

COLLOQUE

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Congregation of the Mission

Contents

Foreword	4
St Vincent and Church Renewal	5
A Fresh Look at Francis Clet	13
From the Provincial Archives:	
Circulars of the Superiors General	32
Early Days of St Mary's, Lanark	36
The China Mission	42
An Unusual Postulant	47
St Kevin's, Glenart, Co. Wicklow	51
Forum:	
Celbridge Chronicle	54
A Prayer Room	56
Obituaries:	
Frederick V. Morrin	57
Jerome Twomey	61
Peter Darcy	66
Edward McDonagh	68
Myles J. Dowley	71
Donald Costelloe	75

Foreword

The second issue of *Colloque* develops the pattern of its predecessor. Our proposed emphasis on the Beati of the Congregation in order to increase our own devotion to them and that of those in our pastoral care is represented by the article on Blessed Francis Clet. We have a right to be proud of the spiritual tradition of the Congregation of the Mission but we must immerse ourselves in it if it is to be a driving force among us.

A new section is added to this issue of *Colloque* — a Forum in which we have included an account of the life of the students and seminarists in De Paul House, Celbridge and also, hopefully the first of many such items, a succinct expression of viewpoint on one aspect of community life by a confrère, which we hope will draw response from the Communities.

Once again the editor wishes to express his thanks to all contributors and his special indebtedness to Father James Murphy and Father Tom Davitt.

The Elo Press merits our congratulations on establishing a suitable type and format for *Colloque*.

Saint Vincent and Church Renewal

Myles Rearden

In 1564 Pope Paul IV published the decrees of the Council of Trent. Publishing the decrees within a year of the Council's close was a considerable achievement, but ensuring that they were officially accepted outside Rome was an even more difficult task. The Council had fixed 24 as the age for ordination (Sess. 23, c 12), yet Vincent de Paul was ordained in 1600 at the age of 19. Indeed it would be another fifteen years before the reforming decrees of Trent would be finally accepted in France. Church renewal after Trent was an agonizingly slow process.

One consequence of this was that St Vincent was in at the beginning of the counter-reformation in France. The French church was much in need of reformation. For one thing, Calvinism had won many adherents, and vicious wars between Catholics and Calvinists had gone on intermittently for fifty years. The wars ended in 1598 with an edict of toleration for Calvinists, and then the specifically counter-reformation work of combatting heresy had to begin in earnest. But the need for reformation went much deeper. French Catholicism showed all the defects which so horrified the Protestant reformers. Some of these defects lend themselves to lurid description; Pierre Janelle writes: "In the Italian wars three cardinals, two archbishops, six bishops and an abbot were in the following of Louis XII of France when he entered Milan in 1507. Some of these took part, with much gusto, in the actual fighting. At a court festival, about the same time, two cardinals danced before the King" (The Catholic Reformation, p 9). But the same writer argues persuasively that the problems of the sixteenth-century church stemmed ultimately from defective organisation and its consequence, defective discipline. This underlying condition of the church showed itself especially in two things: the benefice system, and the confusion between political and religious power.

This is a slightly-edited version of a talk given to the students at All Hallows College on 27th September 1978.

The benefice system concerned the thorny problem of Church finances. In a parish, parishioners had to pay 10% of their annual income to the Church, so that many parishes had good incomes. Similarly, monasteries were wealthy because of the rents paid by tenants on monastic lands. The positions of parish priest and abbot were therefore much sought after as sources of revenue, like stocks and shares in later times. Sometimes the benefice holder was a priest who actually carried out his duties; but often he might not be a priest, and even if he was he might also be an absentee. He would then appoint another priest to run his parish or govern his monastery. These vicars were often badly paid, were usually badly educated, and were heartily despised by the people at large. Consequently, parish life was stagnant in many parts of France, if stagnant is not too mild a word. One fiery priest of the day put it like this: "There are but too many pastors who abandon the care and management of the souls of their whole parish to a vicar to whom they would not entrust their purse, nor the key of their desk, nor even that of their wine-cellar" (Delarue: *The Missionary Ideal of the Priesthood*, p 2). The problems went right up the ecclesiastical ladder. When Cardinal Richelieu was first made bishop of Lugon none of his predecessors had even visited the diocese for sixty years.

It was the lack of clear demarcation between political and religious authority that delayed the beginning of the official counter-reformation in France. The king of France had refused to allow the decrees of Trent to be published in his country. Many of the leading families had the right of appointing bishops; for example, the diocese of Paris was in the gift of the De Gondi family. In St Vincent's own lifetime one of that family became archbishop and later cardinal in spite of the fact that he was one of the most notorious scoundrels in all France. The wars of religion already mentioned show clearly the dangers of close identification of religion and politics; and to make matters worse, the Calvinists were even, more committed to the identification than were the Catholics. This situation made it virtually necessary for the state to interfere in religious matters. And it worked the other way also; for a large part of St Vincent's lifetime the prime ministers of France were cardinals.

It was at these underlying flaws in Church management that the Council of Trent directed its efforts. To quote Janelle once more: "The fathers of Trent went on a very definite plan, which is never declared as such, but which unmistakably emerges from the *Canones et Decreta* taken as a whole, that of strengthening the authority of the hierarchy, both secular and regular, in conjunction with the papacy" (op. cit. p 76). The way was thus opened for the resumption of serious pastoral

work, amounting in many places to re-evangelisation of the people. This process was only beginning in the France into which Vincent was ordained, Trent had not yet reached the country through official channels. It had, however, begun to seep in despite official blockage. This was mainly due to the great religious orders of the counter-reformation, the Jesuits, the Oratorians and the Capuchins, nil of whom moved up from Italy into France. The Capuchins worked among the people, chief!) in towns and cities. They were very popular because of their care for the sick and the beauty of their liturgy. It was apparently from the writings of a Capuchin, Benet of Canfield (an Englishman), that Vincent learned one of his fundamental beliefs: that Christian perfection consisted in absolute fidelity to God's will. The Oratorians were founded chiefly to restore the dignity of the priesthood, and in France they engaged largely in the education of youth. Vincent took the founder of the French Oratorians, Pierre de Bérulle, as his spiritual director and followed his instructions implicitly. However, the main carriers of the counter-reformation in France were neither the Capuchins nor the Oratorians but the Jesuits. In founding schools the Oratorians were only following the example of the Jesuits, who had begun to do so before Trent and by 1600 had up to twenty colleges in France. However, the shock-troops of the counter-reformation, as the Jesuits are often called, did not confine themselves to teaching in colleges; such an apostolate could achieve comparatively little in a country where only some three million out of a population of eighteen million were literate. Jesuit preachers were converting thousands up and down the country by their missions and their care for the poor, the sick, and prisoners.

Between them, then, these three orders did in France the work of reformation that bishops and secular clergy were in no position to do. They were engaged in work many of us might regard as typically Vincentian: the liturgy, missions, care of the sick and poor, restoring the dignity of the clergy. Rather than labelling these works Vincentian it seems more reasonable to see Vincent as inheriting from the Jesuits, the Capuchins and the Oratorians the authentic spirit of the counter-reformation. He was, in fact, giving a mission with some Jesuits in a country place near Amiens in 1617 when he realised what specific contribution God was asking him to make to Church renewal. The confession of the old man of Cannes in January that year followed by the sermon in Folleville on the 25th made him realise the work to which God was calling him, though this realisation took some time and the prompting of Madame de Gondi.

The townsfolk were catered for by the Capuchins and Jesuits, but the country people were almost entirely neglected. To make matters worse, the priests who lived in such places were in a terribly low state morally, spiritually and intellectually. Consequently Vincent's Congregation of the Mission extended its scope to include both the preaching of missions and clerical formation. In due course the Congregation took up the work of general education, so central to the whole drive of the counter-reformation.

We can now see that Vincent de Paul was at once a principal agent of the counter-reformation in France and a product of that movement. At his ordination he was an unreformed, worldly-minded man, as anxious to secure rich benefits as most other priests. But seventeen years later he had learned in a deeply personal way what it meant to be a Christian and a priest. Before setting out to renew others he was himself renewed, and he was renewed by the counter-reformation.

We can be even more precise, it was to the Council of Trent that Vincent owed his conversion from worldly to dedicated priest. In its very first reforming decrees the Council had called for good education, both religious and secular, and for high-quality preaching, lest the words of Scripture be fulfilled: "The little ones have sought bread and there was no one to break it for them" (Sess. V, cc 1 & 2). The work of the counter-reformation orders stemmed largely from these calls of the Council. In the Common Rules Vincent echoes the Council's words: "They shall break the bread of the divine word for little ones by preaching and catechising". The Council had told clerics that they were mirrors in which the people were to see how to live (Sess. 22 c 1), and Vincent saw clearly the desperate need for priests who would lead exemplary lives. In his letters he often quotes Trent. Its rules, he said, are to be respected as coming from the Holy Spirit (II 459). As already mentioned, fidelity to God's will was the keystone of his spirituality, and there is no doubt that he saw in the decrees of Trent a clear expression of the divine will.

However it is not enough to see Vincent as a Trent-man, rather as many today are Vatican II-men. The Council of Trent was largely the achievement of the Papacy. One of its main effects was to strengthen the Papacy, and it entrusted to the Pope the execution of the work of reformation which it had begun (Sess. 25). Vincent recognised God's call not only in the Council documents but also in the on-going authority of the Papacy.

Vincent never met a Pope, but he did see one, Pope Clement VIII. This experience, on a visit to Rome shortly after his ordination, was to

leave a life-long impression on him. He frequently referred to Clement, who was one of the greatest of the post-Trent popes. Vincent spoke often of his sanctity. When he decided to send his priests on the foreign missions he was influenced chiefly by the reflection that the Pope had the authority to send missionaries anywhere in the world, and that priests had a corresponding duty to go. He also had in mind a story he had been told about Clement. It appears that two visiting ambassadors attended the Pope's mass. Clement was renowned for the devotion with which he celebrated daily mass. They observed him overcome with sorrow and in tears during the mass, and afterwards asked him the reason. The Pope explained that during the mass he had felt deeply saddened by the losses the Church was daily suffering from heretics, so that he feared that God might wish to transfer the Church to another part of the world. This thought seems to have been a constant factor in Vincent's thinking about the foreign missions, (cf G van Winsen CM in *VINCENTIANA*, 1978/3, p 158), and it came to him, indirectly to be sure, from Pope Clement VIII. Other connections with Clement can also be noted. He was so close to St Philip Neri that it was said that St Philip ascended the throne in his person. Now Philip Neri represents the most human side of the counter-reformation; his gentle, cheerful and highly cultivated spirit finds its French equivalent in St Francis de Sales. It was Clement who made Francis bishop of Geneva, and Francis was another of those who deeply influenced Vincent both by his writings and by personal contact. Francis made Vincent the superior of the Paris Visitation Monastery. Again, Vincent and Clement both lived very sacramental lives. They both shared great devotion to the Eucharist, and unusually for that time they both offered mass daily. Clement started the Forty Hours Adoration in Rome, and Vincent advocated, if he did not in fact originate, solemn First Holy Communions in France (III 119, 120, & n 3). Both had the custom, unusual for that, or any, time, of daily confession. Vincent's attitude to the Papacy was then neither purely juridical nor purely theological, though it was deeply theological; it was also spiritualised and personalised by his affinity with Pope Clement VIII. Clement was to Vincent what Pope John XXIII is to many people today.

Vincent de Paul, then, is not a lone figure. On the contrary he is part of a whole movement. The counter-reformation is however no ordinary movement. It is not just a drift in a general direction, but a clearly defined process. Unlike the Protestant Reformation the counter-reformation had a coherent programme (the documents of Trent) and was under central control (that of the Holy See). One of its great achievements was to raise the priesthood to a standard scarcely ever reached

before, with consequent benefit to everyone in the Church. Vincent adopted the programme of Trent, aligned himself to the Papacy, and worked for the achievement of the Church's goals at that time.

There may seem to be little surprising in all this. Yet it is surprising. Another movement was going on in France at this time; this was Jansenism, called after Cornelius Jansen; it was a kind of Catholic Calvinism or Puritanism. It was based on the teaching of theologians rather than on official Church teaching, and in this resembled the Protestant rather than the Catholic Reformation. Vincent was most vigorous in combatting this spurious reform, and he did so by constant reference both to the Papacy and the documents of Trent. Jansen claimed to base his teaching on St Augustine and Vincent declared roundly that Augustine must be interpreted in the light of Trent rather than the other way around, for the Council was infallible whereas the doctor was not. It is not at all self-evident that Vincent had to be a counter-reformation person; he could easily have been a Jansenist.

He was not a Jansenist, and Jansenism is just another forgotten heresy. But the thought must come to anyone today that the counter-reformation too is firmly buried in the past. If so, isn't Vincent de Paul also an outdated figure? We have had two councils since Trent, and while it is usual to see Vatican I as a continuation of Trent, Vatican II is almost always presented in sharp contrast to Trent. If the contrast is so sharp, then Vincent de Paul is rather someone to be against than to be for.

To emphasise the contrast between the two councils does not seem to be a balanced view. Rather there are important elements of continuity which do not usually receive enough prominence. For example, the renewed liturgy is continuous with Trent's emphasis on the Eucharist and the other sacraments; the ministry of the word is as central to the theology of Vatican II as it was to the practical thinking of Trent; and most of all, Vatican II is continuous with Trent's drive towards moral and spiritual renewal. The opening words of the first document produced by Vatican II are: "The Sacred Council has set out to impart an ever-increasing vigour to the Christian life of the faithful". The originality of Vatican II has been so widely hailed as to obscure its essential continuity with what preceded it. Consequently there has been a drastic crisis of confidence in the institutes deriving from the Trent period — certain religious orders, and seminaries as a whole. The first stage in recovering confidence must be the recognition that Trent and Vatican II complement each other rather than conflict. The next stage is to see that the new insights of Vatican II, which are most important, are not ready for instant application in all cases, any more than the new insights

which Trent had in its day were ready for instant application. This paper concludes by examining how Vincent went about the practical implementation of what Trent laid down. His policy was one of creative interpretation.

Vincent believed that the practical implementation of Trent depended on experience. Take the matter of catechetics. Trent ushered in a great period of catechetical activity. Catechisms were published to suit all kinds of people. The best known is perhaps the Catechism of the Council of Trent, or The Roman Catechism. It is a literary masterpiece. Vincent's missionaries wrote back from Madagascar looking for copies of it. He himself preferred St Robert Bellarmine's, which was more practical and imaginative. But at home in France his priests were not preaching to the three million literates, and the people of Madagascar had never seen a book in their lives. So, he made effective teaching of Catholic doctrine both to children and to adults an essential part of the missions given by his Congregation, and he insisted that the spoken word be supplemented by pictures and dramatic experiences like processions, beautiful ceremonies, and so on. The priest who wrote back from Madagascar asked for all the books he could think of, including not only the Roman Catechism and the Decrees of Trent but also the complete works of St Thomas! Vincent sent the books but included of his own accord a set of visual aids, as a gentle hint to his confrère not to be carried away by the bookishness of the counter-reformation. Vatican II is, if anything, more bookish than Trent; its own documents are at least twice as long as Trent's, and very much more complex. The way Vincent dealt with Trent speaks to us today also. It says: Learn from experience how best to communicate the message.

The second example of how Vincent interpreted Trent in the light of experience concerns seminaries. The Council had fixed twenty-four as the age for ordination, and twelve as the minimum age for entering a seminary, but had been rather vague about how the intervening twelve years were to be spent. Naturally in the few seminaries which were set up the vast majority of those who came in at twelve left as soon as they had got a secondary education. Vincent saw that two quite different kinds of seminary were needed, Trent's kind, which we today would call a minor seminary, and another kind which would prepare students immediately for ordination. In the Vincentian seminaries of Vincent's day and after, the ordinands remained for as little as ten days in some cases, though three, six, fifteen or even eighteen months eventually became normal (cf Poole, *A History of the Congregation of the Mission, 1625 — 1843*, p87). These seminaries were chiefly places of spiritual, pastoral and

moral formation, more like novitiates than houses of studies. Perhaps the Fathers of Trent would not have recognised them, any more than they would have recognised their finely polished definitions in the visual aids unpacked by the missionary in Madagascar. Nonetheless, the ultimate effectiveness of Trent depended on the existence of people like Vincent who knew how to interpret it creatively. Vatican II is probably more in need of such interpretation than even Trent was.

Experience is already teaching us to interpret Vatican II creatively. For example, the development of a married diaconate and greater lay involvement in Church functions are already clashing. Experience will show which is better, but at present it seems to lean definitely towards a more prominent involvement of the laity. Again, missionaries are not quite sure what to make of non-Christian religions in the light of Vatican II; in April 1978 I was present while a SMA priest, on the Nigeria-Benin border, and a pagan priest called the Awan Cashie, politely discussed the problems of forcing Catholic women to take part in pagan ceremonial; the Awan Cashie seemed to be well up on current theology, because he produced as his trump card that we all worshipped the one God, basically! Experience has not yet allowed us to make a creative interpretation in that area.

