

COLLOQUE

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Abbreviations and References

All references to the letters of St. Vincent de Paul are to *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondance, Entretiens, Documents*, (Paris 1920-1925), edited by Pierre Coste, C.M. References are to volume number and page, thus: IV, 234.

Contents

Foreword	4
St Vincent as a Person by Thomas David	5
Selected Letters of St. Vincent, translated by James C. Shell	17
From the Provincial Archives:	
Union with the Congregation of the Mission	25
A Hundred Years Ago	29
Vincentians in Cork	37
Irish Vincentian Mission 10 Peking	43
Thady Lee, CM.	51
Obituaries:	
Gerard Tierney	59
Francis Cleere	60

Foreword

A small group of people, like the members of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Mission, is constantly in danger of losing its identity under the bombardment of mass communications. We want to be different, to be ourselves, to be in some way recognisably in the tradition of Saint Vincent, yet we find ourselves pushed into a good but dull and common mould by the forces of centralised religious bureaucracy and the stereotyped thoughts of the media. *Colloque* is an attempt to assert ourselves.

To use the name “Vincentian” implies a wish to share the ideal, the thought patterns, of Saint Vincent. Regular contact with Saint Vincent through his writings is the normal way of doing this. In this first issue and in succeeding ones members of the Province will have a twice yearly renewal of their awareness of Saint Vincent. It is to be hoped that this will aid them both in personal piety and in preaching.

There are many ways of being a good member of the Congregation of the Mission. While this is already illustrated in the various community houses of the Province, each with its own individuality, in the life in Saint Justin and of the Beati of the Congregation there is a commentary on our Common Rules that has been tested by the authority of the Church. To enable us to draw value from their experience, aspects of their lives will be brought to our attention in later issues of *Colloque*.

The Irish Province had an existence before its affiliation to the Congregation of the Mission. Its history has always shown an interesting variation from the common norm. Solid pastoral drive and imaginative administration have been matched by electric clashes of personality and perversities that are humorous only in retrospect. From the archives of the Province Father James Murphy has drawn a selection for the current issue and has promised to make this a regular feature of *Colloque*.

This journal is intended to be a means of communication within the Province. We hope that we will be able to add in later issues a Forum in which people can set out their ideas, particularly about the Province and its works. Those who wish for a platform should contact the Editor.

I would like to thank Father James Murphy and Father Thomas Davitt for their patient help in the development of this first issue.

Philip Walshe.

Saint Vincent as a Person

by Thomas Davitt

St Vincent is frequently portrayed against the background of the France of his day or the Church of his day. If we are to get to know him as a person, though, we need to be able to see him against the background of his own Congregation as he deals, in his letters, with day to day community matters.

In the hope of speeding up the process of getting official approbation for his new Congregation Vincent sent one of his best men, Francis du Coudray, to Rome in May 1631 to conduct negotiations with the Holy See. In a letter to him Vincent summarised the purpose of the Congregation, and added:

“...to do this it is necessary to live as a community”.
(I, 115)

Living together as a community brings problems. In his explanation of the expression “to strive for one’s own perfection”, which occurs in the opening paragraph of the Common Rules, Vincent placed first “getting on with others and respecting their rights” (XII, 27). This naturally applies within the community as well as in relations with other people. It is interesting in going through Vincent’s letters to see him dealing with the concrete realities of everyday community life; these are the situations which helped him to build up his views on this matter before he encapsulated them in the rules of 1658.

In 1637 he wrote to Anthony Colée, the superior in Toul:

“I’ve heard that your bread isn’t properly baked; please get it done by a baker, if you can find one, for it is essential to have good bread. It will also be well to vary the menu from time to time to cater for poor human nature which gets sick of always seeing the same thing. You will also do well to recommend to the brothers cleanliness and tidiness in kitchen and refectory”.
(I, 387-8)

On 9 November 1649 he wrote to Mathurin Gentil, the bursar in the seminary in Le Mans. He writes as though he were referring to another

house of the congregation, though in fact he was referring to Le Mans; he used this device on other occasions as well:

“I’ve heard of one of our houses where the bad food served is having a detrimental effect on bodies and minds. Now, if the bursar, who goes to this extreme of economy under the pretext of cutting down expenses, does not manage things better after my warning and the letter I sent him, I’ll be forced to replace him by someone who has a proper idea of how to feed the community, as is done in Saint Lazaire and elsewhere; because otherwise many confrères fall ill. Since you’re in the same sort of job, Father, I tell you all this so that you’ll be careful to avoid such an abuse and will serve good bread and good meat, and won’t sell off the good wine and serve the worst, and in this way you’ll give the community no reason to complain of miserly treatment”. (III, 504-5)

In July 1649 he wrote to Bernard Codoing, the superior in Richelieu:

“You certainly must not be surprised at the little misunderstandings which crop up; the angels and the apostles had their differences, and our Lord allows this, inside and outside communities, for a greater good. It is up to us, though, to prevent the harmful consequences, and to settle things as quickly and as fully as possible. What would it be like, Father, if everyone agreed with us in everything, and we never had any reason to complain of other people’s conduct? God would have to change human nature”. (III, 468-9)

Three years later he wrote to a laybrother in Genoa a long letter in answer to complaints which the brother had made. Towards the end he says that saints had their faults, and that our Lord had to put up with a lot from the apostles, and then continues:

“Since that’s the case, my dear brother, should you be surprised at having something to complain about in the community in which you live? You well know that you yourself are not always in the same mood; one day you’re very assiduous, close to God and edifying the whole house; the next day you’re slovenly, lax and a trouble to everyone. On such a day the others will have to put up with you, just as you will have to put up with them”. (IV, 452)

On this matter of putting up with others he has a good fitter to the Daughters of Charity in the hospital in Nantes, written in 1647; it is long letter, and the following extract is taken from the middle:

‘You’ll say to me: ‘I would willingly put up with that sort of thing from externs, Father, but when it’s a question of my own sisters,

who should be a help to me but who are a burden, a cross, and a trial in everything they say, everything they do and everything they don't do!' Now my dear Sisters, whom would we have to put up with if not those with whom we live? Someone miles away whom we never saw and never will see?... Who annoyed our Lord except the apostles, the disciples and those among whom he lived, and they were the Chosen People? A man going to confession one day was asked by the priest what profit he drew from annoyances caused by others; he said: 'Ah, sure, Father, I've nothing like that to put up with. Since the wife and children died I'm by myself, and I've no one to give out to even if I wanted'. The point of that, Sisters, is that our daily cross of bearing with others can come only from the people with whom we live". (III, 176-7)

The question of troublesome confrères in the Congregation is one that comes up frequently in Vincent's letters. In 1650 René Alméras was superior in Rome and had to deal with this problem. Vincent answered his letter and accepted the points which Alméras had apparently made about some confrères who were causing trouble, and then continued:

One is gone, after we had put up with him as long as possible, and it would be just as well if the others were also far away; it would be acting justly towards the Congregation to amputate gangrenous members. That's true enough, and prudence demands it, but since we have to put all virtues into practice let's now try patience, forbearance and even charity, in the hope that they will improve ... Our Lord did not expel Peter for having denied him several times, nor even Judas...". (IV, 36-7)

We cannot quote this, though, as Vincent's invariable practice.

In an earlier letter, in 1643, to a predecessor of Alméras in Rome, Bernard Codoing, he wrote:

"You tell me that we must put up with these men as our Congregation is in need of men as it's only beginning, and that later on we can get rid of them. It's true, Father, that the Congregation needs men, but it is better to have fewer men than to have several troublemakers and suchlike. Ten good men will do more for God than a hundred like that. Let's rid the community of them, Father, let's rid the community of unspiritual men who are not pleasing to God and he will increase and bless it... It takes only one man like that, Father, to disrupt the community...

I pray to God, Father, that he may enlighten your understanding so that you can appreciate the importance for the glory of God, the sanctification of the Congregation and the good of the Church, of not holding on to men who are no good...

Remember, Father, that the ruin of most communities stems from the weakness of superiors who won't take a stand, and from not getting rid of troublemakers and those who won't mend their ways". (II, 380-382)

These two diametrically opposed ways of dealing with apparently identical situations do not indicate that Vincent changed his mind on the matter or that he vacillated. The fact is that in each case he was not enunciating a theory but was dealing with specific persons, and obviously he had a different opinion about each of the confrères concerned. To use the standard expression, Vincent judged each case on its own merits, and in one of them he was clearly of the opinion that there was hope, but in the other, not. In this type of situation, when it arises in his letters, the adjective "incorrigible" is a favourite one of Vincent, and he never wavers from his conviction that an incorrigible confrère must be expelled from the Congregation.

"Incorrigible" means that a person will not mend his ways, that he cannot be corrected. Vincent did not make this judgment about a confrère without very good reason. He was always very kind and tolerant to confrères in trouble, and in many letters he suggests similar kindness and tolerance to superiors who complained of troublesome confrères. In October 1650 he wrote to the superior in Sedan, Mark Cogley from Carrick-on-Suir:

"You ask how to deal with the quick-tempered, the touchy and the critical. My answer is that prudence should determine this, and that in some cases it is useful to see the thing from their point of view, making yourself all things to all men, as the Apostle said; in others it's well to oppose them in a kind and gentle way, and in still others to take a firm line against their behaviour, but this must be always in the sight of God and in keeping with what you think is most for his glory and the good of your community". (IV, 90)

In February 1653 he wrote to Stephen Blatiron, superior in Genoa:

"I praise God that your community is faithfully observing our customs, apart from the two men you mention; I entirely agree with your being tolerant towards them for a while. Some people

slacken off at certain times and not at others, and there are even some who don't do well in one place who do marvellously in another. We must hope for such an improvement from these two confrères, being content to wait instead of nagging them". (IV, 551-2)

Many of these matters arose in letters which were written to Vincent and which needed answering. He was insistent that every confrère had the right to send letters to him as Superior General: (cf II, 373, 490). It is hardly surprising that many availed of this right in order to make complaints about their superior, or about others in their communities. Vincent was no fool and he knew enough about human psychology to realise that not everything in such letters was to be accepted at its face-value. In December 1639 he wrote to Nicholas Durot in Toulouse:

"...we have to accept as absolutely certain the maxim that the difficulties we have with other people stem more from our own insufficiently-disciplined inclinations than from any other cause". (I, 608)

Since he holds that as a basic principle it is not surprising to find Vincent tackling such problems by suggesting that the person complaining should set his own house in order first. He wrote to Louis Lebreton in Rome in Lent 1640:

"...most people offend God by criticising what other people do... without knowing the reasons they have for doing what they do; for how can you draw conclusions about something if you do not know the principles involved?" (II, 29-30)

At the end of a longish letter to William Delattre, superior in Cahors, he wrote:

"Following what I've said it occurs to me to give you another bit of advice ... The blessed bishop of Geneva said that if there are a hundred ways of looking at something we should always choose the best way. In God's name, Father, let's act that way, even though our own inclinations, and human prudence suggest the opposite to us". (II, 584-5)

Bernard Codoing, when superior in Richelieu, had complained to Vincent about two confrères; in a following letter he expressed hope that their retreat had done them good. In his reply Vincent had this to say:

"We can often be wrong in our suspicions; and we've lost a very good man, who has left us, because someone had ill-founded suspicions about him, rather like what you have about these two". (IV, 80)

Complaints about confrères sometimes came from superiors who objected that those appointed to their houses were not too good at the work to which they were assigned. Stephen Blatiron, superior in Genoa, had complained along these lines in 1653, and Vincent replied:

“...I’ll tell you, in this connection, something I heard Fr Lambert say, something I’ll remember a long time: when God has not given us first-class men to bring success to our work he is very pleased that we appoint those whom we have, even though they are inadequate”. (IV, 549)

He touched on the same thing in a letter to Louis Thibault, superior in Saint Méen, in 1651:

“I’m asking you not to get annoyed at Fr So-and-so; everyone can’t be an outstanding man, and the less gifted can’t always be foisted off on other houses; they have to be kept, as long as they are God-fearing and well-disposed, as that man is”. (IV, 257)

Most of the extracts so far have shown Vincent giving advice to others on how to get on with troublesome persons. Let’s turn now to extracts from letters which show Vincent himself in direct contact with such problems. His letters always convey his personal interest in the addressee and his appreciation of his work. In February 1638 he wrote to Robert de Sergis:

“I can’t tell you how glad I was about the way our Lord was pleased to bless your mission in Montpezat, but I must admit I was, and still am, very worried about those three months of long hard work; I’m very much afraid you’ll break down if you don’t take a good rest, and the same goes for Fr Brunet. In God’s name, Father, take a break, and do something about your eye-trouble and your throat; have them seen to in Aiguillon or Agen, if you haven’t already done so, for I’m afraid they’ll pile on the work as soon as you get to Toulouse”. (I, 438)

Vincent was both realistic and practical, as well as being idealistic; although he knew that there was a huge amount of work to be done on missions he realised that nothing would be gained by overworking the missionaries; too much work could ruin their health and render them unfit for anything in the long run. Proper care of health is a constantly recurring theme in his letters. A representative excerpt on this subject is one from a letter he wrote to Louis Serre in Saint Méen in January 1650:

“I’ve been very pleased indeed at your letting me know how things are in your house, but what you say about Fr Thibault worries me; he’s endangering his health too much; he hasn’t

been well, yet he went off to work; I'm afraid this will lead to a breakdown. In God's name, Father, take care of him; make him take a rest, and see to it that he takes better care of himself; you'll be doing a good turn both to the Congregation and to the large number of people who should receive spiritual help from him. That goes for the others, too, who need to ease up a bit". (III, 532)

One way to lighten work on a mission was to have one free day per week during it; this was recommended to Vincent by Cardinal Richelieu, as he told Lambert aux Couteaux in March 1638:

"His Lordship the Cardinal is of the opinion that during a mission there should be one free day a week, Saturday for example, and has ordered me to see that this is done everywhere". (I, 469)

In July 1639 he wrote a long letter to Jane Francis de Chantal about the sort of community his Congregation was, and the sort of life they led; she had asked him for this information. In the course of the letter he has this passage on missions:

"We work from about All Saints' Day to St. John's Day, and in July, August, September and part of October we leave the people free to work at the harvest and vintage. When we've worked for about twenty days we rest for ten or twelve before starting again; it's not possible to stick at this work for much longer than that without a break, as well as one free day a week". (I, 564-5)

In November 1642 he wrote to Bernard Codoing in Rome:

"I'm worried about your heavy work-load and I'm afraid you're overdoing things mentally and physically. In God's name, Father, take care of yourself. (II, 315-6)

One of Codoing's successors in Rome was René Alméras and he too, apparently, tended to overdo things; Vincent's advice to him is along the same lines, but with some more detailed instructions:

"Don't overdo things, don't be in a rush, don't take things too much to heart, don't stick too long at the same thing with too much concentration, and lastly, give up all activities apart from your duties as superior and whatever you're able to get in the way of relaxation". (IV, 139)

Vincent was good at letting confrères know how pleased he was to see them, particularly when they were taking a break after a spell of hard work. In August 1646 he wrote to Louis Gallon:

"Thanks be to God for the good news, the hope you give us that you'll be coming here soon for a rest after your hard work. You'll be very welcome, Father, and I'll be more than glad to

receive you. Come along, Father, without delay; I promise you we'll take special care of your health and you'll be master of the house, saying and doing whatever you please, and I'm especially at your service, having always loved you with more affection than my own father". (III, 32)

Later the same year, in November 1646, he wrote something similar to a confrère whom Coste identifies as probably Thomas Berthe. Berthe was an interesting man and it's worth knowing something about him. He joined the Congregation at the age of eighteen in 1640 and was ordained in 1646. He was from just outside Sedan, but nothing is known of his background. His first appointment was to Sedan and he somehow got the impression that 'he was appointed as superior; when he found that this wasn't so he left the Congregation and returned to his family in November 1646, as Vincent told Alméras in a letter of 10 November:

"I think I wrote to you that Fr. Berthe had left, as he couldn't take the appointment we had given him; more than one person outside the community thought, and he himself had spread the rumour, that he was going there as superior; when we put him right about that and recalled him here, he pretended he was sick in Rheims and from there returned to his parents in Donchery, three miles from Sedan". (III, 105)

On November 24 Vincent wrote a long letter to Berthe; he started off this way:

"I've received two of your letters which have redoubled my sorrow, seeing that you are determined to cut yourself off from us. This makes me also determined to point out to you the danger to which you're exposing yourself, but I do so with all the humility and affection of which I'm capable...". (III, 116)

Then follow seven paragraphs of reasons why Berthe should not leave the Congregation, each paragraph numbered, as was Vincent's practice in this type of letter. The letter then ends up:

"That's why I implore you once again, in the name of Jesus Christ and the love he has for you, to come back here. I'll have more confidence than ever in you, being no longer afraid of losing you, seeing you safe from such a dangerous reef. Choose any house you like; you'll be welcomed anywhere with open arms ...". (III, 118)

Berthe returned, and in about a year's time he was superior in the Bons Enfants (III, 274). Six years after that he was sent as superior to Rome (IV, 541); even before going to Rome he had been appointed to carry

out visitations of other houses, a work he seems to have been engaged in all during his life; he was appointed to go to Poland to carry out visitations there, though in actual fact he never went. At one stage he was Director of the seminaire, and he was one of those who were present at Vincent's death. He presided at the Assembly which elected Almérás as Vincent's successor as Superior General, and he himself was, after Almérás, Vincent's second choice for the office. This outline of his subsequent career shows how shrewd Vincent was back in 1646 in not letting him go. There was another confrère later on whom he willingly let go, and went around the house for days afterwards saying: "Thank God we're rid of him"! (XIII, 187)

Sister Margaret Chetif, who succeeded Louise at the head of the Daughters of Charity, at one stage also wished to leave the community and Vincent wrote her a letter setting out reasons for her to stay on; another example of his insight into persons' characters and their potential. (VI, 100)

Another confrère whom Vincent jollied along through a difficult time was Claude Dufour, who had joined the Congregation shortly after his ordination. In 1647 he was superior in Saintes, and began to have worries about remaining on in the community; he had got the idea that the Carthusians would be a more suitable community for him. He let Vincent know about this and there are quite a few of Vincent's letters to him which refer to this matter. On 31 March 1647 Vincent wrote in the course of a letter:

"Look, Father, there's no position in the world where a man will have nothing to put up with. What man is there who does not experience trouble and opposition in the majority of things with which he has to deal, and who doesn't feel he'd be better off in some job other than his present one? You can be quite sure, Father, that this is a trick of the devil ... Let me know what I can do to help you in this matter, for if some confrère is a trouble to you we'll send you a replacement". (III, 164)

About three weeks later Vincent wrote again:

"If your appointment to Saintes or the work you're doing don't suit you, tell me, please, and we'll appoint you somewhere else ... I pray to our Lord that he'll let you see the dangerous nature of this temptation the way I see it, tending as it does to make you exchange the certain for the uncertain, and making you think an opinion is an inspiration, and that being tired is the same as being worried". (III, 173-4)

In June of the same year Vincent is still helping him along:

“When you’re tired of living where you now are, let me know; I’ll do everything I possibly can to make you happy”.
(III, 203)

He did not in fact leave the Congregation and a few years later Vincent appointed him to Madagascar, adding that many a Carthusian would give a lot for a chance of such an appointment! (IV, 104). As usual there was a long delay between his appointment and his actual going aboard a boat bound for Madagascar, and in the interval he sent Vincent the manuscript of a book he had written; there is no indication what it was about. In connection with this Vincent made the comment that there is no rule of such general application as to have no exceptions (IV, 445). In 1653 while he was still waiting for a boat to Madagascar Dufour was appointed Director of the seminaire during the absence of Almérás (IV, 629). In October 1655 he eventually set out for his mission, and on arrival at Fort Dauphin started a long letter to Vincent, but he died before he had completed it. In its unfinished form it was sent to Vincent, and even unfinished it takes up eight pages of small print (VI, 9-16).

Another facet of Vincent’s character emerges in his correspondence with Lambert aux Couteaux, one of his closest friends in the Congregation. He was a native of the diocese of Amiens, some twenty-five years junior to Vincent. He joined the Congregation in 1629, the eleventh member to join. He was the first superior of Toul, the first house opened outside Paris; he was also first superior of Richelieu and of the Polish mission. At the General Assembly of 1641 Anthony Portail was appointed First Assistant (XIII, 298) and in 1645 Vincent appointed Lambert as acting Assistant in the absence of Portail (II, 535). He was appointed by Vincent on many occasions to conduct visitations, including that of Saint Lazare itself. At one stage there was a request from Rome for a priest of the Congregation to be named as coadjutor bishop of Babylon, and Vincent put forward Lambert’s name, though he admitted that the departure of Lambert would be like the loss of his eye or his right hand (III, 158). This project fell through, but when Vincent sent Lambert to establish the mission in Poland he added a PS to his first letter to him in Warsaw saying that he felt as though he had lost his right hand. (IV, 292)

He knew well that Lambert would be lonely in Warsaw and would love to get items of news from Paris, so most of Vincent’s letters to him contain such items, including the fall of Limerick, the escape of Fathers Barry and Brin, and the murder of Thady Lee. In a letter

in March 1652 he gives a long account of the visit of a nephew of Lambert to Saint Lazare:

“I’ve just seen your nephew off; he came to see you and stayed only twice twenty-four hours. He wanted to get back by today’s coach; he’s married, and God has given him children and he didn’t want to upset them by staying any longer. He has two horses and about twenty-four acres, some of them under crops. That would be ample to live on if there were no soldiers in France. When they arrive Mr Jouailly [i.e. the nephew] receives them willingly with what they bring. I’ve never met anyone who better exemplified our Lord’s goodness and simplicity, and I don’t mean a stupid sort of simplicity for he’s not lacking in shrewdness. He embraced me more than half a dozen times and kissed me on the cheek with such cordiality that he seemed to be all affection. We spoke a lot in the Picardy dialect, though with this difference: he tried his best to speak good French while I tried to speak good Picard. He said you’d be absolutely flabbergasted when you heard he’d been here. He was a bit disappointed at not finding you, but he went off as happy and contented as possible. His good humour put me in the best of form, linked as it is with piety and the fear of God”. (IV 341)

Like so many of Vincent’s letters this one is in the handwriting of one of his secretaries, but the expression “absolutely flabbergasted” was inserted in Vincent’s own hand; he often made insertions like this as he read over his letters before signing them.

In May of the same year he wrote to Lambert:

“If you’re happy at our exchanging letters each week on a regular basis I can assure you I’m no less so, and I can give you a couple of indications of this. As each Thursday approaches I get impatient for your letters, as they usually arrive on that day; and I was very disappointed at not getting one by the second-last ordinary delivery...”. (IV, 376-7)

In that connection it is worth going back to the start of the letter about the visit of Lambert’s nephew; it opened this way:

“I received your letter of 19 February. I was rather disappointed on opening it to find only half a page of writing...”. (IV, 341)

In a later letter dated 17 May 1652 he refers back to this:

“When I told you I was disappointed at how short one of your letters was, containing as it did only half a page, that was to let you know the happiness I get from reading them and not to oblige

you to write me longer ones; don't go to that trouble if what you have to say doesn't call for it". (IV, 387)

Finally, here's an extract which shows a very human side to Vincent, a flexibility which he could show in certain circumstances. The letter was to Alméras in Rome, written in October 1647; he mentions the end of the annual retreat in Saint *Lazare* and the fact that the confrères had renewed their vows, and continues:

"...since some said that they [the vows] are null and that they had a problem about renewing them, Fr. ... and a student being the main ones, I stopped the latter from renewing them. And the said Fr. ... came along to tell me that all his difficulties had vanished as a result of the few poor words I addressed to them all yesterday evening; this morning he asked me frankly for permission to renew them and, in fact, brought along some things which he had been keeping privately, in order to give them up; however, I let him hold on to them...". (III, 245)

Selected Letters of St. Vincent

Translated by James C. Sheil

To Fr Bernard Codoing, C.M., Superior, Rome.

Paris, 28 July 1642.

Dear Father,

The Grace of Our Lord be with you always.

I'm writing to you again. I am now one letter up on you. Though I haven't had any of your usual letters, I know that on your retreat you have sent several to heaven on my behalf to obtain pardon for the abominations of my life. This is to tell you what I have just been told. It is — that your community have said in public that they have been sent to Rome to reform the ecclesiastics who are authorized to form and reform the clergy in general. This talk is doing a lot of harm; and someone just back from there has said so here.

Consequently, after bringing ourselves down a peg or two, we must pray earnestly and keep in the background until God is satisfied we have got rid of the complacency we have taken in this undertaking of ours.

This, Father, is what the pile of my petty occupations allows me to tell you for the present. I have only to add that I am with an affection God alone knows, and in His love, Father,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

Vincent Depaul,

Unworthy priest of the Mission.

(II, 280)

To Fr Bernard Codoing, CM., Superior, Rome.

Paris, 19 August 1642.

Dear Father,

The Grace of Our Lord be with you always.

I am worried I didn't receive any letters from you in the last post.

I am afraid you may be laid up. For God's sake, Father, take care of your health, especially during these Dog Days. I am not asking you to look after the community, because you don't fail in that respect, thank God.

I was greatly consoled by all that each of those gentlemen wrote to me after their retreat, and I ask God to give all of them the grace to be faithful to the holy resolutions they have made. Their kindness will forgive me for not writing to them by this post.

I got someone to write and tell you that it will be as well if you all give more time to the ordinands' retreats so that you and the community will be in a position to conduct the spiritual discussions and hold the repetitions of prayer. Then, you will not be employing people from outside for this work. I know the consequences of this from past experience.

The Duchess d'Aiguillon, in addition to the foundation in Rome, has made one of 1000 livres coming from the annual revenue of the Orleans coaches. It is for the upkeep of three missioners at Notre Dame de la Rose. They are to serve in the diocese of Condom. She has estates here as well as in Agenois.

We sent off the three missioners for this foundation two days ago with Father Souffliers as their superior.

Canon de Saint-Aignan is worried about the affair at Saint Eutrope [Cf letter 582]. Could you get a brief appointing judges *in partibus*, and without this becoming public. If so, the Bishops of Beauvais, Meaux, and Senlis should be nominated. Do this in such a way as not to appear to be mixed up in the matter openly.

Once again I am leaving in your hands that dispensation from the vow to join the Carmelites, and also the business of the Bishop of Puy. Jealousy is beginning to show itself here because of the work [Retreats for ordinands] you have been led to expect you will be given over there. It is just as I feared, and I don't know how to explain, the grounds for the complaint that certain religious are making about us. Charity, humility, and patience will disperse these clouds, as I hope.

You are to address to me, if you please, the letters written by members of your community to anyone of the congregation here in France; and you are not to mention this to anyone, if you please.

I greet your community with all the affection and humility possible, and I am, in the love of Our Lord,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

Vincent Depaul,

Unworthy priest of the Mission.

(II, 284-6)

To Fr Bernard Codoing, C.M., Superior, Rome.

