

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

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Foreword

Shortly after this issue appears we shall celebrate the 400th anniversary of the birth of St Vincent de Paul. A renewed concern among us for the life and writings of our Founder is one of the aims of Colloque. It would be a good thing, a true celebration, if the reading of articles in Colloque were to encourage members of the Community to delve more deeply into the Letters and Conferences.

The Forum section in this issue contains information about the preparation of the Mission Team at St Joseph's. All members of the Province will be concerned for the success of this new bid to take with seriousness this most central and traditional of our works. Grateful to those who have previously worked at the Parish Missions, and whose experience has helped to train the new group. The Province will follow with interest and prayers the development of their activity in the next few years.

Father Bill Clarke's article, together with one in the last issue, brings up to date his account of our Nigerian Mission. Again, as with the article on the Parish Mission Team, the purpose in publishing this narrative, apart from the desire to set things down before memory fades, is to make us urgently aware of and prayerfully involved with the pastorate of fellow members of our Province. There is a special sadness in the fact that this survey of the development of the Nigerian Mission appears in an issue which includes the obituary of the confrère who, as Provincial, inaugurated the Mission.

Vincent de Paul: Minister of Restlessness

Patrick McCrohan

The first time I heard the expression: “Le prêtre doit être ministre de l’inquiétude” (the priest ought to be a minister of restlessness) was in a lecture by a Belgian priest in U.C.D. in 1965. It’s a description that has floated round the back of my head ever since. It puts before my mind the picture of a priest prophesying like Isaiah or Amos — or Jesus. It captures for me the essence of St Vincent’s specialness. It’s what makes him so like Christ, *the* Ministre de l’inquiétude. Jesus was the one who “burned with zeal for God’s house”, whose food was “to do the will of my Father”, who was “moved to compassion by these people because they are like sheep without a shepherd”. Jesus was always on the move, up before daybreak seeking the Father’s guidance, moving on to new towns and villages because he was restless to do the Father’s work. Jesus questioned every fixed idea and prejudice and value. He disturbed the comfortable and challenged the smug. He loved the poor, the sinners, the brokenhearted, the social “nobodies”. He loved the rich and the “notables” too, only they didn’t want *or need* his love, and they found him abrasive and troublesome. This was the Jesus who in the years 1609-1613 took hold of Vincent de Paul and shook him and disturbed him and uprooted him and made him a Minister of Restlessness and a bringer of Good News to the Poor.

The Experience of Vincent

You can’t be a Minister of Restlessness until you have become restless. You can’t bring Good News to the Poor until you have become poor. Between 1605 and 1607 Vincent de Paul “disappeared”. He re-appeared in respectable society, went to Rome, and wrote two long letters to his patron, M. de Comet, describing a colourful captivity in North Africa in the hands of Turkish pirates and slave-traders and subsequently as a slave on a farm. While the authenticity of these letters is not disputed, the truth of what the 27 year old Vincent wrote *is*. His total silence on the subject in later years and his impassioned pleas to have the letters destroyed suggest that the letters were either a fanciful use of a student’s

spare time, or else an attempt to cover up a more “damaging” reality, possibly that he spent the two years in Marseilles prison as a result of having sold a hired horse.¹

Just let us assume that *whatever* happened between 1605-1607, Vincent was very ashamed about it. On his return to Paris in 1609 he was introduced to Pierre de Bérulle, who became his spiritual director. Not long afterwards he was accused (understandably but mistakenly) of petty theft, and lived under the shadow of that accusation for six years until the culprit confessed his crime. In 1610, when things were “looking up” a little and he joined the “ecclesiastical staff” of Marguérite de Valois he entered a period of extreme mental and spiritual suffering which lasted five years. All his efforts to distract himself from temptations against his faith failed until he recognised that what God was doing was purifying him prior to calling him to find Jesus Christ in the Poor. So from 1605 to 1613 Vincent underwent a total “shaking”. He was blasted out of the promotional preoccupations of a 17th century French cleric, and in the midst of his confusion and misery he found Jesus where Jesus had always said he would be found — in the least of his brothers and sisters. It was this “shaking” and “blasting” that plunged Vincent into an experience of desperate poverty — of desperate need of God — and this was the context in which he identified himself with the Messianic figure of Isaiah chapter 61 who says: “The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring Good News to the Poor, to bind up hearts that are broken, to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison...” (Is.61, 1-2). If we are to understand Vincent, understand his charism, understand his vision, understand who we are, who the poor are and what evangelism means, then we not only must understand what he *experienced*, but we ourselves must also in *some* way experience being *poor*; needing God, being restless, in need, insecure, being “blown out of the water” of complacency and acceptance of things as they are. In our searching for our proper work orientation we tend to ask the question: “What would Vincent do or say to us if he were alive today?” “I think what he would do would be to ask another question: “What would *Jesus* do if he were confronted with situations X, Y and Z?” and *then* he would *do* something.