As a final example of how the import of Vatican II is not yet clear to us consider the new moves towards political dissent among Catholics in the light of the Declaration on Religious Freedom and the Church's social teaching. There is confusion among Catholics about the best course to adopt both in Latin America and in the Phillipines. The Vincentian message is one of strict fidelity both to the Council and to the Holy See, combined with careful attention to the unfolding lessons of experience. If there is a rider to that message it is that experience has a habit of teaching its lessons slowly. On this point we may give Vincent the last word:

It is true that I delay much before replying or doing things, but I have never yet found any matter the worse for my delaying, indeed it is rather the case that everything gets done in good time with all the necessary consideration and precaution God is much honoured by the time taken to give due consideration to what concerns his service (II 207).

A Fresh Look at Francis Clet

by Thomas Davitt

It is factually accurate to state that Francis Clet was a confrère who was martyred in China, yet it can be misleading. This happens if emphasis is placed on the second element in the statement. Biographers and illustrators have tended to do this, trying to make his martyrdom illuminate the earlier part of his life. The emphasis should rightly be placed on the first element: Francis Clet was a confrère.

Vincent de Paul and Justin De Jacobis were canonised because they lived lives of heroic virtue. Francis Clet, John Gabriel Perboyre and the martyred confrères of the French Revolution were beatified because they accepted death rather than compromise on their faith. This is something expected of every Christian in similar circumstances and it does not imply heroicity of virtue during the previous years. Francis Clet and the others were relatively ordinary confrères who happened to find themselves in historical circumstances where priests were being executed for fidelity to their vocation, and they showed that when the crunch came they had their priorities right. It is distortion of what they really were to try to make their eventual beatification mean more than it does.

Francis was born on 19 August 1748 in Grenoble, and was educated at the Royal College there.¹ This was a Jesuit college but during Francis' time there the Jesuits were suppressed in France, in 1764, and the college was taken over by secular priests. At the age of twenty-one he entered the Congregation in Lyons, in 1769; he had possibly spent a couple of years in a major seminary. He probably came into contact with the Congregation during a mission or retreat. He was ordained in 1773 and appointed to teach Moral Theology in Annecy; he spent fifteen years there, the final ones as superior.

On 6 November 1787 Antoine Jacquier, the ninth Superior General, died. The sixteenth General Assembly opened in Saint Lazare on 30 May 1788. Francis was elected a delegate for the Lyons Province, and at forty was the youngest confrère present. Jean-Felix Cayla de la Garde was elected General; he was fifty-four years old, a native of Rodez, and had been superior of the seminary there and of the one in Toulouse.

The Assembly elected an Irishman, Edward Ferris, as Third Assistant, although he was not present at the Assembly; he was superior of the seminary in Amiens.²

When the Assembly was over the new General asked Francis to remain on in Paris as Director of the seminaire. The following year the Revolution started. In his Circular Letters in 1790 and 1791 Father Cayla gives some idea of the effect of it on the Congregation in Paris as well as news of community activities elsewhere, including China. In 1773, nine years after they had been suppressed in France, Clement XIV ordered the total suppression of the Jesuits. Ten years later, by a decree of 7 December 1783, the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith handed over to the Congregation of the Mission all the missions in China which had previously been in Jesuit hands. The first Vincentian to go to China as a result of this was actually the thirteenth to go there, as there had already been four French, three Italian, three Chinese, one Portuguese and one German there. In February 1791 Father Cayla decided to send three more, two deacons who were students in Saint Lazare and a priest; as there was some doubt about the latter being ready in time for the sailing Francis volunteered to go, and was accepted; he had previously volunteered unsuccessfully.

At this time there was an Irish confrère, Robert Hanna from Newry, in Macao, the Portuguese colony in China; he spent 1788 to 1794 teaching in the seminary there before going to Peking, where he became a member of the Mathematical Academy; he died there in 1797 aged thirty-five.³ While still in Macao he received a letter from the Procurator in Saint Lazare, Jean-Francois Daudet, with the following news:

Father Clet, who had been teaching theology with success for fourteen years, came here for the General Assembly; they got to know him well enough to appreciate his worth and made him Director of the seminaire, and I think that in spite of the General's affection for you he would not let him go if there was any future for the Congregation here; he's got everything you could ask for, holiness, learning, health and charm.⁴

On 10 March 1791 Francis wrote to his eldest sister, Marie- Therese; she was the eldest of the fifteen Clets, fifteen years older than Francis who was tenth; she never married and survived all her siblings, dying a year after Francis, aged eighty-eight. After telling her he was off to China he continued:

I've about ten days left to get to Lorient where I'm to board ship; it's doubtful if I'll be able to have a reply from you before I leave Paris, so lose no time in answering. As I'll be running a great

many risks, and since I probably won't have the pleasure of seeing you, I think I should put my affairs in order in case my life should outlast yours; if you outlive me there's no problem as my will is made. But it's important to fix things up for any eventuality; I'm not handing you over complete control of all my possessions because, absolutely speaking, I could come back, and then, if you were dead, I'd have no claim. Besides, since ships leave for China every year I'll be able to receive some money enabling me to make little gifts to facilitate conversions. So, my idea is to hand over to you ownership of my rights, apart from an annual allowance of 300 francs. It's not that I'm going to claim that amount each year, except perhaps after your death; I'd be quite happy to get 200, or even less if you couldn't afford that. You realise that by this arrangement you'll have to re-make your will, naming someone you think suitable as your heir; and if you continue to have, as no doubt you will, some kindly feelings towards me you'll be able, on your own authority, to make me an allowance which will add something to what I hold on to for my rights. Let me know as soon as possible what you think of this, but I must tell you that if I don't have your answer by the last day of my stay in Paris I'll settle things as I have explained, rather than leave your affairs and mine in a mess from which it will be very hard to escape later on.

You can easily imagine that a journey as long as the one I'm making calls for an exceptional sum of money. I need 1,000 francs, and Father Daudet, our Bursar, is willing to advance me this sum on the undertaking I gave him that you would repay him in a short time. I'm asking you to borrow this amount if you have no other way of meeting my request; but remember that if you repay Father Daudet by means of a bill of exchange drawn on some merchant, it will certainly be paid in assignats (Government promissory notes) on which 5½% or even more will be lost in converting them into cash; so he'll have to take this loss into account since it's not right that he should be at a loss in giving me necessary help. Anyway, to make up for this exceptional surcharge I'll have the notary include a statement that I won't have the right to ask for my allowance until three years after the drawing up of the agreement. (D 66 ff)⁵

His sister got the letter in time, made the expected attempt to dissuade him, and received his answer, written the evening before his departure from Paris; he wrote:

I could, of course, be making a mistake, but at least I'm in good

faith. If God doesn't bless my attempt I'll cut my losses, admit I was wrong, and in future be more on my guard against the illusions of my imagination or vanity; the experience will teach me a bit of sense. (L 57)

On their way to Lorient the three made their final overnight stop at the seminary in Vannes, where Pierfe-Rene Rogue was professor in dogma; he would be guillotined five years later. They sailed from Lorient in early April 1791.

Since the Propaganda decree of 1783 three French confrères and Robert Hanna had been sent from Paris, three Portuguese confrères had gone from their Province, and three Chinese had joined the Congregation; this meant that Francis and his two companions became numbers 25, 26 and 27 in the chronological list of Vincentians in China.⁶ The two deacons were Louis-Francois Lamiot and Augustin-Louis Pesnée, and on arrival in Macao they were ordained priests. The former was appointed to Peking, and the latter, with Francis, to work in rural areas. Pesne died within four years.

Francis wrote his first letter to his sister on 15 October 1792 to let her know he had arrived at his final destination, in Kiang-si:

At the moment I'm living in a house which is rather large but totally dilapidated; they're going to start repairing it at once, and as it's wooden it won't be unhealthy in the winter, which, anyway, isn't very bad in these parts. A new life is starting for me, re-awakening religion in former Christians who have been left to themselves for several years, and also converting pagans; that, I hope, will be my work till death. (D 126)

Kiang-si was one of the most populous and fertile regions yet its Catholic community was one of the poorest and most neglected; when Francis arrived they had last seen a priest in 1787, a Chinese Jesuit. Francis was the only European in a large area and felt the isolation very much. A year later he was changed to Hou-Kouang and appointed local superior for a scattered group of confrères.

The language was a big problem for a man of forty-four.⁷ In 1798 he wrote to his brother, a Carthusian:

The Chinese language is hopeless. The characters which make it up don't represent sounds, but ideas; this means that there's a huge number of them. I was too old on coming to China to get a good working knowledge of them...I know barely enough for ordinary daily living, for hearing confessions and for giving some ad vice to Christians. (D 130,135)

Two years later he was repeating the same sort of thing, but added:

It's much better for them to have me, ignorant and all as I am, than to have no priest... (D 135)

He never mastered the written language at all, and even eighteen years after his arrival this still caused difficulties; he had to write to a Chinese confrère, Paul Song:

I have to write to you in Latin because you misunderstood the words of my letter written in French ... (D 235)

That is jumping ahead, and getting away from the 1798 letter to his brother which begins:

My very dear brother,

It's now seven years since I sailed from the waters of our unfortunate country to go to China, where I arrived safely after a six-month voyage; the first family news I got was a very short letter from you from Rome, dated 25 December 1796. It referred to two earlier longer ones, but they never reached me. This letter, short and all as it was, was a great relief to me because it let me know that at least up to a certain date none of my brothers or sisters had been a victim of the Revolution. (D 181)

He expresses his views on the Revolution later:

It's better to be in China than in France; our pagans don't go in for anything like the atrocities of your anti-religious people, who prove the truth of *corruptio optimi pessima* ... (D 188)

The letter also has his views on the missionary scene:

Conversions of pagans are rare here; they see the scandal of some bad Christians and they refuse to be instructed in a religion so badly lived-up to by those who profess it; they see only the bad and shut their eyes to the vast majority who live lives in keeping with the Gospel. Anyway, the number of missionaries is too small... (D 192)

At first I worked for a year in Kiang-si where, among other things, I baptised something over a hundred adults who were reasonably well instructed. I could have baptised a far greater number, who were strongly urging me to grant them this favour, but they didn't seem well enough prepared, and we've noticed that catechumens who are baptised too easily apostatise equally easily ... (D 142)

Since I haven't got the spirit of prayer I don't draw down the blessings of Heaven on my pastoral work. Having only a mediocre interior life my pastoral work does not rise above that level ... (L 120) My being transplanted to a country and climate so different from ours hasn't affected my health in any way; our food is almost the same as in Europe, apart from wine which is too scarce

to drink; the little we have is kept for mass. We eat wheaten bread, unless we go for rice which is the usual food for the Chinese; we have fowl, pork and vegetables. (D 137)

A little over a year later he has another letter to the same brother, mentioning that letters are still not getting through to China; he also has further comments on the Revolution and his health:

We have some lax Christians but, thank God, we've neither philosophers nor female theologians ... Our ears are never assaulted with blasphemies, nor the word 'liberty'. All things considered, there are more Christians in China than in France ... My health is keeping up; since I got here I've been sick several times, but nothing really serious. I'm slim now instead of fat, so it's now easier for me to go across mountains. I make all my trips on foot as I find it less tiring than on horseback ... (D 188, 189, 195)

In 1802 he is still worrying about his family and how it was faring:

My very dear brother,

During 1801I received your letter of 2 May 1799; I've no way of knowing if you got my ones; this is the third time I've taken pen in hand to pass on some news of myself and to ask for some news from you. I received only two letters from you, both very short, which pre-supposed other longer ones which, apparently, had family news in detail. I wrote also to the eldest sister but heard nothing from her; maybe she didn't get mine either. However that may be, your letter was extremely welcome as it let me know that in the midst of that universal upheaval none of the family had met a violent death, something I had been very much afraid of... (D 186-7)

He then goes on to speak of his own life:

For more than fifteen years there has been no religious persecution of any sort, although we can't preach publicly because the Emperor allows missionaries only in the capital and not down the country; we slip secretly into those areas. Our ministry has to be secret and undercover as a result; if we were to decide to preach openly we'd probably be arrested and deported back to our own country. (D 190-1)

He adds, though, that his pagan neighbours know he is a European and a priest; they have seen him publicly officiate at funerals, in vestments. None of them say anything about this to the authorities, so he can add:

I see no gleam of hope for martyrdom; anyway, I've no trouble in convincing myself that I don't deserve it. All the same, our life is not without danger as, over the past six years, large numbers of

Chinese have rebelled against the government. (D 175)

After 1802 we have no more letters to his brother. Most of the other surviving letters were written to Paul Song, the Chinese confrère already mentioned; he was born in 1774 and ordained in 1803, and appointed to work with Francis. On his arrival at the residence for the first time he found that Francis was away but had left a letter for him:

Reverend and dear confrère,

The grace of our Lord be ever with us!

What a pleasant surprise for me to hear of your arrival in our mountains! I don't congratulate you on your arrival since, by leaving the capital and therefore dear Father Ghislain, you lose more than you gain; nothing can make up for being away from him. However, I congratulate myself on getting a dedicated fellow-worker who will help me to cultivate the Lord's vineyard. What increases my joy and my trust is that you came without any sinister prejudice against the European with whom you have to live; because of this I'm confident there'll be complete understanding between us, understanding which will underlie all our plans for the glory of God. If at any time I was to become prejudiced against you, or you against me, from that moment on no more good could be achieved *quia Deus non est Deus dissensionis sed pacts*. I'm telling you this because I must warn you that you need a certain amount of patience to live with me; I suggest you prepare for this while I'm away. The fact that I'm absent means that I can't for the moment discuss with you the work you'll be doing when the summer heat is over; I won't let you start work until the autumn. Have a chat with dear Father Tchang; I rely more on his prudence than I do on myself. Be on your guard against indiscreet zeal, wanting to get everything done at once; this ruins a missionary's health and forces him to take time off for convalescence, during which the enemy rushes in to sow cockle in the field.

Since I left Father Tchang our Apostolic Administrator has renewed my faculties, so now in his name I renew yours in accordance with the document I'm sending Father Tchang; he'll pass it on to you to copy out for yourself so that you can act accordingly. He'll also show you the previous Pastoral Letter to which the Administrator refers.

I expect you got my letter answering the one you sent me some months ago. I didn't expect to have the pleasure of speaking to you face to face at that time and now that pleasure, for God's good

reasons, has been put off for some more months. Looking forward to that time I assure you of the deep respect and friendship with which I am, reverend and dear confrère,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

Clet, upCM (D 205-6)

Francis' warning to Song about his health must have been necessary because two years later he wrote:

I hear your health is getting worse; you keep denying this but no one believes you. (D 231)

Francis wrote to his scattered community later on:

A retreat, even a short one, renews our spiritual strength which continuous ministry weakens little by little. On retreat, in recollection and prayer, we pool all our insights so that we can draw up a mission program, a plan of campaign which will be the missionaries' *vade-mecum*, so that no matter how far away we may be from each other there will be unity of action, and the Spirit of God, who is one, will bless all our work. (L 132-3)

Paul Song was not too good at being present at such community functions. In one letter Francis told him that a French confrère, Lazare-Marius Dumazel, had just arrived and was hoping to see Song

... at the residence where we are all planning to meet during the period of the great heat. Father Chen is back; Father Ho will be back from Fang-Hien in ten days at the most; I'll be back after visiting Chang-pe-yu-Keon. You'd certainly add to our joy if you could bring our community up to five. (L 134)

This had no effect, so Francis has to write again:

I presume you're back at the house; if you're still out on your rounds I hope that as soon as you get my letter you'll do what I strongly recommend, or even order; go back to the house and stay there doing no work until at least the Assumption, or even later if the heat is still as bad as at present. (D 222)

Still no result, so Francis tried a different tone:

In a few days we'll be four at the house, all of whom send you friendly greetings and want you to come back, and are sad that your poor health prevents your speedy return. (L 134)

The arrival of Dumazel was the occasion of an unfortunate incident with Song; he had first heard about it on the grapevine, and took a poor view of this; Francis had to placate him:

It would have been the right thing for me to have made your heart happy by passing on the very welcome news of our dear Father Dumazel's arrival; however, lack of opportunity, the hope

of your early return, and a certain amount of laziness all combined to keep me silent on the matter. (D 217-8)

Dumazel's arrival was also the occasion for Francis to raise something else, not for the first time. He never wanted to be the local superior and always hoped another Frenchman would arrive to take over from him; almost every time he wrote to Peking he put in a plea to get off the job, and he also used to refer to the matter in letters to Song:

Normally when I'm away act as superior in all matters; everyone knows I'm unfit for the responsibility: (D 224)

or:

I've a great dislike of being superior but they forced me to accept, in spite of my obvious unsuitability. (D 219)

In spite of these, and many similar statements, he seems to have been well capable of carrying out his duties.

