directed by an increasingly powerful episcopal body. At the next level of the clergy de Paul was a pioneer of seminary education in France. Seminaries were an innovation of the Council of Trent and the Lazarists and others set up and ran seminaries for diocesan priests all over France with episcopal support. Again, nothing like this happened in nineteenth-century Ireland. There seminaries were a normal part of the Church structure and came under episcopal control. One of the reasons Cullen disliked Maynooth so much was because it was a national seminary and, though territorially in his diocese, was not under his control. When he determined to rectify the situation he established Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, in 1854. There was no question of asking the Vincentians to expand the work of Castleknock in the area and the seminary side

of the college soon died out. Irish Vincentians, as a sign of episcopal favour, however, were appointed as spiritual directors to several Irish seminaries including Maynooth and Clonliffe. Two Irish seminaries were entrusted to the Irish Vincentians, the Irish College, Paris, in 1858, and All Hallows College in 1892 but only because the administration of each institution had imploded and they needed an outside group to take them in hand.

De Paul was of necessity a player in a world of high politics in both the religious and secular spheres. He needed patrons to continue his work but managed generally to stay at arms-length from the more febrile forms of political conflict, though he sometimes got singled. Collaboration with others was the key to de Paul's success. In particular, he collaborated with women through confraternities, both the aristocratic women of the Ladies of Charity who provided finance and the poor country girls of the Daughters of Charity under their leader, Saint Louise de Marillac (1591-1660). The conventional versions of de Paul's life present him as the directive force behind these operations. However, some have recently argued that the women with whom de Paul collaborated were much more proactive than has previously been thought. Indeed, one scholar has come close to crediting Madame de Gondi as being the real founder of the Congregation of the Mission (12). Though the Irish Vincentians had little to do with the coming of the Daughters of Charity to Ireland, they were involved with the creation of the Holy Faith Sisters, who were one of the principal new groups of Catholic religious sisters active during the Devotional Revolution.

Looking at seventeenth-century France and nineteenth-century Ireland together has been revealing in several ways. The seventeenth-century, parish-mission template was very influential in the practice of parish missions two hundred years later. Equally, the circumstances concerning the life of the church in the earlier time in France throw the distinctiveness of the life of the church in the later time in Ireland into sharp relief. Finally, it is clear that there was a particular style of Lazarist/Vincentian parish mission in both periods. It was undemonstrative and low-key in its methods. In nineteenth-century Ireland it set the tone for other groups who followed as practitioners of parish missions.

## NOTES

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# The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican and the New Evangelisation

Pat Collins CM

In his mission statement Jesus declared that he had been anointed by the Spirit to bring good news to the poor (cf Lk 4:18). Informed by the charism of St Vincent de Paul, we Vincentians are privileged to share in the proclamation of the same good news in today's world. To do this effectively we need to have a firm grasp of the *kerygma*. In proposition 11 of the Synod of Bishops *The New Evangelisation for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*,<sup>(1)</sup> we read, 'In the context of the New Evangelisation every opportunity for the study of Sacred Scripture should be made available. The Scripture should permeate homilies, catechesis and every effort to pass on the faith. In consideration of the necessity of familiarity with the Word of God for the New Evangelisation and for the spiritual growth of the faithful, the Synod encourages dioceses, parishes, and small Christian communities to continue serious study of the Bible and *Lectio Divina*, the prayerful reading of the Scriptures (cf *Dei Verbum*, 21-22).' Consistent with the teaching of the Synod, an 'A Word on the Word' scripture group meetings are held each week in St Peter's Parish, Phibsborough. They involve *Lectio Divina*, where prayerful insights are shared by the participants, and exegetical commentary on a text is offered with a view to seeing what relevance, if any, that reading for the following Sunday has for everyday life.

As an example of what the Synod had in mind, this brief article will focus on the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican (Lk 18:9-14) in the belief that it contains an essential aspect of the *kerygma* of Jesus and the early Church. Luke is the only evangelist who recalled this story. It is likely that the introduction, about people 'who were confident of their righteousness and looked down on everybody else', (Lk 18:9) and the ending, 'everyone who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted', (Lk 18:14) were added to Jesus' Parable by the evangelist. I want to offer an interpretation of this short but significant story, while briefly suggesting what some of its evangelistic implications might be.

## *Dramatis Personae*

Jose A Pagola says in his book *Jesus: An Historical Approximation*, that there are three characters in this story, a Pharisee, tax collector, and the

temple where God lives.(2) Let's begin with a comment on each. Firstly, the Pharisees were a religious party in Palestine in New Testament times. They were known for insisting that the law of God should be observed and their commitment to tithing and ritual purity. Secondly, there was the Publican who was a tax collector. Joachim Jeremias points out in his *Rediscovering the Parables* that the man was a collector of customs and excise duties rather than someone who collected taxes on behalf of the Roman Empire.(3) Like his colleagues he was a businessman who collected charges which were due when goods were being imported or exported. They were unscrupulous and made profits for themselves by charging more than the stipulated amounts. Not surprisingly, they were despised by the people. Thirdly, although there were many synagogues in Israel there was only one temple. It was the centre of worship in Jerusalem and contained the Ark of the Covenant which included the Ten Commandments. The temple, therefore, represented the presence of God who reigned over his people through the law.

Although Jesus rejected the fundamental attitudes of the Pharisees, there is reason to suspect that he loved them and admired them in many ways as people who tried, like himself, to be faithful to a truly Jewish way of life. The Pharisee in our parable was dedicated to the covenant that God had made with the people when he gave them the law. However, he would have shared the Jewish belief that those who failed to keep the commandments forfeited God's blessing and experienced a curse. Their view was based on two texts. Deut 27:26 declared, 'Cursed be he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them.' Jer 11:3 endorsed that view, 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: Cursed is anyone who does not obey the terms of my covenant!' Because they believed these texts to be true the Pharisees could say about the crowds that Jesus evangelised, 'this mob that knows nothing of the law – there is a curse on them' (Jn 7:49).

### *Justified by good works*

We are told that when the Pharisee went up to the Temple, he stood upright, stretched his hands above his head and lifted his eyes to heaven as he prayed, in a typically Jewish way. He was thankful for his blessings including the fact that he was not like the Publican, a public sinner, who was under a curse because of his infidelity to the law. In marked contrast the Pharisee believed that he enjoyed God's favour because of his fidelity to the law. Not only that, he went beyond the call of duty in his observance of his faith. Whereas the law only required him to fast on the Day of Atonement, apparently he fasted on Mondays and Thursdays every week. We are also told that he went beyond what was strictly required when it came to the question of tithing. Furthermore, he was pious, there

he was in the Temple, at one of the designated times of prayer.(4) One is reminded in this regard of the elder brother in the parable of The Prodigal Son. Like a typical Pharisee he said to his father, 'I never disobeyed one of your orders' (Lk 15:29). It is worth noting that his father responded in a loving way, 'My son, you are always with me and all I have is yours' (Lk 15:31). In the story of the encounter between the rich young man and Jesus, we are told that the former maintained that he had kept all of the commandments since his youth (Mk 10:20).(5) In response we are told that 'Jesus looked at him with love' (Mk 10:21).

What is noticeable about the Pharisee in the parable is that, in spite of his fidelity to the law and observance of Jewish ritual, he was not very religious or prayerful. The great Protestant theologian, Friedrich Schleiermacher, said that from a subjective point of view religion was 'the feeling of absolute dependence', i.e. on God.(6) Although he did thank God for his virtues, the Pharisee gave no indication of poverty of spirit, a sense of creaturely need that found expression either in petitionary prayer for himself, or intercessory prayer for others. The Pharisee seemed to talk to himself rather than to God, and to depend on his own unaided efforts rather than the grace of God.

#### *Justified by grace*

On the other hand, the Publican is ashamed to look upwards. He knows that he has broken the law by cheating people. Even if he wanted, like Zacchaeus,(7) he couldn't make amends to all the anonymous people he had cheated over the years. Furthermore, he showed no sign of being willing to resign from his career as a tax collector. We are told that he merely beat his breast as an expression of abject remorse while saying, 'O God, be merciful to me a sinner' (Lk 18:13).(8) He knew right well that the mercy he asked for was a grace he couldn't earn, merit or deserve. The promise of the psalmist, 'The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit' (Ps 34:18) was fulfilled when Jesus declared, 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other' (Lk 18:14).(9) Jeremias points out that although this is the only place in the gospels where the word 'justified' is used it has not been influenced by Pauline theology.(10)

It seems that implicit in this verse is the doctrine of justification by grace through faith and not by good works. Justification by grace is symbolized by the Publican, and justification by good works is symbolized by the Pharisee. Joachim Jeremias says in his book, *The Central Message of the New Testament*, 'It was Paul's greatness that he understood the message of Jesus as no other New Testament writer did. He was the faithful interpreter of Jesus. This is particularly true of his doctrine of justification. It is not of his own making but in substance

conveys the central message of Jesus.’(11) Jeremiah reiterated that belief in his commentary on our parable, ‘the passage shows that the Pauline doctrine of justification is rooted in the teaching of Jesus.’(12) I believe that Paul expressed the core message of the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican when he wrote in Eph 2:7-9, ‘For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God – not because of works, lest any man should boast.’(13)

We can safely say that the Pharisee was mistaken when he thought that he had kept all the commandments, all of the time. As Jesus said to a group of Pharisees, ‘Moses has given you the law, has he not? Yet not one of you keeps it’ (Jn 7:19). Years later Paul, a Pharisee himself, echoed that point when he said, ‘All men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God’ (Rm 3:23). Jesus tried to help Pharisees to acknowledge their sinfulness on more than one occasion. For example, when the rich young man asked how, as someone who kept the commandments, he could become perfect, Jesus got to the heart of the matter when he urged him to give his money to the poor and follow him. When the young man had to choose between uncompromising fidelity to God or reliance on money, he chose the latter. In this way he showed that in spite of his upright life, his heart was not truly given to God. Arguably he was in breach of the first commandment by trusting in money rather than in the providence of God. As Jesus said, ‘you cannot serve God and money’ (Mt 6:24). Later St Paul added, ‘the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil’ (1 Tim 6:10). In his *Spiritual Exercises* pars. 136-148, St Ignatius of Loyola asked how does the devil, as an angel of light, separate good people from God? He responded by saying that, consciously or unconsciously, they become motivated by a desire for riches rather than poverty, status rather than contempt, and self-determination rather than humble submission to God. We don’t know if the Pharisee in our parable was preoccupied with money, many Pharisees were,(14) but he certainly seemed to have been pre-occupied with his status which he thought of as being superior to that of the Publican.

It is arguable that what we have been saying about the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican had big implications for the Jewish religion which was focused on the temple. Jose Pagola makes the interesting observation, ‘If Jesus is right, then nobody can be sure of anything. They must all appeal to God’s mercy. What good then is the temple, and the spirituality it nourishes? What good does it do to observe the law and the temple cult? How can the reign of God be based, not on the justice formulated by religion, but on the bottomless mercy of God?’(15) I suspect that Pagola is right. That is probably why Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple and its replacement by the living temple of the believers who would be justified by Christ’s saving grace. As he

said to the Samaritan woman at the well, an hour was coming when people would worship the Father neither in the temple in Jerusalem nor on Mount Gerizim. 'An hour is coming,' he said, 'and is already here when authentic worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth' (Jn 4:21-23).

### *Some Personal Spiritual Implications*

Every evangeliser needs to have a spirituality which is rooted in the *kerygma* as it is described in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Because St Therese of Lisieux had a profound grasp of the spiritual implications of the parable, we can learn from her. She knew that, like the Pharisee, she had led a very good life devoid of mortal sin. But she was well aware that, as a result, she might become complacent and self-righteous. So she said, 'After earth's exile, I hope to go and enjoy you in the fatherland, but I do not to lay up merits for heaven... In the evening of this life, I shall appear before you with empty hands, for I do not ask you Lord, to count my works. All our justice is blemished in your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in your own *justice* and to receive from your *love* the eternal possession of *yourself*.' (16) The way I understand what Therese said is that she would not go before God with her meritorious deeds in her hands. If she did, she would be saying like the Pharisee, 'in your justice, judge me by my merits.' Anyone who says this would need to get one hundred per cent in the exam of life. Therese knew that this was impossible. If she wasn't going to rely on her merits, she would have to go before God as a sinner. Like the Publican, she would cry out for his mercy, while confidently depending on his forgiveness and on his forgiveness alone. Even though, strictly speaking she deserved condemnation, she was sure that she would hear Jesus say, 'Blessed are you who are poor in spirit, the kingdom of God is yours' (Lk 6:20).

Blessed Marie-Eugene, a Carmelite scholar, has suggested that Therese's understanding of God's mercy led her to cultivate the 'art of failure.' (17) She would intend to do some good act but for one reason or another she would sometimes fail to do so. Apparently, she would then say: 'If I had been faithful I would have received the reward of merit by appealing to God's justice. I was unfaithful, I am humiliated, I am going to receive the reward of my poverty and humiliation by appealing to God's mercy.' (18) What a remarkable insight into the loving kindness of the heart of our good God. I suspect that Therese's failures were small compared to our own. Nevertheless, the principle she enunciates remains true for all of us. Indeed, it could be argued that the greater and the more humiliating the failure the greater the graces that are lavished upon the grieving heart. As St Paul declared, 'where sin increased, grace increased all the more' (Rom 5:20). God does not react in accord-



ance with what we deserve in terms of justice but in accordance with Divine mercy which is gratuitous and unconditional.

Before his death, Pope Paul VI told John McGee, former bishop of Cloyne, how he had been deeply influenced by the two words, misery and mercy, in St Augustine's commentary on Jn 8:1-8. 'Always, in all of us', he said, 'there is a tension between my misery and God's mercy. *The whole spiritual life of all of us lies between these two poles.* If I open myself to the action of God and the Holy Spirit and let them do with me what they will, then my tension becomes joyous and I feel within myself a greater desire to come to him and receive his mercy; more than ever I recognize the need to be forgiven, to receive the gift of mercy. Then I feel the need to say thanks, and so my whole life becomes a thanksgiving, a Eucharist to God because he has saved me, redeemed me, drawn me to himself in love. It is not anything I have done in my life that saves me, But God's mercy.'(19)

#### *Some Evangelistic Implications*

Shortly before his death, John Paul II said in par 9 of *The Church in Europe*, 'European culture gives the impression of 'silent apostasy' on the part of people who have all that they need and who live as if God does not exist.' Sad to say a growing number of Catholics in Britain and Ireland are apostatizing by drifting away from Christian practice, beliefs and ethics. St Thomas Aquinas observed, 'A person may apostatise from God, by rebelling in his or her mind against the Divine commandments: and though a person may apostatise... he or she may still remain united to God by faith.'(20) As increasing numbers of Catholics drift away from the Church they reject many aspects of Christian moral teaching. For instance, during the Celtic Tiger years, not only were many Catholics motivated by greed, they were often dishonest and financially irresponsible. In recent years there has also been an obvious breakdown of sexual morality. For example, despite the clear prohibitions of the New Testament, many single and separated Catholics engage in sexual relationships outside of marriage. Although the Church condemns abortion as something gravely wrong, thousands of Catholic women not only procure it, some of them seek to justify their actions on moral grounds.

If we want to evangelise effectively, we need to eschew any holier than thou attitude, with regard to the backsliders of our day. As forgiven people ourselves we need to demonstrate the same kind of mercy that Jesus highlighted in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. As he said, 'Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven' (Lk 6:36-37). So instead of

wagging the finger of accusation, we need to offer the apostates of our day unconditional acceptance of a merciful kind.(21)

All forms of evangelisation, including the new evangelisation, aim at conversion. In par 46 of *Redemptoris Missio* John Paul II said, ‘The proclamation of the Word of God has Christian conversion as its aim: a complete and sincere adherence to Christ and his Gospel through faith.’ True conversion or *metanoia* as a response to the gospel proclamation, literally means, ‘to change one’s mind’. It involves an alteration in one’s thinking about God, e.g. coming to believe that his mercy and love are a free, unmerited gift. In a secondary sense, conversion is expressed by changing one’s way of acting in a manner that expresses one’s new found relationship with Jesus. It is a striking fact in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican that the tax collector showed no sign of changing his behaviour when he asked for and received God’s mercy. It will be the same with the people of our day. They don’t need to change their behaviour as a prerequisite for receiving saving grace. It is likely that such change will be the consequence rather than the condition of such a free, unmerited gift.