For Vincent, two things were vital for a Priest of the Mission:

1. To be insecure and poor.
2. To take responsibility for the poor.

Insecurity and Poverty

A minister of restlessness cannot prophesy from an arm-chair. Vincent recognised the scandal posed by the distribution of clergy in France in the 17th century. In a conference to the confrères he speaks of a Calvinist whose only objection to the Church of Rome was that it could not possibly be directed by the Holy Spirit and leave the catholics in rural areas at the mercy of ignorant, immoral priests while the towns were packed with priests and monks who do nothing. How could the Church be taken seriously when nobody seemed to care that there were perhaps 10,000 priests in Paris while the country people, through their ignorance of the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation, and their fear of confessing their sins, were being let go to damnation? (XI 34-36).

For Vincent, comfort and security meant loss of vision. To see as Jesus sees, you must be poor, dependent on God, rooted in God alone. Once you get comfortable and don't need God (like Adam and Eve!!) you lose your way. Writing to Bernard Codoing in 1644 (Codoing was very involved in financial difficulties in mail-coach services in Lyon and Soissons) Vincent impresses on him the need to rest only in the security of God's Providence. He tells Codoing that the prior of the Dominicans in Paris had acknowledged that the ruin of their community had been brought about by financial security which made them "independent of Providence". He goes on: "We are not sufficiently strong to be able to carry the weight of material plenty in addition to the grace of our apostolate, and I fear we never shall be; the one destroys the other" (II 469).

In the same vein he tells his confrères: "Gentlemen and my brothers, there is no greater calamity for a missionary than to become attached to material things. He will get caught up in their toils and will be robbed of his motivation ... he will say:... why bother travelling around villages, why work so hard? Let the country people be — their own priests should look after them." History shows us, says Vincent, that material wealth has brought about the ruin of many clerics and even of entire communities and orders (XI 79).

Vincent was haunted by this fear of his community "settling". Smugness, comfort, laziness, pursuit of good material standards, were attitudes which brought out very strong emotions in him. In a conference on the Aims of the Congregation in December 1658 he attacks the mentality of confrères who object to every tension, who want to work on missions to the exclusion of everything else. He refers to *lupi rapaces* who after his time will endeavour to undo all he has undertaken because they do not look at things through the eyes of Christ but simply make decisions based on human considerations. He tells them that to

be stretched and over-committed (to the Daughters, the Foundlings, the mentally handicapped who lived at St Lazare, the formation of the clergy) is to be like Jesus; uncomplicatedness can never be the criterion for the apostolate of the missionary: the *only* criterion is: "If Our Lord still lived among men, what would he do?" (XII 79-94).

On July 24th, 1655, at a repetition of prayer Vincent challenges the confrères on their complaints about discomfort. He points out that the poor people of the war zones have known nothing but war for 20 years, and can see a whole year's work burnt in an afternoon, leaving them with the prospect of starvation, and still they trust in God; surely we should be ashamed to be so massively secure and cushioned against hardship that even though we don't do a tenth of the work they do, yet we complain if the food which the sweat and labour of the poor provides for us is not up to our standards. We should never sit down to eat without challenging ourselves as to whether we've earned what we eat. We should be sufficiently uncomfortable at least to be *aware* of the misery the poor suffer, and intercede for them as Moses interceded for the people of Israel. Contact with the poor, the suffering, the "nobodies" would always keep us from becoming comfortable and losing the restlessness of Jesus. What mattered to Vincent was to live in Christ and see as Christ saw. Everything else followed (XI 200-205).