Another source of trouble with Song was that he tended to be scrupulous, going back over parts of his breviary if he felt he had let his attention wander. In a letter of 19 November 1807 Francis explained, like the ex-professor of moral theology that he was, all about grades of attention, ending up this way:

Therefore I order you to say your breviary and other prayers in a common-sense way, never going back over them, provided you prepared yourself for these actions by a moment of recollection in the presence of God. (D 243)

All these various frictions between himself and his superior caused Song to ask for a change of appointment, back to Peking. Francis, of course, learnt of this request, and wrote to him:

You want to go back to the capital, and you'll probably get your way next year. If this departure is for God's glory and your spiritual good I congratulate you and am glad of it *in Domino*. By leaving you lose nothing and gain much. I'm the only one who loses by our parting ... (D 237)

In the letter he admits that he also would like a change of appointment: For eight years now I've wanted to be relieved of the pastoral burden and get into student formation; I've always found the ministry of the confessional a crushing load. I've written to Fathers Raux and Ghislain about this and they promised to appoint me to a house some distance from Peking where I'd be given charge of the young students, but I've almost given up hope of this; blessed be God! Obedience is better than any sacrifice. Hearing confessions is my cross; perhaps God wants me to carry it till death; may his will be done. (D 289)

Neither of them got their hoped-for changes, and two letters of the following year show that things remained very much the same between them:

It's important, and justice demands it, that I quickly put you right about a- wrong meaning you took from a sentence in Father Lamiot's letter which you didn't understand. Read over again carefully the bit in question and you'll see that it doesn't refer to Paul Song but to a young man from Han-keou called Francois Lieou; I sent him to Peking about four years ago as a student for our Congregation; he was dismissed for laziness, lack of application and want of steadiness. When Father Laimot saw he was no good at study he tried him working with his hands, *verbi gratia* at watchmaking and printing, but since he showed a similar lack of interest he was put out digging. So, re-read it and join me in a good laugh at your mistake. How could you have thought I'd be so stupid as to give you a letter to read which contained complaints about yourself? (D 234-5)

Towards the end of the year Francis had to remind him that real spirituality isn't scrupulous. (D 242)

The arrival of Dumazel, referred to already out of chronological sequence, was in 1810, he had been expected for some time. Early that year Francis, had nearly died, as he told Father Ghislain in Peking in a letter:

There was very nearly question of my being unable to have any further communication with you except in Heaven. The day after the Epiphany I was attacked by a chong-hang-ping, a sort of pleurisy, I think, which in a couple of days reduced me to stich a state that the doctors feared for my life. A fierce sweat came on so conveniently to help them that when Father Ho arrived — I had sent for him to give me the last sacraments — he found me out of danger. At the height of my illness I was thinking of Father Dumazel and saying to myself: I'll never see this new, dear comfrefre ... (L 130)

That led on, naturally enough, to raising once again the matter of being relieved of the superiority:

I'm asking you to remember what you and Father Raux promised me several times, that the arrival of a European would mean that I'd get off being superior, an appointment I never agreed with; you know I was given this job only because of the need to make do with what was available. (D 219-220)

Later in the year he returned to the same theme, after Dumazel has

safely arrived:

I can now die happy since I have a successor who can repair my stupid mistakes and I seriously urge you to make him my replacement pure and simple; what I mean is that you appoint him superior instead of me. I've never had the knack of getting myself either loved or feared; I'm tired of being in charge ... (D 220)

In another part of the letter he expresses an opinion of Dumazel which probably would have militated against his appointment:

He's much more in need of a bridle than spurs; he always wants to go at full gallop; if you stop him he gets into bad form and easily gives in to depression. (D 295)

Paul Song was still a bit of a problem in 1810:

Your letter gave me both joy and sorrow; joy that your health is good, sorrow that your return is further postponed, till the sixth moon. Actually eight months have passed since you set out for Ho-nan where you were to hear four hundred confessions; now obviously eight months are not needed for four hundred confessions, so, seeing that you were slow about returning, I was afraid that you had caught some illness. Now be quite sure I am not accusing you of laziness ... (D227-8)

Later the same year he writes:

I'll tell you in a whisper that everyone here is very surprised at your long absence; I cover up for you by saying your health isn't good ... I readily give you the benefit of the doubt that you've done all you could and all you should, since I know how delicate your conscience is ... (D 230)

Song complained to Father Ghislain in Peking about Francis, which was the occasion of the following from Francis:

Father Ghislain complains very strongly in a letter he wrote to me that I give my confrères more work than they can handle, so much in fact that even the strongest constitutions are ruined, and that I never allow them to have a break. I'm not annoyed that people complain about me to superiors; I only wish they'd make such strong complaints that my superiors would be forced to relieve me of a weight or burden which I can't carry. Anyway, making an examination of conscience I find that I've never had the intention of ruining confrères' health by work beyond their capacities. Therefore I urge you to take care of your health because I've always said that it's better to live for the glory of God than to die for it, and also for the work of our Congregation, of which you are a member; this is especially so in China where priests are scarce.

(D 238-9)

The year of that letter, 1811, was a very significant one for two reasons: Paul Song finally got over his prejudices and suspicions of Francis and became a great admirer of his: there must have been something of that there all the time, because he kept all the letters he received from him. The second important happening in 1811 was that anti-Christian persecution again broke out. A Chinese priest was arrested for something or other; unfortunately he was carrying documents which marked out the territorial divisions of ecclesiastical administration, which the authorities interpreted as plans for a Christian take-over of the civil administration; as a result, priests were expelled and churches burnt. To avoid such misinterpretation again Francis wrote his letters in allegorical form:

Business in Babylon is precarious. The shop in the west is closed; the assistants sold everything and left of their own accord. The shop in the east and the one on the south have also sold everything and the assistants are ready to leave at the first sign. In the northern shop it's still business as usual. (D 277)

This was his way of letting Song know about the four churches of Peking. In the same year he used the same allegorical form to Father Richenet in Canton when talking about China; about France he was more explicit:

Bonaparte's carry-on proves more and more that his religion is in proportion to his politics; but at least he's less of a hypocrite than Charles V who, after imprisoning the Pope, had prayers for his delivery said throughout the land. (D 283-4)

For the years 1812-1820 we have far less information about Francis than for the earlier years. In April 1813 he sent a long Latin letter to each member of his scattered community. He starts by calling for unity among themselves as a community, and for the avoidance of the sort of dissensions which occurred in the early church in Corinth, where Paul, Cephas and Apollo all had their fans; he continued:

While I'm still alive and before fast-approaching death snatches me away to appear before the awesome Judge who will demand an account of my stewardship it seems a good idea to pass on some advice to my confrères, whose care has been entrusted to me in spite of my unsuitability and reluctance ... (D 252)

He then outlines various areas where confrères should have a uniform approach in their ministry. Every Sunday and feastday each one who was celebrating a public mass should read out a specified section of the Chinese catechism, clearly, distinctly and slowly; to avoid tired knees

the people are to be allowed to stand during this. The reading is to be from the old catechism and not the new one which leaves out many things. Then come points about drunkenness at weddings; Christians can't excuse themselves by saying that this is a Chinese custom; Christ said "I am the truth", not "I am the custom". Towards the end of the letter he says:

But all these rules, and any which may be added later, will be of little or no good if we don't take care that our people see us as true "stewards entrusted with the mysteries of God", so that each of us can say with St Paul: "Be imitators of me as I am of Christ". We should remember these words: "Whose friend is he, that is his own enemy?".⁸ We have to avoid being misled by indiscreet zeal and letting all our time be taken up with our pastoral ministry to others. We should follow in the footsteps of the Apostles who said: "We will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and the service of the word". (D 259-260)

In the earlier part of the letter he had made reference to approaching death; he was 65 that year. Two years later, on 28 December 1815, he wrote to Paul Song:

I had the idea of going over to see you next Spring, staying for a few days rest, and then returning to our house, but Father Dumazel says I'm too old and too much needed here to take on such a journey. (D 297-8, n)

In 1818 some sort of a sore developed on one of his ankles and kept him inactive for months. It must have cleared up, though, as he suddenly had to do a lot of travelling, as he told Lamiot in a letter:

Our first cross is the death of Father Dumazel in Chang-tsin-hien; in his last moments he was assisted by Father Song ... Our second cross is the capture of Father Chen. He was sold by a new Judas for 20,000 pence to some civil guards and other wretches, of which China is so full, called Houo-hoei. He was taken to Kou-tching and sent from there to Ou-tchang-fou with fifteen or eighteen Christians who were arrested at more or less the same time; his fate hasn't yet been decided. This persecution we're going through started in the first few days of the first moon this year in this way: A pagan, known everywhere as a bad lot, made a charge against me eight years ago, and all he achieved was to get himself twenty lashes. This year he had a more successful idea. He set fire to his house and put the blame on two families, saying I had put them up to it. He accused even Fathers Ho and Ngay; the latter, without saying a word, took off to Chang-tsin-hien. This

ridiculous slander was believed in Court. The capture of Father Chen a few days later made things worse. (D 309-11)

Then come details of Francis “going on the run” with a price on his head, staying short spells in safe hiding places and having some providential escapes; Father Ho was with him. He eventually got to Ho-nan, from where he wrote the letter; it ends this way:

While waiting for a chance to get back to our Kou-tching mountains I’ll look after the administration of Ho-nan. My health is keeping up in spite of our setbacks and my more than seventy years. I want none of this world’s goods, apart from a decent watch; only one of the ones you sent two years ago was any good. The others began by gaining an hour every day, and later two hours; then they all contracted a recurrent fever which led to their deaths; so, if you’ve anything in the line of a decent watch I’d like you to send it along, and some money after it... (D 314)

He was eventually caught on Trinity Sunday, 16 June 1819; he was betrayed by a schoolmaster, the one who had betrayed Father Chen the previous year. This man was a Catholic who led a scandalous life and who had been warned severely by Francis about his conduct, which made him a bitter enemy of priests. The following year he wrote to a confrère in Macao:

My capture was due to the imprudence of a family who used always assure me, while I was staying with them, that I had nothing to fear. (L 167)

In the middle of July he was transferred to Ou-tchang-fou, the capital of the province where he had spent most of his time; the journey was about 320 miles and took twenty days; he was handcuffed, wearing neck and foot chains.

Around the same time several Catholic families were arrested, and so was Lamiot in “Peking. Francis got the idea that he was indirectly responsible for these arrests; he was convinced that subtle questioning by his judges had elicited information from him which led to the arrests. In his letters of this period he mentions that he was guilty of this and therefore was being justly punished. On 28 December 1819 he wrote to Richenet:

The mandarin’s idea was to send me to a jail where I’d be the only Christian and where perhaps I’d die through want of help; I was very weak after my stay in Ho-nan jails and my long journey and a kind Providence arranged it that my jailers wouldn’t accept me. I was in a very bad way, very thin, with a long beard crawling with lice, a rather dirty shirt over a similar pair of pants, all of

which indicated a man without money. Because of their refusal I had to be taken to another jail nearby where I had the pleasure of meeting Father Chen and ten good Christians, all in the one room. We have morning and evening prayer in common, and can even celebrate feastdays; no one bothers us, neither the jailers nor the crowd of pagan prisoners who occupy other rooms all around a large open yard; we are free to roam around this from morning till evening. When I saw all this I must admit that I couldn't help weeping with joy, consoled by the fatherly care God has for his undeserving servant and his faithful children; only for me they couldn't get absolution. We all went to confession, and Father Tchang, who maintains an underground ministry to the Christian communities round about this town, celebrated mass in a nearby house and brought Communion to us all, without our fellow-prisoners noticing ...

Father Lamiot's safety was endangered by me. He has arrived here and it seems his case will have a happy ending. Mine, though, is almost over; I've just been told I'll be executed shortly, perhaps tomorrow. Make sure you don't think of me as a martyr; my imprudence jeopardised both our house in Peking and some Christian communities who are now being persecuted, so I can be thought of only as someone who murdered several souls, who is guilty of want of respect towards God, and who is getting only what he deserves. (D 321 ff)

He also mentions in this letter that he has only just heard of the official legal re-establishment of the Congregation in France, where it had been suppressed at the Revolution.

As a matter of fact Francis was not responsible for Lamiot's arrest; he was arrested because letters found in the confrères' house in Houkouang had his signature; at that time he was the only other French confrère in China. He was found not guilty of any charge and released; he died in Macao eleven years later. Francis and Chen were found guilty on 1 January 1820; in the case of Francis his crime was clearly spelt out: he had deceived and corrupted Chinese people by preaching Christianity to them. His sentence was strangulation on a gibbet; as this had to be confirmed by the Emperor there was an interval of seven weeks between sentence and execution.

This was a rather interesting period in his life. The prison was one of detention, not punishment. The big wooden board around his neck, and the handcuffs and chains, shown in many drawings of him, were features only of his appearances in Court and were described by him as

his ornaments, which he did not wear in prison. The kneeling on chains, mentioned as part of his sufferings, seems to have been confined to his short spell in Ho-nan jail. In the letter to Richenet already quoted he explained the different treatment he had received:

In Ho-nan the mandarins who dealt with me were rather cruel, but the ones here are very kind; they are considerate towards us and invite us to sit down when the Court hearings are too prolonged; on three occasions they got us dinner when they heard we hadn't eaten, and once they asked if it was a day of abstinence, and when we said "no" they got us meat. (D341)

He also used the freedom of the prison regime to write a letter to the French newspapers, contrasting Chinese and French jails; it is rather long but some of it is worth quoting:

As I often heard in France of dungeons and gloomy cells where prisoners are locked up until the end of their trial I feel obliged to give you a brief description of Chinese prisons, if only to make Christians blush at being less human than the Chinese towards the unfortunate victims of human vengeance, sad prelude to the divine vengeance from which so little is done to save them. I can speak from experience since in being transferred from Ho-nan to Ou-tchang-fou I passed through twenty-seven jails. Now, nowhere are there dungeons or gloomy cells. In the jail I am in at the moment there are murderers, robbers, thieves; from dawn till dusk they all enjoy the freedom to walk about, to play in a huge yard, and breathe the fresh air so necessary for health. I saw a man who had committed the horrible crime of poisoning his mother, and he had the freedom of that yard till the day of his execution ... This yard is swept every day and kept very clean ... the inside of the building is like a long hall. This huge room is lit by a big door with a window each side; the door is locked only at night. The prisoners sleep side by side on planks, which are raised a foot above the floor to avoid the damp. When it begins to get cold in winter each prisoner is given a straw mat to keep out the cold, and when it gets hotter in summer they are given fans to counteract the heat... I must not forget to mention that Chinese kindness goes so far as to give the prisoners lots of tea or cool drinks in hot weather, and in winter padded clothing for the worst-off. In France they preach about kindness to prisoners; the so-called philosophers, motivated rather by the chance of insulting our holy religion than by charity, raise their voices to rant against the severity, not to say the inhumanity, shown to prisoners; I raise my

dying voice to praise the pagans above the Christians. Preachers in Christian pulpits ask the faithful to show charity to prisoners; I ask Christianity, the goodness of our rulers, the care of our judges, to look at the huge number of wretches who die thousands and thousands of times before they actually give up their lives in their final suffering. The help which good people give to prisoners is only for a moment; it is up to the civil authorities, who have a duty in the matter, to better their lot so that with patience and resignation they can face their approaching execution; this is a punishment which gives them an opportunity of satisfying divine justice and gives them the right to the eternal happiness promised to repentant sinners... (D 345 ff)

The prisoners had access to cookers to prepare their own meals, and Francis and Chen employed a messenger to do their shopping for them; neighbouring Christians also sent in food, mainly meat, fish and fruit.

The letter was set to a confrère in Paris with instructions to obtain the Superior General's permission to send it to the papers, with the author's name suppressed; the covering letter had this postscript:

Today 26 January, I am still alive. Yesterday, the feast of the conversion of St Paul, a day to be remembered for the foundation of our Congregation, Father Chen and I received Communion from Father Tchang, and we had a feastday dinner at mid-day, three priests and six laymen; two were prisoners and four visitors. The only one missing was Father Lamiot, who paid for the meal. (D 348)

In these weeks before his sentence was confirmed Francis found himself in a rather unexpected role, considering his circumstances. Lamiot asked him to mediate in a dispute which had arisen between the French and Portuguese confrères in Peking. It would appear that Lamiot himself was in fact the person at fault; he was being too French in some matters, and also was trying to rush things. Several letters were exchanged between Francis and the Portuguese, and then Francis wrote to Lamiot, telling him off in a quiet way; he reminded him that Adrien Bourdoise was too impetuous while Vincent de Paul took things more quietly; Bourdoise called Vincent a wet hen, but Francis reminded Lamiot that Vincent's methods produced better results than those of Bourdoise. (D 358) The very last letter Francis wrote was to Lamiot, winding up this matter:

Father and very dear Superior,

Rightly or wrongly I consider I have done the job you gave me; all that's now left is to prepare for dying, which attracts me more than living on. I must admit I think I'm better off than you;

here I am not far from harbour, I hope, while you are still out on the open sea. But have confidence; the storms which will toss you about will drive you towards the harbour while they send lots of others down to the bottom of the sea. Anyway, alive or dead, you can be sure I'll never forget you; do the same for me.