### Conclusion

Hopefully this article illustrates, in some small way, the kind of *kerygmatic* scripture teaching that the Synod of Bishops had in mind. As it said in proposition 9, *Lectio Divina* and Bible study provides ‘guidelines for the formation of Catholic evangelisers today.’ Once the clergy and parishioners have grasped the scriptural *kerygma* of Jesus and the early church with their minds and experienced it in their hearts they will have the desire, ability and the power to share it effectively with others.

### NOTES:

1. XIII Ordinary General Assembly, 7-28th of October 2012.
2. Jose A Pagola, *Jesus: An Historical Approximation* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2009), 141.
3. Joachim Jeremias, *Rediscovering the Parables* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 112.
4. The Jews had official prayer times at 9 a.m., Noon and 3 p.m.
5. It is remotely possible that the rich man was a Pharisee. In any case, St Paul claimed that as a zealous Pharisee he was blameless, like the rich man, according to the righteousness that comes from obedience to the law (Phil. 3:6).
6. Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, sec, 4.
7. Cf. Lk 19:8.
8. The Jesus Prayer of the Eastern Orthodox Churches seems to be based on this verse, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner.’
9. Jeremias says in *Rediscovering the Parables*, op. cit., 113, that what Jesus literally said in Aramaic was, ‘The latter went down to his house justified, but not the former.’

10. Jeremiah says that the word justified in this context means 'blessed with God's pleasure', *ibid.*, 113.
11. Joachim Jeremias, *The Central Message of the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1965), 70. James DG Dunn makes a similar point in, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 174-9.
12. *Rediscovering the Parables*, *op. cit.*, 112.
13. The Pauline doctrine was expressed in a contemporary way in par 15 of the *Joint Statement on the Doctrine of Justification* by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church, when it stated, 'Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.'
14. For example in Luke 20:47 we are told that the Pharisees, 'devour widows' houses', i.e. they take advantage of vulnerable women by means of fraud.
15. *Jesus: An Historical Interpretation*, 143. See Jn 8:1-10, where Jesus said to the Pharisees who wanted to stone the woman caught in the act of adultery, 'Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.' They must have acknowledged their shortcomings because, 'the audience drifted away, beginning with the elders' including the Pharisees presumably.
16. Quoted from Therese's Autobiography, *Story of a Soul*, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Dublin: Veritas) par 2011.
17. Marie-Eugene of the Child Jesus, *Under the Torrent of His Love*, (New York: Alba, 2000), 28. He was told about this characteristic of Therese's spirituality by her sister.
18. *Under the Torrent of His Love*, *op. cit.*, 28.
19. Peter Hebblethwaite, *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope* (London: Harper-Collins, 1993), 696.
20. Cf. St Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: A Concise Translation*, ed. Timothy McDermott, (London: Methuen, 1991), 343.
21. This does not mean that evangelisers accept the sinful things that people do or fail to do. It is a matter of hating the sin while loving the sinner.

# Ordination to the Priesthood of Rev Chinedu Eneh, CM

Saturday 15th June 2019

Most Rev John Sherrington, Bishop of Hilta  
Auxillary Bishop in Westminster

*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me*

I am delighted to celebrate Chinedu's ordination to the priesthood in the Congregation of the Mission here at Mill Hill. It is a great joy to see the relationship with my own formation and the work of the Vincentians at All Hallows College in Dublin and the Convitto Leoniano where I lived for two years in Rome. To hand on the gift of priesthood is an honour and a privilege. For the 'little company' of the Vincentians it is a sign of great hope and encouragement as you celebrate your first ordination since that of Fr Pashcal, the present Provincial, and continue the mission in Britain and Ireland.

Chinedu, you are being ordained a priest to follow in the footsteps of many missionaries inspired by the vision of St Vincent de Paul to put on the spirit of Christ himself (Common Rules I:3), in order to acquire a holiness appropriate to your vocation (Common Rules XII:13); to work at evangelizing the poor, especially the more abandoned; and to help the clergy and laity in their formation and lead them to a fuller participation in the evangelization of the poor (Constitutions, #1). Your ordination here in Mill Hill is a reminder of the mission of the province to Nigeria and the foundation of the Province there. The Lord led you to London and to serve in this Province and help renew it. May this ordination be the beginning of a new stirring of faith in the life of your congregation.

'Evangelizare pauperibus misit me'. Chinedu, these words above the entrance of the Church remind you that a Vincentian priest is called to see the spiritual heart of your priesthood in the life of St Vincent and the apostolic spirituality of God's presence with the poor. You are invited to allow the gift of the poor to help you become a more joyful apostle. St Vincent matured into his priesthood when God converted his heart from the ambitions of wealth, honour and comfort to discover Christ crucified in the poor and most abandoned. He reminds us that priesthood is a gift, a precious treasure which is held in earthenware pots and so we need to rely on the gift of God's mercy.

As a priest, you will announce Christ and his kingdom at the celebration of the sacraments and by your preaching. Your hands will be

anointed for service as the Father anointed Christ through the power of the Spirit. We pray that 'Jesus will preserve you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God.'

You will sanctify Christ's people through the sacraments.

Your anointed hands will serve the sick and dying to bring them forgiveness, healing and consolation through the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.

As they humbly confess their sins, you will offer the gift of God's absolution of sins, restoration of grace and freedom to live in freedom from sin. As people struggle to overcome their sinfulness and seek conversion, may you always speak the truth in love and 'be careful not to break the bruised reed or to quench the dimly burning wick' (cf. Is 42:3) (*Veritatis Splendor* 95). The friendship of St Vincent with St Francis de Sales and St Jane de Chantel helped him to understand the power of the persuasion of gentleness.

In the Mass, you will consecrate the Body and Blood of Christ to be offered as nourishment on the journey of Christian life. As the paten and chalice are presented to you, you will hear the words: 'Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to him. Know what you are doing, and imitate the mystery you celebrate: model your life on the mystery of the Lord's cross.' Your understanding of these words will be enriched by the spirituality of St Louise de Marillac. Jesus crucified is at the centre of her spirituality as she united herself to Jesus on the cross ever more intensely and for whom 'The charity of Jesus crucified urges us'.

Stay close to the suffering of the poor for there you will touch the wounds of Christ. St Vincent de Paul heard the cry of the galley convicts awaiting transportation to Marseilles and beyond and ministered to their need. St Louise de Marillac brought food and spiritual comfort to the sick of Paris's oldest and largest hospital, the Hôtel-Dieu, and then other hospitals, and cared for abandoned children. May such friendship strengthen you as it did these two saints for over thirty-six years.

Much of priestly ministry is a 'hidden life': the whisper of sins confessed, spiritual comfort and prayer to those in need, a quiet and encouraging word, traumas carried, needs offered at the altar of the Mass. This ministry stands as a paradox to much of daily life where everything is to be aired in public: Facebook, tweets etc. Both Vincent and Louise understood that humility is the key that opens the door of love. Instead, you will share in the privilege of feeding, healing and consoling the poor of the Body of Christ.

Finally, the way of St Vincent, the radical nature of his poverty, his reliance on the unconditional mercy of God, his closeness to Jesus and his openness to the Holy Spirit, provide the 'tools' (or means of

discernment) to help you see the promptings of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people and events. There you will see the face of Christ and become aware of God's view. St Vincent acted according to God's time, not his own. He provides wise advice to 'Do the good that presents itself to be done', and 'Do not tread on the heels of Providence'.

# Kevin Scallon: A Kind of Spiritual Memoir

Jack Finnegan SDB

I first met Kevin Scallon personally in 1976 at the first gathering of the Intercession for Priests which Kevin had founded with the support of his brother Vincentian Fr Myles Rearden. I remember the occasion well. I joined the group in the afternoon of the first day following a phone call from a fellow student in Rome, Fr Trevor Trotter, an Australian Columban on holiday in Ireland. I still remember Trevor's message, how succinct and to the point it was: *Get down here quick, there is something important happening, something prophetic!* Trevor, who has spent much of his own life working with priests, teaching scripture, and in leadership with the Columbans, never spoke a truer word and was present at the Intercession for several years while he was this side of the world.

That first meeting is sharply etched in my memory: a small group of priests praying together and sharing their spiritual desires and experiences, most of them involved with the Charismatic Renewal at the time. The atmosphere was electric. The sense of the Spirit's radiant presence was palpable, and Kevin sat there smiling, a seeming island of peace, wisdom and tranquillity in our midst. I learnt afterwards that he was in fact quite anxious that day, concerned for the success of a venture that he was convinced was born of God. Several years later it was common for us to have more than a hundred priests concelebrating Mass together during the Intercession.

The message I have held onto since that first day has been central to my own ministry ever since. Our call as priests is to share the story of God's awesome love with the whole world. We are to be love bearers, life bearers, peace bearers to all in need. Jesus is with us always, inspiring and opening ever-new ways to the healing and transformation of lives. As Kevin frequently reminded us, we are Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. The challenge is to live what is a unitive life in a gently loving, coherent manner, proclaiming that Jesus is risen, that Jesus lives: in a word, ordinary mystics in everyday life. In effect, the priest is called to be a transcendent point of reference in an increasingly secular, disbelieving and materialistic world. Intercession for priests has become a necessity in a Church in dire crisis born of the vile behaviour of various priests and bishops. A renewal of the priesthood is imperative.

What Kevin had at the back of his mind is easily summarised. First, priesthood is a way of holiness. It bespeaks a unitive experience of the living Christ, the graced capacity to step beyond the polarised, conflicted and dualistic universe in which we tend to live. Who is mystically present when we say: *This is my body, my blood given for you?* What are the transformative and self-transcending implications of engaging in such ritual actions? After all, as St Paul reminds us, Christ is not divided (1 Corinthians 1:13). Second, when speaking of priests, Kevin was fond of quoting two well-known phrases in Latin from the spiritual tradition, *alter Christus* and *in persona Christi* that make the same point.

Kevin was convinced that moral relativism has no part to play in the life of the priest. I came across a pertinent quote in Bishop Robert Barron's recent *Letter to a Suffering Church* (Park Ridge, IL: Word on Fire, 2019). I recommend this little book to all who are concerned about the state of the Church not just in the USA, but in the West. Bishop Barron writes: A priest whose central preoccupation is money or pleasure or power or career advancement or fame will, sooner or later, fall apart and wreak havoc around him. Those of us who have been involved with the Intercession over the years have no difficulty acknowledging the truth of the Bishop's observation. A soul search on St Peter's stance will make the point: *You are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple. What's more, you are his holy priests. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ you offer spiritual sacrifices that please God* (1 Peter 2:5).

### *Encountering Christ*

Two stories about Kevin come to mind. The first dates back to Kevin's time as a missionary in Nigeria during the Biafran war. The story unfolds on an unexpectedly quiet Sunday morning when Kevin returned to his mission for breakfast after several Masses at out-stations. On his way into the house he was met by a frail young woman who had lost her husband and her three young children to the diseases and hunger rampant at the time.

Feeling a little tired and put out, Kevin did what he could, asking his catechist to put some things together for her. When she received what the catechist brought she placed them on the ground and began to sing and dance around them. 'What is she singing about?' Kevin asked. 'She is thanking God for you' the catechist replied. Kevin then had a chat with the young woman about God and faith. What she said remained with him for the rest of his life: *For me, today, you are Jesus Christ.*

The second story is set on a hot and humid summer's day in Washington, DC. Kevin had gone to the cleaners to pick up his things, dressed for the weather in T-shirt, shorts and sandals. As the shop assis-



tant, a Caribbean woman, was handing him his change she asked, 'Are you a priest?' When he asked her how she knew she answered, '*You have the mark of Jesus Christ on you*'. Kevin's point is easily made. Encounters like these are moments of grace opening doors to change and transformation.

The more the priest encounters Christ, the more he prays and meditates, the more he will come to unity in Christ. The more he grows into union with Christ, the more he will experience the disintegration of his selfish ego and put on the compassionate gentleness and understanding humility of Jesus. Such is the transformative power of the Spirit. Such is the vastness of grace. Such is the power of the resurrection at work in a cosmos flowing towards its ultimate destiny in Christ. Such is the path of the everyday mystic. We need to be converted again and again to our priesthood.

Two stories will help to make the point. I remember on one occasion during the Intercession when Kevin invited Seamus Mulvaney, Diarmuid O'Riain, Pat Dwyer, Bonaventure Leahy and myself to go aside to pray and discern with him in preparation for a talk he was scheduled to give that evening. We gathered around Kevin and had just begun to pray when we were disturbed by two other priests who came into the room where we were. We did not recognise either of them. Anyway, they joined us but the mood had changed and at a signal from Kevin we began to pray for the two strangers.

In true charismatic style, the two of them slumped gracefully to the floor allowing us to finish praying with Kevin. We then ministered to the two and discovered that both were priests in the grip of powerful addictions, one to alcohol and the other to prescription drugs. Both were healed and one of them went on to play a role in the Intercession in England.

The other story involves two Irish priests who booked into the Intercession but with the intention of going to the races at Leopardstown near Dublin. They were simply looking for somewhere to stay. However, they never got to the races, joining with their brother priests in prayer. They had what St John Paul II called a personal encounter with the risen Christ and attended the Intercession for more than a few years. Life truly begins for the priest when he personally meets God.

Kevin had been readied for his work with priests through his earlier ministry as a missionary in Nigeria, as a retreat leader, and as a spiritual director in seminaries in Ireland and abroad. The Intercession did not come out of the blue! It evolved as Kevin grew not only in his understanding of priesthood but also in his awareness of its existential and spiritual needs. As an experienced spiritual director, he was, for example, a founder member of AISGA, the national association of spiritual directors in Ireland.

*Foundational Texts*

The three scripture texts Kevin eventually chose to ground the Intercession are interesting. Sit with them. Use them for *lectio divina*. See where they take you.

- *Simon, behold Satan desired to have you that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.* (Luke 22:31-32).
- *In the days of his flesh... Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears... and was heard...* (Heb. 5:7).
- Because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them (Heb. 7:24-25).

*Intercession and Worship*

What I have to say here about intercession and worship has been honed in many conversations with Kevin Scallon. Intercession is a form of prayer that has at its heart an intentional opening to God's loving and liberating presence in the world. At its best, intercessory prayer is worship-saturated. In fact, as our three texts make clear, Christ's primary role as high priest is to make continual intercession for the people. A wonderful picture of worship-saturated intercession is painted in Revelations 5:8-10: *When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints.* Harp and bowl in hand, worship magnifies God by challenging and changing our perception of God. It is not difficult to see the link to priestly prayer and spirituality.

Worship demands a big heart and a big mind fit for the vastness of God. The intercessor's view of God is big! It is Christ-like, full of the Spirit, focused unashamedly on the limitless power of God's love to change lives. It knows the Father as the Merciful, the Compassionate. It knows Christ as the Beloved Saving One, the Teacher, the Healer. It knows the Spirit as the Wind, the Breath, the Light, the Fire. The truth is that intercession opens up our vision of God and expands it. Try it and find out! Discover what Jesus said in Luke 6:38: *The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you.* Worshipful intercession is prayer full of awareness of human neediness and fragility and God's vast compassion. It is prayer seeking to make a difference.

How big, how abundantly lavish is God in my personal experience and understanding? How open is my mind, my heart? How judgmental, or rigid, or restricted, or spiritually stingy? Can I sing with the psalmist (Psalm 34:3): *Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together!* Can I sing the same words with Mary as she visits Elizabeth? Both psalmist and Mary knew that they could not make God big, but they could let their own vision grow and expand and develop. They understood God's lavish love poured out, full measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over (Luke 6:38). They discovered how to see God big, lavish, abundant, beyond measure (see 1 John 3:1). Do I? Or is the smallness of my vision one of the reasons why my worship – and my leadership of worship – is so often so flat?