Taking Responsibility for the Poor

Somewhere around 1613 Vincent, in the torture of God's withdrawal from him, promised God that he would spend the rest of his life serving the poor. And in that moment he found God and the Poor together. From that day on he not only served the poor, he loved them and needed them. When you love and need somebody, you don't have to debate who they are or whether or not you are doing enough for them. For Vincent the experience of Jesus in his own poverty became the vision with which he saw Jesus and loved him in the poor. And because he was excited and passionate about this, everybody he touched came to life. As with Jesus, wherever Vincent went things happened. His Priesthood was truly Sacrament. He made Jesus present, and miracles took place.

It wasn't *all* straight and simple. God had to orientate him: the poor family in Chatillon, the peasant of Cannes, the chaplaincy to the galley slaves, the mission at Folleville, all of these were "Damascus experiences" for Vincent. The important factor was a *hunger* in his soul, a restlessness to make Christ present to the poor.

The details he left to providence — hence the insecurity. In the Conference, already quoted, on the Aim of the Congregation (1658),

Vincent tells the confrères; “I really want you all to see things as they are, as works of God which God has entrusted to us without our having taken the initiative in any of them or in any way sought to have control of them. Our commitments have been given to us by those in authority or through necessity staring us in the face — these are the ways God has involved us in his plans. It’s true to say that people generally see this Community as being raised up by God because we clearly answer the most urgent and most overlooked needs” (XII 90).

Vincent didn’t romanticise about the works of the community. He says to the confrères in a conference: “I mustn’t judge a poor peasant or a poor countrywoman by outward appearances, nor even by their behaviour or the impression they make; very often they are scarcely recognisable as rational beings since they can be so repulsive and dehumanised; but turn the other side of the medal and you’ll see, through the faith God gives you, that the Son of God is made present to us in these people, because he wanted to be poor. In his passion his face was no longer the face of a man.... Oh God, how beautiful it is to see the poor when we see them in you, and according to the way Jesus saw them. But if we see them with our merely bodily eyes, and judge them by human criteria, we will despise them” (XI 32).

Speaking on the Five Virtues Vincent stresses that meekness is very necessary in dealing with the poor “who are, I must admit, so very coarse, ignorant, slow-witted and even, (I hate to say this), incredibly stupid; they don’t know how many gods there are or how many persons there are in God. Even if you tell them fifty times you’ll still find that they are as ignorant at the end as when you began ... now if you’re not gentle and patient with them, they’ll *see* that, and then they’ll become offended and will never again come back to learn the things they need to know for salvation” (XII 305).

Vincent had a colossal sense of responsibility for the poor people of the country districts. They were neglected and ignorant. Although he was aware that the theology of salvation of Thomas, Augustine and Athanasius was disputed, he took the tutorist line and refused to rest until the implications of that theology were fully realised. The position of Augustine and Thomas was (and it’s vital for us to see how *restless* this made Vincent) that if a man did not have an explicit knowledge of and belief in the Mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity he was damned. Add to that the horror he felt at the vast numbers of peasants who could not or would not confess their sins to the local priest, and were therefore destined for hell, and we better understand what he meant by being poor.

In a conference in January 1657 he begs the confrères to love the poor, to spend themselves in serving the poor with affection, because they are the specially-beloved of God ...” and let us go out of our way to seek out the *poorest* and the *most abandoned* ... They are our lords and masters, and we are not worthy to offer them our poor services” (XI 392).

On November 17th. 1656 in a conference on our duty to catechise and instruct the poor, he says: “... if we do not observe this practice we are in danger of doing terrible harm. I say terrible harm because, as has already been so well said, you can kill a man in two ways: you can either stick a knife in him and directly cause his death, or else you can omit to offer him what he needs for life. It is a great evil when you meet somebody who has not got the knowledge necessary for salvation and fail to teach him when you have the chance. And what Augustine. Thomas and Athanasius have to say ought to disturb us, that is that those who do not explicitly know the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation will not be saved Now I know there are other theologians who are not as rigorous and hold other opinions ... but since there is a doubt. Gentlemen and my Brothers, we ought to act in love and instruct these poor people, whoever they are: we ought not let a single opportunity to go by if at all possible” (XI 381-384).