One thing that still bothers me is the business about the three Christian communities of Ho-nan whom I injured both spiritually and temporally by my imprudent admissions before the mandarin. To ease my conscience I'm very anxious that they should be helped spiritually and temporally in the future. The three areas are Sse-tchouang, Kio-chang and Lou-y-hien.

This is perhaps my last sign of life to you.

Clet

P.S. Should I burn the notes you sent me, or return them to you?
(L 192)

On the morning of 18 February 1820 he was informed that the Emperor had confirmed his sentence; he received absolution from Chen and was taken out and strangled.

Notes

1. There was an older brother named François, who became a Carthusian; our confrère was baptised François-Régis, in honour of St Jean-François Régis.
2. *Recueil des Principales Circulaires des Supérieurs Généraux de la Congregation de la Mission*, (Paris 1879), p. 203, p. 212.
3. “Close application to study brought on an illness which developed into chest disease”. Patrick Boyle CM, *Some Irish Vincentians in China*, (Dublin 1918), p. 15.
4. M. Demimuid, *Vie du Vénérable François-Régis Clet*, (Paris 1893), p. 64.
5. Although Francis Clet’s letters have been published in Peking in 1944, I have been unable so far to see a copy; excerpts are scattered through the two main biographies, those of Demimuid (above) and Larigaldie: G. de Montgesty (pseudonym of Gabriel Larigaldie CM), *Le Bienheureux François-Régis Clet*, (Paris 1906).
The excerpts used here are translated from these works and are identified by the page number preceded by the initial D or L. Larigaldie appears to have altered the wording of the letters in places.
6. Joseph van den Brandt CM, *Les Lazaristes en Chine*, (Peking 1936).
7. John Gabriel Perboyre wrote in 1835: “I’m told Father Clet spoke it only with great difficulty”: *Lettres du Bienheureux Jean-Gabriel Perboyre*, edited by Joseph van den Brandt CM, (Peking 1940), p. 119.
8. Ecclesiasticus 14:5, Knox translation.

Provincial Archives

CIRCULARS OF THE SUPERIORS GENERAL

As has been the custom until comparatively recently, the Superior General in his annual New Year Circular would communicate to the Congregation the important events of the previous years. The following extracts, taken from the collected "Circulaires des Superieurs Generaux", give the earliest references to our Province.

(a) 1 January 1840. Father Nozo, Superior General.

"The Directors and Founders of the Minor Seminary of Dublin have requested to be associated with us, and to link their house with our little Congregation. After mature consideration we have agreed to accede to their repeated requests. Already MM Dowley and Kickham, the directors of this seminary, have come here as novices and spent about six months in our intern seminary. There they gave the greatest edification and showed sufficient signs of having a vocation to our state. On their return to Ireland, necessitated by business connected with their house, they have sent us another seminarist endowed with excellent qualities who fulfills with fervour all the exercises of the seminary.

If this union is effected — as there is every ground for so hoping — it will be to Ireland's advantage, as it will make available the blessing of the missions. It will also be advantageous for many of our other houses where missionaries with a knowledge of English are needed" (II, 514-515).

(b) 1 January 1841. Father Nozo, Superior General.

"We can now state that we have a foundation in Ireland. This island, visited by the missioners whom our blessed Founder sent to combat the fanaticism of Cromwell, has never forgotten their services. A group was established there under the name of "priests of St Vincent": these good ecclesiastics strove to imitate his virtues and to be permeated with his spirit of zeal and charity. Learning subsequently of the progress of the Congregation, they decided to unite with it, and wrote to this effect. The ensuing correspondence led their Superior to come to Paris with one of his companions. When he understood the end of our Company, he requested that he and his companions be permitted to join it. After a

fairly lengthy stay to learn, and be formed by, our rules, he returned to his Irish confrères to instruct them in the Congregation's way of life. But as this seemed insufficient, they requested that a confrère go to Ireland to initiate them more fully into the spirit of our Institute. We sent a confrère who remained for several months for this purpose. These good ecclesiastics are high in their praise for this missionary who guided them in their new way of life, while this zealous and esteemed confrère in his turn has been both satisfied and edified by the good dispositions of these new disciples of St Vincent. This year God has blessed their house in a special way by sending to it a large number of postulants — which gives grounds for hoping that the Congregation is destined to develop in Ireland. Besides the seminary where they train young clerics, they have charge of St Peter's church near Dublin. Crowds come there seeking men worthy of their confidence, seeking also to hear simple and moving sermons. This church has become the centre of many sodalities which contribute greatly to the glory of God and the sanctification souls. Thus through his sons is fulfilled the prophesy made by St Vincent two centuries ago when Cromwell was massacring the catholics. He then wrote to one of his confrères: 'The blood of these martyrs shall not be forgotten before God but sooner or later it shall be the seed of new Christians'." (II, 522-523)

(c) 1 January 1842. Father Poussou, Vicar General.

"The mission of Ireland, recently united to the Congregation, already fulfills in a very consoling manner the hopes held out in its regard; for apart from the seven seminarists or students in the Maison Mère, six others have taken their vows in Dublin. Everything indicates that the numbers will continue to grow. All are exemplary in their regularity, and their work is blessed". (II, 539)

(d) 1 January 1843. Father Poussou, Vicar General.

"The foundation established in Ireland some years ago seems destined to produce great fruit. The confrères belonging to this new mission are, it is true, few in number. Only seven have made their vows. But the report their Superior has made is very consoling and gives grounds of great hope for the future. Their conduct', he tells me, 'leaves nothing to be desired under any head: they work, they teach, they give missions, and do whatever they are asked with much edification, and the good God blesses all their works.'

They began giving missions in the first days of November. After a week, the Director of the mission wrote: 'Not only the town being evan-

gelised, but the countryside for a radius of ten miles, was the scene of much movement. Work was suspended and crowds came from all parts to hear the missionaries'. There is nothing more admirable', says this dear confrère, 'than to see a crowd of men, visibly touched by grace, come a distance of several miles, at the risk of almost certain dismissal by their Protestant employers, and remaining here three or four days, awaiting their turn to go to confession'. Such beginnings certainly lead us to believe that Divine Providence reserves for the Little Company in Ireland an abundant harvest of the fruits of salvation". (II, 550-551)

(e) 1 January 1844. Father Etienne, Superior General.

"I will end this short account of the state of the Congregation throughout the world with some words about our interesting house in Ireland. All correspondence coming from there lead us to bless the Lord for choosing the Little Company to provide useful service to the Church in that land to which St Vincent showed such a tender affection and where our predecessors gave such shining examples of virtue. Already the number of our confrères is sufficiently great to allow them give missions and clergy retreats without the direction of their College and parish in Dublin suffering as a result. I have heard from Father Dowley himself — the superior of this house — who recently visited Paris, very consoling details about the developments of this growing work, developments which point to a flourishing future.

Thus this grain of mustard seed, watered by the blessings of heaven, already has taken deep roots. It is beginning to shoot forth fruitful branches and the beauty of its first fruits encourage us to have great hopes for the future. Similar means should produce similar results. Our confrères in Ireland follow in the footsteps of our Fathers, follow in those of St Vincent — with simplicity, with unshakeable fidelity to the pious practices recommended by our holy rules, with deep humility, and a complete disregard for publicity and any human consideration. We cannot therefore doubt that they will be most successful and that God will make use of their ministry to manifest His merciful designs". (III, 46)

(f) 1 January 1845. Father Etienne, Superior General.

"Providence seems to wish to console us somewhat through the blessings it showers down on our newly-founded group in Ireland. They show a stability and a development which appeared to indicate that the time had come to establish there an internal seminaire. We have done this during the year. The' beginnings have been so encouraging that we

are fully confident it will become in a short time one of the most interesting in the Congregation”.

(g) 1 January 1846. Father Etienne, Superior General.

“On the other hand Providence makes amends to us by the abundance of the blessings it showers down on our growing foundation in Ireland. The general confidence, shown in our missionaries, the success which crowns their labours, are very clear indications of the role they are to play in the merciful designs which Providence now manifests towards England. The beginning of this work bears clearly the stamp of God’s work. Its development, and the blessed fruits already produced, bear the same mark. What is even more consoling, the spirit animating these first workers in Ireland is precisely the same as that which animated those who, with St Vincent, inaugurated the work of the Company. How can we fail to see the new and vast field offered to our zeal which gives promise of a rich harvest in the British Isles?” (III, 93)

(h) 1 January 1847. Father Etienne, Superior General.

“The second consolation the Lord granted me during the year just ended was to visit the expanding work of our Irish foundation. I find it impossible to describe to you the emotions I experienced during my short stay in that country so rich in memories left by St Vincent and the Company, and in the midst of this interesting family which offers us such great success and such magnificent hope. I will merely say to you that I saw there the same picture the Company itself presented at its birth when it came forth from the hands of our holy Founder: the same spirit, the same fervour, the same simplicity, the same union, the same zeal for the salvation of the poor country people; and as well, the same odour of sanctity spreading far and wide and engendering everywhere edification and love of the name of St Vincent”. (III, 109)

(i) 1 January 1849. Father Etienne, Superior General.

“In Ireland, the success and the rapid development of our works; the ever increasing number of vocations and the foundation of a new house in Cork, have led us from the start of last year to erect this important part of the family of St Vincent into a Province of the Company. We have named as Visitor the venerable Father Dowley”.

EARLY DAYS OF ST MARY'S, LANARK

The Minute Book of the House Council, St Mary's, Lanark, contains the following account of "Beginnings". It is — for the most part — in the handwriting of the first superior, Father Matthew Kavanagh, C. M.

J.M.J.V.

1859

- Sep. 5 Rev. Matthew Kavanagh C.M., Rev. Jean Genouvie C.M. and Brother John Bradley left Dublin for Lanark. Rev. T. McNamara, Sup. of St Peter's, Phibsboro accompanied them.
- 6 Arrived in Glasgow, and were met by Mr Monteith. Kept by the Bishop, Rt R. Dr Murdock, and most kindly entertained by his Lordship till the feast of the Nativity of the B.V.M.
- 8 Came to Lanark, where we were met and most kindly received by Mr Monteith and his architect, George Goldie Esq.
One hour after arrival a most distressing sick call, occasioned by severe contusions & fractures of limbs. No other priest nearer than 12 miles. Extreme Unction administered.
- 9 First Mass celebrated. Viaticum administered to sick man. Two persons present themselves for confession.
- 10 Mr & Mrs Monteith and family paid their first visit, and brought with them many presents for the sacristy and the altar.
- 11 10 o'clock. Said Mass for the congregation. Our first Mass in the church, having celebrated during the week in the oratory. Congregation filled north aisle, some 20 or 30 not having sitting room. Preached for the first time to people after Mass. The great majority of congregation females. All of the poor class except a Mr Bowie a Scotch convert. All the rest Irish. Offerings of the congregation 9/3½.
- 18 Sunday. Had two Masses at which 31 persons received Holy Communion. Congregation somewhat larger than last

Sunday. Offerings at door 9/3½. Catechism well attended. 75 children. Adults increased. Selected 5 boys for serving Mass—there being none in parish before. Some young men also selected for choir.

- 22 Fr McNamara came from Carstairs where he had been staying. The *Traité*, in consequence of the absence from the country of some of the former Trustees, cannot be concluded. A "*Traité conclue*", or provisional *Traité* drawn up & proposed to Mr Monteith some days ago. Mr Monteith seems to procrastinate. Seems to betray symptoms of indecision, or timidity of *binding* himself to the full terms at first proposed and accepted by him. A meeting of the heads of families held in Sacristy at 7 o'clock p.m. to concert best means of taking census of district, of establishing male & female confraternities of Christian Doctrine.
- 25 Sunday. Masses as on preceding Sunday. 2nd Mass more largely attended. Offerings 11/6. Attendance at Catechism still increasing. Adults in south aisle, where persons read for them. Some Protestants assisted at Mass, Sermon & Instruction and seemed pleased. *Confraternity* formed— 11 men, 25 females.
- 26 Fr McNamara, having obtained from Mr Monteith in writing a declaration by which he, Mr Monteith, binds himself to abide by the terms of the Draft *Traité* already proposed by the Visitor & approved by the Sup. Gen. 1, returned to Ireland. Choir, male and female, formed— the females to meet for practice on the evenings of Mondays & Wednesdays at 7½, the men on Tuesdays & Thursdays. Mass servers to meet for practice on Fridays at same hour. Every day since our arrival Protestants of all classes apply for permission to see the interior of (the) church. Almost all of them have declared to the clergyman who conducted them their delight at having for the first time been enabled to converse with a Catholic priest, and their satisfaction at having an opportunity of acquiring information on Catholic usages & doctrines which they had hitherto been totally

ignorant of. All seem pleased with the attention & civility shown them by the community.

- Oct. 1 Received letters from Rt Rev Dr Murdock authorising us to duplicate on Sundays if we consider our doing so “necessary or very useful for our poor people”.
- 2 First Sunday of Oct.r. Feast of Holy Rosary. Sermon on the feast. 40 persons approached Holy Com(munion). 2 children, ages 5 & 2 respectively, of Protestant fathers & Catholic mothers baptised. Attendance at all -the services very good. Door offerings 13/-.
- 8 Mr Monteith wrote to Superior to ask him to purchase part of field to east of house. Sup(erior) communicated Mr M’s letter to Visitor.
- 9 Sunday. 2 Masses to be given henceforth on Sundays, 1st at 7, 2nd at 10. Today well attended. Offering at 2nd Mass 13/5.
- 15 Form of receipt: “Received from Robert J. I. Monteith Esq. the sum of twenty pounds sterling to account with the community of the Mission of St Vincent of Paul, Lanark. £20. Lanark, 15 Oct. 1859. M. Kavanagh, superior”.
- 16 Sunday. 60 persons approached H. Communion; this large number was owing to this being. 3rd Sunday of month, and a day of Indulgence of Living Rosary.
- 17 First marriage, after due publication of banns, celebrated.
- Nov. 6 Five converts baptised & received into the Church.
- 9 Church blessed by the Superior deputed by the Bishop. High altar consecrated under the invocation of M.B.V. Mary conceived without sin, by Right Rev. Dr Murdock V(icar) A(postolic) who at the termination of the ceremony celebrated Mass & then administered Sac.t of Confirmation to 55 adults.

- 10 Church solemnly opened to the faithful.
 Pontifical High Mass by Dr Murdock at 11 o'clock, , Presbyter
 assistens:- Rev. M. Burke, C.M., Sheffield Master of
 Ceremonies:- Rev. N. Barlow, C.M., St Peter's, Dublin
 Deacon :- Rev. Thos Plunkett, C.M., Sheffield
 Subdeacon :- Rev. Jean Genouvie, C.M., Lanark
 Preacher :- Very Rev. Dr Manning, Provost of Westminster
 Benediction of M.B.S. at 3 o'clock p.m. by R.R. Dr Murdock.

Sermon by Very Rev. Fr Christie, S.J., Edinburgh.

Right Rev. Dr Gillis and 40 priests assisted at the ceremony.
 The laity to the number of about 1,200 were admitted gratis
 by Tickets. Many Protestants of the wealthy as well as of the
 poorer classes were present for the occasion, and seemed
 much struck and pleased with sermons & ceremonies.

Luncheon was provided for the principal parties invited by
 Mr Monteith.

- 14 The new schools were opened for the first time under the
 conduct of one female teacher, girls and boys under 12
 years were admitted. Attendance first day, 64.

Dec. Mission. Wrote to Rev. Val Chisholm of Glasgow to say
 we are not yet prepared to give missions.

- 21 Wrote to Rev. P. Forbes of Glasgow to same effect.

- 25 Our First Christmas Day.
 Heard Confessions every evening during previous week.
 Could not prepare as we wished. Church decorations being
 still in hands of tradesman.
 Had Three Masses, 7, 8 & 11 — last *cantata*.
 120 persons received Holy Communion, perhaps the largest
 number on same day since *John Knox*.
 After last Mass, Sermon & Benediction of M.B.S.
 At Carstairs, Midnight Mass — other Masses at 8 & 8½
 at which 30 persons communicated.
 During the day the Catholics remained perfectly sober &
 orderly.

SICKNESS — The town for some weeks visited by — & smallpox — which together with want of employment resulting from an extremely severe frost caused much distress — which would have weighed almost insupportably but for the generous aid in clothing, bedclothes, and time dispensed by Mrs Monteith through the hands of the community.

1860

- Jan. 13 The Church at length cleared of scaffolding & tradesmen.
Form of Receipt.