15 August 1642

The plan you propose to me to go and start your missions in the territories of Our Lords the Cardinals strikes me as worldly, and against Christian simplicity. May God preserve us, Father, from doing anything whatsoever with such base motives. His divine goodness demands of us never to do good anywhere in order to draw attention to ourselves; but always to look to it directly, immediately, with no compromise in all our actions. Your proposal gives me occasion to ask two things of you, prostrate in spirit at your feet, and for the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ. The first is: to shun publicity as much as you can. The second is: never do anything out of human respect. Accordingly, the right thing for you in every way is to honour for some time to come the hidden life of Our Lord. There is treasure, and enough, locked up in it, considering the Son of God dwelt 30 years on earth as a poor workman before making Himself known, and so He always blesses humble beginnings far more than those which attract attention.

But perhaps you will say to me: “What will those Cardinals think of us, and what will be said about us in Paris?” Let people think and say whatever they wish, and as for you, be quite certain that the maxims of Jesus Christ, and the example of His life are by no means deceptive, that they bear fruit in their own good time, whilst whatever is not consonant with them is barren. Finally, everything goes wrong for whoever acts on the contrary maxims. Such is my conviction, and such is my experience. In God’s name Father take this for infallible and you will certainly lead a hidden life.

[End of letter]

(II, 281-2)

To Fr Bernard Codoing, C.M., Superior, Rome.

Paris, 24 October 1642.

Dear Father,

The Grace of Our Lord be with you always.

This letter is mainly to tell you that I received no letters from you in this last post, and then, in reply to your last one, I want to tell you I don’t see any means at all of increasing your annual allocation beyond your 2500 livres and the 250 livres interest on your money which we

invested to good account, so you will adjust your expenditure accordingly if you please whilst waiting until it pleases God to give you more.

The proposal for the seminary in Brittany appeals well enough to a certain person who can be of help here. But we lack men capable of being employed there, and the resources for its upkeep. (Probably seminary in Vannes Cf. Letter No. 660].

Father Skyddie, along with our Brother Pascal, is on the way to you. I had written to Fathers Brunei and Blatiron to do likewise. Now, I have put them off because I haven't enough money to give you for their upkeep as we are very short here.

Missions are the order of the day for us here. How I wish you could give some to the poor shepherds out there. They are Our Lord's favourites since it was to them He willed to give the first news of His birth to the exclusion of Jerusalem and even Bethlehem where He was born. You will see about it, won't you?

I have sent on to you some letters from the Nuncio here.

We have just held an assembly of some neighbouring superiors and of the senior members of this house. We had the superiors from Richelieu, Bons Enfants, Troyes, Toul and Crécy, with Fathers Portail, du Coudray, Lucas, Alméras and Boucher. It lasted ten days during which we went over the rules we had drawn up. We decided on the principal ones and delegated Fathers Portail, du Coudray, Dehorgny, and Lambert to discuss and revise them. Then we settled on the rest as well as laying down the procedure to be followed at general assemblies. Finally, we cleared up some other matters which remained to be settled by the assembly. I shall send you all this so that you can give us your opinion. We have introduced nothing new, or very little, except to give assistants to the General, so that now you see me prepared to die, whenever it pleases God to tolerate the abominations of my life no longer. We didn't summon you, or Father Guérin, superior at Annecy, or Father Soufliers, because all of you have just been appointed to the places and to the tasks you have in hand and anyway we came to this decision within a few days. The presence of the above mentioned who met here was the occasion of it. You are the first and only one I am informing about this. You will honour the silence of Our Lord, if you please; — not a word to a soul. I have a certain particular reason for this.

Prostrate in spirit, I embrace your small community and ask you to embrace them all for me, and ask them to forgive me for being such a hopeless case that I have been unable to write to them.

I am, in the love of Our Lord, Father,

Your very humble servant,
 Vincent Depaul,
 Unworthy priest of the Mission.

(II, 306-8)

To Fr Bernard Codoing, C.M., Superior, Rome.

Paris, 30 January 1643.

Dear Father,

The Grace of Our Lord be with you always.

I received two letters from you at the same time, one on the 8th, the other on the 14th of last month. I shall not answer the first except to tell you in a few words that I think a lot of your first point which deals with the way of safeguarding the Congregation. You suggest that those who enter should make a promise to reimburse the Congregation in the event of their leaving it afterwards. With this obligation [rest of sentence illegible).

However, take the case of the seminary founded by the late Cardinal de Joyeuse in Rouen, where the student undertakes and gives a formal guarantee to refund the pension in the event of not persevering in his vocation. Experience makes it clear that this measure is useless, and has by no means solved all the former difficulties.

Now to your 2nd point, which deals with parishes. We pray to God unceasingly about this matter ever since the 4 or 5 discussions given to it which ended in our failure to reach a decision either for or against. If, after much prayer and many discussions, the Congregation decides to give up its parishes, we shall, as I hope, supply the Church with as many good P.P.'s through our seminaries as through the Congregation itself. You can be quite sure, Father, that you can't bring forward any reason for or against that hasn't been taken into consideration, and weighed up carefully, by the Congregation which has been thinking about this matter for a long time now; and of the other matters too which your first letter contains. That's why I beg you to put your mind at rest about this matter as well as about the Barbary affair. I shall tell you nothing about this, except that we are still bearing it in mind, and it is not our intention to go against the Order for Redemption [of slaves] and the Mathurins. We are only trying to see if there is any way for the little company to establish some kind of mission from time to

time amongst those unfortunate slaves, and because we are making our first attempt perhaps the ransom of a small number of slaves which we shall try to effect will be looked upon as a mere pretext. Anyway Providence seems to be calling us to that, and perhaps we are already late in the case of 18 who have lost their confidence. Of this number I have promised to dispatch Father du Coudray in 5 to 6 days to Marseilles where, whilst working for the convicts, he will draw up the treaty.

I praise Providence for what you tell me, Father, in your second letter, and praise God that Cardinal de Lenti has the seminary in mind. How much good there is to be done, Father, if God pleases to bless this good work. We have just sent 2 seminarists out on pastoral work in Champagne this morning, and tomorrow or the day after we shall send 7 or 8 in 2 groups. Those who returned recently did very well there, and those we have given to the bishops of Rheims and Chalons to act as their almoners are doing quite nicely. Mon Dieu, Father I am equally cheered up at the thought of you working for the shepherds and the incurables. I think you are right to be present at the retreats for the ordinands. Everyone here recognizes that the good to be seen in Paris comes principally from this work.

I was about to send you Fathers Blatiron and Brunei, but since you tell me to send nobody *si annona non sit duplicata*, your request made me appoint the former to Saintes, and the latter somewhere else.

We haven't yet got the contract of your foundation. We have been led to expect it in 3 days time. Even so I can assure you I am wasting no time in pressing for it. As soon as we get it we shall set about putting aside what is due to you from it. Meanwhile, I am paying off the 37 *pistoles* you tell me you have borrowed. This is in addition to the 100 we have already paid off along with the sum I said you could borrow from M. Marchand which comes to another hundred.

Mon Dieu, Father, how consoled I am by the news that Our Lord has given you those two good Italian priests. I ask you to be good enough to tell them and Father Boulrier that I embrace them in all humility, and that I am going off shortly to celebrate Holy Mass that it may please God to form them after His own heart. As you say, it will be important to train them in the spiritual life without which a man soon realises how shallow, and how narrow is his zeal. I greet in addition, in all humility, the rest of your community, and beg them most humbly to forgive me for not being able to write to them all. Oh! how much I need your help and views. I ask you for them with all possible humility and affection, and I ask your prayers for a retreat

I hope to begin towards the end of next week. Then I hope to revise our little common rules and to send them to you in due course.

I cannot thank you as humbly and as warmly as I should like for telling me you are prepared to give up your opinions on the matters you mention. You can rest assured. Father, that nothing here is decided or carried into effect except after a lot of consultation and discussion with people of outstanding holiness and rest assured we shall always remain in the secular clergy, with God's help, and in the state of dedicated servants to our lords the bishops.

What I told you before ... [rest missing except for some words]

I am in the love of God, Father,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

Vincent Depaul

(II, 359-362)

To Father Mathurin Gentil, C.M., Bursar in Le Mans. Dear Father,

The compassion I have for you in your exhausting worries makes me frequently ask Our Lord to be your strength Himself. The house of Le Mans is greatly obliged to you for the pains you take on its behalf, and for the good example you give. To this good example it is desirable [that] you should add the following: to undertake no building operations whatsoever, and no considerable repairs without the express orders of the Superior General; and not even minor repairs without the permission of your own superior. All this is in conformity with the rules and usage of the Congregation and Father Lambert [aux Couteaux] has fully acknowledged it. Before his departure for Poland, he admitted to me he had a certain amount of regret for telling you during his visitation, you might get done or un-done whatever you deemed fitting and without asking the superior's advice. Now, this was a grave mistake on his part, and here and now I annul this permission. Furthermore, I request you to keep absolutely to the usage prevailing in the other houses which is in conformity with the rules. What this usage is, I have just said above. I have no doubt you will accept this directive coming, as it does, from one who has a deep affection for you. Likewise, I have no doubt you will be all the more glad to practice strict economy for the simple reason that you haven't so many means of paying the seminary pensions, and we here of helping you out. You are aware we have borrowed large sums on behalf of your house, easing its

financial burdens by an annual payment of around 1000 *écus* to Abbot Lucas and others. Meanwhile, you say you cannot meet the remaining expenses. How indeed could you, seeing you have workmen almost permanently around the place, moving earth, changing things, knocking down, and building up again, moving and arranging things, and, of course, taking away lots of money for work and materials. You will tell me that the farm buildings are ready to collapse, and must be repaired. That is only too true, Father, but it isn't on them you are having work done. It is on the house, which is not in such great need at all.

Anyway, you must make up your mind to direct your attention to those small farms, and get authorization as soon as possible for selling some timber to defray the expense it is advisable to incur. May God give us the grace to contribute to good order, to make good use of the scant resources He gives us; and at the same time put poverty into practice.

[End of letter]

(IV, 272-3)

[cf also letter No. 1149, III, 504-5)

Provincial Archives

UNION WITH THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION;
FATHER DOWLEY A NOVICE IN THE MAISON MÈRE;
FR. GIRARD SENT TO IRELAND.

(From a manuscript probably by Fr. Partick Boyle)

Some of our confrères may be curious to know what was the rule followed by these first Missioners of Ireland, and why they did not from the commencement (they had taken possession of 34 Usher's Quay in June 1833) unite with the Maison Mère of Paris. As these questions are rather interesting we shall endeavour to explain in a few words the real state of the case.

The rule they proposed to themselves was the Constitutions. These they had received, as we have said, from the Archbishop. (When in 1832, Fr. Dowley consulted Archbishop Murray about his project, the latter "took out the little book of the Constitutions, and handing it to him said, 'these are your rules, commence in the name of God'). They read moreover the life of St. Vincent and had conceived a great desire, to put on his spirit and carry out his works. Although they had not yet made religious vows, they practised poverty and obedience according to the strictest rules of the religious life. Everything they possessed was in common. What they received as donations or intentions was immediately given to the common fund and they did not reserve to themselves one penny, either for their private use or even for charity.

With regard to obedience, they paid the most respectful deference to the orders and wishes of Mr. Dowley, — regarding him as their Father — submitting their judgement to his, and asking permission for the smallest things. They laboured earnestly to sanctify themselves and longed for the day when they could commence the missions amongst the poor people. They were truly the good odour of Christ to all who knew them.'

Some of us junior confrères who were witnesses of their saintly lives can speak more freely of the virtues of our Fathers in religion, and we can state without exaggeration that the spirit of prayer, of mortification, and of charity which was manifest in them appears to us, even

now, truly heroic, and to their good example many of us are indebted for our first attractions to the Congregation.

But it may be asked, if they loved the spirit of St. Vincent so much, why did they not at once propose a union with the *Maison Mère*? The answer is simply this: because they did not understand the real state of the Congregation in France.

The relations between France and Ireland at that time were not so intimate as now. Besides an idea had prevailed that the Orders in France required so strict a conformity with French customs and French ideas that an amalgamation of an English and a French congregation was almost impossible. This impression was made by the failure of an Irish community living in great piety which proposed a union with a Congregation in France. Providence soon dispelled this illusion. The little society in Ireland had already drunk deep of the spirit of St. Vincent, and could not long remain separated from the family of him whom they regarded as their patron and their model.

In the Summer of 1838 a professor of the Irish College, Paris, Rev. Mr. O'Toole, came to Dublin with the intention of establishing the Society of the Propagation of the Faith. Before leaving, he visited St. Vincent's Seminary (Castleknock) and dined with the Community. During the visit he inquired particularly about the object of the young institute and seemed curious to learn all the details. Nothing more occurred at the time. A short time after, Mr. Dowley received a letter from Mr. O'Toole, in which he stated that he had visited the *Maison Mère* of the Congregation in Paris, and had told the Superior General, Mr. Nozo, what he had found in Ireland — that the General seemed well disposed for a union, and that if he, Mr. Dowley, wished to commence a correspondence on the subject, he, Mr. O'Toole, would be very happy to act as his interpreter.

Upon receipt of this letter, Mr. Dowley assembled the little community to consider what was best to be done. There was no opposition to the proposal. They seemed rather in doubt what course to adopt and for security it was agreed that Mr. Dowley should visit the Archbishop, Dr. Murray, and ask his advice. The advice given by this worthy Prelate was very remarkable. He told them “to unite without fear to the parent stock — that they were a young community, and that they would thus have the experience of centuries to guide them”. This answer was received as the expression of God's will, and all acquiesced at once.

Mr. Dowley soon after wrote to Paris, proposing to the General to allow the little community in Ireland the privilege of being received

into the Congregation. The proposition, as we have since heard, seemed strange to the Council in Paris. It was out of the ordinary course of things. However, Providence smoothed down all difficulties, and after some preliminary inquiries, it was finally arranged that Mr. Dowley should come to Paris and make his noviciate.

In the beginning it was not expected that the Superiors would require this; but when their wish was intimated, Mr. Dowley resolved that nothing should be wanting on his part, and he soon after set out from Ireland to make his first visit to France.