Vincent’s Christ-like restlessness spread out in concentric circles. Just as Jesus instructed his disciples so that they could continue his work, so Vincent impressed on the confrères that we must love the poor through their own priests also: “The Church cannot survive without good priests who will put right such a colossal tide of ignorance and vice in this world and lift this poor Church of ours from its pitiful plight. If we had any hearts at all we would weep tears of blood for the Church. I believe that all the misery we see in the world could be attributed to priests. That might sound a bit drastic to some of you, but this question is too important to let it go by without seeking an answer and finding a solution to the problem of so much evil.... We’ve had lots of conferences about trying to analyse the source of so much evil and trying to get at the roots of the problem: and the analysis is that the Church has no greater enemies than priests. It is priests who have given birth to heresies (for example Luther and Calvin) ... and it is with the co-operation of priests that heretics have established their position, that vice has got such a grip and that ignorance has put down its roots among the poor, abandoned people; and all of this has happened because priests are lax, careless and lazy, and fail to oppose with all their strength these three evils — heresy, immorality and ignorance — which have swamped the whole

of Christendom.

Surely, my brothers, you would be prepared to make any sacrifice to help reform our priests so that they will live up to the great expectations God has of them. Only in this way will the Church be rescued from the awful condition in which we find it" (XII 85-86).

In a letter to Thomas Berthe in Rome (January 2nd, 1654) Vincent expresses tremendous pleasure at Berthe's sending a confrère to visit the poor and distribute alms on behalf of a wealthy lady: "It's a source of great happiness for us that Our Lord seems in every place to be directing our Community to the service and the relief of the *poorest*" (V 60). Vincent was restless and impatient with a simplistic approach to "division of labour". He opposed the mentality of those who said: "let's do nothing but missions; let's do nothing but seminaries." The *only* question was "what is Jesus showing us? What does the Father ask of us?" Addressing himself to the tension created by diversity of commitments to the poor he says:

"Some of you might say: 'Why should we be involved in a hospital? The poor people in the Nom de Jesus are taking us from our true apostolate ... we have to say Mass for them, instruct them, give them the sacraments, and generally organise their lives. Why should we have to go to the war zones and give out relief supplies, take a lot of risks, and in this way neglect what we were called to do?' Oh Gentlemen, how can you talk like that about these works? Why shouldn't priests work to care for the poor? Wasn't that what Our Lord did, and many great saints, who didn't just talk about the poor but went themselves to comfort, relieve and heal them. Are not the poor the broken limbs of Our Lord? Are they not our brothers? And if priests abandon them who do you hope will help them? I want to make this very clear; if some of you think that we go on missions only to preach to the poor, but not to touch them, to minister to their spiritual needs but not the needs of their bodies, you are wrong. We must help them, and get help for them, in their every need if we wish to hear Our sovereign Judge say to us: "Come you blessed of my Father..." (XII 87).

Conclusion

Vincent de Paul was a man who knew what it was like to live in darkness. When he began to see he reacted like Bartimaeus in Mark ch. 10 — "he followed Jesus along the Way." This explained his restlessness and also his strength. He knew that the power of Christ was present in his weakness. He knew that as long as he clung to Christ and obeyed in detail his every sign and call, that God would bless his work. The secret

lay in his passionate love for Christ and for his Church. He really had no problem seeing what to do. It was as clear to him as the voice of God.

I think that our Province, and our whole Community is beginning again to experience being lost, visionless, purposeless and apathetic. I think we have been asking the wrong questions about our works, the poor, our vocations and our future. I believe that when we really acknowledge that we are “wretchedly and miserably poor and blind and naked too” that God will bless us and the work of our hands, and that we will begin to experience what Vincent experienced and do what he did as Christ’s restless Minister of Restlessness.

Note

1. cf Coste: *Monsieur Vincent*, pp 43-60.