Received from Robert J.J. Monteith Esq per John Me Kenzie Esq. the sum of fifty eight pounds sterling, being £45 to account with the community of the Mission of St Vincent, and £13 to account with the said community for the Sisters of Charity at Lanark — for one quarter of a year due 8th Sep. 1860 by said R.J. Monteith Esq.

£58.0.0. M Kavanagh

In August 1860 the Sisters of Charity (three) took possession of their house in Lanark. They were Sisters Thibault, Blundell & Doyle. This year we gave the two clerical Retreats in Glasgow.

1861

In June Fr Geouvié left for Ireland. His place was taken by Fr McNulty.

Finding that the Superioress of the Sisters of Charity did not suit her position, I applied for her change which I obtained.

In May Fr Kavanagh, with Fr Hickey of Sheffield & Fr McBride of Cork, gave a mission for a month in church of St Alphonsus, Glasgow. 7,000 communions, 750 adults confirmed.

Fr Kavanagh's health gave way during this Mission & gradually sunk after.

In July accompanied Sisters Thibault & Blundell to Paris, where (I) left former and obtained to replace her Sister Farrell from London.

In November left by direction of doctor & of Visitor for Ireland where I remained till March.

1862

This year the Infant School was built.

Returned & resumed work. My own illness showed serious symptoms.

1863

In August, Fr Dowley, Visitor, accompanied by Frs Lynch & Duff, came to Lanark and took me to Ireland. Where in May the Superiors decided I should go to France for the benefit of my health. I went in Oct 1863 and remained till Oct 1864, when I returned to Lanark by the direction of the Sup. Gen. I arrived at Lanark 30th Nov.

1864

This year a lottery set on foot & conducted by the Sisters of Charity realized after deducting all expenses the sum of £3,000.

To this sum Mr Monteith added £1,000. Mr Hope Scott £1,000 and Smyllum was purchased for £8,000, £3,000 being borrowed for that purpose. Mr Bowie gave a bond for £1,000.

The Rev. Mr McNulty removed to Cork. The Rev. Mr Gleeson filled the place of the absent Superior. The Rev. MM Mayers(sic) & Byrne given as companions this year.

1865

Jan. 9 Made the following appointments & arrangements with the confrères"

THE CHINA MISSION

(In longhand — unsigned and undated)

An account of the work carried on by the Rev. Father Boyle C.M. for the education of Native Students for the priesthood during the last 21 years.

Foundation

Father Fraser, a Canadian who had done Mission Work for a long time in China and is still there, came on a visit to Ireland in 1910.

During his stay he talked much of the conversion of China, dwelling especially on the importance of educating Chinese students for the priesthood. He showed in all his conversations great zeal for the work in China, so that it was remarked that whatever his discourse began on, it always ended on China.

After his departure, the Rev. Father Galvin, now His Excellency Bishop Galvin, wrote from China a letter to the then President of Maynooth, the Very Rev. Dr Mannix, now Archbishop of Melbourne, on the importance of educating native students for the Priesthood. He stated therein that a Perpetual Burse could be founded in China for eighty pounds which could produce yearly when founded *there*, as much as would be sufficient for the maintenance of a student in College. The President, having read the letter to the College Staff, remarked that they could not do better than found a Perpetual Burse. He then proposed that the students of the College should get an opportunity of doing likewise, asking the Rev. Anthony Boyle C.M., one of the Spiritual Fathers, to speak to them of this charitable work.

The students' contributed generously raising eighty two pounds for the purpose.

Nothing more was heard of the business for some months. Vacation came on. During his holidays, Father Boyle paid a visit to his first cousin the Very Rev. Hugh Boyle, P.P. of Ballinascreen (Draperstown), Co. Derry. On Sunday, his cousin asked him to preach in the Parish Church. He spoke of zeal for the conversion of pagans as a work of great charity, a work very pleasing to God, and a great means of promoting the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He told them how they might have a large share in this work.

A gentleman, a Mr Bernard O'Neill, met him on coming out of the church, and told him that he would like to give a little contribution,

handing him five pounds and telling him that his brother would do the same.

Father Boyle published the contributions in the *Irish Catholic*. Money began to pour in, at first in small amounts, then gradually increasing for the twelve years he was able to continue, so that the average amount each day was twenty pounds during all that time. Fr Anthony Boyle died in 1926. £20 a day for 12 years — £87,600.

With this money he founded Perpetual Burses in China, Corea and India. Owing to advancing years and an attack of sickness being unable to do more, he confided the work to his brother, the Rev. John Boyle C.M.

At the end of the twelve years he had supplied thirty Bishops with Burses. To the honour of the *Irish Catholic*, it should be said that it published, for ten or eleven years, numerous letters from Bishops and the weekly accounts free of charge, thus taking a very active part in the good work.

During the first twelve years money was plentiful and collectors less numerous.

During the last nine years the average each day was twelve pounds.

At the present time, there are between fifteen and sixteen hundred students maintained in the various countries in which Burses have been founded by this society. Hundreds of priests have been already ordained, who have been maintained by contributors, at least one has been consecrated a bishop”.

Father Denis Nugent to Fathers Mullins & Henry (Boyle Fund).

St Paul's Seminary,
Ningpo, Chekiang, China
1 June 1938

Reverend and Dear Confrères,

The grace of our Lord be with us for ever !

Your letter of 9 March has taken a long time to come, but it has arrived which is the important thing, and it gave me great pleasure, coming from St Vincent's of which I have so many happy memories of true Vincentian kindness shown to me during my peregrinations in 1923. Need I say how gladly I shall answer your questionnaire, and send you the desired information. However “man-man-tu-sul”. Our files are no longer in their place, for reasons you can guess, but they can be had,

and I shall endeavour to give you news as quickly as possible. I am sending this in order that you may not be anxious about your letter.

At present we are living *in statu expectationis*. We are in peace, except for air raids, which are made often — too often — on the airfield outside the city and on the Railway Station — situated only a quarter of a mile from the Seminary. The Railway Station has been wiped out, and after that the local military had the rails pulled up, and there is not now a sleeper to be found anywhere — even the cinders have been raked up everywhere on the platform and along the line by starving people who get two coppers for a Chinese pound of it if it will burn. Last week they threw bombs on the city itself, and as a result the population is in terror. When the raid alarm is sounded people pour into the Seminary grounds and little girls from the match factory nearby come and disappear under the shrubs and in the bamboos. Last November the Seminaries were closed, and the students sent to their homes. At Easter it was decided to bring the students of St Paul's back. We felt that they would be as safe here as anywhere else, judging from how things were happening. So Father O'Hara and I went off on a journey as from Cork to Belfast to reach the Hongchow students who were with their P.P.'s — all of them cut off from their Vicars Apostolic ever since Hangchow was taken in December. It took the students 15 days to get to Kinhua in November, for all the cars were in the hands of the military. I went some of the way with them. We got there on Easter Sunday in ten hours in a bus kindly lent to us by the Commissioner of Customs (Mr Ashdown), an English gentleman, and a spiritual son of Father P. O'Gorman. The Customs had bought the motor bus in case the Staff may have to get away in a hurry. Monsignor Frazer who is P.P. in Kinhua (city of the Golden Flower) had gathered the students for us, and we repaid him by bringing in our bus, besides the staff of life and potatoes etc, Mass wine and the Holy Oils for the 25 priests he is looking after since they were cut off from their Bishop. On Thursday we started back for home bringing the cream of the youth of West Chikiang to rejoin their brothers of Ningpo, Taichow and Lishui. Going and coming in this military occupied area we had a clear run thanks to the notice on our wagon telling the world that we belonged to Military Headquarters. As we passed we could see in the villages volunteers drilling in preparation for the supreme sacrifice. Wisha! tis a sad thing, and it should never have taken place.

Three of our students will be ordained at the end of the month. Two belong to Hangchow, and one belongs to Ningpo Vicariate. He has been educated on a Burse sent by Father A. Boyle, and given by Sister Mary Teresa O'Laverly.

I am sure this news will be pleasing both to you and to the good Nun who gave the Burse, and a promise of the other information in a short time.

If you write again, it will be better to address the letter to the Procure des Lazaristes, 44 Rue Chapsal, Shanghai, for me as we may be cut off for a time, and letters can be more easily sent to us by other means than the post, if that occurs. Meanwhile, kindly keep us in your prayers. I shall be ordained 25 years on 13th July, so I need them. Will you please give my kindest wishes to all the Confrères at St Vincent's.

I wish you both success in your good work, and remain your devoted confrère in St Vincent.

Denis Nugent, i.s.cm.

P.S. I am having this posted in Shanghai.

CHINA — 1979.

Extracts from a letter received from a confrère stationed in the Far East.

July 1979.

“.....We received well guaranteed information that our Archbishop Chow died in prison about seven years ago. This information was brought back by a Columban sister who went into Kiang-Si province where the Columban Fathers were and met with a native priest who was with the Archbishop in prison. Never a murmur against his captors from the Archbishop. Worthy of note: there were archbishop-cardinals, Tien S.V.D. in Pekin and Yu Pin in Nanking; both managed to run off before the Communists, and eventually went to Taiwan. Our archbishop remained and refused to have anything to do with the “patriotic church” arrangement. A confessor of the faith! Now just this morning there was a paragraph in the newspaper stating that a certain Father Fu had been “consecrated Bishop of Pekin” — of course, under the auspices of the “patriotic church”. This piece of news ties in somehow — I’m not sure how or why — with some slight evidence of a relaxation of discipline inside China whereby priests of the “clandestinity” — those who have been in prison and now released, usually on account of age, sickness or completion of their prison term — who go to work as priests immediately after their release, do so with fair success seemingly. No one can of course prove this with positive and documented factual evidence. But

there are enough signs, indications, even photographs, to show that Mass is being said — at night in some places, on Sundays elsewhere where the local officials, indebted to the priest for instruction in English, let him go about his duties while closing their eyes to his ministrations.

There are indications too to show that the Faith is far from being dead: little incidents as, for example, someone who happened to ask a person just recently come here from China “How long since you went to Confession?” And the answer was “About six weeks ago”. “How come?” “Well”, she replied, “Father X is always ready for Confessions and we all go to him now and again”. That was up in the area where the Faith was implanted by the Dominicans sometime in 1500 — well before the Jesuits got into Peking. Another instance of the Faith being alive: Rosaries are regularly sent into the same area by people who come and go on business trips. There is evidently some relaxation inside China How does the relaxation work? Seemingly very cautiously. The mention in the morning’s paper about the revival of the “patriotic church” inclines me to believe that the authorities are only too well aware of the clandestine activities of the loyal clergy who are zealously patronised by the faithful, whereas the known “patriotic church” clergy are despised and ignored by the majority of the faithful!! A certain native priest who had been in Australia ever since the Communists took over back in the fifties went into China recently to visit his family. He met a certain very old priest of the Ankwuo diocese who, when asked if he had any message for the outside world, replied: “Yes, tell them that all the Masses Father Desrumeaux (one time C.M. Provincial over what was called North China) gave me have been said”!!! Certainly, there is a certain relaxation. The ——— have been able to contact all their men still in China. Next month their Provincial is going to visit his family and, with an extended entry visa, intends to look up as many of his confrères as he can. Unfortunately, we have no one able to go back into China to look up our confrères. It is fairly well established that the priests — four of them — who say Mass in Peking for the Diplomatic Corps are C.M.’s, and the church where that Mass is said is the church once served by the Irish confrères in Peking.....”.

The writer of this letter was for many years a missionary in China.

AN UNUSUAL POSTULANT

(a) 12 December 1911. 50 Mountjoy Square, Dublin. To the Visitor.

“I should feel exceedingly thankful if you would be so kind as to inform me whether you have a vacancy at present for a Postulant in your Novitiate, as I have for many years been very much attracted to your holy and most distinguished Congregation & to your sainted Founder.

I was educated at Eton, Oxford, the R(oyal) Military College, & Truro Theological College, but I am 39 years of age, & unfortunately one of the many victims of the mixed marriage system, my father having been a merely nominal Catholic in his earlier years, & my mother a religious Protestant, so I was brought up in her faith, with a view to taking up a ‘Family living’, but my Theological studies brought me back to the ‘Faith of my Fathers’ after receiving Minor orders in the ‘city of confusion’ — the Anglican Establishment. My early years were, I regret to say, spent as an officer in the British army — mostly on the Staff— & I served in the late war, & was mentioned in dispatches etc., but since that cruelly unjust campaign, my mind has been steadily fixed on the Religious State, but love of the world, & want of sufficient moral strength to shake off the trammels which bound me to the car of pleasure, induced me from time to time to defer the step which I knew I was destined some day to take; having wantonly exhausted even the patience of God by continuously neglecting the promptings of His Holy Spirit, He laid His chastening rod heavily upon me, & brought me with a broken heart to the feet of His crucified Son, & I have since been gradually disposing of my property etc., among those charities etc. which most-appealed to me.

I am sorry to say that my reception into the Church produced an intensely hostile spirit against me among my mother’s Protestant relatives, especially as her ‘reception’ also took place shortly after mine, & she died a saintly death in its consoling bosom — & my father became reconciled subsequently, & also died a good Catholic. All kinds of expedients were resorted to in order to injure me in a worldly way. I was the recipient under the will of my mother’s half-sister of an annuity of £500 per annum, but there was a proviso that if I became a Roman Catholic I should forfeit that annuity & that proviso was of course carried out.

I was sole legatee also under the will of a cousin to a sum of £20,000 odd, but when my cousin died we gave her lawyer ‘Power of Attorney’ to see to everything, as she died in Mentone: he went out there, & we have not seen or heard of him since, although the Law officers &

Detectives have been on the look out for him, as he has taken away all the legacy. I have looked upon this however as Providential intervention to induce me to enter the clerical state. And again, when my cousin the late Prince de Roche (title Austro-Spanish 1681) et Princede Berges-St Winock, & Duke de Berges (French title 1701) died recently, it was expected that as the titles descended to me through the female line, the male line of the de Berges-St Winock becoming extinct, that the property in the North of France & Paris would come with the titles, but it was decided that as such property was not held in '*fidei communi*' it would not so descend. A further instance I thought of Divine intervention, so that having now parted with almost everything to follow Christ, all the property, I possess is a mining claim of *uncertain value* in South Africa which I bought after the war.

I may say that I can teach French & elementary Latin, & I have a good voice, & would if accepted do my best to merit the approval of my superiors. I only came over from England 2 months ago, as I love Ireland — my mother having been Irish — and there is no Novitiate of your Holy Order in England.

I have been a student practically all my life, & I have a good knowledge of the Church offices, & I have preached in the B.C.

Hoping to hear from your Reverence at an early date, I am yours truly in Xt,

(Prince) de Lorraine de Roche.”

(b) This letter was forwarded to Armagh where Fr Walshe, the Visitor, was at the time, and he replied immediately.

“I beg to acknowledge your esteemed letter of the 12th inst. I write now from St Patrick’s Seminary in Armagh where I have been (for) a few days.

I am somewhat taken back that you have thought of entering the little Congregation of St Vincent de Paul, seeing that we, its members, are poor simple people, without much pretension to learning or influence. I should imagine the Jesuits, or one of the other great Orders, would be more suitable to a man of your position.

However, if you call to see me at St Joseph’s, Blackrock, on next Tuesday, 20th, I shall be very happy to have a talk with you. If you call before 1½ o’clock at which hour we dine, you will have an opportunity of seeing a little of our community life”.

(c) The Prince replies. 50 Mountjoy Square, Dublin.
16, Dec. 1911

“I beg to thank you very sincerely for your kind communication of the 14th inst: & it gives me great pleasure to accept your kind invitation to Blackrock for Tuesday next the 19th inst. when I shall be most happy to call on Your Reverence before 1.30 p.m. & get a glimpse of your community life.

Your humility Rev. d Father, if I may say so, is crediteth to & worthy of your distinguished Congregation & your saintly Founder, & I am conscious of the fact, from my studies & knowledge of Religious Orders, that your Holy Institute, without the *pretension*, has always *possessed* both learning & wisdom, & you have always been engaged in the glorious work which our Blessed Lord Himself was so intimately identified with — ‘Preaching the Gospel to the poor’, — the instruction of the Faithful including the future shepherds, & ‘the breaking of the bread’.

Surely an Order which has produced a Collet, a Cayala, a Bonnet & other such men too numerous to mention — including the present Nuncio (?) — has many claims to distinction as well as great holiness. I am writing away from reference books, but the above names especially Bonnet & Cayala, who steered your Barque so nobly through the troubled waters of Jansenism & Revolution, are indelibly imprinted on my Franco-Irish heart.