When Mr. Dowley arrived in Paris in 1839, he felt naturally nervous at entering for the first time a house he knew nothing about, and approached 95 Rue de Sèvres with a certain amount of timidity. But on entering and inquiring if this were the house of the Missioners, the Brother porter received him with so much kindness and affability that at once all his fears vanished and he could not help saying to himself "This is truly the house of St. Vincent".

The Superiors appointed as his companion (Ange) Mr. Salvayre for whom he afterwards entertained a particular esteem. Upon entering the room prepared for him during his retreat, he observed — as he told his confrères afterwards — that it was a very good apartment for a novice, and perhaps they intended to treat him with special kindness; but at the end of his retreat he discovered his mistake. Mr. Salvayre entered and taking his travelling bag said: "*il faut monter, Monsieur*". Mr. Dowley followed his ange, and as he playfully observed: "It was not without reason he said '*il faut monter*', for you must mount very high".

During the time of his noviciate, he went through all his duties with the greatest exactness and ever after entertained a deep respect for the Maison Mère. He was not long in Paris when he wrote to Ireland for Father Kickham to come over and join him in the noviciate. The arrival of this truly excellent confrère was a great consolation to Mr. Dowley; he no longer considered himself a stranger in Paris and from that day the Irish confrères who have visited the Maison Mère have always felt as children in the house of their Father.

At the end of six months, the Superiors thought it better that Mr. Dowley should return to Ireland. His arrival amongst his associates was a source of great joy to the little Community. All were curious to know everything about the French noviciate: the usages, the manners of the French confrères, what he was obliged to do etc. He described all to them, but in such a way as to make the little mortification appear rather amusing than painful. He said that the Master of Novices often

tried them by certain humiliations: "Sometimes he calls on them to kiss the ground. Often when I saw my next neighbour on his knees with his face to the ground, I thought it was coming to my turn, but I suppose he had compassion on my weakness for he never required me to do it". On another occasion he described himself engaged carrying up water to the top of the house, and stopping on the landing to take breath, when a good confrère who was passing by, seeing him fatigued, took the pitchers and carried them to the top. "This little kindness", he added, "made a great impression on me, for I was very tired and the day was very hot". No Irish confrère could think of objecting to the little mortifications of the noviciate, seeing that our venerable Superior took his place in the common dormitory, and went through all with such alacrity.

Sometimes he spoke of the virtues practised in the *Maison Mère*. On these occasions he dwelt on the spirit of charity that reigned there, and the respect with which they treated each other. This seemed to have pleased him particularly. He had naturally very delicate feelings, always acted in such a way as not to hurt the sensibility of his confrères, and wished to see all his confrères act with politeness in their relations with each other.

After Mr. Dowley's return to Ireland a difficulty arose with regard to the noviciate of the other confrères; but as it was impossible for all to leave their occupations and come to France, it was resolved to send a French confrère to Ireland who would instruct them in the spirit of their state, and conduct the exercises of the Noviciate. Mr. Girard, now superior in Algiers, was selected for this purpose. For six months this venerable and pious confrère remained at Castleknock, giving frequent conferences and edifying all by the example of his holy life. All felt most grateful for his valuable services, and still entertain a deep veneration for their first Director.

From the day that they were united to the *Maison Mère*, a visible change was manifest. Up to that time, though living in great piety and charity, they seemed to make no way in furthering the object they had in view (i.e. the giving of missions): very few expressed a desire to join them, and they felt as if they were destined to witness the rise and fall of their society. After their junction however with the parent stock, young men began to present themselves for admission; these gradually increased, and although the number of applicants in Ireland was never very great, a regular supply has been kept up, which has enabled the Province to advance quietly and steadily with the work of God. Teaching formed the principal occupation of the confrères till

the commencement of the Missions. (The first mission, in the town of Athy, commenced on Sunday, 4 November 1842).

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO

In 1877 at the request of Father Eugene Boré, the Superior General, Father Mariano Maller, then Visitor of the Madrid Province, made a visitation of the Irish Province. Though a Spaniard, Father Mailer had considerable experience of the United States. He was appointed rector of St. Charles' Seminary, Philadelphia, in 1841 and Visitor in 1847. He was involved in the union of Mother Seton's Sisters with the Daughters of Charity and became Director of the former in 1850. In 1853, he transferred to Brazil where he became Visitor and also Director of the Daughters of Charity. For a period he was an Assistant General in Paris. In the course of his visitation of the Irish Province, he visited all the houses; and on its conclusion he submitted a lengthy report to the Superior General from which the following extracts are taken.

“The Province of Ireland is in a reasonably satisfactory state. There is regularity and order, and sufficient union between the confrères themselves and with the local superiors, the Visitor and the Superior General. Certain elements of discord and malaise are present and it would not be right to entirely close one's eyes to them. I will mention the principal ones.

“Firstly, memories still remain of the divisions of ten to twelve years ago which began to heal with the removal of Father McNamara from the office of Visitor and the appointment of the present Visitor, Father Duff. This change was accepted out of respect for the Superior General: but a malaise is still present though little by little it is tending to disappear. A small number of confrères would still be pleased to see Father McNamara — if it were possible — at the head of the Province: but this is not possible at present, and probably never will be.

“The second cause of the malaise is the ‘whisky-punch’ question — as it is called here. About two years ago the Visitor and his Council, for good reasons, became alarmed at certain tendencies to drink which they believed they saw in some confrères. Drink — in everyone's eyes — is the great scourge in Ireland. The late Father

Etienne, some years earlier, had permitted the use of alcohol on four or five occasions during the year, and also in the course of missions when invited to dinner by Bishops and Parish Priests alcohol was offered and accepted by the other guests. This permission was granted so that the missionaries would not give the impression that they disapproved of what the others were doing. But these invitations are very numerous, since it would seem that they are invited weekly — on their free day. The Visitor wishing to arrest the evil because — as I have said — of his fears, applied to the Superior General who approved of the measure (i.e. the prohibition of ‘Whisky-punch’). But he wrote in his Circular of 1 January 1876 that it was the confrères themselves who had freely pledged to abstain from alcohol, whereas they hadn’t even been consulted, only the Superiors were. As a result there were strong objections. And now a good number of confrères complain that the Visitor has misrepresented the true mind of the Province to the Superior General. They feel that they have been stigmatised and dishonoured before the entire Congregation as men given to drinking to excess, whereas this is not the case; that for the failings of two or three at most, all are being punished. They want the prohibition lifted, and if any confrère fails in this matter, let him be punished, not everybody; that it is severe to impose without sufficient cause a ban on the Province, while all the other Provinces are free to drink alcohol; that they know of no other reply to make to those who offer them drink except to say that they are forbidden to take whisky-punch — which is not a suitable reply. Such in my opinion are their chief arguments. They also add that the prohibition seems pointless, since other alcoholic drinks are allowed, and if they really wanted, they could take these to excess. Those who think differently maintain that it is not a question of punishment, but rather a precautionary measure; that the other Provinces will not regard it as a punishment; that when invited to dinner, they can refuse alcohol when it is offered without saying that they are forbidden to take it. And this has become all the easier in that the use of alcohol is tending to disappear not only among the clergy but also among the laity; that many do not take it and far from being offended, they would be edified. The Visitor and his Council, with the exception of one Consultor, think that the prohibition should be maintained. That too is my view. However, were it possible, it would be a good thing to pour oil on troubled waters; but I don’t see how this can be done. The Visitor thinks that the agitation will die away of itself and that it is better not to say anything more about it.

A third cause of discontent is more complicated and longstanding.

It is maintained that the local superiors consider themselves as *almost irremovable*, that they do what they like, do not consult, or if they do, do so in an unauthorised way; for example, some will seek the advice of their consultors individually, but do not hold a Domestic Council sometimes for months. When the Visitor makes a visitation, he is told everything. It is presumed that he will speak to the superior, but when the visitation ends, things continue as before. The same will be true of your visitation', a confrère said to me. I don't think the evil is so deep-rooted or so incurable; but in my opinion there is some truth in it with regard to two or more superiors...

MISSIONS

"Missions have been the principal work of the Irish confrères. Right at the very beginning of the Province the Archbishop of Dublin, towards the close of a clergy retreat being held in Maynooth College, mentioned to the parish priests that young priests of a Community, called Vincentians, were prepared to give parish missions. The suggestion was coolly received; the elderly parish priests deemed it forward on the part of these young priests as if they, the parish priests neither knew how, nor wanted, to preach to their parishioners. A few, however, accepted and these first missions — as normally happens — were so fervent and so fruitful that everyone was astonished. Their fame spread far and wide and requests for missions multiplied. Through them the Vincentians became known and good subjects were attracted to their ranks.

But today the picture is somewhat different. Missions, although always very Useful, do not seem to be as fervent as they were in the beginning. They have lost some vitality, according to what I have heard. This is perhaps due — at least partially — to the fact that Missions are no longer a novelty, but have become quite common since there are many Orders engaged in this work, for example, Passionists, Redemptorists, Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, Capuchins etc., etc. Perhaps, too, the best men are not sent on the Missions. In the past, six or eight missionaries were sent as a team, now four or five are sent. Formerly, they lasted six to eight weeks, now they only go on for four or five. Another cause put forward to explain their decline is the custom of having collections during the mission, not only to defray its expenses, but also for other purposes. Thus parish priests avail of the occasion to collect large sums of money to meet debts on their churches, or to build new ones. A collector

stands at the door of the church and allows no one enter without first making an offering of, for example, a shilling. This practice does great harm to the mission; the missionaries have protested strongly, but the parish priests carry on. We are unable to remedy this state of affairs. Fortunately the Irish Bishops have taken up the matter, and the National Synod has passed a decree against this abuse. It remains to be seen whether the parish priests will pay any attention to it. Some confrères think it will be a dead letter.

“Our confrères devote about eight months each year to giving missions. After each mission they return to their houses and rest for at least three weeks. They then go out on another mission. Many confrères think that the rest period should not be so long, and that the work of the missions should be resumed again after a week: but others — and they seem to me to be the more experienced— think differently; they maintain that the Irish missions are very tiring, and that the health of the missionaries would not hold up. One must yield to the voice of experience.

PARISHES OR QUASI-PARISHES

“The Missions also suffer from the fact that in four of our houses the confrères are responsible for parishes or for churches which, while not parochial, impose obligations of varying extent. Thus, Sheffield and Lanark together can hardly provide a team of missionaries to give missions in England or Scotland because in both these houses parish duties take priority over mission work. It can be claimed that in these parishes, as well as in the public churches attached to Cork and Phibsborough, we are giving a kind of continual mission: but it is only a *kind of* and not a true mission. I have no wish to condemn what is being done: I am just stating the facts. It is worth noting that there is no house specially founded for the work of missions; nor are there any Foundations for missions, apart from two for the diocese of Dublin. We have to provide for the others, and the missionaries would not have means of subsistence apart from the missions if they hadn’t these churches, whether parochial or not, from which they derive practically all their resources. This is the only way to provide an assured and permanent income. All the other religious Orders do the same. Moreover, how otherwise would the missionaries be occupied when they are not away giving missions? The life of a Carthusian at home makes little appeal to the generality of missionaries, and in countries where the clergy are not too numerous, such a life does not seem possible. Neither people, nor the clergy, nor

the religious themselves understand what is involved in a life of recollection, study and prayer. One is bored *doing nothing*: in such terms study, recollection and prayer are designated by some — even us.

“The wish has been expressed to me that the *modus vivendi* of missionaries should be regulated outside the time of missions: it seems to me, however, that this pertains to each superior. These intervals are utilised to give retreats, and I see nothing wrong in this; but the retreat work has increased to such an extent that the missions are suffering in that the missionaries acquire such a taste for retreat work that they neglect, or haven’t the time, to prepare well for the missions.

“Missions are given gratuitously: this is interpreted to mean that payment, apart from expenses incurred for meals and travel, is not accepted for them. It is claimed that this has been authorised by the Superior General. But for parish retreats they accept, besides the above-mentioned expenses, whatever is offered. In this, I am told, they are also following directives received from on high. Many confrères, however, have pointed out to me the clear illogicality involved, since in reality these *retreats* are small, or abbreviated, missions. It is difficult to see how we can accept payment for a parish retreat, and not for a mission given in the same parish. But since the question has been regulated, there is nothing more to be said about it.

CASTLEKNOCK

“Apart from the central house in Blackrock, this is the most important house of the Province. The building is large and well constructed; it can easily accommodate 150 boarders and the present community of 23 — 9 priests, 7 brothers, a confrère who is somewhere in between, and 6 postulants. There are also some domestics who work in the College. It is about 10 kilometres to the west of Dublin, on a very fine site that is eminently suitable for a College. Magnificent fields surround the house, and there is a hill on each side. These are perhaps artificial. One of them in particular has all the appearance of being one of those burial mounds to be found scattered here and there in both the old and the new world. The ancient Castle-Knock was built on the larger of these two hills. All that remains of it are some ruins — in stone. Already a good number of priests, some brothers and a pupil of the College are buried in these ruins. During my visit I liked to pay a daily visit to this cemetery.

“We own in perpetuity 43 Irish acres (an Irish acre is about a quarter larger than an English one) and all the necessary equipment to utilise

this property to its best advantage. It is chiefly used to graze animals which are slaughtered, or sold, according to need. Besides these 43 acres owned in perpetuity, the College has — for 30 years — another property about a mile distant. This is St. Mary's farm. There was uncertainty as to whether this farm should be retained or sold and the Superior General was approached. But when the *landlord* — the true owner — came to hear of this, he opposed the sale and that ended the matter. In my opinion there is no reason to regret the retention of the property since — according to the brother who is responsible for making it pay — it is very useful to the house, and produces a great deal more than would the interest on the capital which it represents...