The Zelazewski File

Noel Travers

I promised I would write something on St Vincent and Discernment. I have been impressed by the way Vincent deals with people, especially in his letters. During Lent of last year (1980) Fr McCullen sent around to us a selection of letters that had been translated by Fr J. C. Sheil. One of these letters was written by Vincent to Fr Stanislaus Casimir Zelazewski. It shows us Vincent, an old man of 74, trying to persuade a young Polish confrère of 24 years of age to hold on and remain in the Community. So I thought it worthwhile to read some of the letters that Vincent wrote to Charles Ozenne, the superior of Stanislaus, and discover what happened. Stanislaus Casimir Zelazewski was born in Warsaw and was received at Saint-Lazare in 1647 at the age of 18. On 4 September 1651 Vincent sent to Poland a group of confrères, Lambert aux Couteaux superior, Guillaume Desdames priest, Nicolas Guillot subdeacon, Stanislaus Zelazewski cleric and Jacques Posny a laybrother.

Three years later he received the letter from Vincent that Fr Sheil translated for us. So I will start with this letter, the only one to my knowledge that Vincent wrote to Stanislaus (V 104). Vincent points out to him in this letter that he must not be surprised if he is not happy:

You see, no matter what place and no matter what occupation we are in, we never find perfect contentment in them. Did our Lord lead a comfortable life? All of this can also serve as a reply to the pretext you make up for leaving us — that you haven't good health — as if that should be more precious to you than the glory of God. Who told you that by quitting your vocation you will feel better, or that by persevering in it you will always be in bad health?

Vincent exhorts him to remain in the Community. Then in the last paragraph he says:

As for your request to live with our missionaries without being one of them, to work with them and still remain your own master, this we will not grant. So I ask you, Father, to be good enough not

to expect this concession but to give yourself to God in order to serve Him all your life in the way He wants, and in the state where He has put you.

I decided to follow up the correspondence on Stanislaus. I have made a selection of the letters and I will give some extracts. Vincent wrote to Charles Ozenne, superior at Warsaw, on 22 May 1654:

May God grant that what I have sent to Fr Zelazewski will give him a change of heart. There is no sign of it, having seen the rashness of his spirit and the love that he has for himself. God allows it that at the beginning of every community many leave, and some in a scandalous way. He knows the reason. It is up to us to prepare ourselves and to adore his ways (V 136).

Something must have happened because Vincent writes to Charles on 10 July 1654:

That which has happened between yourself and Fr Zelazewski makes me ask you in the name of our Lord to support him. I would not wish to tell you not to correct him, but this must be done gently, rarely, privately and having thought before God if you should do it and how you should do it. I have heard that the Poles win one another more by a cordial and friendly way than by a rigorous one. I hope that you will snatch this good priest out of the side-track where he has gone, as the late Fr Lambert (*previous superior*) used to do, and that little by little he will fall in with our little observances; and if he doesn't, God will take care to dismiss him from you, and should this happen it would be better that he would have reason to praise you for the gracious treatment that you had given him than that he should leave discontented (V 165).

On 20 September 1654 Vincent writes to Charles:

Say nothing to Fr Zelazewski except that I recommend him with all my heart to our Lord and I would be consoled to know how he received the letter I wrote to him (V 180).

On 16 October 1654 he writes again:

Now I am consoled in a way that I can't tell you about the missions that Father Desdames and Zelazewski are going to begin and I ask God who has a loving heart that he will bless their work and yours (V 201).

In another letter to Charles on 27 November 1654 Vincent says:

I have received your letter of 29 October which has greatly-consoled me by the news that Fathers Desdames and Zelazewski have begun the mission with a blessing (V 232).

On 8 January 1655 Vincent writes again:

I *beseech* you to tell Father Zelazewski that I greet him and embrace him with all my love, and I ask you. Father, to *support* him as best you can and to do all you can *to help him carry his cross*: and perhaps that little by little our Lord *will touch his heart*. Oh what a pity, and what an account he will render to our Lord if he does not fit in with his plans (V 257).

(The words in italics were written by Vincent himself) On 12 February 1655 Vincent says:

My God. Father, how I suffer at the absence of Fr Zelazewski (V 314).

and on 24 September 1655 he writes:

I have finally decided that it is too much to tolerate the liberty of Fr Zelazewski. which can cause great harm to the Company. It is therefore time to remedy it either by asking him to leave and not to have any further communication with him. or, if he has any love for his vocation, to promise to do his best to live as a true missionary in the observance and submission which is his duty. I ask you. Father, to find out what his disposition is and then to act in the manner described above. You will treat him with respect and gentleness, with evidence of affection but also with firmness, pointing out to him that it is necessary to speak to him in these extreme circumstances. I thank God that he has given to the Company a new Polish priest who has the good qualities that you have told me about. May God give him the grace to persevere,

and give to all of you the grace to live in such a way that the good odour of your lives and of your work will attract many others for the progress of our holy religion (V 428).