Just as holiness expands us, intercession challenges us to go beyond our limited and limiting ego-centred visions, the self-made dream-worlds we confuse with reality. Holiness enlarges our image of God. It widens our perception. It gives us insight into the heart of Christ. It allows us to glimpse the creative fire of Spirit flowing through the universe. Holiness means that we have been touched by the fires of saving grace. That is how intercession enables us to be part of something more than any ego can imagine. It liberates us from our reactive, self-centred dreams. It frees us from our defensive illusions. No wonder that at the Intercession for Priests we begin each morning by welcoming those who have arrived and praying with them for the three gifts of the Intercession: a listening heart, the gift of intercession itself, and a great love for the priesthood.

Intercession is a profoundly biblical form of prayer for others. It involves standing in the broken places of people's lives and bringing their needs to God. The focus shifts intentionally from self to pray in favour of someone else. We stand in God's presence intervening in favour of our brothers and sisters. A great example of the intercessor is found in the story of Job who intercedes for his family and for his three friends (Job 1:5; 42:7-10). If you sit for a moment with the story in chapter 42 you will see how Job's intercession becomes a turning point of change. Consider Abraham as an intercessor (Genesis 17:18; 18:23-32). We see it in the life and ministry of Moses (see for example Exodus 17), and it is there at the beginning of the Church when the faith community in Jerusalem prayed for Peter's release from prison (Acts 12:1-18).

At the Intercession for Priests we have witnessed such turning points, such pivotal moments in many lives over many years. There is something mystical about intercession, something of the mystery of grace, something deeply experiential and transformative. And that transformation does not stop with the individual priest. When the pastor's faith

and spirituality start to blossom so does the local faith community. In our experience intercession for priests and pastors moves the quality of ministry onto a higher plane.

This should come as no surprise since intercession always assumes a loving encounter with the living God. And for Kevin, worship-saturated intercession lay at the heart of priestly life and prayer, at the very heart of Word and Eucharist. He knew that intercession is a fundamental expression of both true worship and true devotion. After all, he had woven intercession into the very warp and woof of his own spirituality and ministry for many years. In fact, intercession informed his ecclesiology.

These are just some of the ideas about the interweaving of holiness and intercession and worship Kevin and I explored down the years in our conversations at night, often over a glass of wine, during the Intercession in All Hallows. Remembering those conversations brings to mind a question from one of Rumi's poems:

*And you?*

*When will you begin that long journey into yourself?*

It also brings to mind the pathos of God's complaint about priests and prophets in Ezekiel 22:23-30, *And I sought for anyone among them who would repair the wall and stand in the gap before me on behalf of the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one.* If the priest is not spiritually alive, if the priest is not ready to stand in the gap, is it any wonder if the faith community suffers? When we pray for priests and bishops we are praying for the faith community itself. The point is made abundantly clear in the story of another great Old Testament intercessor, Esther, who stood in the gap for a whole people. Priests need to be converted afresh to priesthood and the needs of the faith community.

### *The Way of Conversion*

Kevin often spoke about conversion. But his vision was much more broadly spiritual than might be expected: a change of mind is much broader than a change of sin. And that change of mind towards God was his goal. As a son of St Vincent he spoke caringly and often about his founder's own layered conversion, to the poor, to the priesthood, to the holy, a form of what in spirituality is termed the second or adult conversion, or in Pentecostal language, the baptism in the Spirit, a profound renewal of faith and love that takes us far beyond self-image and survival needs: a need felt even by great saints. It is a conversion to

all that is, an openness to everything and nothing, to the very paradox of reality as we encounter it. In fact, Kevin saw a form of St Vincent's conversion to the poor in what today we would describe as conversion to a world and a planet in distress.

These are radical existential and experiential changes that Kevin confronted in himself before he ever confronted others with their reality. Conversion at this level is about radical change, change at the deepest levels of human and Christian identity. What is more fundamental for a priest than conversion to the infinite, to the vast variety of reality as it presents itself to us in ever new and unexpected ways? At such moments we discover that love is all. How easy it is for us to forget that our homeland is always becoming, always ending, always starting anew. Conversion to the priesthood inevitably involves conversion to change.

These were conversions Kevin himself experienced. He was converted to the poor in Biafra, an essential moment in his Vincentian journey. He was converted to the priesthood in a variety of encounters with people, an essential moment in what was to become the Intercession for Priests and his wider ministry. He lived himself what he helped so many other priests to experience. We all need such a conversion and Kevin was a living example of what that looks like. Kevin knew that genuine spirituality is self-implicating of its very nature. It is lived gospel. So is priesthood. My spirituality is the spiritual story I tell; and it makes no sense if it is largely theoretical, an unlived fiction or a defensive illusion. What could be more important than singing our story with the Spirit? What could be more important than listening to God?

Kevin listened to God in all kinds of ways, in scripture, in nature, in other people's stories, in theatres, in palaces, in hovels, in out of the way places, and in times of silence and prayer. He heard it in voices of need and in voices of critique, and in the listening his own story changed and emerged and his sense of humour flourished. Kevin knew that God sings his sacred tale through many different stories – some funny, some sad – weaving tapestries of wonder and surprise. God is all in all (Ephesians 4:6), a tree with the trees, a flower with the flowers, a raindrop with raindrops, a friend with a friend in ways many of us never grasp. That is why I am not surprised that Kevin's friends included comedians and bishops, singers and cardinals, presidents and kings. But that's another tale for another day!

I remember a story Kevin told a few of us one afternoon that makes the point. It seems he was somewhere in England leading a silent retreat on prayer in a centre which had the local parish-priest for lunch each day. So Kevin was invited to share lunch in the parlour with the parish-priest. In the course of conversation the priest asked Kevin about the theme of the retreat and Kevin told him. It turned out that the

priest was very interested in the theme of prayer and had many books on the subject! Those who knew Kevin's dry humour can guess what happened next. Like a good spiritual director Kevin posed the key question: When are you going to begin? I wonder still how the poor man took Kevin's smiling query. But the point is well-made. Prayer and spirituality are only real if they are practised. They are about how and why we live as we do.

There is another conversion that Kevin lived profoundly: a kind of baptism or conversion to wonder. I suspect the root of this conversion was in his devotion to Mary, shaped by the music of the Rosary, honed in the Stations of the Cross, and grounded in her Magnificat. The lilting strains and themes of Mary's song of praise echo brightly in Kevin's spirituality and ministry. *My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour* (Luke 1:46)! For Kevin there was a message here for every Christian, a message for every priest: a challenge and an invitation too, a rhythm for life and a song for the journey in good times and bad.

What is at work in Mary's Magnificat is a conversion to wonder, the wonder of life, the wonder of birth, the wonder of beginnings, of hill journeys and family greetings, of babies leaping in wombs. The spirituality of the Magnificat enshrines a call to be more than a disciple, the call to be an everyday mystic. Such a spirituality challenges us to be joyful witnesses to God's breath-taking wonders. It should come as no surprise, then, that Kevin served as international spiritual director of *Magnificat*, a ministry to Catholic women born of the Charismatic Renewal, from 2001 until his death in 2018. Nor should it come as a surprise that he worked with Sr Briege McKenna for more than forty years. Together they modelled a distinctly practical Christology, a compassionate Trinitarian vision, a love for Eucharist, full of care, full of healing, full of an empowering word, a loving blessing and an encouraging smile.

I saw another conversion unfold in Kevin over the years I knew him, a conversion to stillness and deep contemplative silence, a place where Kevin learnt to listen with the ears of the heart. This is something else he shared with his founder, Vincent de Paul. Like Vincent, Kevin was a man of practical and concrete work: ministering, preaching, teaching, writing and travelling in service of the word of life, especially in priests and people in need. But it reverberated with distinct undertones of contemplative silence, a transformed empathy, a kind of unpretentious, kindly, considerate, gentle yet firm fidelity to the will of God. Kevin's way was experiential, always open to a living God: a mystic heart made visible in a smile.

*The Way of Silence and Trinity*

Kevin knew that silence is something alive. It is neither an absence nor a gap. It is a living presence. Silence is not something to study; it is something to enter. It gifts us with the ability to sit quietly with truth, with beauty and goodness. It opens windows onto the sacred and the divine. It beckons us to walk like John of the Cross in fields of silent music. Like contemplation, silence is a mode of being, a quality of intimacy, an experience rather than a concept. It pierces illusion and discovers reality. That is why he emphasised it.

Silence draws us to the Father. It unfolds in the presence of the Comforter. It walks dusty roads in interweaving rhythms of compassionate service after the manner of Jesus. It listens without judgment. In contemplative silence God is here and now: presence, presencing, present, alive; and the mystic soul is attuned to God's love alive in the reality of the moment. Being and doing walk together in this vision of stillness and service, of silence and care, in the liberty of the Spirit becoming one with Christ. And that brings us to Kevin's Trinitarian vision.

The presence of the Trinity shines through Kevin's own writing. This is very clear in the first chapter of his book, *I Will Come Myself*. Describing his own experience Kevin refers to moments of grace and goes on to say that *the importance of such moments is not in words; it is experienced in the soul, the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity*. Kevin does not develop a theology here. His concern is practical, to describe a Trinitarian way, a way of transformative presence alive in the depths of every person's life.

The Father, Jesus Christ, the Spirit are encountered as friends, companions on the journey, helpers in the vicissitudes of life as the stories in this little book make clear. Like the kingdom, the Trinity is at hand, near, within, carried on the winds of love. The Trinity is pivotal and transformative in Kevin's experience. In the light of the Trinity everything becomes sacred, everything comes alive in an overflow of communion and loving presence. The Trinity is about communion, about an abundance of life, an abundance of love flowing freely into the world. Trinity is about the full flowering of life, of being, the full flowering of communion, the full flowering of love, justice and peace.

Our call is to be channels of that loving flow, that cosmic intimacy flowering in the hidden depths of things. To do otherwise is to embrace a stunted, inhibiting vision, one in which language itself is often twisted and turned against itself. What is happening to us when the intentional destruction of rain forests driven by greed is called development? When moral relativism is called freedom? If we subvert the truth how can we be free? Hence, a liberating, healing Christ who says, *I will come myself*. This is the Christ Kevin knew.

We are implicated with Trinity and as a consequence what happens to the outer world happens to the inner. The result of the absence of Trinity is an increasingly shallow, superficial, even vicious life, a life moved by greed not love, by violence not integrity. We stand at a crossroads making choices that have real consequences for Christian spirituality. When the outer world is lessened in its rich diversity and beauty why be surprised if the language of spirit is diminished, if the rich imaginative, emotional, and spiritual wisdom of the human family is steadily quenched. Kevin saw the signs of these things in his travels, especially in the lives of the poor. He witnessed their impacts and grieved.

Too often the busy priest lets go of Trinity. Leave it to the theologians, he might say. But Trinity is foundational to any genuine understanding of priesthood. This is not the place to go into the issue in depth, but some hints drawn from memories of Kevin's conversations, talks and homilies may prove helpful and necessary. Sit with each and let them question your understanding of priesthood. Trinity is relational. Is my ministry relational? Trinity mirrors joyful intimacy. Is my ministry touched by the joy of the Spirit? Trinity evokes the language of surrender. Whose will truly moves my ministry?

Trinity bespeaks gracious self-knowledge and self-acceptance. How does my inner world, my wants and needs, my hurts and drives, my habitual reactions, impact my ministry? Trinity opens us to the reality of dynamic Indwelling Love. Is my ministry rooted and shaped in the creative dance of such unifying Love? Trinity is passionate mission. Is my soul on fire? Does my priesthood reflect Trinity? Do I understand that Trinity is the fundamental grammar of all priestly forms of spirituality? Do I intentionally allow Trinity to orient all my relationships with the faith community? Do I understand Trinity as a life orienting transforming gift? Do I seek to live in the *imago Trinitatis*?

For Trinity is the Living Spring from which all creative life and love ultimately flow. No wonder that Gregory of Nyssa saw Trinity as a beautiful image cluster: the Anointer, the Anointed One and the Anointing. Or consider Julian of Norwich's image clusters: Might, Wisdom, Love; Joy, Bliss, Delight; Maker, Keeper, Lover; Fatherhood, Motherhood, Lord. Gerald O'Collins draws attention to another set of image clusters: Lover, Beloved, Equal Friend; Eternal Lover, Divine Beloved, Empowering Friend.

Trinity challenges the priest to go deep into the implications of and live an image of the Divine that confronts all Christians with the dynamism of loving availability, the mutuality of reciprocal love, and compassionate self-giving. Freedom grows as intimacy with God grows, as Trinitarian Love touches the very basis of our being. Trinity



challenges all of us to hold the paradox of equality and difference, of origin and destiny, close to our hearts. It challenges us to be creative, healing, and empowering in all our dealings with people.

There is no room in trinitarian spirituality for power plays or games of rank and status, much less for the games of manipulation and collusive domination that have plagued the Church in recent decades. Trinity confronts us with a different way forward for the human spirit, a way of love, of respect, of integrity and truth. In a spirituality where the self is understood relationally rather than in isolation change happens. It is all too easy to forget that grace is the life of the Trinity touching the world, drawing it to a beautiful and lavishly generous future.

Like all Christian spirituality, priestly spirituality is dared to dance in terrains of depth and mystery, of generosity and beauty, to the music of Trinitarian Love. This is a love that seeks the good of all people and of all creation. It is such graced seeking that makes us God's special treasure (Deuteronomy 7:6) and fills us with a yearning to glimpse the glorious light of the Trinity in the loving face of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6). A trinitarian spirituality also teaches us that love must blossom as service in the world or lose its essential Christian imprint.

It is the loving presence of Trinity that makes Christian – and priestly – spirituality an ongoing, ever deepening, ever descending and ascending, ever graceful, ever renewing, ever healing and creative process. The result is that genuine priestly ministry unfolds in a communion of friendship and compassion big enough for a cosmos. When the priest seeks to be spiritually awake and aware he begins to sense the Trinitarian dance constantly making and remaking the world. He witnesses the Trinity making and remaking lives. He hears God calling priests and prophets to walk through the land. He understands St Paul's promise, *I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people* (2 Corinthians 6:16). He becomes alert to the ways Trinity seeks to make a loving home in us as Jesus promised (John 14:23). And Kevin Scallon spoke with love of all these things.

### *The Everyday Mystic*

The question I encountered most frequently when I talked to others who knew Kevin and his spiritual vision was this: was Kevin Scallon a mystic? The answer to that question depends on how the mystical is described. The problem is that the word means so many different things to so many different people. Mystic is an elusive catch-all word if ever there was one, and it easily eludes precise definition. It can refer to someone who is crazy just as easily as to someone who is profoundly spiritual. And I have even seen ads for a mystic cat shop! And we have all seen references to mystic beauty.

When Karl Rahner wrote that the Christian of the twenty-first century would be a mystic or nothing he was not talking about enclosed monastics. Rahner was thinking of ordinary people with jobs and families, of apostolic religious men and women, and priests trying to serve their faith communities in difficult times. As a good Ignatian he was thinking of people who were and are seeking to be engaged contemplatives in the world. Our concern here, then, is with engaged mysticism, the kind that moves you to go out and do your level best for the people of God, that motivates you to be the best kind of Christian lay person, religious, or priest you can be.

Anyone who knows the life of St Vincent de Paul will know that he was not a fan of extraordinary mystical phenomena. Yet he was a mystic. And if we are to describe Kevin as a mystic it will be in the same manner that his founder was a mystic: a mysticism that draws us out onto the street with the poor and needy, a mysticism with the smell of the sheep about it. What does everyday mysticism look like? It looks like Kevin Scallon, it looks like all of those who are trying to be faithful to the living God and the people we are sent to serve.

If we take Francis de Sales' ecstasy of action, his ecstasy of life, seriously we will see that the fruit of mystical experience is always made visible in real lives. It always has a harvest (Matthew 7:16). In other words, the mystical experience, if it is real and coherent, is played out in ordinary life, the result of unifying love. The love of God becomes visible in the way the mystic lives, in the way the priest ministers or the teacher teaches. In the wisdom of unifying love we overcome the apparent opposition between contemplation and action. The task of the Intercession for Priests is to support and encourage this movement.

Our concern is with a life of lived Presence. An integral life. A life of unifying love made flesh in the world. Our concern is with experiences that lift busy Christians into a place of oneness, into transforming personal encounters with the living God sending them out to serve. We live and move and have our being in the grace of unity (see Acts 17:28). More to the point, contemplate the experience of sharing fully in the paradoxically generative and kenotic energy of the Trinity as it gives itself away in love. This is the way of the everyday mystic.