“The College is considerably in debt... But this shouldn't give cause for alarm. It enjoys a degree of prosperity, such as it has never experienced previously. There are 180 boarders, and with such a number and a reasonable pension it is impossible that considerable savings cannot be made. Practically everybody views matters in this light. . .

“The College, as I have said, enjoys a very encouraging state of prosperity. In numbers it surpasses the two best Colleges of the Jesuits in Ireland. If the buildings would permit, an even larger number of pupils could be taken as some who wish to come have to be turned away. I am told that the teaching is of a sufficiently high standard. However, it could and should be better.

“The Community is regular; there is piety; and considering that it is a College, I did not expect to find so much silence and recollection. In this regard, after Blackrock, it is the house that most edified me ...

“The Superior, Father Malachy O'Callaghan, is also a Provincial Consultor. Pious, regular, highly gifted, he has a great way of dealing with people and winning them over for the College and the Congregation. He has been responsible for raising the tone of the College and its reputation. He knows how to make himself liked by the pupils and the confrères. But confrères generally point to certain faults in his temporal administration: a) a real passion for spending beyond the means available — even to purchase things which are luxurious or ornamental, and in no way needed; b) that he often incurs such expenses without consultation. Apart from these failings, and others of lesser moment, he would be the perfect superior. (Alas! where is the man who is perfect?)

“Father Peter Byrne is Assistant and Admonitor. A fine character, capable, prudent, balanced, intelligent, with sound judgement, he has all the qualities that go to make an excellent superior. But he hasn't the health; he does not rise with the Community and can only do a

limited amount of work. He takes classes in Physics — for the easy and ordinary experiments.

“Father James Moore: very edifying, he entered the Congregation late, but has become more and more impregnated with its spirit. He is very capable and, above all, high-minded. He is an acquisition for the College and has very sound judgement.

“Francis O’Beirne is a cleric: he entered the Congregation some 30 years ago I believe and began his studies. They were beyond him and he remained a cleric. He helps the Bursar and makes himself very useful around the house. He is simple, humble and edifying. . .

“There are seven brothers: all of them are good. Also five postulants for the brothers: 16 pupils in the College, 5 of whom will soon start their seminaire in Blackrock, intend to join the Community.

ARMAGH

“The house is large enough to accommodate 60 to 80 pupils. The siting of the buildings is not a model to be followed. The seminary owns a farm which, if well managed, would be very profitable. Because of uncertainty as to the future of the College discipline has suffered. The teaching also needs to be improved and somewhat strengthened. Considerable debts had been incurred for which the Congregation seemed to bear responsibility. When these were paid off with funds for which an appeal had been made, it was decided that rather than incur similar debts in the future it would be better to leave the College, and this was done for some time. But the Archbishop took responsibility for all future debts and his only condition was that the confrères would submit financial returns every six months to a permanent commission. The confrères were to have the administration of all the revenues of the seminary. This agreement was very favourable to the Congregation and we returned to the seminary. Everything seemed settled when a new problem arose. Monsignor, without consulting the confrères, chose a site for the palace he was going to build near the cathedral which entailed the loss of a courtyard used by the pupils for recreation. Our confrères registered their complaint, and believing to see in this decision a lack of consideration on the Primate’s part, and conscious of the difficulty — if not impossibility — of another suitable place for the recreation of the pupils, spoke to the Archbishop who indicated an alternative site. But the confrères did not think it suitable for the purpose by reason of certain moral difficulties which they feared would arise from its proximity to a certain road or avenue along which, so it was said,

persons of more than doubtful character often walked. The Primate was informed of this objection: he replied that as a result of his enquiries he was convinced that there was no substance to such fears. And there the matter rested.

“Having convened the Provincial Council, I submitted the following question: should we persist in the plan to retire from the seminary, or should we remain on? In favour of leaving were the following considerations: 1. fear of future debts; 2. the lack of consideration shown by Monsignor in the affair of the playground; 3. the unsatisfactory nature of the alternative site proposed by Monsignor; 4. the difficulty in finding a superior who would make a success of the seminary. Against withdrawal were the following reasons: 1. the weakness of the case for withdrawal; 2. the evil consequences of our departure, since we would not be in a position to lay before the public the reasons for this course of action. The Congregation would be judged to be either over-exacting or incapable of directing a seminary. Having fully weighed all the various aspects, it was decided to remain on and make every effort to succeed in the work. And now for the personnel: Fathers Michael Mullen, superior, Henry Gray, Anthony Boyle and Patrick Boyle ...

DRUMCONDRA

“This is not a (distinct) house, but merely an annexe of Blackrock. It is a Training College — exclusively for Catholics. The Bishops have forbidden young Catholics to attend the Protestant Training School; hence the need to have a Catholic one. It receives no grant from the State, and is supported by a levy imposed for this purpose on the parish priests by the Bishops. All do not pay well; but the College has been functioning now for almost two years and gives grounds for hoping, that it will go from strength to strength. The house — or houses, as two adjacent buildings have been leased — is not impressive. It is merely a question of carrying on for the present and it is intended to move to some good property a little outside the city where there are many fine buildings. The financial resources are just sufficient to make ends meet and to avoid going into debt. The Cardinal honoured us in inviting us for such an important work, and one so delicate since it involved securing the consent of the English government to the saving of many young people from falling into indifference. The clergy, despite the money demanded from them, regard our confrères with favour.

“Father James Petit, who is Irish despite his name, is an excellent confrère. Providence sent him to us expressly for the office he now holds. He was well prepared for it, being engaged in public education before joining the Congregation. He is familiar with the courses, with administration and with students. He is full of courage and very successful. At present there are 70 students, all resident.

“His companion, Father Louis Bean, is a good young priest; though of very mediocre ability, he has a gift for dealing with young people.

“It goes without saying that, apart from religion, they do not teach in the College, but they direct the studies and everything else. For teaching they have good professors who are well paid for their work.

“The brother is a good brother. There is also a day school for poor children, and in it the students of the Training College practice the art of teaching.”

The original (in French) of Father Mailer’s report is in the CM archives in Rome. Its final paragraph is worth including: “I end by mentioning that perhaps I would change my view were I to become better acquainted with our confrères. For already I have come to realize that the Irish confrères, generally speaking and taken as a group, improve on acquaintance. When certain national idiosyncrasies are set aside, a very rich soil indeed lies underneath.”

THE HISTORY OF THE VINCENTIAN IN CORK, 1845-1906

Notes drawn up by Fr Leo O’Mahony, C.M.

- 1845 Very Reverend Michael O’Sullivan, V.G., with the intention of establishing a community of Missioners in Cork, took a lease in 1845 of the Mansion House from the Corporation and opened a school there in January, 1845.
- 1846 Father O’Sullivan applied to Father Dowley, Castleknock, for a community of Missioners in Cork, proposing to become a

member of the community on their establishment, and offering in support:

- a) the property of the day school;
- b) the salaries of two chaplaincies held by himself — Peacock Lane and the Lunatic Asylum;
- c) the rent of some houses of his own in Bantry.

Dr. Delaney, Bishop of Cork, and Father Etienne, Superior General, give their approval.

- 1847 Fr. Roger Kickham is appointed the first superior. He arrived in Cork, and took up residence in the Mansion House, then called St. Vincent's Seminary. (It is the present Mercy Hospital). The other members of the community were Fathers Philip Burton and Laurence Gillooly.
- 1848 Father Michael O'Sullivan was received as a Vincentian novice by Father Kickham.
- 1850 Father O'Sullivan made his vows. He was born in September 1800, and was ordained in 1833.
In this year, Father Kickham was appointed to take charge of St. Peter's, Phibsboro, during the absence of Father Thomas McNamara on sick leave.
- 1851 The beginnings of Sunday's Well church. In July the present site — the garden of Miss Mary McSwiney — was purchased. Sir John Benson — no competent Catholic architect was available — was appointed architect.
24 October, the feast of St. Raphael: the solemn blessing of the foundation stone by Dr. Delaney, the bishop of Cork. Notwithstanding the distress consequent on the famine, Father O'Sullivan's collections were very successful, and he obtained many subscriptions.
- 1853 A violent storm from the S.W. blew down the roof and aisle walls. Great sympathy was aroused and in the course of a few weeks £700 was subscribed. There were collections not only in the city and rural parishes of the Cork diocese, but also in the dioceses of Cloyne, Kerry and Waterford.
- 1854 Father Michael O'Sullivan is appointed superior.
A bazaar organised by the ladies of Cork realized £600 towards the rebuilding.

- 1855 7 July, the death of Father Michael O'Sullivan.
Father Laurence Gillooly is appointed superior, he devotes himself to the direction of St. Vincent's seminary and the completion of the church.
Miss Bury dies, and leaves house property in trust to the Missioners for missions in the diocese of Cork.
- 1856 July 20, St. Vincent's church was solemnly dedicated and opened for public worship.
July 21: Solemn anniversary Office and Mass for the Very Reverend Michael O'Sullivan, C.M. Father B. Russell, O.P., preached on his edifying life.
August: Father Neal McCabe is appointed to succeed Father Gillooly as superior.
September 7: Dr. Gillooly is consecrated Bishop of Elphin at St. Vincent's, Sunday's Well. Dr. Dixon, the Archbishop of Armagh, preached.
The community attached to St. Vincent's change residence from the Mansion House. The latter is still kept on as a school. However, after a short time, in November, it is handed over to the Very Reverend J. J. Murphy, Adm., SS Peter and Paul, for a hospital (the Mercy Hospital, which opened in March 1857).
- 1857 January 7: St. Vincent's seminary (Christian College) opened. Father Malachy O'Callaghan was in charge; he was assisted by Fathers Philip Burton, Daniel O'Sullivan and three paid teachers.
July: The first mission from the Cork house is given in Kinsale.
- 1858 Father Nicholas Barlow replaces Father Malachy O'Callaghan (changed to Castleknock). During his time in Sunday's Well, Father Barlow attracted crowds by his preaching, especially at Christmas.
- 1859 Father Barlow is changed to Sheffield. Father John McBride is appointed to Cork. The Seminary is kept going. Missions are given regularly from Cork — to Bantry, Bandon etc.
- 1866 Father Daniel O'Sullivan is appointed superior to replace Father Neal McCabe who is named Rector of the Irish College, Paris.

- Completion of the church buildings and a house for the community is now undertaken. The side wing was designed as a house of retreats. The plans were drawn up by Mr. Goldie, a London architect. A bazaar realized £2,700 and weekly collections were organised.
- 1867 The Daughters of Charity come to the North Infirmary.
- 1868 The work of giving missions is intensified. Four of the community remain at home to look after the Seminary and Church.
- 1870 July 19 — the feast of St. Vincent: the opening of the new house by a Celebration or Academical exercise. Some of the confrères take up residence in it.
- 1872 The entire community move into the new house.
- 1875 About six priests and ecclesiastical students came to make a retreat.
In August, the bishop and priests of the diocese of Ross came to make their annual retreat. They came in two groups of 12.
- 1876 The closing of St. Vincent's seminary. The twenty year lease would expire during the year. The community resolved to borrow and build. The permission of the Bishop was sought. It was discovered that he intended to build his own minor seminary. As there would not be room for both establishments, the Vincentians informed Dr. Delaney that they would cease to run their school from July, 1876. November: a portion of the McDonnell property was purchased. It was sold in the Encumbered Estate Court. The church and house are built on it. Originally, there was merely a lease for 200 years from 1846. It was thought to be a good time for purchasing Fee Simple. The purchase included the garden, except the lower part which is held from the Cork Distillery Company at a nominal rent of 2/6 a year for 200 years, and besides our garden all the land leased for 300 years from 1844 to Mr. Fitzpatrick upon which are built two good houses. Archdeacon Murphy, our convictor, purchased the land and conveyed it to Fathers Duff, D. O'Sullivan and Morrissey. The purchase

money, £1,265, was borrowed from the North Presentation Convent @ 4½%.

- 1878 By permission of the Bishop, Father L. Brown, Friar Minor Recollect, blessed the Stations of the Cross in the church and the private oratory.
Misses Margaret and Elizabeth Coleman, Myrtle Hill Terrace, gave £650 to the Superior as a commencement of a Foundation for free Missions. The community bound itself to apply the annual interest for this purpose.
- 1882 Father Thomas Morrissey succeeds Father Daniel O'Sullivan who goes to Sheffield as superior.
- 1884 A meeting was held in the presbytery, chiefly attended by gentlemen of Sunday's Well, to consider plans for completing St. Vincent's Church. About £500 was subscribed.
- 1885 December 29 : the new facade was solemnly opened. Bishop Delaney presided and Father Cribben preached.
- 1888 Father Michael Gleeson is appointed superior to replace Fr. Morrissey who is named Assistant Visitor. He leaves Cork, because of ill-health, Christmas 1888. Father Malachy O'Callaghan is recalled from Sydney and appointed superior.
- 1889 June 23: Father Malachy O'Callaghan comes to Cork as local superior.
November: the Rosary is substituted for Compline on Sundays and Holydays in St. Vincent's Church.
- 1890 March 6: the Bishop, Dr. O'Callaghan, consecrated the Passion and the Blessed Virgin altars: the ceremony took 2 hours and 20 minutes. (The altars had been consecrated previously but the sepulchre had been broken and they had to be reconsecrated). A novena before the feast of St. Patrick and after the feast of St. Joseph are introduced: both drew large crowds.
A Solemn Triduum is held to mark the beatification of Blessed J. G. Perboyre.
- 1892 To encourage the choir, 12.00 Mass on the first Sunday of each month was to be a Missa Cantata.