I beg to remain, Dr. V. Rev. Father, Yours sincerely in Xt,
de Lorraine de Roche”

(d) The Prince again. 50 Mountjoy Square, Dublin. Feast S. Thomas
Ap. 1911

“I have just left the V. Rev. Father Geoghegan after a most interesting afternoon’s interview, or rather *examination*, far more *searching* than that of an Anglican Bishop’s for ordination, as he put me through my ‘pacings’ as we say, in practically everything I had *done*, or *read* in my life — between 4.50 & 7.20 p.m. & I’m *pleased* to say that he does not *entertain* Father Morrissey’s opinion, & I’ve promised him to leave the matter in the hands of Your Reverence for decision. I took him the original testimonials I had from some priests, & particularly one covering 12 years last past, from a French Benedictine Prior which he read. I told him of course that after my interview with Fr Morrissey

I felt very much inclined to withdraw altogether my application, but he has advised me otherwise, & I will abide by it. What an extraordinarily able man he is. I was very much struck by his learning in our 3 hours interview.

I'm afraid when I was at Blackrock yesterday I may have seemed to be a bit absent-minded as I was *worrying* about a private matter in - which I was much *interested* but which was settled amicably yesterday.

With kind regards to all the dear Priests I met yesterday, I am Dear V Rev. Father,

Yrs v. sincerely in Xt,
de Lorraine de Roche."

(e) The final word from the Prince. 50 Mount joy Square, Dublin

23 Dec. 1911

"I have to thank you for your kind letter of yesterday's date.

I cannot help contrasting the difference between the Orders in England (including the French ones) & your Holy Orders & Congregations here. For instance I made application to an Order one day, I saw the Superior 2 days afterwards, on the 4th day he wrote me to say he had conferred with his Consultors & would be pleased to admit me as a Postulant — & that is a very strict & popular Order.

I have another experience which was almost the same, except that the time was a week instead of 4 days. Of course I know that in Ireland you get all your candidates when mere boys, & it is *unusual* to admit a man of mature age, as I wrote for particulars to another Order in Dublin about the time I wrote your Reverence, & I only wrote last night withdrawing my application — as it was *interpreted* as one instead of an *enquiry* which I intended it to be.

Why there should in my case be any *exceptional* difficulties except the age, I don't quite understand, as I am fairly well known, vidi "The Royal Red Book & Court Guide, Webster's etc. and other Reference books, & I don't think my life has been a *mis-spent* one, & I have been educated at a Public School & the premier University in probably the world. I have been a life-long student, & have lived for years a semi-monastic life in the world. I have not forgotten the Philosophy or Theology which I've learnt — certainly not my Biblical & systematic Theology, Psychology etc. & I don't suppose it would be necessary to repeat my course in Arts. It seems however that there is a *strong feeling* against my reception, so under these circumstances & in the name of

charity, — I beg your Reverence to consider my application to join your Holy Congregation withdrawn.

I do this, believe me, with great reluctance. With kindest regards & reciprocating your good wishes, I am Dr. V. Rev. Father,

Yrs sincerely in Xt.,
de Lorraine de Roche”

ST KEVIN’S, GLENART, CO. WICKLOW

The following account — in the handwriting of Fr James O’Doherty, the then Visitor, and dated 25 January 1948 — is taken from a notebook in the archives at 4 Cabra Road.

In 1947 it was decided that a new house of studies was desirable, if not actually necessary, for the development of the Irish Province of the Vincentians.

When the matter came to be discussed more in detail various difficulties presented themselves. There was first the problem of finding a Bishop who would be willing to admit us and secondly the problem of finding a reasonably suitable building either actually extant or capable of being adapted to our needs.

What were these needs? At St Joseph’s at the time there were 49 students and seminarists 3 retired priests and eight priests on the Staff together with 5 brothers and 4 domestics. The chapel and diningroom were too small and the sleeping accommodation was taxed to capacity. Further buildings at St Joseph’s seemed neither desirable nor even reasonably possible. The layout did not lend itself to further building and to perpetuate the long course at St Joseph’s did not seem a wise proposition.

On the assumption that there was to be a new house the question arose as to the basis of the division. The natural one would be “students” and “seminarists” and that would be only in conformity with the Canon Law & the general practice of the Church. With us however seminarists (i.e. majority of them) “do” University studies & must continue to live near the University during their second year of Seminaire. If then the Seminaire were to go to the country only the first year could go in practice and our problem would remain unsolved for the nett

“easing” to housing in Blackrock would only be about ten, and the long term (7 years) at St Joseph’s would be continued. For these and other reasons that proposition could not be carried out. For a parallel reason (University considerations) the Philosophers could not be sent to the country. It was accordingly agreed that the only practical division at the moment was to segregate and send the students of theology to the country. It should be borne in mind that an earlier attempt had been made, during the Visitorship of Fr Bennett, to solve the same problem and that, though first given, permission was refused by His Grace Archbishop Byrne to open such a house in the-archdiocese of Dublin. I mention this because it explains why the earlier search for a suitable house was outside Dublin: we felt we would not be allowed to get our house in Dublin and that it would be useless to try. (Personally I felt and still feel that it would be better to be outside Dublin in any case. That view though held by some was not in accordance with the general feeling.)

Anyhow investigations were pursued and Benburb Castle, some 5 miles from Armagh, was thought reasonably suitable. Permissions were got from His Grace of Armagh and the Vicar General and all was settled, price £12,500, except to sign on the dotted line.

His Grace of Armagh & the P.P. of “Moy” were most anxious for us to take the property at Benburb (then parochial). It then became known that the Dublin ecclesiastical authorities, particularly Monsignor Dunne, did not want us to leave Dublin & some of the Province at least did not like the idea of going to Northern Ireland. The Visitor had already orally agreed to take Benburb & so in view of the fact that he had not the whole Province behind him and in deference to Monsignor Dunne, a good friend of the Community, he begged the Archbishop of Armagh & the P.P. of Moy (legal owner) to release him from his oral promise. So ended Benburb as far as Vincentians were concerned. Presumably the Archbishop of Armagh & the P.P. in question were not “too pleased” though gracious to the Visitor.

Many other properties were inspected after the Benburb failure only to be rejected for one reason or another. Eventually and almost by accident, or perhaps I should say Providentially, Glenart was discovered. It happened thus. The Visitor was informed through the Sisters of Mercy that a suitable property was on the market near Arklow, namely “Hyde Park”. On inspection he rejected it as unsuitable, but learned from a local guide (supplied by Sisters) of Glenart. He examined Glenart that same day & returned a second day & eventually • reported it as “promising” to his Consultants. These he invited to the spot and after much

bargaining with their approval acquired (the property) on the 25th Nov. 1947 for a sum of £13,000.

Glenart was the property & residence of the head of the Proby family (Earl of Carysfort) until 1922 when it was burned down in part in the troubled political struggle of the day. (The whole southern wing containing the principal rooms of the house was burned leaving only the walls). Subsequently the Earl got £80,000 compensation without the onus of rebuilding. The whole estate of Glenart stretched roughly from Arklow to Woodenbridge in all over 1,700 acres, about 1,100 wood and 600 farm lands. Lord Carysfort left the country about '22 & his property was administered by an agent. In 1941 a local syndicate succeeded in buying the estate at a cost of £1,400. Mr OToole was the head of the syndicate & it was from this syndicate that the Vincentians bought the property i.e. the Castle and about 100 acres of surrounding land & gardens. About 55 acres of land is arable & seems reasonably good with excellently laid out gardens. The remainder of the estate has been or is being denuded of its forestry for commercial purposes and sold to the Land Commission or to local farmers. The syndicate refused to sell us any further farm lands and must be very happy over its very profitable investment.

Water to the Castle & lands is by gravitation, source some 2 odd miles away. 'Right of way for horse & cart with a view to repairs & maintenance of the pipe line together with ownership of the source & intervening reservoir is secured by the sale (terms explicit in Deed).

There are 4 residences included in the sale besides the Castle i.e. Front Lodge on the Arklow-Woodenbridge road at the side of the fish pond, 2 solidly constructed semidetached houses near the farm yard entrance and a house in the farmyard. Also included in the purchase are the excellent farm buildings solidly built and in good repair.

The sale is to be completed and vacant possession of all houses to be given on 1st February 1948.

The Castle will need much repair & adaptation to our needs, involving a probable cost of £30,000.

James O'Doherty

25 Jan. '48

Forum

A CELBRIDGE CHRONICLE

What is going on in Celbridge? That is a frequent question in the province. I wish to inform you, as best I can. But this is very difficult, so I ask you to be patient with me. The seven men, who complete the Seminaire, agree that it was the best year of their life so far. Each had his own different experience, though we all have the same experience that arose from training to live in the particular spirit of all Vincentians.

Our spiritual director set out to have us complete a two year Seminaire in approximately one and a quarter. As a result, the pace was very demanding and fast-changing. Due to this our 'inmost' selves began to change pretty rapidly for the better. We received the true classical education of a Vincentian, with all the usual 'seminary teaching aids'.

As part of our Seminaire, we worked with mentally-handicapped people in Stewart's Hospital, Palmerstown. This weekly work with the Christian community was worthwhile. After getting used to the patients and their conditions, we soon began to build up a rapport with the patients, nurses and staff. We learned to accept these patients as real people, who are no different from ourselves. These patients are worth knowing as they can teach us much through their simple approach to God and life.

At Christmas we did a concert for the children of St Teresa's, Dunardagh. We rehearsed with a very challenging script, full of songs, skits, jokes and comedy. All this we hoped would be like *The Muppet Show* (Television Series). After our preparations we changed the title to 'Floppit-Show' as it was so inferior to the real show. Nevertheless, the children and the sisters seemed to enjoy it immensely and the cast was delighted that there were no rotten tomatoes thrown.

Christmas was enjoyed greatly by all resident seminarists (the students went home). We wish to thank all those who helped to make it so enjoyable for us. Just before Christmas we had the honour of attending what was probably the last Mass in Glenart. While there we all availed, of the chance to 'ramble' around the grounds for a few hours. Now we appreciate its loss to the congregation.

Christmas '&' was a new awareness of Christmas for us and a new appreciation grew within each one of us. Before Christmas we had quite a few events, as follows; we went to 'Messiah' and to the Maynooth choral concert. We had a day of fasting, we had liturgical practices, the

putting up of Christmas decorations and the influx of Christmas cards; all these happenings prepared us for the Birth of Christ.

After that season, there was a long wait for Easter, even though we had a mid-term break. During Holy Week we shared an 'Agape-Meal' with the sisters and postulants in Dunardagh; we attended the Good Friday ceremonies in Phibsborough; we celebrated the Easter Light ceremonies in De Paul House, Celbridge. Then on Easter Monday, the start of the Seminaire Retreat. This was given by Fr Pagan and he made it very inspiring and thoughtful. On the First Sunday after Easter, each seminarist left to go to a community house.

In accordance with what Saint Vincent once said, 'Le seminariste n'est pas au seminaire pour examiner sa vocation, mais pour s'y affermir', each one of us lived a period of three weeks in a community house. Once there, we saw a practical role that a priest has to live and the role that is expected of him by his people. More important, however, was that we saw how a community lives in community together. Basically this was a 'field trip' for each seminarist.

For the summer, which started on July 1, two of the four seminarists went to work in St Paul's 'Summer Camp '79'. The four others went to work in 'Camp Rockwell '79'. After working with children in these camps for the whole month of July, we all met in Ballybunion for our own 'provincial assembly'. There we all enjoyed a pleasant holiday in a rented caravan despite the Atlantic rain. 'Ballybunion never again'. After two weeks stay, we

took the 'bog road' out of Ballybunion and went back to Celbridge to clean up the house for the new 'Sems'. Then all of us split up to travel to our families for two weeks.

On September 1, we arrived back in De Paul House together with two new sems; Eugene Curran (Fairview) and Eamon Devlin (Cookstown). Fr Cowan gave us our retreat, a retreat that brought us back to earth after a rather hectic summer. Many thanks to Fr Cowan for a very good retreat.

Then came Pope John Paul to the Phoenix Park. We all stayed overnight in Castleknock for the 'Park Mass'. Our thanks to all the Castleknock community for taking more than adequate care of us. Then two more sems arrived; Jay Shanahan (Waterford) and Jerome O'Driscoll (Kildare).

At present, there are eleven men here: 4 seminarists, 3 philosophy students, 2 theology students, 1 arts student, 1 science student. All of the students are studying in Maynooth.

PRAYER ROOM VERSUS ORATORY

There seems to me to be a case for having in our houses a room in which the Blessed Sacrament is reserved and in which there is no altar for the celebration of the Eucharist. This would of course call for the setting aside of a small room for the celebration of 'private' Masses.

Reasons in support of the above case are as follows:

Life in community is more fluid today and there can be more demands on confrère's time. Through no fault of his own a confrère may find that he cannot attend the common community spiritual exercises as often as he would wish. There can be a clash between the demands of his apostolate and the demands of spiritual exercises in common. This clash in one individual is reflected in the clash between a monastic spirituality and an apostolic spirituality. Many apostolic orders became more and more monastic in their ways. The renewal in many orders is bringing about a demonasticization. Are we feeling the wind of these changes?

I hope so.

We all need to strive continually for an even deeper relationship with God. Personal prayer is one of the major keys to a developing of this relationship.

Having a quiet prayer room in our houses set aside for that purpose only could become a great help in sustaining personal prayer — a room that could be used at any time of the day — not a room where a celebration of the Eucharist could be taking place at any time of the day.

John Cleary, C.M.

Fr. Frederick V. Morrin, C.M.

There is one sure way of getting to know a fellow human being and that is — go on a holiday with him. I never really knew Fred Morrin well until he turned up at Strawberry Hill early in the month of August, 1939, and asked me if I would join him on a few weeks holiday somewhere. Of course I had seen a lot of Fred in the preceding twelve years. He had taught me whatever I knew of Scripture (a subject which he loved but had no qualification to teach) and Canon Law (a subject in which he was highly qualified but hated) when I had been a student in the Rock. I had come across him at community gatherings in various houses of the Province after my -ordination. But that was all. He had struck me as a rather reserved, rather shy sort of man, not really cut out for the academic life to which, apparently, he was committed.

“Where could we go ?” I asked him.

“I was thinking of Morocco”, he said. And he proceeded to paint a vivid word picture of that colourful land, the souks and bazaars of the Imperial Cities, the Berber tribesmen of the Rif mountains, the orange groves, the deserts, the camels, and so on.

When I got to know Fred better, which was to be in the course of the next two weeks, I discovered that he was incurably and genuinely a romantic, an adventurer, an explorer. He always wanted to cross that mountain to see what was on the other side. He would have made a wonderful foreign missionary. It was later on one of his great regrets that when the Province began its Nigerian development he was too old to take part. It would have suited him and he would have loved it.

“I doubt if the Provincial would allow us to go to Morocco”, I told Fred. These were the days before it was normal for confrères to think of spending Christmas in Israel and July in Los Angeles. The Provincial, it turned out, was quite clear in his mind that we should not think of going to Morocco. He pointed out that among other reasons, it was very likely that there would soon be a war in Europe, and that if this happened it might be exceedingly awkward to be in a place such as Morocco.

Fred was discouraged at the Provincial’s excessive caution. I took it for granted that this was the end of the Morocco project, and that

we should now start thinking of Bundoran or Glandore. Then Fred produced his Plan B.

“We know that there is one request that the Provincial never refuses”, he said. “If any confrère wants to go on a pilgrimage to Lourdes he is allowed to. What we now do is ask for permission to go to Loardes — and of course we will go there. And then we can come back via Morocco. What about it?”

Whatever about the morality or the legality of this idea, at any rate this is what we had in mind when we set out with the Provincial’s blessing on our holiday. Officially we were on a trip to Lourdes. What we would do after we had been there we would decide at that moment of time. And if we felt like taking in Morocco on our return journey, then that was our concern.

Here followed the most enjoyable holiday I think I have ever had. We did not, actually, take in Morocco. Instead, we went first to Paris, where we spent a wonderful week at the Old Irish College in the Rue des Irlandais — alas, there is no longer a community of the Province there — and then we went, leisurely, south in the general direction of Lourdes. We spent a week at St Jean de Luz, then a few days in Spain, taking in Loyola, finally to Lourdes for two days. Thence to Carcassone and Toulouse, and finally back to Paris.

Before we set out from Paris Fred had something to say:

“You know there is likely to be a war” he said, “and it may break out at any moment!”

This was mid-August, 1939, and it is interesting to think back and to remember, at this distance of time, that all of us who were at London or Paris then took it for granted that within a matter of weeks, days, perhaps, we would be at war. In all my experience I can remember nothing so absolutely inevitable, so completely predictable, as that war. This is what in retrospect makes Fred’s suggestion so incredible, and so typical of the man. “I am thinking”, he said “that if we are to enjoy this holiday, these last few weeks before the trouble starts, we should agree not to buy or to read any newspaper whatever. It would only worry us, and it wouldn’t make the slightest difference if we worry or if we don’t”.

Do young people act as foolishly as that now? I hope not. Anyway, Fred and I agreed, and set off.