Clues to the depth of such experiences are found not only in a priest's writing and homilies but more especially in their daily life and engagements, in their manner, their wisdom, their gentleness and consideration of others. And such experiences are commonly linked to a life of prayer, to meditation, spiritual reading, sharing God's word, and a range of spiritual actions and exercises moved by love and centred on God: bright flowers in a dappled garden of rich spiritual practices.

Everyday mysticism is best described as a synthesis of many ways. First of all, let us describe it as a way of paradox. Anyone who takes Jesus at his word and seeks to go beyond the bare minimum inevitably encounters the paradox of life in an ever-changing world. Consider how faith speaks of a Presence felt yet still to come. There is a self to be renounced and transcended. More, in the gospels Jesus is a Master of paradox, and the Christian mystic is one who seeks to live the Christian paradox according to the mind of Christ. If you would be first be last. If you would save your life you must lose it. The alpha is the omega. The God who is present is the God who is absent. Paradox is there in our key doctrines: in the Trinity, in the incarnation, in grace. And then there is the dance of order and chaos in the cosmos of which we are a part.

The purpose of paradox in spirituality has little or nothing to do with logic or problem solving. It has everything to do with liberating us from the limits of the rational mind. The rational mind believes it is able to solve all problems. It does not recognise that it is a prisoner of language and its oppositional thinking, the kind of stubborn or self-righteous thinking that so often leads to conflicts and wars. Every quarrel, every conflict, every war multiplies in a nasty nest of power-driven oppositional thinking.

Mystics on the way of paradox intuit this and seek a different way, the way of unifying love. They seek to recognise and move through oppositional thinking and beyond it, a difficult task at the best of times. Can you recognise the powerful impact of socio-religious and socio-political conditioning in your own stances and behaviours? The everyday mystic seeks a place of union in Christ. He or she tries to see from a position of oneness, from a place that lets go of judgmental and condemnatory attitudes. And I am suggesting that Kevin was doing his best to struggle with such paradox, to let it bring him into a place of greater freedom. I know this from conversations with him. Living with paradox is not easy. Freedom from oppositional thinking and habitual reactions is not easy.

What is easy is to drop out of oneness, out of the grace of unity in Christ, and return to the oppositional thinking we learnt before we ever learnt sense. Oppositional thinking, saying no, disagreeing, is inbred in our defensive identities. Paradoxically, our spirituality wants us to say yes. There is a struggle here but there is also grace. Who completes this journey before they die? As St Therese of Lisieux wrote in her autobiography, *the storm thunders at my heart; I find it difficult to believe in the existence of anything except the clouds which limit my horizon*. But then we discover the possibilities of our weakness. Or as St Paul's paradox puts it, *When I am weak then I am strong* (2 Corinthians 12:10). Would you see Kevin Scallon there?

Part of the way of paradox is dealing with our own incompleteness, our weakness, the fact that we are not finished even as we seek to embrace our ultimate destiny. Accepting everything, resisting nothing, led by the Spirit! There is a lot of dying to do before we die, a lot of wrestling with paradox before we come to the glory of oneness in Christ the Master of Paradox. He holds out to us an image of loving unity, an image of oneness that cuts through all the illusions of reality in which we tend to live, those dream-realities that have no real existence outside our own heads. In the paradox of Jesus we encounter the *is-ness* of all in a life lived on the edge. And this brings us to a second path: our commitment to awareness.

Ordinary mysticism is a way of awakening to something – Someone – already there. What we awaken to is a presence and a journey, in biblical terms, the journey to Jerusalem, or climbing the holy mountain, or looking for Jacob's ladder, that ancient symbol of the journey between earth and heaven. Those of us who are not alert, who are not committed to awareness, all too easily fall into the ways of masculine thinking. We want to arrive. We want to get the job done. We want to be successful. The ordinary mystic recognises the traps hidden in these signals and cultivates patient awareness. What is important is to be on the way, to be faithful. Loving fidelity in the moment is the key. The everyday mystic is someone like Bartimaeus sitting going nowhere outside Jericho who, recognising Jesus passing by, jumps up, throws off the authority of his past, and follows Jesus (Mark 10:46-52).

There are echoes in this story of feminine spiritual symbolism. It is there in the embodied nature of the encounter. It is there in the existential reality of the moment and the concrete nature of the change that takes place. It is visible in the softening of stances and the change from rebuking to encouraging and nurturing. It is especially present in the receptive nature of the meeting and the new life that flows from it. Mind and heart are set on Christ. Other key qualities such as creative presence, being in relationship, process, intimacy and healing are also present. So is the capacity to see through the oppositional nature of language, its capacity to hide what I do not want to see or reveal. And so is the expansive and spacious presence of holiness.

Holiness is a work of God, a work of the Spirit building on nature, making us more than we are, gifting us for service. These are all qualities of the ordinary, everyday mystic, somebody who is open to being made more in a whole variety of ways, heart made bigger, more open, more receptive, more coherent, not to mention the rediscovery and revitalisation of soul and spirit. The human spirit is empowered to be more creative. The soul opens to new and deeper levels of wisdom.

Self-control grows and the fruit of the Spirit blossoms. Holiness makes us real as followers of Christ. We become mirrors of the One we serve, less limited and less limiting. We empower those we serve. We do not hinder or limit them to suit our own often unrecognised, often subtle ego-centric power needs. The everyday mystic wrestles with such forces, works through them and seeks to offer a more loving, more considerate response. Take the story of Moses. He was called to live a life of responsibility to God. But he was also called to live all of this in his own particularity. He was called to stand in the centre of his own story. I have seen a similar process at work in Kevin Scallon.

Another way of talking about the way of awakening is to understand it as a way of conversion, the way of a repentant heart, the touch of metanoia. It is the way of Third Isaiah: But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word (Isaiah 66:2). This is David's way, the way of a humbled, contrite heart (Psalm 51:17). It is also the way of Jesus: Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls (Matthew 11:29). It is a way that embraces the paradox of change and transformation with humility and a contrite heart.

The nature of genuine awakening is clear in the story of Bartimaeus. It is the story of a blind man going nowhere who is overtaken by a seemingly chance divine encounter. The everyday mystic is someone like Bartimaeus who wakes up and embraces the way to Jerusalem, the way through the Cross to change and transformation. Who desires metanoia? He or she who is not yet finished but is on the way with Jesus. Like Bartimaeus they are awakening to something, to Someone. They wake up, they meet the living Christ and are liberated from all that went before. Something new comes to birth in them. They find something fresh in the present that sets them moving, and the Church moves with them. Paul calls it putting on the mind of Christ, a mind that is already there for us, a mind of openness and love, a mind that recognises failure and repents.

I think Kevin Scallon was a mystic in this sense. He was awake and he was on the way. He was receptive, doing what needed to be done, living his priesthood with a smile and a twinkle in his eye. He wrestled with paradox and accepted the challenge to be a better, freer, more open, more gentle, more kindly, more forgiving version of himself. He repented and forgave. He knew that without a commitment to humble awareness spirituality becomes detached from lived reality. In the awesome paradox of grace and freedom Kevin accepted Christ as his Teacher and Guide. And something new was brought to birth through his fidelity and service. In Mark's terms he was on the way with Jesus. In Luke's terms he took up his cross daily and sought to be faithful. He

had a repentant spirit. If this isn't descriptive of the everyday mystic, I don't know what is.

There are other ways of talking about everyday mysticism. It is a way of practice, a way that makes prayer and action and virtue real in the world. The mystic knows that prayer is not a concept. It is real only if we do it. The same is true of meditation. If we don't sit nothing much will happen. The same is true of service and action. They are all practices making fidelity and love real. You may have the deepest thoughts but without action they wither on the vine. They are seed on stony ground.

We know that Kevin was a man of prayer. We know he spoke knowingly and lovingly of it and wrote about it. We know that he wrote beautiful prayers. But what is most relevant is that he prayed. He prayed with the whole of his being. He journeyed into the depths of prayer: mind, heart, feelings, body and it shaped the whole of his life. Prayer is reality finding its way to God in us and through us, bringing us with it. Kevin knew that prayer grows out of our belief that God is Love. It reveals where we are in terms of our deepening faith, trust, entrustment and surrender to God. He knew that in prayer we stake everything on Jesus.

Much the same may be said about the way of service. Kevin didn't just write about service, he served, he was available, he accompanied and listened and prayed. Like the Good Samaritan he refused to pass on the other side. He was available. He empowered. He encouraged. He prayed for healing. He knew that gospel service unfolds right where you are at the moment. He remembered that spirituality is real only when it is lived and practiced. He put his contemplation into action and his prayer bore much fruit. Seen from this perspective I think it fair to say that Kevin Scallon was an everyday mystic.

We can also describe everyday mysticism as an emphasis on what is central and essential to the life of faith. And what is most essential is love. The everyday mystic is an active bearer of God's love in the world. What is love? Is it in the saying or doing? We see the mystic's love in the loving, in the doing, in the service, in the healing, empowerment and liberation it brings. Love is about being open, about being kind and gentle, about being generous and forgiving. If there isn't fire it isn't love, and to the mystic the fire says, Be strong! Live love!

Mystics are ready to go through the fire for those they serve. They understand that real love is ready to die for another. They know that love is the foundational, God-created energy in the cosmos. They know that love is greater than an ocean (Song of Songs 8:7). They know that love is a light in a darkened world and they bring that light with them wherever they go. Those who knew him felt this love in Kevin. More, they saw it in action and recognised Jesus at its bright core. This is not

to say that Kevin was perfect. He was aware of his faults and repented them. He didn't like being criticised. He didn't like being told when things were not going well. Who does? But he listened because he sought completion in a loving Christ.

The everyday mystic doesn't like his or her own faults and failings. They recognise it, acknowledges it, work with it, and move ahead. They recognise, acknowledge, take responsibility for and let go of their habitual reactions. That is why the way of the everyday mystic is a way of continual conversion. Conversion is a change of mind, a change of heart, a change of behaviour that reveals the touch of holiness. Conversion considers more than how my sin works. It seeks to recognise and understand how my mind works – and how my unconscious mind works – because it is concerned in grace for the Spirit-sown seeds of holiness and wholeness.

I do not know what my unconscious mind is doing. But others do. They see it in my face. They hear it in the tone of my voice. They see it in my movements and gestures. If I am not open to criticism, to correction and challenge, how am I to truly know myself? If I do not listen to others how am I to know when I have become a prisoner of my own unconscious? How else may I come to know that I have been an all-unaware servant of my false self? What we do not know about ourselves controls us. The stuff I am hiding from God controls me.

That is why the everyday mystic seeks to understand the dance of awareness and unawareness. They seek out more awareness. They take responsibility. They listen to the whispers of Spirit. They understand that conversion allows barren places to become fruitful. It allows the seeds of holiness to be sown and watered in grace, and then find root and produce fruit at the proper time (Psalm 1:2-3). The everyday mystic takes care of these Spirit-sown seeds in themselves and others. They seek God's loving will. They remember what Paul wrote in Galatians 6:9, *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* Kevin did not give up. He helped so many to find their way back. He often spoke about these matters. I wonder what his harvest looks like.

There are still other ways in the everyday mystic's toolkit: the way of discipleship, the way of dealing with times that are changing for the worst. In fact, mysticism tends to flourish at times of change. Times of change and times of scandal also ground the way of radical prophecy, the way of disturbing the status quo, of stepping out of unquestioned or collusive mainstream thinking, of glib and intolerant political correctness and questionable ideology.

I hear echoes of Kevin in each of these. I hear him encouraging us to take a stance, to stand for something more significant, more honest,



more bountiful. I hear him encouraging us to pray and meditate if only because prayer and meditation will confront us with what needs to change in ourselves and the Church. The everyday mystic is always ready to be disturbed by what needs to change in both the inner and the outer world.

Kevin also emphasised the way of the sacraments, especially the sacraments of initiation and the priesthood. He talked and wrote about them in ways that brought out their wholesomeness and beauty, the way they change lives. He also loved scripture as all mystics do. He was at home in the word of God. He could preach on the word of God at the drop of a hat! I know many priests were amazed at the depth of his insights. It was obvious that he spent quality time doing what today we call *lectio divina*.

And he had a habit of giving gifts of the Bible. I have no doubt that scripture took him to a place of deep contemplation and deep contemplation brought him to levels of insight that are unobtainable in any other way. No wonder he regularly invited scripture scholars like Francis Martin, may he rest in peace in God's glory, to come to the Intercession to break open the scriptures and let them come alive for those present.

Kevin loved good liturgy. He loved the beauty of it and the rhythms of it and invested time and money in providing for good music at the Intercession. Liturgy was the heart of his priesthood and the soul of his ministry. His mysticism was profoundly Eucharistic. He was a man of profound Eucharistic faith. Kevin believed that Eucharist is the nucleus of oneness with Christ and the Trinity. It is the door to unitive Love, the music of transformation. Kevin understood that the gift and challenge of union, of unitive Love, is there for every priest every time he celebrates Eucharist. The difficulty for many of us is that at the key moment of union, of consecration, we are distracted. The ego mind drifts off, but the mystic mind pulls us back. Which do we favour? Kevin loved bringing the Eucharist into people's lives. He favoured adoration. He favoured Eucharistic healing services, things any priest can do.

Kevin's mysticism was profoundly prayerful. He knew that prayer was a journey to the heart of God, a journey to the depths of stillness. Prayer starts with saying but ends up with being. This is the spiritual wonder of it, the beauty and the truth of it. He knew that the person sitting quietly and intentionally before God becomes a living prayer, every breath a song of praise, every glance full of gratitude. Prayer is openness to God. Prayer is receptivity to the Spirit come alive. Prayer is an encounter with truth and goodness drawn into the dance of Trinity, paradoxically open to presence and absence because the language that



opposes one to the other is transcended in a profound quiet, an endless stillness. Sadly the human ego does not like such spaces and turns away. That is why the mystic learns to let ego and its wants go, not because the mystic is complete but because he or she hopes to be complete in Christ one day. It is a question of love cooperating with God.

The Christian mystic is a bearer of God's love to the world, a beacon of creative compassion amidst the chaos of the times. In effect, a mystic is in touch with reality, with her or his feet firmly on the ground. It should come as no surprise, then, that the approach favoured today, especially among active religious, is to understand the mystical in a broad, more inclusive sense, in a way that is descriptive of a life and commitment touched by and in touch with the sacred in every aspect of life and creation: recognising God in the world and bringing God to the world. It is an approach in which Julian of Norwich's famous dictum is easily remembered: *All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well.*

In conversations with Kevin about the mystical, several aspects of the experience became clear. God is not passive in our experience. God, and the relationship with God is active, transformative, engaging. God is encountered as self-disclosing and self-identifying in ways that are awesome, direct and vivid, yet always challenging, always seeking to draw a life-giving yes from our instinctive no. From our perspective the encounter may be experienced as one-sided in the sense that it is unexpected, a surprise, an undeserved wonder, a vast gift, a marvel, a gentle touch of Spirit Breath. It makes us long for more.

The mystical is paradoxically complete and incomplete, in the sense that there is always more to come, to unfold, and to be encountered. There is room for growth. That is why the mystic today is an engaged mystic, a bright and active presence in the world's darkness, a peace-maker, a layer-on-of-hands, a speaker of healing words in spaces of conflict, the blessing of divine mercy among errant people, a builder of a better social-spiritual world touched by the living presence of God.

In the Irish tradition we always stand in a thin place, a caol áit, a place where the veil between us and the Holy becomes sheer and translucent: silence complete. We see it made plain in the story of Elijah running to save his life from Jezebel and encountering God at Horeb, the place where his calling turns (1 Kings 19:11-13). The story is worth repeating: *Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood*

*at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'*

And so we return to our opening question: was Kevin Scallon an engaged mystic? I think the answer is yes. The evidence is there for anyone who looks. In Kevin the Vincentian what became evident is a deep interiority, a convinced faith-life that found both expression and nourishment in a life of committed and zealous action, qualities he shared with his founder, St Vincent de Paul. There is nothing abstract about Kevin's mysticism. Like Vincent's, Kevin's mysticism was essentially functional and practical, a mysticism of service and travel: he truly discovered the poor during the Biafran war. You can see the simplicity of it in his conversion to the poor and in his conversion to faith. It is clear in his conversion to the priesthood, of which the Intercession will hopefully be a lasting monument, and in his call to minister quietly to Christian leaders in Church and State around the world, as well as to Catholic royalty in Europe.