- 1893 Resolved not to supply preacher to outside churches during Holy Week so as not to interfere with Tenebrae in St. Vincent's.
- 1893-1897 13 stained glass windows (Munich) @ £80 each.
- 1896 July 19: the statue of St. Vincent in the quadrangle was blessed by the bishop. It cost £45; total cost of erection £180. The Holy Agony group erected: a sodality was established and linked with the Paris Confraternity.
- 1897 The crib figures were renewed.
- 1898 36 missions and retreats were given this year.
The statue, pedestal, canopy and priedieu of St. Anthony were presented by Mrs. Wall as a memorial to her two sons who were priests in Pittsburg.
- 1899 Mortuary tablet — with the names of the priests buried in the vault — is erected at the end of the south aisle.
- 1900 Church cleaned and redecorated: roof repaired, gutters attended to. New sacristy built. Mr. Haynes was the architect and Mr. O'Callaghan, the builder. Cost including furnishings, £850.
- 1901 Four pictures purchased: two for sacristy, Tara and Gougane (£20 each in Munich); two for church, Blessed Perboyre and Blessed Clet (£13 each in Rome). Most successful mission — in the church — for Jubilee year: public procession with Confraternities, banners, congregational singing, on the four Sundays preceding the Mission. 7 May, Father Gaynor resumed charge of the choir.
- 1902 Arranged with the Bishop to hold the Forty Hours on the 3rd Sunday of May. For the convenience of the people, it is decided to celebrate the solemnity of the Sacred Heart on the Sunday following the feast.
- 1906 12 October: consecration of St. Vincent's Church by Dr. O'Callaghan, O.P., Bishop of Cork. Bishops of Cloyne, Ross

and Waterford present. Special choir from Dublin. Church and presbytery bedecked with flags, bunting etc.

THE IRISH VINCENTIAN MISSION TO PEKING – ORIGINS

1. Father Anthony Boyle had been sending funds to the Vicariate Apostolic of Peking, then in the hands of the French confrères. On 15 November 1917, Father Jean-Marie Planchet, CM, the Procurator of the Vicariate, wrote to him.

“...Allow me now refer to a project which Mgr. Jarlin has long pondered, namely, to open China to the Irish Province. To send a few men on the Missions every ten years would not impoverish the Province; and it might also have the advantage of attracting young men who, without this Mission, might seek elsewhere to fulfil their vocation.

“What is envisaged is simply a house with two or three confrères, under the authority of the local Bishop who is a confrère. If the venture succeeds, it will be always possible to develop this small beginning and take on other works, or even take charge of an independent Mission. An excellent opening is now available in Peking which, while making insignificant demands on our Irish confrères, will provide them with an entry to China. I refer to our parish of St. Joseph, Toung Tang, Peking. It has a beautiful church ... and also a house of the Daughters of Charity; it is situated in the centre of Peking, close to the section where the Legations are situated. We would wish to profit by your coming to make it an English parish, that is, an English-speaking parish, for English-speaking foreigners who live in, or pass through, Peking. Moreover, we think an English school is a real need for these foreigners as well as for the Chinese who must have a knowledge of English to gain entry to businesses where a knowledge of this language is essential. Such a school would prevent Catholics from seeking entry to Protestant schools of all denominations who now have the monopoly of such education.

“It would be possible for Irish Daughters of Charity to replace the French Daughters in the two houses, and then the boys and girls in them would have a chance to learn English as well as being instructed in their religion.

“As regards conditions — these should be easy to arrange between confrères. Well then! Will you undertake the task of negotiating officially with the Visitor of Ireland? Strictly speaking, only one confrère would be needed now, as up to the present only one confrère has been caring for the parish. It would belong to the Province of Ireland, but would be provisionally under the authority of the Bishop of Peking until a firm decision is made about the works to be undertaken. The most urgent of these would be establishment of a College — to be linked with the parish — in the sense I have explained above.

“I ardently hope that this will come about, for the good of the Church in Peking and that of our dear Congregation. I have but one further request to make — that you say or write nothing about this matter except to those who have the right to know of it...”

2. On 16 January 1918 the Provincial Council discussed the proposal, and it was decided that it should be recommended to the Vicar General for acceptance. (The Superior General, Father Villette, died on 7 November 1917, and due to World War I it was impossible to hold a General Assembly to elect his successor.)

Father Joseph Walshe, the Visitor, wrote to Father Louwyck, the Vicar General, on 18 January 1918.

“I have the honour to enclose a letter of M. Planchet of Peking to our Father Anthony Boyle of Cork. I should mention at the outset that Father Boyle, who is very interested in China, has collected and sent to China more than £30,000 (700,000 francs) — and the figure continues to rise — for the education of native clergy in Chinese seminaries. Mgr. Jarlin (the Vicar Apostolic of Peking) has received his share of this money.

“Now this proposal of the Vicar Apostolic that two or three confrères of the Irish Province take charge of a parish in the city of Peking — thus opening the gate, so to speak, for us also to enter China — has been received with joy and gratitude by the Visitor’s Council, and we are prepared in a few months, or at the latest at the end of the war, to send three suitable priest confrères to begin this fine mission, provided you give your approval. I am sure when this project is made known to the confrères, the number of volunteers will be so great that we shall have difficulty in making our choice.

“Doubtless it will be necessary to draw up a precise agreement to avoid misunderstandings in the future. My Council will be ready to work at this when you shall give us a summary of the points ...”

3. On 17 February 1918, Mgr. Jarlin drew up, and signed, the following draft agreement which he forwarded to Father Walshe. *Contract between the Vicar Apostolic of Peking and the Province of Ireland concerning the Parish of St. Joseph, Peking (China)*

1. The Peking Mission entrusts to the Lazarists of the Province of Ireland — provided they accept — the care of St. Joseph's parish (Toung Tang) with all its existing works, as well as those to be undertaken in the future; and for this purpose hands over free possession of all the buildings, present furnishings included — church, residence, schools, garden etc.
2. The Irish Lazarists will receive the same grants as their predecessors in St. Joseph's, for the support of the missionaries and of the works of the parish: Support for the home run by the

Daughters of Charity	2,000 Taels
Support of a missionary	300 Taels
Supplement for visitors etc.	300 Taels
Parish schools	100 Taels

 At the present rate of the Tael, this would amount to about 15,000 francs.
 N.B. According to the custom of the Vicariate, honoraria for Masses, in the case of seculars and religious alike, remain the property of the Mission.
3. The Peking Mission undertakes to pay the travelling expenses (second class) from London to Peking of missionaries coming to St. Joseph's. For extraordinary journeys, for return visits to Europe, and exceptional medical expenses, the cost will be borne by the Province of Ireland.
4. The Irish Lazarists will guarantee to conform to all the statutes and usages of the Peking Vicarate as regards spiritual direction and ecclesiastical dress. In particular, they will not appear in public except in soutane or long Chinese robes.
5. The Irish Lazarists promise to establish — if possible, at their own expense — a College within the parish of St. Joseph where English will be taught to both Chinese and Europeans.
6. Subject to the approval of the Superior General, it is understood that the house of St. Joseph will have a local superior, subject to the Visitor of the Province of Ireland. The said Province will own all foundations established at its expense and with the approval of the Vicar Apostolic of Peking.
7. The Vicar Apostolic naturally reserves the right to set up eventually new parishes within the territory of St. Joseph's when circumstances will allow it.

8. It is expressly agreed that, in accordance with the rule observed by all Catholic missionaries in China since 1860, the Irish missionaries (and others) will place themselves under the protection of France for as long as they remain part of the Peking mission.

Drawn up in Peking (two copies) on the 17th of February 1918.

The Vicar Apostolic of Peking
+ Stanislaus Jarlin
Peking, 17 February 1918.

The Visitor of the
Province of Ireland

4. This draft agreement was discussed by the Provincial Council on 17 April 1918. It was decided that “the following questions be submitted by the Visitor to the Vicar Apostolic:

- a) That the Visitor inquire under what circumstances the Chinese Mission would cease on either side.
- b) That since he mentions 300 Taels for the Missioner, will 300 Taels be given to each of the Missioners? Does the support of Missioners include the support of servants &c, and the clothing &c of the Missioners?
- c) That the Irish Missioners will get (Mass) intentions from Ireland, and would require, owing to Irish customs, the money for additional expenses.
- d) That the Visitor presumes the Irish confrères will be free to seek protection from other nations if the French do not give suitable protection.”

By mutual agreement, the clause about Mass honoraria was omitted. It was also agreed that the establishment of a College would not be included in the original contract, but that, at some later stage, a special agreement would be drawn up on this matter.

5. *Personnel*

On 10 July 1918 the Provincial Council decided “that Fathers O’Gorman and Mullins be appointed to the new house in Peking”, and on 7 October 1918 “that Father O’Gorman be recommended to the Superior General as a suitable confrère to be Superior of the new house in China”.

On 22 September 1919 it was decided that Mgr. Ciceri of Ki-Ngan-Fou be asked to release Father Feely “for a year or two to help Fr. O’Gorman in the parish works of St. Joseph’s, Peking”, and on 19 November 1919 “that one of the three Irish confrères belonging to the

Chinese Provinces be asked to help Father O’Gorman for some years”.
(This would refer to Fathers Denis Nugent, Michael McKiernan and ?)

6. *Confrères who staffed our Peking mission*

O’Gorman, Patrick (Superior)	1919-1929
Mullins, James	1919-1925
Barry, Patrick	1921-1928
Feely, James	1920-1948
Howard, Michael	1924-1946
O’Connell, Daniel	1925-1931
Crowley, Michael	1926-1952
Kavanagh, Maurice (Superior, 1930-1952)	1926-1952
Murnaghan, Kevin	1928-1950
Kavanagh, Andrew	1932-1948
Rice, Thomas	1933-1949
Milner, James	1937-1939

7. Father Patrick O’Gorman, then a Chaplain to the Forces, has been asked by the Visitor, Father Joseph Walshe, to go to Peking with Fr. James Mullins. This letter is to the Visitor.

APO L6,
15 October 1918.

My Dear Confrère,

G.D.N.J.C. sit semper nobiscum!

Your letter of the 8th arrived today with unusual speed, also two of Mgr. Jarlin’s (Vicar Apostolic, Peking) enclosed.

As I wrote you yesterday that I am now very confident of being released on November 15th or so — not sooner for reasons already mentioned — I need only add now that I shall make haste to get to London and home. In that way I could leave for China by Christmas or before, if thought necessary.

Meantime, as I said, it may be worthwhile to consider whether it may not be more expeditious to go through the States. The American boats are returning largely empty of passengers, and the Pacific is absolutely free of submarines. If the war continued into the Spring, that at any rate is what most friends here advise. Father Ballesty (Bursar, All Hallows) perhaps could find out with his usual discretion about the facilities and rates for passage to the States. It’s plain sailing after that. At any rate

if the total cost is not much greater than the other voyage East, it may be worth considering. If I went in khaki, I suppose I'd almost get a free passage to the States — especially if I brought a bit of the Kaiser's beard for which lots are already being cast by the Yanks!

I needn't dwell on the momentous news of the past few weeks. It's the beginning of the end, I presume. But when will the end come? ... I return Mgr. Jarlin's letters. Indeed I am now doubly anxious to meet his wishes as soon as possible. No undue delay will occur as far as I am concerned. This morning early I said Mass with a special petition — amongst others — to St. Teresa that she might take an interest in our little share in this great work.

I should rather go out to work under Fr. Mullins or anyone else. But that is a little detail which will easily arrange itself. I feel sure you will get all possible prayers for us. For no work, especially of that kind in these critical times, can proceed without prayer.

I must finish for post. Regards to all.

Yours devotedly in Xo,
P. O'Gorman, upcm.

8. *An Early Description of the work of the Irish confrères in Peking. St. Patrick's College, Peking*

Two years ago when the end of the Great War seemed still far off, the Vicar Apostolic of Peking and North Chihli asked Father Walshe, the Provincial of the Irish Vincentians, to send him priests to help to fill the vacant places in his Vicariate.

Though hard pressed for subjects himself, Father Walshe felt he could not overlook this earnest and moving appeal, and so, having taken counsel with his advisers, it was decided to send two priests to China. The undersigned had the honour of being selected for this new mission.

We have now been at work in Peking for almost a year. We have taken over from our French confrères an extensive district containing one of the most Chinese portions of the Capital of China. We have a good working church dedicated to St. Joseph, in the quarter known as Tung T'ang in the East City. We have already about 1,000 good Chinese Catholics and a firm hope of having many more, please God, in the coming years. Our Parochial Boys' School is taught by Chinese teachers. The Sisters of Charity, all Chinese except two, have charge of the Girls' School, and also the work of the Holy Childhood including an orphanage. They have also a Home for old men and old women (40

of each), and a modest but most useful Dispensary. In it from 400 to 500 of the poorest of the poor, mostly Pagans, are daily treated by these devoted Sisters for the usual accidents, aches and ailments to be met with in a large unsanitary heathen city like Peking.

At the urgent request of Mgr. Jarlin, the Vicar Apostolic, we have opened a new school or college where Chinese boys can learn English and through it commercial and scientific subjects.

To understand the importance attached to such an undertaking by the Vicar Apostolic and others, a few facts about the Far East may here be usefully recalled. In the first place, as most people know, China is today in a state of rapid transition socially and politically. The revolution which culminated in the Republic in 1911 undoubtedly opened a new era, fraught with great possibilities for the future of this old country and people. To a Catholic, it need hardly be said, the supreme need of China, as of the whole world today, is to become Christian and Catholic, and this as a cure alike for her temporal and her spiritual ills. To all who have lived in the East, or who know it at first hand, it appears almost equally certain that next to food for her teeming millions in the temporal order, China's great need is education, provided it be of the right kind. This is to some extent recognized by the Chinese themselves. It is no exaggeration to say that today there is a veritable craze amongst young Chinese to get educated, or at any rate to assimilate those factors of progress whereby they consider, rightly or wrongly, the Western peoples of the Old and of the New World have gone forward.