I can still recall every detail of that holiday. The Spanish bull-fight we attended at a little village named after our Holy Founder — St Vincent de Tyrosse! The visit we paid to the fortress tower of St Jean Pied-de-Port and to historic Roncevalles! The endless hours lying on the

beach at St Jean de Luz, admiring the leisurely French way of life! On one such occasion I asked Fred: "What's going to happen to us all when this war breaks out?". Fred was quite clear about one thing: "I am going to volunteer as a chaplain in the British Army", he said. "Ireland will probably stay neutral, and Britain will be at war. There will be a call for army chaplains. I think I'm still young enough (he was over forty) so I'll volunteer. Some of us will have logo".

I remember vividly the warm sunshine, the placid beach, the children playing all around. "What do you think life will be like in the army?" I asked. Fred began to describe his dream. It included, I remember, crossing trackless wastes, scaling mountain ranges, deserts, camels, excitement, adventure.

In the last days of August we returned to Paris, to a completely transformed city. The atmosphere was electric with apprehension. A few days earlier the Nazi-Soviet Pact had been signed, and now war was inevitable. The foreigners were leaving France in droves, and nobody but a fool would stay if he could get away.

Fred and I decided that the time had come to leave. We left, finally, on what Fred was later to relate with relish, was the last train out of Paris before war was declared.

When we arrived at Strawberry Hill, less than a month after leaving for our holiday, the Civil Defence wardens were walking the streets, some men were digging an air-raid shelter under the trees on the edge of the lawn, and everyone was getting ready for the war that was due to start on schedule.

War was duly declared and Fred was among the first confrères allowed to volunteer as Army chaplains, and was commissioned. His war record is impressive. Two years in London with the civil defence forces. Then to North Africa to join in the invasion of Italy. From there to the Greek theatre of war, to Salonika and Athens. Thence to Palestine, Iraq and Egypt.

Although he was not a young man he saw quite a lot of action, and took part in some key engagements in the Mediterranean theatre of war.

I can recall meeting him when he was finally demobbed. He had aged a lot, I thought; and had lost a good deal of his enthusiasm and buoyancy. War is a dreadful business. He was looking forward to coming back to civil life.

The Province felt, and rightly, that it could not do too much for those men who had represented us in the armed services. It is interesting to reflect that Fred was the only one really to survive that experience. Willie

Gilgunn had been killed in action. Henry Casey returned, a broken man to die soon after. Eddie Conran and Mick Devlin were to die within a few years. Only Fred really survived. He went for nine years to Lanark as Superior. Then he came to the academic staff of Strawberry Hill as lecturer in Divinity for eight years. Then for three years as English-speaking secretary to the Superior General — no less!

He did not really like his Roman experience. I have no idea what his day-to-day life was like, but I remember turning up in Rome during those years with a party of English school children on a “school journey” in a British-India liner, and hoping that when we reached Rome we could have an audience with the Pope. Thanks to Fred, our eight hundred children had a wonderful audience with Pope Paul in the middle of the Vatican Council, and full marks were given to the Vin’s and their “man in Rome” for the success of the tour.

After Rome, back again to Strawberry Hill, this time as a retired confrère and community bursar. Then, briefly, for a year to Coventry. And finally, in 1978, to Lanark, where on February 28th of this year Fred died, aged eighty-one.

Salute, then, to a genuine trouper, to a man who would be equally and readily prepared at the drop of a hat, to join a party going to the North Pole or to work in an inner city mission.

Fred was the type of confrère who was always and immediately expendable, because he was prepared to go anywhere where he was required or could be useful.

K.C.

FREDERICK V. MORRIN, C.M.

Born: Baltinglass, 17 November 1898.

Entered the Congregation: 7 September 1916.

Final Vows: 1 November 1918.

Ordained a priest by Bishop James Downey C.M., Coadjutor
Bishop of Ossory, in Kilkenny on 22 September 1923.

APPOINTMENTS

1923-1939	St Joseph’s, Blackrock
1940-1947	Chaplain to H.M. Forces
1947-1956	St Mary’s, Lanark (Superior 1950-1956)
1956-1964	St Mary’s, Strawberry Hill

1964-1967 Curia Generalizia, Rome (Secretary to Superior General)

1967-1970 St Vincent's, Cork 1971-1977 St Mary's, Strawberry Hill

1977—1978 St Vincent's, Coventry.

1978—1979 St Mary's Lanark. Died 28 February 1979.

Father Jerome Twomey, C.M.

Father Jerome Twomey's passing will long be regretted by all who knew him, not just because he died prematurely before the proverbial three-score-and-ten. Rather, I would say, because he was such a genuine person, a man without guile. He was simple and straightforward. There were no hidden recesses, no coils or convolutions, no mysteries. He liked to talk, and he talked straight.

When our band of young recruits entered the 'Rock in 1939, we had the good fortune to sit in due course at the feet of Matt Ryan and Jerome Twomey. Matt, in his inimitable way, tried (by night) to attune our immature minds to the profundities of Barbadette. Jerome took a Scripture class up the house, and also a Chant class at which we Juniors assisted. One still has a vivid picture of Jerome's brisk entry into the class-hall, with his 'strong' Kerry face, usually lighted up with a broad grin, his high forehead, surmounted by combed-back black hair; and he had a characteristic way of carrying his books concealed beneath his cape. Mounting the rostrum he would lay the books down, toss his head back, and flashing an eye round the class would simultaneously throw back the cape with both hands. Jerome then launched into the exercise with the greatest enthusiasm. In the same way that he would later preach his homilies in All Hallows, at the top of his voice and under full steam, never letting up and driving his point home. With pursed lips and right hand outstretched, palm downwards and occasionally marking the swell of a cadence, Jerome would carry us along — even the most ungifted. It was impossible not to respond, though in all honesty he was not a brilliant chant master.

He was born in 1912 in Castleisland, Co. Kerry, where his family had a business. After his primary schooling with the local nuns he came to Castleknock in 1924. He was a brilliant student, with a 'mind capacious by nature and replenished by study'. Even in the midst of a galaxy of talent which included T. Dunning, T. Cashin, R. Mackey, E. Sweeney, T. Pagan, M. Ryan, D. Moran, D. Cregan, he was not outclassed. Under the aegis of the late Father James Rodgers, while the others quaffed at the

Fans Bandusiae and other delectables, Jerome had covered the whole Sabine farm — all five books — in as many weeks. He was particularly good at debates, having an agile mind and a facility for churning out rhetoric in torrents. But he was weak at Maths, which was serious; for it imperilled his prospects of matriculating.. He therefore got a rough time from the redoubtable Tom Waller, the Maths Professor. And Jerome's discomforture was in fact not a little enjoyed by his classmates. For the truth was that Jerome was not at all popular as head prefect. He held the office (with D. Cregan) for two years in succession, under Father Bill Meagher as Dean; and he fulfilled it with a rather unnecessary zeal, as if indeed he were the Dean! At games he was rather indifferent, though not incapable of doing harm; but the harm was as likely to be done to his own side as to the opposition. As a swimmer, on the other hand — perhaps for the very reason that here he was left to himself — he was excellent. Devotees of the 'Forty-foot' back in the 'thirties will recall his long plodding swims out into Dublin Bay. There was indeed something in Jerome's make-up which left him unattuned not only to the rhythm of games but also of music. As a young student he practised at the piano, the organ, and even the fiddle, but not with any success.

He decided to join the Vincentians and came to St Joseph's, Blackrock, in 1930. In Jerome's case

‘the machinery just meant
To give the soul its bent’

was an almost computer-like mind, which enabled him to store and conjure up at will an enormous profusion of detail. Before long he became Librarian and learned to know every book and article in the library. In a field such as that of Canon Law (for which he had no great liking at all) the identity and enumeration of the Canons came as easily to Jerome as that of innumerable Kerry friends. He did quite a brilliant Arts degree (English, Irish, plus Latin), and followed it up with an equally brilliant course in theology. He had indeed a brilliant mind and could have distinguished himself in any field of studies, but for some reason or other he was not sent forward. I believe it was felt that his health would not withstand the rigours of the Roman regime. This was a great pity. One felt — and he no doubt felt it himself — that here was a man who had never achieved his full potential. On the other hand, it has to be said that when he did get the opportunity of doing higher studies, during the year when St Patrick's College was closed, he did not persevere.

He was appointed Principal of St Patrick's in 1942, at the age of twenty-nine. Here naturally his knowledge of Irish served him well. At

this time it was customary for the students of the 'Rock to go over to 'St Pat's' every Easter for a outing. One student recalls going into Jerome's study and finding him engaged in translating J.B. Phillips' *Modern Thomistic Philosophy* into the Gaelic! He also commuted a good deal back and forth to All Hallows, where his personality and gifts did not escape the notice of Father Tom O'Donnell. The latter would take him by the arm and lead him out for a walk up and down the 'Ash', while he explored his mind. One of Jerome's endearing qualities was that he never allowed the links forged over the years in various places and with various groups to be buried in the compost heap. He gave an ordination retreat in All Hallows in 1945 and he would invariably bring it up whenever, in later years, he met a priest of the same class.

He was appointed to Strawberry Hill in 1948 and remained there for twelve years as head of the religious department and Vice-principal of the College. He made countless friends among the students, and never forgot them. Years later, at All Hallows, whenever he met parish priests from up and down Britain, he would still enquire about them. His conversational gifts served him well in entertaining the many inspectors, ministry officials, and other distinguished visitors who came to the College. As Vice-principal he had to travel the length and breadth of the country interviewing each year candidates who had applied for entry to the College — a job which he particularly relished, and for which he was eminently suited. When the count-down came, Jerome needed only to be presented with a photo and he could turn out a full inventory of relevant detail. The story is told that he once spent a whole afternoon interviewing a chap at the fountain outside the Waldegrave building, while the victim sat with his feet in the water, keeping cool!

His greatest gift was for conversation, even if — as must be admitted — he tended to 'hog' it. And how often one heard a repeat of the record! But then he was a Kerryman, with all the sharpness and wit of the Kerryman — and the copiafandi. If Jerome got wind of the forthcoming visit of a Kerry-born priest, he would surely be found sitting outside at the front waiting for his man. The two would then remain closeted for hours, exchanging news of the Kingdom. In his earlier years, especially, he had an extraordinary memory for people and faces. But in all his conversation about people and places, nuns and clerics, delinquents and relatives, and all the rest, there was never the least lapse *contra caritatem*. He could not abide hearing bad things said about people.

He liked to be the first to purvey news of some 'funny thing' he had heard from some 'bod'. Or, perhaps, an article, or a new book that had come on the market. On one occasion Father Rodgers had to give

a retreat in Kerry diocese, where he had already given one a few years before. To vary the fare he was looking round for something new, and was able to avail of Bernard Buckley's *The Priest at Prayer*, which had just come out. But to his great dismay he had no sooner started the retreat than he found that most of the priests were already familiar with *The Priest at Prayer*. Jerome had already blazed the trail!

From 1960, to '66 he was Superior in St Joseph's, Blackrock. Jerome was a very loyal Vincentian and keenly interested in the history and the affairs of the 'Little Company' at home and abroad. He was delegated on three occasions to go to a General Assembly, and would probably have been delegated again in 1968 had he not withdrawn his name. Appointed as Superior to Blackrock he brought with him his characteristic enthusiasm and an informed and deeply loyal Vincentian spirit to help towards the guidance and formation of the young students.

He was quite at home with students, to whom he spoke in a man-to-man way and without pretensions. The 'thirty-niners recall how in the grim days of the war he used to come down to the student hall in Blackrock and regale us, bringing news of the latest in sport, politics, and — of course — the war. There were no newspapers then. Our only communication with the external world was by means of an old loud-speaker perched on the chimney piece, which was turned on for special occasions *ad nutum superiorum*. Jerome was kind enough to warn us that the old machine worked both ways, and that our flippant and unholy remarks could be heard amid the spiritual gloom upstairs!

The same friendliness was also shown to the students in All Hallows, where he came in 1966 to lecture in theology and liturgy. Very many of them sought spiritual guidance from him. He also carried another portfolio, which was unofficial but no less demanding on time. He was always on hand for entertaining visitors and came to know in a remarkably short time most of the alumni of the College. His lectures had the usual tempestuous flair. Not long after his arrival there appeared in the College Rag a cartoon: Jerome on the rostrum declaring to the class, with the legend, '*Weather Forecast*': gale force winds — 180 words to the minute, with gusts of up to 250'.

His interest in theology and the needs of the busy pastoral priest led him to bring out a series of 'Booknotes' — type-written, nicely produced, containing lists of useful books for the priest in the parish, with comments and potted reviews in Jerome's own very characteristic style. They were found to be helpful, and soon he was doing a similar service for *The Furrow*.

But the years were taking their toll. It was harrowing to see a man

of Jerome's enormous vitality 'dying by degrees', slowly but inevitably wearing away. Not that he was confined to bed; not that he suffered great pain. But he was constantly racked with giddiness, shortness of breath, coughing, disorientation, and a gradual but unrelenting breakdown of the machine. During the last month of his life he was a living cadaver. When at length he had to stay in bed, he fell into a coma within a couple of days and died soon afterwards, on May 25th, 1979.

The final rites were celebrated in the College Chapel and he was buried in the adjoining cemetery on a beautiful May day. His brother Paddy (now retired), his sister, Mother Alphonsus (of the Loreto Order), many nephews and nieces (his younger brother David had died only a few months previously), and a host of friends, paid him a final tribute. May he rest in Peace.

Kevin Condon, C.M.

JEROME J. TWOMEY, C.M.

Born: Castleisland, 10 February 1912

Entered the Congregation: 7 September 1930

Final Vows: 8 September 1932

Ordained a priest by Bishop Francis Wall, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin, in Clonliffe College on 3 October 1937.

APPOINTMENTS.

1938-1942 St Joseph's, Blackrock

1942-1948 St Patrick's College, Drumcondra (Superior and Principal)

1948-1960 St Mary's, Strawberry Hill

1960-1966 St Joseph's, Blackrock (Superior)

1966-1979 All Hallows College

Died 25 May 1979.

Brother Peter Darcy, C.M.

Brother Peter would have read this piece carefully.

Being an avid reader and a stickler for accuracy, he would have pored over it to assure himself that we got everything right.

His approach to life was invariably direct. Nothing irritated him more than philosophical detachment, and he had little patience with any tendency to embroider the facts for the sake of a good yarn. Subtlety of any kind looked to him like evasion and any boy who tried to be funny about the price, shape, size, texture or style of a football jersey was soon reminded that Peter had little time for such idle chatter. Though he had a nice sense of humour and must have heard countless generations of schoolboys make the usual jokes about his baldness, it never interfered with the work in hand. Or they would be told with mock seriousness that he had forgotten to put in his curlers again. In the middle of winter he would accost his friends in the local garage with the remark—“I didn’t see you in the Forty-foot this morning!”

For years — in addition to his other duties — Peter tended the College generator with scrupulous care and when in later years someone presumed to start it without him, they were warned against the ultimate incompetence, “losing the charge”. Academic qualifications counted for nothing in his pragmatic world; if you failed to get it going you were dismissed as a mere amateur meddling in a professional world. When the old machine was finally replaced the contractors expressed their admiration that Brother Peter’s generator was still in superb working order.

The College car was also Peter’s particular concern and driving the confrères to the various chaplaincies was undertaken with military precision. He set a standard of punctuality that brooked no defaulters and heaven help the unfortunate confrère who slept it out. He lived by certain standards which remained unquestioned throughout his life. In his latter years when most of the driving slipped from his hands, he accepted it with calm detachment. In a real sense his commitment to anything was in response to Obedience and when asked to give it up he did so with ease: it was no longer his concern. When one by one he gave up the Sports’ Shop, the Cars and finally the generator, the break was instant and complete. Apart from the occasional wry observation on the driving habits of the confrères, he never indicated by word or gesture that any of these areas had been for so long the centre of his working life.

Of course, the real centre of his life was elsewhere. Peter faced change

and the limitations of old age with remarkable equanimity because his devotion to Christ transcended all of them. Mass, the Eucharist and Prayer were the still point of his life and nothing took precedence over them. In the first years of his retirement, while he was still active, most of his waking hours were spent — happily — in the Oratory where he gladly participated in every Mass said there. When his sense of time became more hazy he would feel aggrieved to miss a third Mass in the day. His love of the Lord was total and his single-minded service of Him spread to everything in his life. His work was essentially another facet of his service of Christ. The niceties of distinctions like *secular* and *sacred* meant nothing to a Faith as complete as Peter's and, come to think of it, he would have had precious little patience with you if you tried to expound it!