Kevin's life shows us a mystic with eyes open to see the needs of the world, heart and hands open to participation in all its anguish and tribulations. It is a way that walks in interweaving paths of prayer and service. It has clear social dimensions, something that is crystal clear in St Vincent's own mysticism of the poor and the oppressed. It is a way that is open to the Fatherhood of God, a blessing God lavish in holy surprises and gifts, opening doors and avenues we did not know were there. Kevin's is a way of active compassion, of radical belief in a God of mercy. It is a way that finds God in people and events as well as in quiet and the chapel. It is a way that knows how to listen and serve contemplatively. In fact, in my view Kevin's mystical experience was the true source of his action. As Francis de Sales once said, what we aim for is what we tend toward. And Love is always the key.

#### *A Concluding Addendum*

Why is a Salesian writing about a Vincentian? Let me conclude with two answers to this question. Kevin and I shared a co-accompanying relationship over more than forty years and so I think I can say that I know something of his spirituality and the ways he was moved by the Spirit. I could not have written what I have otherwise. But I had a second motive. St Vincent de Paul had a deep influence on the life of my own founder, Don Bosco. He caught the desire to work with poor and abandoned youth from Vincent. And Don Bosco worked with priests for many years. Few people today remember that Don Bosco also wrote and published a book of reflections on Vincent's spirituality with meditations for every day of a month; and he learnt from Vincent's engaged

spirituality when he founded the Salesians. Don Bosco saw in Vincent the prototype of untiring charity and zeal. And something few Salesians know today. When the Salesian Rule was definitively published Don Bosco included in it a letter on community prayer written by Vincent on 15 January 1650 and there it stayed for more than seventy years. Both saints joined love as *affect* to love as *effect* and the world has reaped the benefits.

## OBITUARIES

### Father Brian Mullan CM

When Brian's remains had been lowered into the grave in the Community cemetery in Castleknock, some people present from the Mayo Gaeltacht sprinkled earth from Falmore and Blacksod onto the coffin. It was a last token of affection from a place and people who had long regarded Brian as one of their own, a gesture Brian himself would have deeply appreciated and owned. I thought of his familiar toast on yearly holidays in Falmore – 'bás in Eirinn', and the further west the better! Brian's life and journey had come full circle from his childhood in Ballina and Glenamaddy, through students days in Castleknock and Blessington, to appointments in Armagh, Dunstable, Castleknock, Lanark and Raheny. The mobility necessitated by his father's profession had prepared him for the 'disponibilité' that is the stuff of life in the Little Company.

Brian's longest appointment was in St Patrick's College, Armagh, where he experienced the austerity of the post-war years, the upheaval of the 1960s and, most indelibly of all, the worst years of 'The Troubles' in the 1970s. Several times in this decade the town of Armagh was bombed, burned, bombarded with gunfire and besieged with protests, strikes, barricades and waves of orange and green dissatisfaction. For those who had grown up with such turbulence, times were traumatic, but for those entrusted with a duty of care and education, it must have been doubly so. In his own way, Brian provided stability, his own perception of a bigger picture and longer history giving a wider context – Navan Fort, Eamhain Macha, the Battles of Benburb and the Yellow Ford; all reminders of a strange continuity – 'plus ça change...!'

As a teacher, Brian took the educationalist approach, encouraging students to find their own way through the nitty gritty of syllabus and curriculum while he concentrated on whetting appetites, providing resources, allusions, analogies drawn from a broad range of inspirations – local archaeological digs, historical talks, cultural outings, cemetery clearances and examination of place and family names – history and culture always being unearthed! History, like language and literature, were, for Brian, living things to be experienced close up, here and now: the secular and the sacred merging too, in timeless landscapes that shape human nature and destiny. The Lord Himself with Peter on the lakeshore or on mountain height transfigured was as readily accessible on the windswept rocks round Blacksod Bay or on the slopes of Carraig a 'Teuch or Lugnaquilla. Like his forebears who read their faith on Celtic

crosses and in the sublime beauty of monastic texts, Brian was most himself in the patterns that moulded our particular Irish faith experience or replicating them in tapestry and carpet making for each new generation of students.

At the end of both his college appointments, in Armagh and Castleknock, Brian took up parochial duties in Dunstable and Lanark respectively. In both parishes, unsurprisingly perhaps, Brian's ministry led him to the country parts and country people in the villages which dot the countryside around both Dunstable and Lanark. When teased about this preferential option, Brian would silence all comment by reference to St Vincent's own summary of the Vincentian mission 'to the country people!' He would recall with fondness and respect his father's high regard for the wisdom of the country people in the rural parts of the provincial towns of Ireland to which he was appointed. From his Armagh days, Brian had developed a keen interest in ecumenism particularly through his friendship with Archbishop Otto Simms and his family. Brian continued this work in Dunstable and Lanark, particularly in the latter where he was warmly welcomed in many a manse, rectory or vicarage to discuss classical literature or engage in tapestry and carpet-making!

Brian's last years were stunted greatly, arising out of an unfortunate accident in his room in Lanark, which led gradually to the loss of mobility. Annual holidays in Belmullet and occasional forays to the Wicklow hills provided some relief: family, friends and confreres rallied around him during his last years in Newpark Care Centre, where the conversation invariably turned to memories of past glories, pilgrim walks throughout Ireland, cycling expeditions to Celtic and classical ruins, once centres of learning, Trojan tasks of tree-planting, clearing old cemeteries, lone vigils on coastal headlands... Caesar, Cicero, Colmcille and Christ all merging in memory, meandering as life ebbed slowly away... adieu, frater, in perpetuum, ave atque vale.

Eamon Devlin CM

## BRIAN MULLAN CM

Born: Ballina, Co Mayo, 14 September 1927  
Entered the CM: 7 September 1946  
Final Vows: 8 September 1948  
Ordained: 30 May 1954 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS

1945-78: St Patrick's College, Armagh  
1974-75: Heythrop College, London  
1981-96: St Vincent's College, Castleknock  
1996-2005: St Mary's, Lanark  
2005-2011: St Paul's, Raheny

Died: 6 May 2011  
Buried: Castleknock College

## Father Sean Johnston CM

When Sean Johnston was appointed to the Parish of the Travelling People in 1986 he already had a silver jubilee's worth of experience as a priest behind him. His first appointment had been to Nigeria, fresh out of Glenart! The way he used to tell the story of going in to see Christy O'Leary to receive his first assignment made even him laugh. In 1961, the Vincentian Mission in Nigeria was barely a year old. Even with the encouragement and admiration of the confreres, it must have been exhilarating and nerve-wracking all at the same time, as a young man with no pastoral experience, to face into the prospect of going somewhere so far away and so utterly different.

Sean spoke of his experiences in the Community with self-deprecating humour. It made him very easy company and very pleasant. Getting to know him during his first year with the Travellers was a study. His was hardly a driven approach but day by day, site by site he introduced himself to Travelling families and began to learn something of the culture. There were many occasions too, though, when, over a well-anticipated lunch, he would marvel at the work of the confrères who had preceded him in the parish. The winter that year was shocking but being in Sean's company was an experience of insouciance typified by a long weekend trip to Rosstown in Co Donegal with a minibus full of teenagers. It rained the whole time. The house was damp and Sean was under pressure. His relief came when, having to go into Ballyshannon for groceries, he and the help found somewhere to restore themselves.

The young Vins ordained in 1961 made up one of the largest ordination groups of that period in the history of the Province. As the decade went on they were encouraged to pursue further studies at a time when the teachings of the Vatican Council were taking hold. Sean's opportunity came when, on return on leave from Nigeria, it became clear that, as the situation concerning Biafra was deteriorating, it was too dangerous to return. Sean went to Catholic University in Washington. He would later say he was not sure how he would get on academically at CU but that he was proud to find that the theological training he and his contemporaries in the Community had received in Glenart allowed them to thrive in the larger and more diverse university environment that exists in the United States.

It was in Washington that Sean picked up a phrase which became one of the mottos he liked to repeat frequently, 'liturgy is life'. Watching Sean at the liturgy or at dinner, one was struck by the similarities in his demeanour in both settings. He seemed, in a manner of speaking,

devoutly appreciative without the distraction of piety; he just seemed to be enjoying himself. This seemed wonderfully the case during a retreat he gave more than once using a rucksack filled with items illustrating what one might take on life's pilgrimage.

Sean brought this same disarming personality on mission. It was always striking how much even some local clergy seemed to have bought into the cliché of the fearsome missionary, someone they expected, while in the parish, to revive and reorder the place forcefully. Sean was invariably a disappointment in this regard. His small stature and ready smile made him a very attractive presence among parishioners who were enthralled by his stories and illustrations of the Gospel. He would finish a story occasionally by saying simply, 'Imagine that!' Parishioners and priests responded to him. He could finish a mission as the favourite missionary, overturning people's expectations and representing how we like to imagine the Vincentian charism.

After Nigeria and Washington, Sean served as chaplain in Strawberry Hill, and became part of the new Mission Team formed in late 1970s. After a brief sojourn in Stillorgan Park, the Mission Team moved to All Hallows and that began a long association for Sean until his move to the parish of the Travelling People in the 1980s.

In 1997 Sean became Superior of a new community that the Province established in Belfast in the wake of the experience of our confrères Frs Frank Mullan and Eamonn Cowan in Harryville, Ballymena. Harryville tested everyone. The stresses were extreme. Every Saturday for nine months it seemed most of the Police landrovers in Northern Ireland were on standby in the town in order to ensure parishioners could attend Mass in spite of the protests of Loyalists. Harryville was a crisis that threatened the still young peace process but it also had a profound effect on the confrères. Sean was to have joined Frank and Eamonn in Ballymena but had to remain in Belfast while the final stages of the crisis played out. When a resolution was arranged in the summer of 1997, Frank joined the new community in Belfast and Sean began the search for a permanent address. It took a while but the house at 99 Cliftonville Road is part of Sean's legacy to the Province and finding it was largely due to a small network of friends he and his brother Oliver had in the city. The prayers we say daily for 'our friends, relatives and benefactors' had special significance at that time.

Harryville had also strained the relationship between the Province and the Diocese of Down and Connor. Sean did a great deal to restore it. He was working as chaplain in St Louise's Comprehensive College on the Falls Road while Frank was curate in St John's parish. When Sean found the house on the Cliftonville Road, it was necessary for the community to go and see the bishop and ask for his consent to acquire the



property. The dynamic at the meeting was a lesson in diplomacy. Bishop Walsh was charming but Frank was tense. Once the tea was served, Sean took over and led what followed. He was at his non-threatening, disarming best. The bishop said he was glad that the community was moving to north Belfast. He came to dinner and blessed the house once the confreres moved in. It was a significant moment and Sean's handling of it was so admirable

Sean's health saw him have to move to Rickard House in 2001 where he spent his last years in the care of the Daughters of Charity. His brother Oliver and sister Philomena and her husband Danny were very attentive to him there although Oliver predeceased him by several years.

Paschal Scallon CM

#### SEAN JOHNSON CM

Born: Armagh, 29 July 1936  
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1954  
 Final Vows: 8 September 1959  
 Ordained: 27 May 1961 in Clonliffe College  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

#### APPOINTMENTS

1961-68: Nigerian Mission  
 1968-69: Sabbatical in Washington DC  
 1969-70: Hereford  
 1970-77: St Mary's, Strawberry Hill  
 1977-80: St Patrick's College, Drumcondra  
 1980-81: St Joseph's Blackrock  
 1981-86: All Hallows  
 1986-89: Parish of Travelling People  
 1989-94: All Hallows College  
 1994-97: Damascus House, Mill Hill  
 1997-2002: Belfast  
 2002-12: St Paul's, Raheny

Died: 29 August 2012  
 Buried: Armagh

## Father Denis Collins CM

Denis' relationship with many people, but confreres in particular, was largely defined by their first encounter. In my case, it was when, as a seminarist on pastoral placement, based in Phibsboro, Denis asked me to stake rows of magnificent gladioli destined to grace the altars of the Church. I dutifully did, too tightly as it happened, with the result that the top-heavy heads of the flowers, without exception, snapped off in the next wind; the very disaster staking was meant to ward off! When the much fiercer storm of Denis' ire swept my way, I was fortunate to be able to sway with the gale and counter that had he not planted them far too close together, such a complete domino effect might not have ensured. He realised that that moment that both of us were at fault – *felix culpa!* Thus began a combative rapport which for the rest of his life when our paths crossed was both complementary and complimentary!

Denis was a devotee of the *via negativa* in most aspects of life. Though mostly appointed to parish ministry, he saw himself as a missionary; old school being the only school and all preaching gauged by its forthright and fearless exposition of the discipleship of the Cross. Anything less was highly suspect, and preachers of moderation were, at best, lukewarm, at worst currying favour with the world, the greatest treason! More than once, Denis' style and content got him into trouble and the efforts of superiors to curb his *élan* brought further abrasive and, sometimes, explosive encounters.

For all this, perhaps to some measure, as a result of it, Denis was basically a shy man, reclusive even. Confreres tended, by and large, to give him a wide berth and his experience in community life was isolated and lonely. Paradoxically, the *via negativa* that community life was for him may well have been the catalyst for his indefatigable pastoral ministry, largely unseen and unsung as Denis would have wished. Denis excelled on the doorsteps, his rough and ready exterior, rough-hewn country man, softened by nervous smile and uneasy banter. His affinity with elderly, lonely and housebound parishoners in particular, themselves isolated by their circumstances and growing urban anonymity, was instinctive. Denis' compassion for their situation and readiness to do all he could to alleviate their burdens won him many quiet admirers. A neglected flower bed or unruly hedge, a tight-fitting door or sullen timepiece – all were put to rights with characteristic energy and diligence. Once engaged, Denis persevered in a faithful service.

Old age brings little enough solace it seems. In Denis a mellowness softening revealed a more reflective mind while memories of individual

confreres' kindnesses over many years brought peace at last; Paddy O'Leary and Frank MacMorrow were standing stones of sure support while a tenderness of touch at the end through the care of Aidan Galvin and others, smoothed the path to God.

Colm McAdam CM

DENIS COLLINS CM

Born: Lahern, Co Cork, 5 October 1927  
Entered the CM: 7 September 1950  
Final Vows: 8 September 1955  
Ordained Priest: 15 June 1957 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe  
by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS

1957-66: St Vincent's, Sheffield  
1966-74: St Peter's, Phibsborough,  
1974-78: St Mary's' Lanark,  
1978-96: St Peter's, Phibsborough  
1996-2013: St Joseph's, Blackrock

Died: 11 May 2013  
Buried: St Finbarr's, Cork

## Cornelius (Con) Curtin CM

On a warm bright June afternoon following a pleasant lunch in a local restaurant, I sat with Con in the car park on Howth Head overlooking Dublin Bay. It was about a month before his death. There was not a cloud in the sky or a ripple on the still blue sea except the Holyhead ferry effortlessly gliding across the water as it sailed for home. Con was in reflective mood, recalling his visits to the harbour during his time teaching at St Paul's and one or two occasions when he had been invited to go sailing in the bay. After a pause, he turned and said 'remember this *they are not long the days of wine and roses*'. A ninety-seven year old quoting a poem on the brevity of life might seem a little odd but this was a man who got somewhat irked when he discovered his recently renewed passport was valid for only three years and not the ten he anticipated. He was looking forward to visiting Lourdes once again in the coming September. Con loved life and lived it to the full.

Born in 1917, he grew up the youngest of seven children in the Parish of the Immaculate Conception, Wexford. He was educated in the local Christian Brothers School and duly won a university scholarship while there. In 1935, he entered the Vincentian Community and with large numbers in the seminary, he spent a year in Castleknock before moving to Blackrock. Con was a very bright intelligent man, I suspect among one of the brightest of his generation. His appointment after ordination was to Sunday's Well to undertake an MA in English at UCC. He chose the metaphysical poet Crashaw for his subject. There was always a little angle to Con's choices in life. He said he chose Crashaw because everyone else at that time was choosing Yeats or Eliot. He graduated with First Class Honours. He was a man who throughout his life wore his erudition and learning lightly.