Not to speak of the thousands, who after preliminary studies in China are at present frequenting the Universities of Europe, and especially of America, a vast number of Chinese boys, urged on by their parents, passionately desire to learn English, and through it commercial and scientific subjects. In most cases, owing to the large amount of British and American capital in China, a knowledge of English is the only door through which they can secure a place in Banks and Railways, and commercial enterprises of all kinds even in their own country. This is not a mere expression of opinion. It is a fact patent to all who know the East, and especially to those who, like ourselves, have lived even one year in the capital of China.

British- and especially American Protestant Missionaries are labouring feverishly to supply this demand for schools where young Chinese can learn English and through it, commercial and scientific subjects. And what of the Catholic Missionaries? It is the simple truth to say that in the work of evangelization proper, the Catholic Missionaries have

no equals. They have the Truth and they preach it in season and out of season with a zeal and devotedness beyond all praise. This is the opinion of honest men of every creed who meet them at their self-sacrificing work in all corners of China.

On the other hand, owing to the fact that almost the entire body of Catholic missionaries hitherto in China have been French or German, Italian, Dutch or Belgian, Spanish or Portugese, it is natural and yet regrettable that in the subsidiary work of providing a certain type of education in eager demand in China, the prestige of running such schools, as we have mentioned, is the monopoly of British, and especially American, Protestant Missionaries, lay and clerical.

It is to remedy this state of things in a small way, as far as Peking is concerned, that we have opened a Catholic school where English and French and commercial and scientific subjects are taught to Chinese boys and young men through the medium of their own language. As we have already said, this has been done at the urgent request of the Vicar Apostolic, Mgr. Jarlin, to whom the presence of Irish Vincentians in Peking is directly and immediately due.

Though opened only last Summer, our new school is already too small for the numbers who desire to frequent it. We might easily have 100 pupils, and possibly more, if only we had accommodation for them, and a larger staff to teach them. Our classes hitherto have been conducted in the rooms, outhouses and open verandah of our poor Chinese house.

Obviously this state of things cannot continue indefinitely. In China, even more than elsewhere, the quality of education is apt to be judged from the dignity of the buildings in which it is imparted. We must, therefore, endeavour to have a school worthy of Peking, Capital of China, and worthy of St. Patrick, under whose patronage, with that of Our Lady and St. Joseph and St. Francis Xavier, we have placed our new undertaking.

Not unmindful of the numerous appeals to which the Faithful have generously responded in recent years, and well aware of the anxieties of the times in Ireland and elsewhere, we venture to address ourselves to the Catholics of Ireland, England and Scotland, of America and Australia, on behalf of St. Patrick's College, Peking. We ask the children of the Irish Race especially to help us to make this outpost of our Faith in the capital of China worthy of our great Apostle, for the Glory of God and the honour of Ireland. We make this appeal all the more confidently because this new school or college has been undertaken at the request of the venerable Vicar Apostolic of Peking,

and because it has already elicited the praise of several Vicars Apostolic of North China on a visit to Peking.

Amongst others, we have been honoured by a visit from the Apostolic Visitor, Mgr. de Guébriant. He was kind enough to give a special blessing to our pupils and our work, to express his warm appreciation of our poor efforts, and to prophesy a bright future for Saint Patrick's College. It supplies, as he said, a great need in Peking and in North China generally.

Contributions, therefore, for this good work, warmly commended by the representative of our Holy Father, the Pope, in China, will be thankfully received and acknowledged in the Press. In return, we promise that our benefactors will be remembered in our daily Masses, and also in the prayers of our good Chinese people and pupils, and in the prayers of several religious communities. A special Mass will be offered once a week for all their intentions.

Patrick O'Gorman
James Mullins

Catholic Mission, Tung Tang, Peking.
Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul, 1920

THADY LEE – THE QUESTION OF THE INTRODUCTION OF HIS CAUSE

1. Father Peter Byrne, St. Patrick's Drumcondra, writes to Father Patrick Boyle, Rector of the Irish College, Paris, 21 September 1917.

“I was dining with the Archbishop (of Dublin) on Wednesday evening, and when I was leaving Father Curran (Archbishop's secretary) mentioned that he was engaged in connexion with the canonization of the Irish Martyrs. He added that one of the old Orders was pressing on the cause of two of their men; and he further added that he believed one *of our* men, Lee he thought was the name, had a stronger case than either of the two men in question.

“He said Father John Maher had shown him your book (*St. Vincent de Paul and the Vincentians*, 1909), which he said contained much information.

“Now what I venture to suggest is that you take up and present the cause of Mr. Lee. No one else, as far as I know, will do so, and certainly

no one else is as well qualified as .you.

“Why should not we show as much anxiety about the canonization of our men as other communities do?”

“The question might occur to one, whether some evidence might not be found in some old documents in Limerick? The same might apply to the Maison Mère. You understand these things better than I do — I only make suggestions. Perhaps you have the matter in hand. A visit to Limerick might yield something. (At the time Father Boyle was in St. Joseph’s, Blackrock.)

“I came out of my four days’ retreat on Tuesday, the 18th. That same day 58 years ago I came out of retreat in the Maison Mère, to be received into the Congregation.”

2. *“Memorandum in reference to the case of Brother Lye.*

The facts of the case are stated in an article in the I.E. Record, October 1904.

Father Curran, Secretary at Archbishop’s House (Dublin), thinks the cause of the Beatification of Br. Lye capable of being presented.

The Archbishop of Dublin has not the leisure to take it up.

Fr. Curran suggests that the nomination of a Postulator be obtained from Rome; the Postulator residing in Rome and the Vice-Postulator in Ireland.

Then a bishop should be got to hold a court and go through the preliminary process.

If this process is completed within two years the case may be annexed to that of the Irish Martyrs, which is in progress.

I have done my duty by giving the facts of the case. It belongs to the authorities of the Congregation to judge if the process is to be undertaken, and the necessary expenses incurred. 4 Nov. 1917.

P. Boyle.”

3. Father Joseph Walshe, Provincial, writes to Father Boyle, 1 February 1918.

“... But now I wish to write to you on Br. Lye. I was summoned yesterday by the archbishop (of Dublin) to discuss this subject with him. His Grace showed a very friendly anxiety to introduce his (Lye’s) cause if possible with that of one of his predecessors, Abp. Russell who died in prison in 1690.

“Now he would like you to appear in due time before his court as

a witness in the cause, having first got together and authenticated all the evidence possible in Paris bearing on his death. The letter of S(aint) V(incent) would have of course an important part, especially if the original MS. be in existence. I understand him to say that a Notary should be employ(ed) to copy &c in a legal manner any documents or other evidence that you cannot bring with you when you come. No doubt you will lay the matter at once before M. Louwyck (Vicar General, C.M.) for his permission and approbation.

“Father Curran had said there sh(oul)d be a vice-promoter, but the Abp. was silent on this point. I imagine he intends his own promoter to act also for Br. Lye. Neither did he say anything of the expenses.

“When His Grace is ready for your evidence he will send word. But would it not be well if you could come over (from Paris) as soon as you are ready, & make enquiries in Limerick & elsewhere that might elicit further information on the death...”

4. Father Boyle did draw up a document to be introduced at the preliminary process for the beatification of Thady Lee. It is in French: what follows is a translation. Footnotes are omitted, and some quotations, which are merely repetitive, have also been omitted.

“Statement for the introduction of the Cause of Beatification of Thady Lie, cleric of the Congregation of the Mission, who died for the Faith in 1651.

I

Thady Lie (Lee) was born in Ireland in 1623 at Toua, identified by an Irish historian (W. H. Grattan Flood, IER 1904, p.463) as the present Tough, near Adare in Co. Limerick.

On 21 October 1643, at the age of 20, he entered the Congregation of the Mission in Paris to study for the priesthood. He took his vows on 7 October 1645.

II

Thady Lie returned to Ireland, probably with the eight missionaries of whom St. Vincent speaks in his letter of 15 October 1646 to the Bishop of Limerick. In fact eight missionaries left Paris for Ireland in October 1646. Unfortunately, the list of those who comprised this group is incomplete. What is certain is that Thady Lie was in Ireland in 1651, the year Ireton's army laid siege to and captured Limerick.

On 22 March 1652, St. Vincent de Paul in a letter to Fr. Lambert, superior of the house of the Congregation in Warsaw, wrote in the following terms of the siege of Limerick and the death of Thady Lie:

‘I add to this the news we have had of our confrères in Ireland, whom we supposed to among those whom the English put to death at the capture of Limerick. But, thanks be to God, He has rescued them from their hands. This is certain as regards M. Barry who has arrived at Nantes, and whom we are expecting here; and we have reason to hope the same is true of M. Brin, though we are not certain of it. They left Limerick together, along with five or six score priests and religious, all in disguise, and mingled with the soldiers of the city who quitted it on the day the enemy were to enter. Our men spent the night in preparing for death, because there was no quarter for ecclesiastics; but God did not permit them to be recognized as such. On leaving the city they separated not without great sorrow, going one in one direction and one in another. They thought it best to act in this way, so that if one perished the other at least might escape. M. Brin took the road to his native place with their good friend, the Vicar-General of Cashel. M. Barry went towards certain mountains which he names, where he met a charitable lady who received and lodged him for two months, at the end of which there chanced to be a vessel sailing for France, and he embarked without having had any news of M. Brin since they separated. He thinks, however, it will be no easy matter for him to cross over to France, because the English are masters of the sea, and because they occupy the district of which he is a native, hence he has much need of our prayers... Poor Brother Lye, being in his native place, fell into the hands of the enemy, who dashed out his brains and cut off his hands and feet before the eyes of his mother.’ (Letter 1473, Coste IV pp.341-343).

III

According to this testimony of St. Vincent, and to the tradition of the Congregation of the Mission, Thady Lie was put to death with barbarous cruelty by Ireton’s soldiers in hatred of the Faith.

Since the time of St. Vincent, the tradition that Thady Lie died for the Faith is found in the Congregation of the Mission.

Pierre Collet, the well-known theologian and historian, in his life of St. Vincent published in 1748, referred to the death of Thady Lie as follows:

‘Of the three missionaries who had remained in Ireland only two returned to Paris, after having passed at Limerick through all the

terrors of pestilence and war. The third finished his course there; the others disguised themselves and escaped as they could. One of them retired to his own country with the Vicar-General of Cashel. The other found in the mountains a pious woman who concealed him for two months. A brother (Thady Lie) who waited on them was less fortunate, or rather more so. The heretics having discovered his retreat massacred him under the eyes of his mother. They smashed his head, after having cut off his feet and hands, an inhuman and barbarous punishment which served to show the priests what they might expect should they be captured.' (*La Vie de Saint Vincent de Paul*, Nancy 1748, II, pp.471-2)

V

The same tradition concerning the death of Thady Lie is very much alive in the 19th century. In his life of St. Vincent de Paul the Abbe Maynard, treating of the Missions in Ireland, writes:

'Leaving Limerick they separated, not without great sorrow, in the hope of saving the life of at least one of them. Brin made for his own part of the country with the Vicar-General of Cashel. Barry headed for the mountains where a charitable woman took him in and hid him for two months. A ship taking on cargo for France subsequently became available; he embarked and arrived safely at Nantes. This brought great joy to St. Vincent as he believed his two priests had died in the massacre at Limerick. His Congregation, however, paid its price to the bloody persecution. A brother named Lye, discovered by the heretics, was horribly massacred before the eyes of his mother; having cut off his feet and hands, they smashed out his brains.' (*S Vincent de Paul, sa Vie, son Temps etc.*, III, p.42)

Under the title "A forgotten martyr", a similar account is to be found on pages 441-442 of *Petit Pré Spirituel de la Congrégation de la Mission*, which was published in 1880.

VI

Dr. (later Cardinal) Moran considered the tradition concerning the death of Brother Thady Lie worthy of inclusion in his work "*Historical sketch of the persecutions suffered by the Catholics of Ireland under Cromwell and the Puritans*", Dublin 1884, p.398. Having referred to the return to France after the capture of Limerick of the two Lazarists, Barry and Brin, Dr. Moran continues:

'Although these good priests escaped from that general massacre, the Congregation paid its tribute to the persecution, and a lay brother of the Order named Lee being discovered by the heretics was brutally put

to death by them before the eyes of his own mother; his hands and feet were first amputated, and his head was then bruised to atoms.’

Dr. Myles O’Reilly in his work “*Memorials of those who suffered for the Catholic Faith in Ireland in the 16th, 17th & 18th centuries*” cites the above passage verbatim. Unaware that the term “Brother” applied also to clerics of the Congregation, these two authors took Thady Lie to be a laybrother, but this small error does not detract from the value of their testimony.

Similar descriptions of the death of Thady Lie are to be found in Canon O’Rourke’s “*The Battle of the Faith in Ireland*” (Dublin, 1887) and Canon Alphons Belleshiem’s “*Geschichte der Katholischen Kirche in Ireland*” (Mainz, 1890).