Finally, on 17 December 1655 Vincent writes:

Don't be surprised at the complaints and bad disposition of Fr Zelazewski. It is normally the case that those who leave us try our patience. God wishes to strengthen your patience! (V 486).

I believe that a man's (and a woman's) character comes out in what he says and how he savs it. Vincent shows himself to have had a great love for Stanislaus. He knew him from his time in Saint-Lazare. Vincent was concerned that his young confrère was not answering the call of God, and he did his best for him. I think Fr Zelazewski was the first Polish Vincentian priest to work in Poland. Vincent also showed great support for Charles Ozenne the local superior. He was on the spot with an unhappy confrère. Charles was born in Nobas, near the Somme, in 1613 and became a priest in 1637, and was received into the Congregation in 1638. Vincent describes him as a man of God, zealous and detached (II 147).

Sadly, Charles died in 1658. So, we have the interesting triangle — Vincent, Stanislaus and Charles — Charles, the go-between man. The national differences are part of the story. Vincent handles the situation like a man opening a glass cabinet gently, lovingly, or like a good mechanic listening to the sick noise of a car engine. Vincent's secret ingredient in his skill as a director was his love for and the knowledge of his confrères. He had the insight into their needs. His relationship with God built on his peasant patience and helped him to give people time to grow. He was not over-anxious about Stanislaus. He knew that God would take care of him.

As a friend said to me before he sank a putt: "You have to let your kids grow away from you". As directors we must not be overanxious about our flock and friends. Rather let us submit ourselves and our flock to God. Vincent in these letters practised the rule: "We shall treat each other with great respect, yet living together after the manner of dear friends".

One last point. Vincent in his letter to Stanislaus pointed out the mistake he would make in thinking he would do more for God outside the Community. Obviously he was speaking from experience. The confrères in Poland did great work with the plague-stricken people.

Whether this work would have been done if it were not organised on a community basis is doubtful. In our community discussions about our works we might think that we should change our works— get a new apostolate. Stafford Poole CM in *A History of the Congregation of the Mission* quotes the confrère who described the French Revolution as “Blessed”, because “it despoiled us of all our goods and put us back on the path of duty” (p 100). We have had the equivalent of a revolution in that our numbers of students have fallen so low. We have inherited Vincentian works and ideals. Maybe it is time that we give ourselves more generously to God and become Vincentians in fact. The fault is not in our works, it is in ourselves. We have a goldmine in the conferences and letters of Vincent. This has been my joyful discovery in the past two years, thanks to Fr Chris O’Donnell O. Carm., who told me at Dunardagh: “You should know more about St Vincent”. At that time F could have quoted some of his rules, but that was all.

A good way to learn how to do anything is to watch someone doing the job. I was fascinated as a boy watching a farmer using a scythe — the slow, graceful sweep, and the periodic halt for lighting his pipe and sharpening the blade. In this way the farmer used to keep going all day at the job.

I suggest that we learn about discernment from Vincent. The flavour of the times and the difficulties of those early years have taught me how to cope in 1980. Vincent lived in the wake of the Council of Trent. We live in the wake of Vatican II. God has called us to the Little Company. Vincent’s letters reveal him and his confrères — and ourselves! That’s discernment.