He reminisced with affection on his time teaching in Armagh. One former student speaking in later years at a prize giving in the College said 'Fr Con Curtin taught me English, ever among the kindest and most loyal of his Vincentian confreres he was not renowned for his industry. On his lazy days he would read us short stories, or, best-of-all, whole tracts of *Juno and the Peacock* or *The Shadow of a Gunman*'. Con loved the world of drama and music. He produced plays and even wrote some one act ones for students to perform. Past students always spoke warmly of him and over fifty of them travelled south to a Dublin hotel in 2012 to make a presentation to 'Baldy' as they called him. He always kept his antennae fine-tuned lest any of them might be writing biographical tales of schoolboy days.

Con's natural instinct was pastoral and he was at his happiest in the more unstructured adult world of parish missions and parish life. He found energy in producing high quality musicals in Lanark, but most of all he loved London. While living in St Vincent's on the Ridgeway in Mill Hill and working in the parish with Fr Louis Thomas in Finchley, Con took full advantage of the split locations to explore the joys of opera at Covent Garden and an abundance of live theatre. He could recall with ease a long afternoon of conversation with the playwright Harold Pinter after the funeral of the actor Patrick Magee at which Con was celebrant.

He was disappointed to have to leave London for Sheffield in 1982. When asked why he was disappointed, he responded with characteristic wit saying; a man had gone to Euston Station and told the ticket attendant he wanted a ticket for Sheffield to which he replied 'Sir, you need a ticket for Sheffield. You don't want a ticket for Sheffield!' His exile was brief, as within two years he was back in London as parish priest in Goodmayes.

He enjoyed travel. He loved his supply priest work in parishes in foreign parts. He explored the snows of Hamilton in Canada one year and sunshine on the beaches of Florida in another. He combined his visits to his brother in California with some work in parishes on the west coast of the USA. He once did a Christmas supply in a parish in the highlands of Scotland and always with a keen eye to a celebration, managed to get an invite to Christmas lunch with the Laird in the local castle. He was an entertaining and affable partner on the golf course and a very witty and engaging confrere to live with. Always open to adventure, he embraced the CIF Course in Paris aged eighty one. Here is his description from that occasion of a visit to the French vineyard once owned by the Vincentians where the famous wine Chateau de la Mission is still being made:

We got a very warm welcome from the manager and staff. The only snag was, he went on and on about the process of winemaking. The day was fiery, warm and I was thirsty. The foremost thought in my mind was 'Is he ever going to give us a drink?' I felt we would be able then to judge the wine for ourselves. Finally, he invited us inside to the beautiful reception room in what was formerly the residence of the Vincentians and gave each of us a glass of white and a glass of red. An excellent conclusion to our visit!

After a seven-year stint in Warrington he returned to St Mary's Dunstable where he continued to minister until the age of ninety one. In his concluding years there, he celebrated the Eucharist perched on a stool to accommodate his limited movement, yet, despite those

limitations, he remained pastorally alert, interested in people and always fascinated by new possibilities of communicating the word of God.

While studying at UCC he undertook some part-time teaching at the diocesan college St Finbarr's, Farranferris. A keen, observant young student in the school by the name of Tom Lane noted how Con seemed unusual among the clergy there; he spent his time between classes praying in the school chapel. He was the only priest he saw do this and it made a deep impression on him. It was something that never changed. Prayer was a central plank in Con's life and ministry.

During his days living on the Ridgeway he loved to eavesdrop on speakers who were leading courses or retreats in nearby Damascus House. On such an occasion he encountered a Carmelite priest speaking on the topic of Centring Prayer. He was intrigued by the concept and it grew into a passion for him. Articles of his about this method of praying were published previously in this journal. He established Centring Prayer groups in the parishes where he worked. He was particularly delighted when a married couple he had recruited to his group in Toddington went on to publish a book on meditation for children and travelled internationally to speak on the topic.

In 2008, after ministering for nearly fifty years in the UK, Con returned to Dublin to live at St Paul's, Raheny. His physical limitations did little to diminish his agile and interested mind. There was a whole new world of coffee shops to be explored and now there was a National Concert Hall in Earlsfort Terrace; where seventy five years before he had sat for his BA examinations. With the help of carers and confreres, he engaged fully with his new surroundings. It enabled renewed connections with his nephews and their families and a chance to visit once again the famous Wexford Opera Festival. I recall accompanying him on his last visit to the Festival where his sartorial style – peak cap and all, were perhaps more suitable for the Wexford County Hurling Final and a little at odds with the surrounding jewellery and evening dress of other patrons. He was delightfully unperturbed. He joined the Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes three years in a row and relished the company of the young student volunteers who assisted him.

A fall and a broken hip in 2013 meant Con required more professional care and help and while he felt the loss of community greatly, he graciously accepted a move to Rickard House. Upon its closure he, Denis Collins and twelve Daughters of Charity moved to Nazareth House on the Malahide Road. Despite the upheaval he made the move seamlessly and without complaint. Greater reliance on others and a decreasing lack of independence always brings its challenges; it was not easy for one who was really quite private and relished his freedom. Con was not a man who was slow to express his needs, if bells were there,

they were for ringing, but it was always accompanied by an unflinching graciousness and gratitude for help. There was something very attractive about the way in which in his final months the veil between liturgy and life became very transparent. Any confrere visiting was invited to move seamlessly from chatting and laughter to prayer.

On the day of his death he was feeling tired and we prayed together as a shortened evening prayer, Psalm 16: You search my heart and visit me by night-Hide me in the shadow of your wings. I don't think either of us realised how quick that visit would come. Later that night, Con slipped away peacefully. It was a gentle end to a fully-lived life.

*They are not long, the days of wine and roses:  
Out of a misty dream  
our path emerges for a while, then closes  
Within a dream.*

Aidan Galvin CM

#### CORNELIUS (CON) CURTIN CM

Born: Wexford, 27 May 1917  
Entered CM: 3 September 1935  
Vows: 8 September 1937  
Ordained: 30 May 1943 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

#### APPOINTMENTS

1944: St Vincent's, Sundays Well  
1944-57: St Patrick's College, Armagh  
1957-58: St Peter's, Phibsborough  
1958-61: St Paul's, Raheny  
1961-66: Lanark  
1966-82: St Vincent's, Mill Hill  
1982-84: St Vincent's, Sheffield  
1984-90: St Cedd's, Goodmayes  
1990-92: St Mary's, Dunstable  
1992-99: St Stephen's, Warrington  
1999-2008: St Mary's, Dunstable  
2008-14: St Paul's Raheny

Died; 3 July 2014  
Buried; Glasnevin Cemetery

## Father Joseph (Joe) Cunningham CM

Joe was born on the old feast date of St Vincent de Paul, 19 July; his mother was born on the new feast date of 27 September and he wondered if this was an omen indicating he was always destined to be a follower of St Vincent. Born in Derry in 1932, his family moved to Greencastle in Donegal on the outbreak of war in 1939 and remained there for the duration. He loved his childhood years in the rural peace of Greencastle. At the nearby beach at Shrove, he discovered the joys of swimming in the sea; something which remained a lifelong pleasure and where ever possible, a daily one. A brief unhappy stint in St Colm's, Derry led to a transfer to St Patrick's College Armagh as a boarder and a pathway to the Vincentians.

Tall, strong, imposing in appearance and for much of his years, with a pipe in the corner of his mouth, Joe seemed to exude a calmness and serenity that was enviable. He could be charming and playful in company but also a man very at ease in the stillness of his own company, almost with a touch of shyness. An avid reader and a keen amateur astronomer, he seemed to embody St Vincent's invitation to be an apostle abroad and a Carthusian at home. The story of his varied appointments testifies to this. His years as spiritual director in Ushaw, Maynooth and the Irish College, Rome, required that interior resourcefulness in abundance; he found himself living for considerable periods without the normal supports of Vincentian community life. Joe was a very loyal Vincentian. He went where ever he was asked to go.

Joe had two stays in Glasgow. He worked first with the deaf community where, with respect and affection, the symbol they used for Joe in the deaf language was his beloved pipe. After six years' service in Sacred Heart, Mill Hill in London, he returned as parish priest in St Mark's. This made access to one of his favourite haunts even more convenient. He loved the ruggedness of the Isle of Barra with its Vincentian heritage. He was very knowledgeable on the colours, the shapes and sounds of the resident bird life. He was always amused that the arrival or departure of his flight on the island was dependent on the tide being in or out. The idea of the plane landing on the beach caught his imagination.

By nature and temperament Joe was very orthodox. He had an uncle called Charlie McLaughlin who by contrast was very colourful. His exploits merited a biography and his adventures included being shipwrecked on a South Sea Island, falling in love with a tribal chief's daughter and playing a significant role in the Byrd expedition to the



South Pole in 1928-30. Joe was proud of his uncle's Congressional Medal of Honour and how he had been honoured by the US President at the White House. He always attributed one brief encounter with this uncle as a child, involving a boat journey on the River Foyle, as a source of his interest in things maritime and the sea.

Priesthood was at the very core of Joe's life. He had fruitful periods ministering to the young in Strawberry Hill and Armagh, however, it was formation for priestly life which appealed to him; he saw it as a ministry close to heart of Vincent de Paul. He engaged in this work in a time period which was sometimes turbulent and always ever-changing. He brought calmness to it. He oversaw the transition of Vincentian student life from Blackrock to Celbridge. He loved his time in Maynooth; he was saddened when asked to move; he felt he had more to give, so when the call came to go to the Irish College in Rome, he jumped at the opportunity. It was not without its challenge or difficulties; learning a new language, negotiating the new world of pasta when he had recently been diagnosed with coeliac disease. But embrace it he did.

When he returned to Dublin some years later to lead the community in Blackrock, he was conscious of the increasing frailty of his two unmarried sisters, Terry and Pat, in Derry. He travelled monthly to monitor their wellbeing. Terry had been headmistress of a secondary school in Creggan overlooking the city and was something of a legend in Derry for her protective care of students during the height of the troubles.

Towards the end of his stay in Blackrock, Joe began to stagger and trip occasionally when out for his daily walk. For a man who had run both the London and Glasgow Marathons, it was a severe shock to his system. A catastrophic fall on the stairs within the house led to a broken shoulder. During his time of recovery in St Vincent's Hospital, he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. Initially appointed to Phibsboro, he, in fact, ended up living in St Paul's. Each patient experiences Parkinson's in their own unique way. In Joe's case, the disease was very progressive. He bore his considerable suffering with extraordinary dignity. That enviable equanimity never deserted him.

Joe was popular with residents and staff in his nursing home in Bray. When words became a struggle, his engaging smile never failed to communicate. He travelled to St Paul's every Wednesday to join the community for Mass and lunch. With the help of carers, he made some visits to his home in Derry. Despite increased frailty in his final months, he got particular joy in joining his sister for a week of respite care together in Nazareth House in Fahan on the Inishowen Peninsula in Donegal. From there, they revisited their childhood haunts in Greencastle and shared an ice cream on their favourite beach at Shrove. It was as if the circle was complete.

In our celebration of Mass for those who have died, we pray: *to our departed brothers and sisters and to all who were pleasing to you at their passing from this life, give kind admittance to your kingdom. There we hope to enjoy forever the fullness of your glory.* That was a fervent hope of Joe's, he believed in it with rock-like faith. At noon on All Soul's Day, with two confreres praying quietly by his bedside, Joe slipped gently and silently into eternity. He died as he had lived all his life, with quiet dignity.

Aidan Galvin CM

### JOSEPH (JOE) CUNNINGHAM CM

Born: Derry City, 19 July 1932  
 Entered CM: 7 September 1950  
 Vows: 8 September 1955  
 Ordained Priest: 15 June 1957 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

#### APPOINTMENTS

1957-58: St Joseph's, Blackrock  
 1958-66: St Patrick's College, Armagh  
 1966-70: St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill  
 1971-75: Ushaw College  
 1975-77: St Joseph's, Blackrock  
 1970-78: DePaul House, Celbridge  
 1978-85: Pollockshields, Glasgow  
 1985-90: Sacred Heart, Mill Hill  
 1990-95: St Mark's, Glasgow  
 1995-2000: Park View  
 (Spiritual Director, St Patrick's College, Maynooth)  
 2000-02: St Peter's, Phibsborough  
 2002-05: St Joseph's, Blackrock  
 (Spiritual Director, Irish College, Rome)  
 2005-11: St Joseph's, Blackrock  
 2011-12: St Peter's, Phibsborough  
 2012-15: St Paul's, Raheny

Died: 2 November 2015  
 Buried: Deansgrange

## Father Desmond Beirne CM

My first memory of Desmond Beirne is of meeting him when I was a student in St Joseph's Blackrock in the early 60s. He was in St Mary's, Strawberry Hill at the time. In later years I lived with him in community in All Hallows and worked with him very closely - and indeed relied on him - for fifteen years. He was such a tower of strength and support for me as President in All Hallows. After we both left All Hallows in 2011, we were members of the St Peter's Phibsborough community for five years until dementia began to take over his life.

The first reading at Desmond's Requiem Mass in St Peter's was read by the late Louise McDermott, Assistant Registrar in Dublin City University. Desmond would have had much contact with Louise in the validation and accreditation of Dublin City University degrees in All Hallows. The reading was from Isaiah and was about a future life with God. A future life with God is compared to a banquet of rich food. Desmond would approve of that. He would enjoy it. Desmond would have been very much at home in that kind of setting. He knew his wines very well but never showed off his knowledge. A modest, self-effacing, humble man, showing off was never part of his make-up.

Desmond would have had a huge influence on people in the course of his life. In St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, he would have had contact with many generations of teachers in England and Wales who would have trained as teachers in St Mary's. Desmond spent thirty years of his life - 1962 to 1992 - in Strawberry Hill. He loved Strawberry Hill and he loved London. He had a succession of important posts there as lecturer, Head of the Divinity Department, Vice-Principal and then Principal for fifteen years. Desmond would have been very pleased that the current Principal and Vice Chancellor of St Mary's, Francis Campbell and the President and Vice President of the Students Union travelled from London for his Requiem Mass in St Peter's.

After leaving Strawberry Hill, Desmond became Dean of Studies in All Hallows. He would have had contact with hundreds of students in All Hallows doing degrees in theology and various pastoral degrees. Desmond would have been seen by these students as a man of outstanding integrity and honesty with great attention to detail and more importantly someone who cared about them. He had a great love for and empathy with the underdog, especially the less academically gifted students.

Occasionally, Desmond and I had a serious exchange of views about keeping the points of entry to All Hallows BA Programme at an accept-

able level. I argued that to maintain academic standards we had to keep our standard of entry from going too low. Desmond argued that the points of entry didn't matter. A student could have done a poor Leaving Certificate at the end of second level and thrive in third Level. What was important for Desmond was how they developed in All Hallows in a small college with much individual attention and what kind of a degree they had when they left.

One particular year Desmond and the Registrar in All Hallows went to a Higher Education meeting in Athlone. The purpose of the meeting was to allocate CAO points of entry for the BA Programme for the following September. They agreed to reduce the points for entry to the BA Programme about which I was not very happy. I checked how many students entered All Hallows as a result of the reduction – only one student. So I followed her progress with much interest through All Hallows. Four years later, she left All Hallows with a first class Honours Degree in Theology and English from Dublin City University. I had no further arguments with Desmond on the subject.

Over the years in All Hallows and in St Peters, he kept in contact with former staff in Strawberry Hill. In fairness he left part of his heart in Strawberry Hill. The Principals in Strawberry Hill were very diligent about inviting him to attend various functions. Desmond loved to respond and attended many functions there after he retired. He was a man of many interests in the academic world, education, philosophy, scripture, literature, spirituality. His huge library of books is a testimony to his wide interest in so many areas of academia. One of the last books he bought was *Loving the Church* by Father Cantallamessa, OFM Cap. After he died I found the book on his desk in his bedroom, waiting to be read. It was a fitting epitaph for Desmond's life – serving and loving the church.