In everything he was deeply loyal. His commitment once given was never revoked. His Faith, which he learned first from his parents in Inchicore and the Oblate Fathers for whom he had such strong affection, was that strong virile kind which never wavered and saw in every change liturgical or otherwise an invitation to draw closer to the Lord. At times details such as the intricacies of the Breviary could irritate his sense of order and simplicity, but he worked at it because this was what the Church asked of him. He certainly enjoyed the increased opportunities to participate actively in the Liturgy and while his unique *rite* of serving Mass would have delighted the *Zualdi-Sheehy* generation, his natural sense of dignity and an impressive reading voice indicated a man to whom worship was thoroughly natural. The Rosary was also a treasured part of his devotional life; Our Lady he loved with real affection and throughout his declining years he always fingered his beads as he sat in his chair. Every year while he was able, he would set out for Lourdes and those of us who lived with him knew that when the annual visit had to be cancelled Peter was certainly ill.

His funeral in the College was an impressive tribute to the affection in which he was held, not just by the community and staff but by many people in the locality. Those who were his friends were friends for life and though they could expect the same treatment as the confrères if they fell short of his standards of punctuality, they admired and loved a simple man who was so deeply Christian. I doubt if he fully realised just how many people liked him. Everyone who cared for him in his last few years when — unknown to himself — he could be a difficult patient, was completely devoted to him and mourned his passing deeply.

When all's said and done, Peter was a holy man. His years of fidelity to the Community have enriched it; the power his prayers mediated to

us has left us stronger.

With his tenacious loyalty, I suspect, Peter will prove a stubborn advocate for us with the Lord.

M.R.

PETER DARCY, C.M.

Born: Inchicore, 22 June, 1891.

Entered the Congregation: 19 March, 1920.

Final Vows: 7 November, 1923.

APPOINTMENTS.

Castleknock, 1924— 1979.

Died 16 October, 1979.

Edward McDonagh, C.M.

One day in 1973, a recently ordained priest, on learning that I was a Vin, introduced himself with a great flourish of the red carpet, saying “I’m one of Ned’s men”. On my displaying some mystification, he went on “that’s what we call ourselves in Kilkenny — Ned McDonagh’s boys”. Two years later when Fr McDonagh came as Superior to Lanark, I met him virtually for the first time. Having heard his first few sermons, watched him chair his first Community meeting without being exactly set on fire, having heard him moreover admit that the extent of his Latinity was “De gustibus et coloribus non est disputandum”, I was moved from the Olympian depths of my ignorance of human nature to ask a confrère, much better placed to know, the secret of his quite extraordinary rapport with and influence over so many diverse people, in Sheffield for example, and on those clerics in Kilkenny. The answer was simply this: “He is a man of the heart”.

In the following four years, I was to obtain proof of it — in his wonderful devotion to the old Sisters in St Catherine’s; to all sick or troubled or lonely people, his great empathy with such as the patients in the State hospital — how he would mobilise folk on their behalf (what matter that his fallible grasp of names would send you to visit the wrong patient in

the wrong ward or the wrong parishioner in the wrong street!). To him Charity was not something to talk about but to perform; and that compassion found an echoing response in the recipients, and in those who came to know and love him best; as witness the deep and unrestrained emotion at his passing.

Not the least of his memorials in Lanark will be the Restoration in a dignified and prayerful blending of the Sanctuary area of St Mary's Church, that glorious testimony to the vision, taste and generosity of our predecessors in Lanark. Perhaps a no less important memorial, in praecordiis, may be the cementing of the ties between the Community (and that larger body of our parishioners) and the ministers of other Christian Denominations meeting in our prayerful and congenial Fraternalis. That is, indeed, what they were, meetings in genuine brotherhood, enormously helped on by his geniality and generosity — a point so beautifully stressed in the Clergy's joint obituary.

You would scarcely find anyone who so single-mindedly pursued his goal — the care of souls. He was never known to read a novel or a thriller or a Western; to him light literature was the Furrow or the Tablet; he just about scanned the Telegraph, and that at exactly 4.0 p.m. accompanied by one of those interminable mugs of cold tea, which seemed to make him a giant refreshed. So too with music and song. The only music that meant anything to him was "Sweet Heart of Jesus" which he sang around the house or whistled so tunelessly as to make Toscanini smash his baton. He just about knew that T. V. existed but recognised no programme nor artiste; he never succeeded in discovering when the News was on; though he might sometimes emerge to seek it. In an unguarded moment he once revealed a long-suppressed interest in boxing. His earliest hobby, he admitted, had been rearing Kerry Blues. He volunteered to visit in my stead a wayward parishioner whose Alsatian had scared me out of my wits. "I never feared a dog" he said. Football or any other game was a closed book to him, except perhaps to find out if Kilkenny were still in — and that was really only a tribute to his friendship with Fr. Tommy Maher. If he momentarily watched a race on T.V. it was to determine by question and answer what was the favourite. Having elicited that information, he would lose interest and disappear, even with only a furlong to go. This kind of iconoclasm deeply puzzled the Congnoscenti.

Parochial Visitation meant just that to him — no truck with the Celts and Rangers syndrome nor — Horresco referens — the Hippodrome; but a sincere effort to rescue the lost Sheep. How typical of him that on the eve of his death in between two wearing meetings he should struggle

into a house in great distress as was to be revealed subsequently and there find someone unexpectedly whom he greatly helped.

Fr McDonagh's piety was simple and down to earth. I never knew him to miss morning prayer and he pursued the ideal of assembling us three times per day for Community praise of the Lord with unyielding devotion. Every 9.30 a.m. week-day Mass and every Benediction found him there in the benches in the midst of the flock, despite that dreadful cough which would have lesser mortals away for three weeks in bed. Sometimes he might invite a confrère to visit a patient with him in Law Hospital. Before too long on the journey a rosary beads would materialise from nowhere, it would be pushed into your hand and he would say "The 5 Glorious Mysteries, right?" If one took off to bed in a vain effort to cheat the rigours of Lanark's climate he would come in, whistle tunelessly from the door for a minute and say — shyly but with a clear appreciation of the priorities: "How would you like me to bring the Lord to visit you". That was the man: no mere professional or routine touch, but the language of the heart.

By the exigencies of their family circumstances, the McDonaghs had lived in many places and he remained for me, a man without roots. Who ever heard him claim a place of origin? If he thought of anywhere as home, it would be Sheffield or Kilkenny; not for him the fierce *Pietas loci originalis* of his contemporary, Fr Jerome; nor the knowledge nor lore nor anecdotal commitment to the "honour of the little village". But he had his priorities right.

He loved to dispense hospitality, was never happier than when surrounded by folk enjoying one or other of the *Quinque Causae*. On these occasions one marvelled anew at the expertise of his ambidexterous carving. On the day of Pope John Paul's return from Shannon he arranged a dinner ostensibly to honour that occasion, *revera autem* to honour the departing member of the Community, (*Pro discessu amici*). When I played along with the deception, he was immensely pleased. In his valedictory words, in retrospect somewhat halting and at this remove unbearably poignant, he asked pardon — *Sancti Vincentii instar* — of the Community, for any scandal or hurt he might have done me. That was Monday afternoon. On Tuesday night he stood at the door of my room on the assumption that I was trying to sleep. His normal practice was to come in, smoke a cigarette walking up and down, while distributing ash in the wash basin (alas no ash tray could be discerned in that labyrinthine room). He wanted the address of a new parishioner whom he wished to involve in a parish project. Always about the Father's business.

“How would you like me to bring the Lord to visit you?” Like many another confrère he was denied this consolation at the end — but the peacefully reposing figure which I discovered next morning filled me with ‘joyful hope’ that the Lord had indeed come to bring him home.

EDWARD MCDONAGH, C.M.

Born: Limerick, 10 December, 1911.

Entered the Congregation: 3 September, 1932.

Final Vows: 8 September, 1934.

Ordained a Priest by Bishop Wall, Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin on 22 May, 1937.

APPOINTMENTS:

1937-1963 St Vincent’s, Sheffield. (Superior: 1954-63).

1963-1964 St Vincent’s, Cork.

1964-1975 St Kieran’s College, Kilkenny. (Spiritual Director). 1975-

1979 St Mary’s, Lanark. (Superior). Died 3 October 1979.

Father Myles J. Dowley, C.M.

The first contact of Myles Dowley with the Vincentian Community was as a boy at Castleknock College, 1936-1940, where it was honours all the way. But the story of his life as a Vincentian priest began at St Joseph’s, Blackrock, 1940-1948, where and when, just like the rest of us, he accepted and submitted to a regime of discipline, studies and spirituality which was then common the world over, but so different to what obtains today.

We used to play rugby football in those days and like everything in the Rock it was a very seriously taken exercise. The pitch on the top field was no place for the fainthearted, and when Myles got the ball ten yards from the line, the sensible thing to do was to get out of his way for he was going for the line with or without you. Going for the line was his way of life. He took his degree at University College. His subject was English. He had mastered it and he loved it, and his knowledge of English was the foundation of his easy approach to the art of preaching. Preaching was his life.

The missionary activity of Myles falls into two separate and very different eras. The first from 1949 to 1964. This was the time when it was easy to be a preacher. Vocations were flourishing, every religious order was building new seminaries to cope with the ever-increasing demand for space to house aspirants. The missionary was regarded by the people as a very special 'man of God'. His every pronouncement was listened to and accepted. He had all the answers and no questions were asked. And we who then preached took every advantage of this fact. We could frighten people, and we did. We could smother them with the mercy of God, and we did. And the results of this double-pronged attack was evidenced in the endless queues for confessions — of recent sins and sins of the whole past life. This type of approach suited Myles admirably. He was forthright, blessed with a powerful voice, — a great asset when amplification systems were in their infancy — a very clear mind, a compelling presence and an extraordinary gift of compassion for wayward humanity.

But as the years went by, and especially in the early sixties, we were all beginning to have misgivings and doubts about our approach to missions. The world was changing, the church was changing, times were changing. We did not of course realise that the Second Vatican Council was just around the corner. The better educated were beginning to question a religion that was mostly law and little love. They could not formulate their doubts in language, so they took the simple way of proving their point — non attendance at missions. Myles was quite agitated about all this, and in the few "Missioners conferences" that we had at this time he was beginning to insist that we must change our approach. In 1964 he received an appointment that was to shelve all his thinking on missions. He was appointed Superior and Parish Priest of the Sacred Heart parish, Mill Hill, and it was during his term of office there that I really got to know and appreciate Myles Joseph Dowley.

I was Parish Priest at the same time in Dunstable which was just a half an hour away on the motorway. We met frequently to share our hopes and difficulties, and I soon valued his friendship, advice and common sense. Myles was not too keen on administration. He would have preferred to be out among his people whom he loved. He made friends easily and he kept them. He was a tireless visitor and met all problems head on and he was very quick to admonish anyone whose style of life was not in keeping with the teaching of Christ. Even his closest friends were often on the receiving end of his displeasure, for he was totally fearless where right and wrong were concerned. This quality of honesty and genuineness won him the admiration of even those who opposed his views.

Myles had a wonderful, but quite personal, sense of humour that was not always appreciated until you really got to know him. For example, he would tell you that you 'mean well'. This was great if knew that it didn't mean what it seemed to mean! His infectious laugh put everybody at ease, especially the priests in the presbytery. He really enjoyed life and a day with him at the races was as good as a day at the races with the Marx brothers. It was just great fun. He loved chatting up the tipster who for a modest reward was prepared to give him the certain winner of the fourth race, or listening to the prophets of doom with their placards announcing that the end was nigh. He also knew something about horses, but would never bet on a favourite and when his outside chance failed to deliver, he would philosophically declare 'Well, he meant well'. The parishioners of Mill Hill greatly appreciated Myles and his genuine efforts to further their interests; and there was general regret in the parish when he was appointed to Lanark in 1971. They had lost a dedicated Parish Priest and a personal friend.

So now Myles returned to a mission scene that had vastly changed during his absence in Mill Hill. There was a marked falling off in mission attendance especially in the cities and towns. Other orders were experimenting with radically new approaches — with mixed results. Our band of missionaries had diminished. We were still giving the traditional type of mission, although hopefully with updated content. Missions were still, as always, seasonal and this was perhaps a blessing for Myles for it gave him the opportunity in the off seasons of talking Lanark parish by storm, especially by his house to house visitation of Douglas and Carstairs. But he was most unhappy about the mission scene and was forever calling for a complete reassessment of Vincentian policy. He was particularly anxious that all our missionaries would live together in one house where we could share our ideas and update our theology. In the meantime, he soldiered on and delighted in coming to Ireland for the country missions. He gave his last Irish mission in Castleconnor, Ballina, — preparation for Pope John Paul's visit. He was in the Phoenix Park on this great occasion, and returned to Lanark to prepare for the novena in honour of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal at St Peter's, Phibsborough. As he prepared for this Novena, God called him home.

Myles had a great love for his family. He was in constant touch with them by letter, and whenever he got a 'spare few days in Ireland, he would mount his motorbike and head for Carrick, Tullamore, Kilkenny, Clonmel or Porterstown bringing to all his brothers and sisters and their families his love and affection. Priestly vocations are rooted in

the family, and so at this sad time for all of us we offer his family our most sincere sympathy and thanks; thanks for your gift of Myles to the Vincentian Community. We received him from you, trained him and gave him as our gift to the world. But he was God's gift to all of us. We also offer our deepest sympathy to his countless friends, but especially to all who were so close to him in the parishes of Mill Hill and Lanark. We all grieve for him, but grief is the price we must pay for having loved someone.

Kevin O'Kane, C.M.

MYLES J. DOWLEY, C.M.

Born: Tybroughney, Co. Kilkenny, 7 April, 1922.

Entered the Congregation: 7 September, 1940.

Final Vows: 8 September, 1942.

Ordained a Priest by Archbishop McQuaid in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, 22 May 1948.

APPOINTMENTS.

1948-1949 Castleknock.

1949-1952 Sacred Heart, Mill Hill.

1952-1958 St Mary's, Lanark.

1958-1964 St Vincent's, Cork.

1964-1970 Sacred Heart, Mill Hill (Superior).

1970-1979 St Mary's, Lanark.

Died 13 November 1979.

Father Donald Costelloe, C.M.

The farm at Carey's Cross near Bandon, was home to Donald Costelloe. The Faith and education were in his blood. His mother was a teacher; the same profession claimed his brother; four of his sisters became religious.

After schooling at St Coleman's in Fermoy, Donald applied for entry to the Congregation of the Mission. At that time it was felt desirable to shorten the course in St Joseph's, Blackrock, so the six applicants in 1922 went to Mount Mellery to study philosophy and on completion of the course there entered the 'Rock in 1924, during the superiorship of the formidable Father John Rohan. A succession of directors guided him during the next four years, first Father Bob Rossiter, then Father Bill Purcell and finally Father James O'Doherty. The last year before ordination was spent in Gateacre.

As a student Donald was a serious young man and this trait followed him in his years in the priesthood. His first appointment was as dean of St Patrick's Training College. In later years he was to spend some fifteen years as spiritual director in Maynooth and in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe. There was a pattern in these occupations. They were isolated positions, leaving him less opportunity than normal to cultivate friendships in the community. The same may be said of later appointments to Glenart and to Hereford, alone in one and with a single companion in the other. On the whole it was an unusual career for one who joined a congregation of secular priests living in community.

Not that community, small or large or the lack of it seems to have made much difference to him. He was hard on himself, driven always by a sense of duty which allowed no excuses to himself and at times perhaps few excuses to others. Personal comfort was not high on his list of priorities. The combination of disregard for self and driving sense of duty made him an effective parish priest in Lanark even if it did little to cushion the community against the austerities of post war Britain. Equally these characteristics made possible for him two pioneering stints: in Hereford, where from a totally unsatisfactory house he set up the basic facilities of church and school in a new parish and in the process beguiled many a confrère to subscribe and thus have his name enscribed in the Golden Book; and again in Glenart where he took over when the students finally returned to Blackrock. His commission here was to set up a retreat house and this he did almost single handed.

Failing memory which plagued him in his last year in Glenart was the forerunner of a long illness. Again it dogged him as orte of the first curates appointed in the newly created parish of Sunday's Well, Cork. Not all the enthusiasm which he mustered for this post could stave off the twilight in which his last years were spent. But his contemporaries and those younger among us who were happy to know him and work with him will remember him as a good Vincentian priest, dedicated to the fulfilment of his duty and rule, a seeker for the fulfilment of the will of God, not his own.

DONALD P. COSTELLOE, C.M.

Born: Bandon, 10 May 1904.

Entered the Congregation: 3 September 1924.

Final Vows: 14 September 1926.

Ordained a priest by Dr Cullen, Bishop of Kildare and Leighlm, in Clonliffe College on 16 March 1929.

APPOINTMENTS.

1929-1938 St Patrick's College, Drumcondra.

1938-1945 Holy Cross College, Clonliffe (Spiritual Father).

1945-1950 St Mary's, Lanark (Superior).

1950-1954 St Patrick's, Maynooth (Spiritual Father).

1954-1963 Our Lady's, Hereford (Superior).

1963-1967 Holy Cross College, Clonliffe (Spiritual Father).

1967-1968 St Mary's, Dunstable.

1968-1971 St Kevin's, Glenart. 1971-1979 St Vincent's, Cork. Died 5 September 1979.