VII

The same tradition continues in the 20th century. In “*Ephémérides Historiques de la Congrégation de la Mission et des Filles de la Charité*” (Paris, 1914, p.430), M. Louwyck, later to become Vicar General, gave the following account of Brother Lie:

‘Brother Lye accompanied the Missionaries sent by St. Vincent to Ireland on 12 October 1645. When the revolution broke out, he was captured with MM Brin and Barry. These latter were released because it could not be proven that they were ecclesiastics, and they were sent back to France whence they had come. Brother Lye being in his own native place was held, and later — in hatred of the Faith — terribly dealt with by the heretics. His hands and feet were amputated and his brains smashed out in the presence of his mother;

VIII

Brother Thady Lie fulfilled the three requisites for martyrdom:

1. He suffered a violent death. According to St. Vincent de Paul, this was the first requisite.
2. He was put to death in hatred of the faith. This is the second requisite. He was massacred with unbelievable barbarity by the Puritan army after the capture of Limerick. It is known that the Puritans treated priests and religious — to whom they gave no quarter — with great brutality.
3. He accepted death in witness to the faith. In fact, Thady Lie remained in Ireland, despite the dangers of persecution, when other members of his Congregation returned to France. In 1649 the war made the giving of Missions in Ireland impossible, and the Superior of the Missionaries sent some of his confrères back to France. In April 1650, St. Vincent

wrote to him to express his approval of this decision:

‘We have been’, he wrote, ‘greatly edified by your letter, seeing in it two fruits of the grace of God. The first — you have given yourself to God to remain in the country where you are in the midst of dangers, preferring to risk death than to be found wanting in service to the neighbour. The second — you took steps to protect your confrères, sending them back to France to put them out of danger. The spirit of martyrdom inspired the first, and prudence prompted the second: and in both you follow the example of our Lord, who when he was about to die for the salvation of men, wishing to preserve his disciples from it and keep them safe, said ‘Let these men go; do not touch them’ ... Since the others with you share your determination to stay, whatever the perils from war or disease, we think they should be allowed to remain. Who knows what God may wish to achieve by it? It is certainly not in vain that He gives them so holy a resolution.’ (Letter 1213, Coste IV, pp.15-16)

Thady Lie was among those to whom God gave the holy resolution to remain in Ireland and to hold steadfast there in the midst of perils. During the siege of Limerick and, as Collet says, in serving the priests he shared their privations and their dangers. Like them he was exposed to famine, to pestilence and to death. Already then before his death he had the mind of a martyr.

IX

Thady Lie practised to a heroic degree the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Through his faith he remained steadfast in the midst of sufferings and dangers: it was as if he had seen the invisible: ‘He held to his purpose like a man who could see the Invisible’ (Heb. xi 27). Through his hope he preferred the ignominy of Christ to the riches of the world because he looked to the recompense: ‘He had his eyes fixed on the reward’ (Heb. xi 26). Through his charity he gave the greatest proof a man can give, sacrificing his life for the love of God.

X

The tradition that Thady Lie died for the faith has been constant in the Congregation of the Mission: the same is true of Ireland, at least since the Missionaries returned. If it is difficult to trace this tradition further back in his native country, this must be attributed to the fact that the Catholics of the region where he suffered — and among them his own mother — were deprived of their possessions, evicted from their homes and, in the official phrase, transplanted to another Province.

XI

In Ireland, and throughout the double Family of St. Vincent, there is a general desire for the Beatification of Thady Lee, and a longing that the Holy See will add his name to the glorious list of those who have died for the faith. 20 October 1918.”

5. At a meeting of the Provincial Council, held in St. Joseph’s, Blackrock on 7 November 1917, it was ruled:

“That the case of Brother Lee, martyred near Limerick, be taken up and further investigations be made in order to promote his Beatification.”

The Provincial Archives yield no information as to whether even the preliminary stages of the Cause of Thady Lee were undertaken, and if they were, what was the result. Perhaps some confrère can provide this information.

OBITUARIES

Fr. Gerard Tierney

In 1930 St. Vincent's, Sheffield, was a populous and flourishing parish, an ideal initiation to pastoral work for the young priest, Father Gerard Tierney.

During his five years at Solly Street Father Gerry's innate earnestness and his zeal were clearly manifested in his ministry. His first parish mission was at the Spanish Confreres' Church at Saffron Walden, following which he was assigned to the mission staff at Lanark. For ten years he was constantly engaged on mission and retreat work; he continued that activity when he was changed to Sunday's Well in 1945. Thirteen years later he was appointed to Phibsboro* still preaching the Good News in parish, convent or school until his failing health curtailed this work. From 1974 his health deteriorated and Father Gerry, knowing the terminal nature of his illness, accepted Christ's advice "go to your private room and pray to your Father who is in that secret place".

By nature Father Gerry had a genial and kindly disposition. He followed a code of conduct in line with the rule of Saint Vincent and adapted to his own strong principles. The consistency of his religious way of life and his social character was indeed edifying. On occasions of Community discussions he would freely challenge any statement with which he did not agree. He enjoyed entering into contention, stating his own opinion and giving his basic grounds for it. No authority on earth, except an ex cathedra from Rome would cause him to change his determined convictions. At the end of his persuasive argument he would end with a roar of laughter by way of thanks to his attentive audience. During his years in Phibsboro' he had in the Community room a reserved chair (he avoided the cushioned arm chairs) which became known as the "sedes sapientiae".

On 17th October, 1978 The Father took him to Himself. We pay tribute to a worthy Vincentian, a priest who consistently co-operated with the sacramental grace of his vocation. He zealously reflected the Eternal Priest by his sensitive celebration of the Eucharistic Sacrifice, by his enthusiasm when preaching the word of God and by his dedica-

tion to the administration of the sacrament of reconciliation. May Christ have welcomed him into the everlasting sanctuary, and Mary, to whom Father Gerry was filially devoted, have opened her motherly arms to embrace him.

May our noble St. Vincent have greeted him as a worthy son.

V.A.

Gerard J. Tierney, C.M.

Son of Michael Tierney and Winifrid (Kyne).

Born in Dundalk, 10 August 1905.

Entered the Congregation: 22 September 1924.

Final vows: 25 March 1927.

Ordained a priest in the Pro-Cathedral Dublin by the Most Rev.

John Norton, Bishop of Bathurst, on 14 June 1930.

Appointments

1930-1935 Sheffield

1935-1945 Lanark

1945-1958 Cork

1958-1978 Phibsboro

Died 17 October 1978

Father Frank Cleere, C.M.

Father John Murphy was fond of telling a parable connected with his own life on the staff of Castleknock. In these days Father Campbell's pageant was a regular feature of College life. Every so often on Union Day the history of "Cnuca" was re-enacted for the entertainment of parents and friends of the College. The pageant had many advantages to commend it: for one thing it engaged the whole school, unlike Rugby XV's or Cricket XI's or, worst offender of all, Tennis which was confined to two or at most four. There was room for everyone in the pageant: if you had a sword and a shield then you were a ready-made soldier and, needless to say when the choir and the principals were chosen, the rest were by and large mobilised for the army. Every proud parent was sure

then to have eyes for his or her own Johnnie and Johnnie was sure to be seen in action at some stage of the performance. And as well as the boys the staff too were engaged, each in charge of one of the “light brigades”, ensuring that these were ready to charge at the psychological moment. Priests and parents knew only too well, of course, that it was largely a question of restraining the “young Turks” who were in a perpetual state of readiness to charge, with or without the approval of the commanding officer! Father John with a nice blend of humour and sarcasm liked to recall the President’s vote of thanks at the end of the pageant and the emphasis he always put on the “quiet workers behind the hill”. Needless to say Fr. John himself was in charge of one of the armies and so was numbered among “the quiet workers behind the hill”. In fact that was the whole point of the parable.

When I was asked to write about Frank Cleere, I thought at once of Fr. John’s parable. Because from the day he was ordained till the day he died, Frank’s role in the Congregation was a hidden one, known only to those whom he served. He was not destined for the limelight, he was always one of the quiet workers behind the hill. Frank knew this and he was quite happy with his role. It was amusing to hear him refer to his brother the Doctor. But though he never got the limelight, his apostolate was no less real or no less effective on that account, as you will soon find out if you visit the different community houses to which he was attached after ordination. Phibsboro was in fact the chief scene of his priestly work and it was there our paths crossed when I came to St. Peter’s myself in 1970.

I was soon to discover that Frank was invaluable in all sorts of ways and if his work was unobtrusive it was very effective. I knew in some vague way that he had a serious illness some ten years after his ordination, and I had some idea too that this had somewhat restricted his priestly work. But just how mistaken I had been in this I was soon to discover. Frank was always “on the go” and he was always helping others. He was most obliging and ever ready to undertake any task allotted to him. These tasks are usually not particularly spectacular from a human point of view, but with his usual sense of humour, Frank dismissed that side of things. For example one task that came his way very often was to be “priest on duty”. This involved looking after the hall door and dealing with the wide variety of callers that “plague” a presbytery door every day of the year. Frank dealt with them all and they all loved him. He was no “easy mark” but he was always very kind, a smile was never far from his face and he was a good listener; and to cap it all he had a marvellous sense of humour.

Any picture of Frank would be missing an essential ingredient of his character if one were to forget his sense of humour. He was always in good humour and he was able to see the humorous side of life in most situations. His comments on men and matters were often funny in the extreme: and he did not necessarily have to await a man's absence to make such comment. The said comments could be devastating but there was never any trace of malice in them and so they were never resented.

In a way nothing was sacred and nobody was exempt. No matter who you were or what you were you could be exposed to it. He had a field day when the church in St. Peter's was being renovated and the sanctuary altered and needless to say the perpetrators of change were his target. However, I'm thinking not so much of his sense of humour in community (though it was invaluable there) as outside with the people. Give him a funny story and you were sure to hear it back three or four times and from different lips before the day was over. And the people loved him for that. The usual comment you hear going around the parish since he died is: "Poor Fr. Cleere, the place is not the same since he died", and then in the same breath they will recall some anecdote about him. Only last week, I was visiting an old lady in hospital. In no mood for gaiety, yet she exploded with laughter as I did myself when she recalled the day she came to the presbytery looking for the Superior. As so often happened, Frank was on duty and told her the Superior was away and then added: "we have a great time sliding up and down the bannisters". One had only to think of Fr. Bannigan desporting himself in this way to see the humour of it. "Defunctus adhuc loquitur", Frank's memory still brings sunshine. Another lady told me how she lost her prayer book, containing all the "lares and pennates" of her piety. She had given up all hope of ever finding it again, when that night Frank rode up on his bike, rang the door bell and when she opened the door just held the book up before his eyes, saying not a word — knowing well that he could have fallen from heaven as far as the delighted owner of the book was concerned.

The bike reminds me of my own last memory of Frank and his sense of humour. It was the Sunday night of his departure for Mill Hill: we were all at supper, there were many comments on Frank's impending visit to Des and his "cashing in" on the P.P. — getting the last out of the parish. Frank was batting with his usual skill and hitting every ball in sight. At some stage I entered in, to enquire how he proposed going to the boat; "bike to Store Street and then by bus". When I offered my services to drive there, he came back with "and how do you think I'd get here on the return journey?" When I offered to meet the boat on

the return journey, the real humour came out — “not likely”, he said, “do you think I’d trust myself to *your* driving for two journeys” — he always maintained I overworked St. Christopher as do some others too, quite incorrectly, need I say!

In addition to Frank’s good humour another pleasant memory is his agreeableness at all times. St. Vincent says someplace in the Common Rules that we should be content with the arrangements, whatever they be, in our houses. I don’t think I ever heard Frank complain or even comment adversely about anything, whether food or times of meals. As I indicated he could comment tellingly and amusingly but never in a complaining way. No matter what you asked him to do he never made any difficulty. Changes had to come in the allocation of rooms when No. 4 was being vacated. Frank made way without demur, and as always with good grace, for someone considered a more important displaced person. If he spotted you about to ask him to do something difficult, he would make a gesture of withdrawal and say “NO NO NO”, but the smile on his face soon made you realise that the answer was sure to be yes, with the usual comment: “O the old pack horse (or mule) of the community!”

It was remarkable how little his operation interfered with the effectiveness of his priestly work. It did of course, limit him in some ways, but he was aware of this and accepted it humbly. And oftentimes these very limitations only added to his attractiveness and as often as not they were amusing. His liturgical improvisations, for example, sometimes made you smile. But there was no doubt the people accepted him as a man of God on or off the altar. The sick were particularly fond of him and no wonder, because he was at their beck and call day and night. The same was true of Regina Coeli hostel where he went nearly every week. For that he literally taped the more prominent preachers in St. Peter’s, though I doubt if they would have suspected this if they heard a play-back by Frank!

He was remarkable for recalling anniversaries whether family or community. He never omitted a confrere’s name from the anniversary list nor a family name either. We all knew his mother’s name was “Mamie Cleere” because she featured on the anniversary list at least four times a year. It was an indication of his pietas; though not appreciated by all!

Finally his spirituality was the same as when he was a seminarist in the Rock. I don’t believe a day passed that he did not do his “spirituals”, just as he did them thirty years earlier in St. Joseph’s. If there were devotions on in the Church Frank was sure to be there in some corner

and no matter what ‘crank’ was reciting the rosary she could be sure Frank would join in. If you passed through the oratory late at night as often as not he was on his knees reading the N.T. Incidentally you knew also that the last T.V. programme was over ...

That’s the Frank Cleere I like to remember. As I said in the beginning his was a hidden apostolate, nothing that caught the eye or the imagination, but he meant a lot to many people; in memoria aeterna erit Justus. He left many friends in Phibsboro, among the sick to whom he was devoted, among the regular callers with their exasperating trivia with whom he was always so patient, among the Iveagh hostel and Morning Star fraternity for whom he always had a cheery word and assurance of a night’s lodgings. I like to recall too that another priest named Vincent de Paul spent many of his days doing much the same kind of work and I think he would have seen the family resemblance in the quiet worker behind the hill when they met on that July day when Frank’s work was done.

T.F.

Francis A. Cleere, C.M.

Born: Kilkenny, 8 February 1916.

Entered the Congregation: 3 September 1936.

Final Vows: 8 September 1938.

Ordained a priest by Archbishop McQuaid in Clonliffe College on 30 May 1943.

Appointments

1943-1947 St. Vincent’s, Sheffield

1947-1948 St. Peter’s, Phibsboro

1948-1950 St. Vincent’s, Cork

1950-1953 St. Vincent’s, Sheffield

1953-1978 St. Peter’s, Phibsboro

Died 25 July 1978