Desmond was an able administrator. His ability as an outstanding chairman of a meeting was legendary whether in All Hallows, in St Mary's University in Twickenham, London or at our own Vincentian Provincial gatherings. His ability to listen well, to see things clearly and to quickly grasp the essentials made him a very good chairman. We always trusted Desmond to do the right thing and to say the right thing and he was always elected chair of our Provincial gatherings. He never had an agenda as a chairman. He was always open and childlike. Many people said of him what Jesus said of Nathanael (John 1:47) *Behold an Israelite in whom is no guile.*

Those of us who lived with him in community would be well aware of his commitment and devotion to prayer, Mass, and community life. He was a delightful companion in community. He always thought the best about people. He never had an evil thought about anyone. He was

great company and a great conversationalist. Desmond was an upright, dependable, loyal, wise, competent confrere. Dare I say it, Desmond was a holy man but he didn't know it.

Desmond loved sport-all kinds of sport including athletics. He played on a cup winning Gaelic Football team in St Patrick's College Armagh. On my visits to Strawberry Hill he could talk very knowledgably about Gaelic football and current activities in the GAA world in Ireland. He could have been talking to Lord Longford the previous day showing just as comprehensive a knowledge of cricket. A Sports Hall – the Beirne Sports Hall – is fittingly named in his memory in Strawberry Hill.

There was one sport he had little interest in – soccer; he couldn't understand so much passing backwards of the ball, especially to the goalkeeper. His reasoning – there was a reason behind everything with Desmond – was that the play was supposed to be going forward not backwards. Teams were supposed to be scoring goals, not hitting balls into the other goal. So he opted out of watching soccer on the television.

He had a great sense of humour. He was well able to tell a story against himself and tell it very well. One story in particular was about Desmond going into a café in London. The staff were putting chairs on the tables and were obviously tidying up at the end of their day. When Desmond asked for a cup of coffee they told him they were closed. Ever logical and rational, Desmond pointed out that they couldn't be closed because the door was open and he walked in. One of the staff said: 'Sorry Sir! We're closed!' Desmond, in typical fashion, argued the bit and said they couldn't be closed as there was a sign on the door saying OPEN. He had walked in so how could they be closed! The staff member in exasperation then told him to 'f.... off!' Desmond got great fun out of telling the story. There were many other stories like this one. This one will suffice to give a taste of what Desmond's sense of humour was like and the fun he brought to community life.

Now we are left with the memories, not just we Vincentians, but colleagues and students in Ireland and England who encountered Desmond in the academic world. All pleasant memories of a wonderful human being, scholar and Vincentian. It is with great sadness that we say goodbye. May he rest in peace.

Mark Noonan CM

## DESMOND (DES) BEIRNE CM

Born: Portaferry, Co Armagh, 30 August 1933  
Entered the CM: 7 September 1950  
Vows: 8 September 1955  
Ordained Priest: 22 March 1958 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS

1958-59: St Vincent's College, Castleknock,  
1959-62: Rome (studying)  
1962-91: St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill  
1992-93: Sacred Heart, Mill Hill (Sabbatical)  
1993-2012: All Hallows College  
2012-16: St Peter's, Phibsborough

Died: 7 May 2016  
Buried: Glasnevin

## Father Peter J Slevin CM

Peter was the youngest of five children, three boys and two girls, born to Francis and Angela Slevin in Keady Co Armagh in 1936. He excelled at school and had 'brains to burn' according to the local scribes. He spent only one week with the 'Nuns' before moving to the Christian Brothers in Keady and then to St Patrick's College, Armagh. On completing his A-levels in 1954 he was offered a scholarship to Queens University, Belfast. However, as he felt a very strong call to the Priesthood he declined the offer and entered St Joseph's, Blackrock. Sadly, his father passed away while Peter was doing his A-level examination.

Having completed his first year Seminaire, Peter entered University College Dublin and again his academic ability was quickly recognised. At the end of his first year, he was invited to study for an Honours degree in Physics. rather than study for a general BSc. This entailed an extra year at St Joseph's and in 1959 he obtained his BSc (Special Hons). The staff at the UCD Physics Department were very keen that he should continue to study for his Masters, but he opted to begin his Theological studies.

On 8 September 1959 he made his final vows in the Congregation of the Mission at St Joseph's before moving to Glenart. He was extremely happy at Glenart. Not surprisingly he took his Theological studies in his stride and he very much loved his involvement in the farm and particularly enjoyed his interaction with the local farmers. It was also during those days that we first began to appreciate his prowess at rugby. Together with Mattie Barry he formed a formidable second row partnership. For some years after ordination he continued to play rugby for Glenart. In his later days, Peter loved the rugby internationals and, whether watching the game at the Aviva stadium or on TV, he became totally immersed and emotionally involved by the play, regularly expressing his frustration, or joy, as the game progressed.

On the 23 March 1963 he was ordained as a priest by Archbishop McQuaid in Clonliffe College. His first appointment was to St Vincent's College, Castleknock, a College he served with great loyalty and fidelity throughout most of his life. While studying for his HDE at UCD in 1963-64 he once more teamed up with his colleagues in the Physics Department and began his studies for his MSc which he obtained in 1965. Undaunted at having a full class schedule at the College he then launched into his PhD studies in Astrophysics. This involved many hours' observation and study in the Dublin mountains late at night but he never failed to turn up for his morning classes the following day.

Highly regarded and respected as a teacher by the boys, they sought every opportunity to distract him by asking a leading question about creation, God or the universe. They enjoyed his animated response. As one of his former pupils Fr Paschal Scallon wrote 'His pronouncements on the laws of God and the laws of physics were both amusing and provocative. He was a gifted teacher who sought and shared insights into mysteries.' On obtaining his PhD, he was invited by Professor Neil Porter to join the staff at UCD but he declined and opted for a teaching career at the College.

Now with more time at his disposal he took on the role as Housemaster in the New Wing/Cregan House. He was firm, fair and respected by the boys. No one stepped out of line in Fr Slevin's house. The boys had their own code for discerning Peter's reaction to what they were up to. The first indication of his disapproval was the 'pursing of his lips'; he would then mutter a few words of disapproval and if they did not heed these signs and proceeded a little further, he would spell it out in no uncertain terms, and those who ignored the warning signs rued the day. Occasionally Peter enjoyed joining some of the senior boys in a game of poker. They quickly recognised his sharp and astute eye for a kill and most tended to play a cautious game in his presence. However, sometimes the gamblers among them; now prominent entrepreneurs in the world of business; would call his bluff and enjoy winning a handsome pot at his expense. It was also at this time that he began to assist with the coaching of rugby and basketball. Both he and his lifelong friend, Jimmy Bruen, attended summer courses at Loughborough College for a number of years. In the late eighties and early nineties, they teamed up with Mick and Charlie Quinn in coaching some very successful Senior Cup Teams at the college.

In the late sixties canoeing became a popular sport at the college. It began when Fr Vincent O'Brien assisted one boy in making a wooden canoe in the woodwork room. Others followed and later that year the Canoeing Club was formed and the first canoeing holiday was undertaken on the Royal Canal and the Barrow. The maintenance of the wooden canoes proved extremely difficult and many had to be discarded. Fortunately, Peter came to the rescue and introduced the making of fibreglass canoes. He subsequently took over the organisation of the canoeing club and in the early seventies he led some very successful and enjoyable canoeing trips in Ireland and UK. In September 1977 Peter was appointed Senior Dean, a position he held until 1981 when he transferred to St Patrick's College, Armagh.

Here he taught Physics and Maths Physics and again proved himself to be a highly regarded and sought after teacher. His appointment to Armagh also proved to be fortuitous as he once more linked up with



his family. The next generation were now in their early teens and Peter quickly formed a close bond with them. Canoeing and camping holidays were once again the order of the day. When not engaged with his nephews and nieces, he loved to undertake renovation work in their homes or gardens for his sisters.

In 1985, the Provincial announced that Castleknock College, which up to then was an all boarding school, would be opening its doors to day pupils. The College authorities, anxious to ensure a smooth and successful change over, approached Peter to become Head Teacher/Prefect of Studies. Thankfully, he readily agreed and returned to the College in September 1987. With a clear vision, determination and the support of his former colleagues he quickly set the tone for the upward thrust in academic excellence which has become a feature of the College in recent decades. On the appointment of the first lay Headmaster in 1993, Peter was given a well-earned Sabbatical break 1993-94 and returned as a full time teacher at the College. He continued to play a key role in the future planning of the College. In 2005, Peter was appointed President, a post he held until his death.

During his tenure as President he placed great emphasis on the Catholic ethos of the College restoring its original title – St Vincent's College, Castleknock (SVC) and inaugurating the College Vincentian Medal. This is awarded annually to the Sixth Year student who best embodies and exemplifies the ethos and charism of the College.

By nature, Peter was shy, humble man who was always ready to help and encourage where needed. In the words of his obituary card.

*His life was one of kindly deeds,  
a helping hand for others' needs,  
sincere and true in heart and mind.*

Yet Peter was not a soft touch; he was a man of principle with a steely determination to stand for what was right, just and fair. He opposed all forms of injustice, real or perceived, and was vehemently vocal in expressing his views on an action or decision that he felt strongly about. Ultimately he would agree to differ and after a cooling off period would return to being his old helpful self.

In his eulogy at Peter's funeral Mass, his nephew, Seamus Savage, gave us a very succinct and true profile of his Uncle Peter when he spoke of him as 'a giant – a man of God & Faith, a man of Science & Space' – he combined ALL and this in itself was both reassuring & inspiring – His phrase was – You should always believe in God – Google does not have all the answers.

Peter was always a man of faith. Far from distracting him from his belief in God, his study of astrophysics led him to an ever deeper appreciation of God's presence in the universe and in his personal life. He would readily remind us that: 'The heavens proclaim the glory of God, and the firmament shows forth the work of God's hands.' Now that he has passed on to a new life, the mystery of the Universe no longer problem for him, we pray that he is now eternally immersed in the mystery of Divine love.

*May he rest in peace.*

Kevin O'Shea CM

#### PETER J SLEVIN CM

Born: Keady, Co Armagh, 23 October 1936  
 Entered CM: 7 September 1954  
 Vows: 8 September 1959  
 Ordained Priest: 30 March 1963 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

#### APPOINTMENTS

1963-81: St Vincent's College, Castleknock  
 1981-87: St Patrick's College, Armagh  
 1987-2018: St Vincent's College, Castleknock  
 (Sabbatical – 1993)  
 (President 2005-18)

Died: 5 May 2018  
 Buried: Castleknock College

## Father Kevin J Scallon CM

Kevin Scallon had a wicked sense of humour and irony was a really strong part of it. In fact, let's cut to the chase; he had a refined sense of the outrageous but to be fair to him, when it was turned on himself, sometimes to take him out of himself when things got him down, he could laugh heartily. He had a great smile but when he laughed it was like you could see the whole man.

Kevin responded to strong statements because, I think, he was fond of making them himself. So, when I learnt that the readings chosen for his funeral contained some of the strongest words in the whole of Scripture, there seemed only one line to reflect on: 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'

Make no mistake, this is Kevin Scallon's last will and testament. This is the word he wants to leave with us, to reflect on, to understand and to appreciate. I'm just sorry he didn't write the homily to go with it.

So, what is it to eat and drink the flesh and blood of Christ?

Jesus tried to purify the sacrifice culture of the religious practice of his time. This was one of the reasons he drove the money changers out of the Temple in Jerusalem for example. The purest form of sacrifice, in the mind and heart of Christ was of oneself.

Jesus gives himself and speaks so outrageously in terms of flesh and blood because, in part, he wants us to realise how much our commitment to him should 'get under our skin.'

We consume the body and blood of Christ at the Eucharist because Christ's offering of himself had and has flesh and blood consequences. In the same way Jesus tried to have people understand that they ought not to spill the blood of animals with indifference, he wanted them and us to realise that faith and life must connect.

Jesus exhausted himself during his ministry and he finally went to the cross because he would not break faith with either the Father or the people to whom he believed the Father had sent him. His fidelity cost him his life.

And the thing is, Christ asks us to keep faith, just as he did, just as the Apostles did and just as all the saints always have, the acclaimed and the anonymous.

Christ asks us to make our fidelity a flesh and blood matter too. What we say and do in the name of Jesus will cost us, not always in spectacular ways – even though Christians are still persecuted – but we are all familiar with the experience of allowing someone else the last word (or not) or going the extra mile even for someone who may not appreciate it.

I speak like this because we should understand that in following Christ, we have become a priestly people. I speak like this because if there is one aspect of Kevin Scallon's life and ministry we are especially aware of, it was his appreciation of what it is to be a priest.

As Catholics we have a profoundly developed sense of the ordained priestly ministry but by virtue of our baptism, we are all admitted into the priesthood of Jesus Christ, and he is our High Priest.

The hallmarks of priesthood are prayer and sacrifice, which is to say, if I may borrow from Bishop Robert Barron of Los Angeles, each of us understanding the electrifying enormity of the maxim, 'Your life is not about you!'

In our time that phrase is almost as repellent as Jesus saying to people in his time, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'

As a priestly people – lay and ordained – truly appreciating what Jesus says about the sacrificial meaning of his words in this gospel passage, is to grasp that Jesus calls us to live our lives: for the good of others, in support of others out of love for others. And these others are our children, our elderly, our friends and our neighbours, our colleagues and, yes, those we don't know whose needs we learn are greater than our own.

The flesh and blood needs of others met with blood and treasure of our own make us a priestly people, used to sacrifice and willing to sacrifice because we will have seen in the person whose need we meet, what Jesus saw in everyone, especially the despised and the ostracised, people embittered and in despair: the image of the Father.

To be part of the restoration of the integrity of another person is to glorify God and glorifying God is surely the concern of a priestly people. This is our most devout prayer, to see as St Irenaeus of Lyon put it: the glory of God is the human person fully alive!

In the Vincentian tradition we understand that this is what St Vincent de Paul saw very clearly. But he also understood that the priestly calling of all the baptised needed the support and service of a reformed and a renewed ordained priesthood which is why St Vincent made the formation of priests one of the pillars of his community, the Congregation of the Mission.

Kevin Scallon worked with priests for practically all his ordained life. But the work took on a particular character when, in collaboration with Sr Briega McKenna and others, he established the Intercession for Priests.

I have marvelled over the years at the stories of renewal in priests' lives that I have heard, stories of men who perhaps simply in need of affirmation in a demanding ministry, have been encouraged to continue

to live the life of prayer and sacrifice on behalf of the people of God that the priestly ministry asks. And I am encouraged too at the stories of men who have been broken in the ministry being healed and restored through the ministry of the Intercession for Priests.

And it is also true that the Intercession for Priests has had to face the pain and shame of all that has come to light in our time concerning priests who have abused children, or indeed anyone. This, more than any other issue, compels us to seek deeper and deeper renewal; of the life of priesthood but also and fundamentally to seek deeper renewal of ourselves who respond to our call in baptism in this way of life.

All this mattered to Kevin so much. To him it was a life-long learning of what is involved in accepting the teaching of Jesus, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.'

Today, with grief and joy, we offer the prayer and sacrifice of Christ himself for Kevin because with the fragments of our own devotion, we approach the altar of God and ask; may Christ bring him into Paradise and set him among the blessed, the communion of saints and the beloved of the Lord.

Paschal Scallan CM

## KEVIN SCALLON CM

Born: Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh, 14 June 1935  
 Entered CM: 7 October 1953  
 Vows: 11 October 1958  
 Ordained Priest: 27 May 1961 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS

1961-64: St Vincent's, Sheffield  
 1964-67: Ikot Ekpene  
 1968-69: Catholic University of America  
 1969-70: Biafra  
 1970-79: All Hallows College  
 1979-81: St Joseph's Blackrock  
 1981-85: All Hallows College (Director of Missions)  
 1985-2012: All Hallows College (Ministry to Priests)  
 2012-18: St Peter's, Phibsborough (Ministry to Priests)

Died: 25 June 2018  
 Buried: Irvinestown, Co Fermanagh

## Father Francis (Frank) McMorrow CM

‘...and Brutus is an honourable man’ – *Julius Caesar 3:ii*

Whenever I think of Frank McMorrow, the word ‘honourable’ comes to mind, having lived with him as his Superior for the final five of his twelve years in Stillorgan Park.

Frank was an innately genial confrere to be in community with. The other ‘g’ word that I associate with him is ‘generosity’, which knew no bounds! He had a loose hand on possessions and was also very much ‘at home’ in ‘wasting time’ with people. Again, though perceptibly dutiful and hard on himself, Frank made a virtue of making allowances for the weaknesses and failings of others; which probably explains why he was much sought after as a confessor for penitents of all ages... ‘generous to a fault’ in every respect!

Frank’s spirituality was informed by an authentic prayer-full and prayer-filled lifestyle. His more than regular visits to the oratory on a given day did not escape the notice of those who lived with him. He also professed a very deep devotion to Mary, the Mother of God. In regard to the latter, one recalls his much anticipated pilgrimages (almost annually, at least while in Stillorgan Park) to Lourdes with the people of Mountrath and adjoining parishes.

Mountrath, of course, was Frank’s birthplace, and he always looked forward to his monthly excursions to that beloved town. Such sojourns afforded him another opportunity to reconnect with the many ‘old friends’, including the Bridgettine Sisters, who held him in high regard.

Both of Frank’s parents were teachers, giving him, his sisters, Celia and Bernie, and brother, Des, a unique headstart in that profession. Until his death on 6 July 2018, Frank was the sole remaining co-founder of St Paul’s College (1950). He spent his first seven years of priesthood there before moving to Castleknock for the following nine years.

After ‘dusting himself off’ at the ‘chalkface’ of teaching Frank entered the arena of parish life. I recall him telling me that he found the transition from the classroom to the parochial scene to be an unprecedented culture shock! However, it wasn’t too long before he made his mark in pastures new. Prompted by an earnest desire to improve the lot of parishioners and confreres alike, Frank set about pursuing his legendary building projects; in Cork, Sheffield, Phibsborough and Lanark. Three notable ventures in Cork spring to mind: the transfer of the kitchen from the ‘lower regions’ of the presbytery to street level; the renovation of the church forecourt to facilitate car parking; and the

setting up of a hostel (within the presbytery) for (male) students attending UCC.

But Frank's primordial interest was in people, not property. He manifested a loving concern for the welfare (and future) of the Province right up to the day of his departure from us. An example of his consideration for confreres that comes to mind was in him joining Denis Collins for Evening Prayer every day during the latter's residence in Rickard House (which closed in 2013). Frank cared about, and for, others.

While some might claim that Frank was, essentially, a 'man's man', he was notably comfortable with and 'blessed among women'! In this regard, one thinks of his dedication to the Daughters of Charity in Blackrock (especially the St Teresa's community), to the Dominicans in Dun Laoghaire and, indeed, the residents in the Blackrock Hospice. Enjoying rude health – despite his love of the frying pan – Frank was engaged in all of these ministries until his ninety-third year, when he moved to St Peter's... an excellent exponent and practitioner of 'active retirement'!

As well as possessing good physical well-being, Frank was endowed with a keen intellect. Given his voracious appetite for reading, matched only by an enviable capacity to recall and to debate with others, Frank was someone whose opinion and authoritative judgement engendered broad respect. He boasted a very special interest in Irish history, thereby enabling his 'audience' to understand current political challenges in an appropriate and enlightened context. All in all, then, there was never a dearth of table-talk – at least not in Stillorgan Park!

The other topic of conversation close to Frank's heart and in which he longed to engage was, of course, rugby! By all accounts, he was a shrewd 'reader' of the game. Ironically, it was while training an under-14 rugby team in Castleknock that he began to become hard of hearing. Apparently, as he told me himself, it was caused by him being too strident a 'whistle-blower'! Yes, as recent events in the public forum in Ireland have proven, whistle-blowing can come with a high price tag!

Early in my time with him in Stillorgan Park, Frank told me that he was genuinely looking forward to the Resurrection. Placed in his coffin was a cherished statue of Our Lady which he once procured in Lourdes. May she who enjoyed the singular privilege of being assumed body and soul into Heaven intercede for Frank that he may, indeed, be parked in the Resurrection of her Son.

Colm McAdam CM



## FRANK MCMORROW CM

Born: Mountrath, Co Laois, 30 July 1923  
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1942  
 Vows: 8 December 1944  
 Ordained Priest: 28 May 1950 at Holy Cross College, Clonliffe by  
 Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS

1950-57: St Paul's College, Raheny  
 1957-66: St Vincent's College, Castleknock  
 1966-72: St Vincent's, Sunday's Well  
 1972-74: Studies in USA  
 1974-77: St Vincent's, Sheffield  
 1977-83: St Peter's, Phibsboro  
 1983-84: Bigard Memorial Seminary, Nigeria  
 1984-92: St Stephen's, Warrington  
 1992-95: St Vincent's, Sheffield  
 1995-2002: St Mary's, Lanark  
 2002-03: St Vincent's, Sunday's Well  
 2003-04: Marillac Hospital, Warley  
 2004-16: St Joseph's, Blackrock  
 2016-18: St Peter's, Phibsborough

Died: 6 July 2018  
 Buried: Castleknock College

## Father James Vincent (Jimmy) Sheil CM

I first met Jimmy in St Paul's College, Raheny in September 1956. I'm not sure but I think Jimmy's brother, Michael, was in that year of 1956. From the very start one could see that Jimmy was a very good athlete. I have the vague memory that Jimmy played rugby occasionally for Arklow Town during our years as students in Glenart Castle. As a back he had an impressive turn of speed in contrast to the muddled Oafs of the forward pack.

Seminary-wise, I was a year behind Jimmy and when I got to Glenart he had already completed his first year of theology. Jimmy informed me that I had to take over his job of the winding of the huge castle clock which was housed in the tower. He insisted that this was a very important task as all the other clocks in Glenart took their time from the tower clock. The winding took place every Saturday at noon precisely. Jimmy then presented me with a small spanner for the winding of same clock.

On the following Saturday I headed off to the tower with my trusty spanner. After searching for the point where I presumed I was to wind I was baffled and confused and time was slipping away – it was now 12.05 pm. I spied Jack Dempsey, our gardener, and asked for his advice. I showed him my spanner and told him what Jimmy had said. Jack was not a man who often showed his emotions but that morning was an exception – he started to laugh and eventually he chortled so much that I feared a heart attack. He showed me the 6ft long 'spanner' which HE used to wind the clock. I had been totally conned by Jimmy. Later that day eminent conferees like D O'Donovan, M Prior and B Doyle asked me if I needed a hand to wind the clock. Jimmy laughed his head off. He had a great sense of fun.

I have a dim recollection of a group of elderly people coming from Dublin to Glenart for a day out. Tea and buns were the order of the day with perhaps a drop of the 'craetur' to keep the cold out. Somehow or other Jimmy became the MC (maybe he appointed himself) for the sing song to round off the day. I will be as kind as possible to the dead and say that JAMES V SHEIL was not a great singer. I watched the faces of the senior citizens as he sang completely out of tune,

'At McCarthy's party,  
everyone was hearty,  
till someone hit Maloney on the nose...'

Some people winced, others put fingers in ears and when the song finished there was a great sigh of relief. Jimmy couldn't have cared less, he was enjoying himself and so were his friends from Dublin.

Jimmy came from a family with strong Vincentian connections, his uncle, Father James snr, spent many years in the formation of student confreres in Glenart and elsewhere, a kind man with a lovely gentleness. Jimmy junior had great respect for his uncle. Mrs Sheil was a past pupil of the Holy Faith Sisters and Mr Sheil was a past pupil of St Vincent's Castleknock – the three Sheil boys went to school in Raheny: Jimmy jnr was to be a member of staff in later years.

Jimmy spent many years of his priesthood (thirty in all) in England and I think he was very happy in Goodmayes and Dunstable/Houghton Regis as Superior and Parish Priest. Wherever Jimmy served he made friends for life. He celebrated his Silver Jubilee of Priesthood in 1994 just before he left Goodmayes to join the parish mission team based in All Hallows College in Dublin.

The following words spoken by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II when she celebrated her Silver Jubilee as Monarch of Great Britain could I think have been spoken of Jimmy Sheil's determination:

When I was twenty-one I pledged my life to the service of my people and I asked God's help to make good that vow. Although that vow was made in my salad days when I was green in judgement I do not regret or retract one word of it.

When Eugene Curran asked me to pen some words about Jimmy I thought of Paddy McCrohan's contact with him over recent years and Paddy very kindly sent me the following:

My earliest memory of Jimmy was when we were in the second or third year in St Paul's. We were involved in a cricket match and Jimmy was bowling. As he ran up to bowl he spotted that the bowling end batsman (in full regalia, unlike Jimmy and most of the rest of us) had stepped outside his crease. Jimmy without breaking stride, swept off the bails with the ball. This was, apparently, very unsporting behaviour, and the batsman and the umpire said so but Jimmy didn't care. Out was out, whether or not he might be reported to the Secretary of the Marylebone Cricket Club. He loved sport of all kinds and while he was still able and fit often played with local rugby clubs.

It was characteristic of Jimmy that he never appeared to be too concerned with how people saw or judged him.

There was the time he was asked to call to the local hospital to visit a Mrs Sweeny. Jimmy followed directions to her bedside and

after introducing himself he proceeded to pray for her very loudly and dramatically, arms spread wide. He was distracted a few times by a female voice from the next bed saying 'Excuse me, Father'. Eventually he turned and asked her how he could help. She said, 'sorry Father, but I'm Mrs Sweeny'.

On another occasion he arrived a bit late to a funeral in Dunstable Cemetery and as the cortege departed he halted it and opened the door of the chief mourning car to offer consoling words to the widow of 'Dan'. She informed him she was not the widow of Dan. Jimmy was at the wrong funeral. He recounted these faux pas with his wonderful sense of humour and fun.

There was enormous kindness and compassion in Jimmy and he was very much loved. Somehow he was a 'fear ann fein' (his own man), so people accepted and loved him and he was the soul of kindness. As I personally got to know him better in his later years in Dunstable, I got to like and appreciate him more and more. He was a man of deep faith and prayerfulness and huge generosity. He also had a withdrawn, private side that I doubt anybody else ever got to know other than God.

In God's great harvest-home may he live forever.

Jimmy's last few months were spent in a nursing home in West London. When I visited him he was obviously not happy but after a few minutes he would come back to the old lovable, happy Jimmy Sheil who loved life and people and most of all who loved God. How many times did he say, quoting his mother, 'say your prayers – God knows best'?

God rest Jimmy, he is at peace now. I can hear his laugh as he winds the timeless clock in Heaven.

Fergus Kelly CM

## JAMES VINCENT (JIMMY) SHIEL CM

Born: Dublin, 7 September 1944  
Entered CM: 7 September 1961  
Ordained Priest: 31 May 1969 in Castleknock College  
by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS

1969-73: St Paul's College, Raheny  
1973-79: Sacred Heart, Mill Hill  
1979-80: St Joseph's, Blackrock  
(attending Liturgical centre, Carlow)  
1980-83: St Vincent's College, Castleknock  
(Chaplain to Coolmine Community School)  
1983-87: De Paul House, Celbridge  
(Chaplain to Coolmine Community School)  
1987-94: St Cedd's, Goodmayes  
1994-2000: All Hallows College (Mission Team)  
2000-01: Sabbatical  
2001-18: St Mary's, Dunstable

Died: 29 October 2018  
Buried: Glasnevin

## Father Hugh McMahan CM

Hugh was born in Belfast, into a close knit family. Family, and especially his three brothers, was always important and return visits to Belfast were like a pilgrimage for him. His childhood, though very happy was marked by two significant losses; his younger sister, the only girl, Moya, died as a child and Hugh would often mention that loss. The other experience that marked him was the result of bombing raids during World War II; young Hugh was evacuated to a country place, an experience he found upsetting and remembered throughout his life.

When he returned to Belfast, he was educated at St Malachy's. He was, like all the family, very interested in Gaelic Culture and was an award-winning Irish dancer. Even in his later years, he could still 'cut the rug' and demonstrate his skill. When that ability passed, he was happy to reminisce about those days. He was also very happy in the kitchen and took after his mother who, he would say, was a great cook.

On leaving school, he spent some time in the Benedictine Community in Glenstal, as did his brother, Henry, Br Christopher. However, a priest friend in Belfast suggested that he should join the Vincentian Community which he did. He was ordained in 1958. One of his treasured possessions was the chalice which Henry, still in Glenstal, made to mark the occasion.

He studied catechetics at Mount Oliver in Dundalk and then was appointed to St Peter's, Phibsboro. He would go around Dublin on his bicycle, distributing copies of *The Golden Hour*, a monthly magazine edited by Fr Jim O'Herlihy CM.

He also served on the mission team and kept a list of every mission he had ever given. Following that, he served in Sheffield, first as Bursar and then as Parish Priest. He was later Parish Priest in Goodmayes, where he was responsible for the move of the organ to the sanctuary, following a number of visits to other churches to see what they had done. He was very artistic and had a great love for and knowledge of the liturgy.

He first served in Sacred Heart, Mill Hill, for a number of years in the nineties, before moving up the hill to serve on the staff of Damascus Hill on the Ridgeway. Following the closure of the retreat and conference centre, he moved first to St Vincent's Presbytery and then, again, down the hill to the parish. I lived with him in all three of his Mill Hill residencies.

Hugh had a great gift for bonding easily with people and had a great, warm and welcoming smile. He especially loved to travel and made

many pilgrimages, including (with some ingenuity) to Hawaii – to celebrate St Damien of Molokai! He had a great devotion to Our Lady and became chaplain to a Philippino group and went with them to various shrines of Our Lady in Europe. He was also a very keen and gifted photographer and used these pilgrimages as opportunities to exercise his skill; he showed me many of the slides and I thought them of a very high quality.

He was, as I mentioned a keen and accomplished cook, and encouraged me to learn from him.

He was also chaplain to the Knights of Columbanus in Mill Hill, a post of which he was very proud and they were staunch supporters of his. He prepared his talks to the Knights meticulously and with dedication.

His health was never the best but this did not prevent him from carrying out his ministry to people. He got great support from his extended family in Belfast, to whom he always remained very close; he often holidayed with them, especially with Henry and Brian – the ‘three amigos’. His room was filled with photographs of these holidays and of the many pilgrimages.

Due to failing health, he moved to St Paul’s, Raheny, for the last few years of his life. Even there, he continued to travel, especially with Fergus Kelly, whose company he loved and who could raise a smile from Hughie at any time. Once, while Storm Ophelia raged and Hugh was recovering from an illness, he surreptitiously crept off to the airport to board a flight for a pilgrimage to Fatima. One could sense that the end was coming for him when he reached a point of no longer wishing to travel, not even to his beloved Belfast.

On Good Friday, 2019, his breathing became more laboured and it was advised that he should go to the hospital. Eugene Curran, then Superior at St Paul’s, remembers sitting with him in A&E during the long watches of that night. Hugh knew what was coming and told Eugene that he had no fear, as he was returning to the Lord. His only request was to be buried in the family grave, with his parents and close to Henry, Brian and Moya.

It was a privilege to have known him.

Noel Travers CM

## HUGH MCMAHON CM

Born: Belfast, 10 October 1932  
 Entered the CM: 15 October 1951  
 Vows; 15 October 1956  
 (as he took his vows a day too soon,  
 the Congregation had to seek a 'sanatio'  
 from the Holy See)  
 Ordained Priest: 22 March 1958 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe,  
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

## APPOINTMENTS

1958-65: St Peter's, Phibsborough (Retreats and Missions)  
 1965-72: St Vincent's, Sheffield (Parish and Missions)  
 1972-73: Mount Oliver, Dundalk (Catechetics course)  
 1973-78: St Mary's, Dunstable  
 1978-84: St Cedd's, Goodmayes  
 1984-92: St Vincent's, Sheffield  
 1992-95: Sacred Heart, Mill Hill  
 (Sabbatical 1993, attached to St Paul's, Raheny)  
 1995-96: St Stephen's, Warrington  
 1996-98: Damascus House  
 1998-2004: St Vincent's, Mill Hill  
 2004-15: Sacred Heart, Mill Hill  
 2015-19: St Paul's, Raheny  
  
 Died: 25 April 2019  
 Buried: Milltown Cemetery, Belfast