Jean-Henri Gruyer

Thomas Davitt

Poor Jean-Henri Gruyer, having been done to death in the September Massacres, suffered further maltreatment afterwards in print. He appeared as Guillier, Grillet and Gouyer, and even when his surname was correctly rendered he once had his forenames given as Jean-Marie.¹

In a printed extract from a manuscript life of Jean-Felix Cayla de la Garde, tenth Superior General, there is a very short biographical note headed *M. Gruyer (Henri)*. This gives his birthplace as Dole and says he entered the Congregation in Saint-Lazare in January 1771. He was later stationed in the Vincentian parish of Notre-Dame in Versailles, was imprisoned in the Queen's Stables in August 1792 and killed there on 8 September.²

Another account, headed *M. Guillier, or rather Grillet*, has more biographical details. It gives the date and place of his birth as 1725 in the diocese of Boulogne, and the date of his entry into Saint-Lazare as 1774. He was superior of the seminary in Beauvais and expelled from there during the Revolution for refusing to take one of the oaths. He sought refuge in Paris in St Firmin's seminary and was killed there on 3 September 1792.³

In each of these accounts biographical details of two different confrères have been confused, apparently owing to the similarity of their names.⁴ The two are Jean- François-Henri Grillet, who was not killed in the Revolution, and Jean-Henri Gruyer who was.⁵

Grillet was born in the diocese of Boulogne in 1725 and entered the seminaire in Saint-Lazare in 1774. He became superior of the seminary in Beauvais. In his circular letter of 1 January 1780 Jacquier mentioned that Grillet had been appointed Visitor of the Picardy Province,⁶ and he attended the 1788 General Assembly in that capacity, being still superior in Beauvais.⁷ During the Revolution he sought refuge in Münster and while there was appointed Vicar Capitular of Beauvais.⁸ He died in 1802.⁹

Jean-Henri Gruyer¹⁰ was born on 13 June 1734 in Dole in the diocese of Besançon,¹¹ the son of Denis Gruyer and Claudine Bruxelles. Dole is slightly south of the mid-point on a line between Dilon and Besançon. He was ordained priest for the diocese of Saint-Claude¹² but no details about his priestly life seem to be available before 19 September 1770,

the date of a reference written for him in connection with his application to enter the Congregation of the Mission. It reads:

We the undersigned Dean of the Royal Chapter of Dôle and Parish Priest of the same town certify that M. Gruyer, a well-known priest of the town of Dôle, is of good life and conduct, and that we have always found him zealous in making himself useful in our parish in all circumstances in which we needed his ministry.¹³

He entered the seminaire in Saint-Lazare on 23 January 1771, at the age of thirty-seven. At the end of his first-year seminaire he was appointed to Angers, a house devoted solely to giving missions. During the following year he was engaged in this work. He took his vows in Angers on 24 January 1773 and shortly afterwards he was appointed curate in Norte-Dame in Versailles. Towards the end of 1784 he was transferred to the other Vincentian parish in Versailles, St Louis. On 27 April 1791 the parish was taken over by constitutional clergy and Jean-Henri got permission from the municipal authorities to return to his native region, and he went to Besançon during May, with an official document, part of which read:

...we certify that Jean-Henri Gruyer, townsman, native of Dôle in Franche-Comté, living in this town, is of good life and behaviour, as has been established to our satisfaction by his conduct which is known to us...¹⁴

Around 18 June of the following year he left Dôle for Paris, with a safe-conduct issued by the municipality:

Allow the passage of M. Jean-Henri Gruyer, priest and citizen at present domiciled in this Municipality of Dôle, District of Dôle, Department of Jura. Height five foot four inches, hair and eyebrows white, slightly bald at the back of the head, medium brow, eyes grey-blue and deep-set, long nose, medium mouth, small chin, round face. He has said he wishes to take up residence again in Paris where he used to live, having come back to Dôle his native place only in May of last year, where he has lived up to today.¹⁵

On 8 August that year, 1792, he went out to Versailles for some reason, returning to Paris on the 12th or 13th. He stayed in St Firmin's

seminary, the former Collège des Bons-Enfants, where Louis-Joseph François the superior was giving accommodation to displaced priests. It was an unfortunate time to arrive there. On the 13th a guard was put on the seminary and none of those inside was allowed to leave again. On 3 September seventy-two of those imprisoned there were massacred, seven were officially spared and twenty-eight escaped, including seven confrères. For only six victims, including Louis-Joseph François, are there details of how exactly they were killed. Jean-Henri Gruyer is one of the others about whom nothing is known. The bodies were quickly taken away and buried in unmarked graves in three or four different cemeteries; no particulars are known.

Cayla, in his circular letter of 1 January 1794, wrote:

Fathers François, Gruyer and Gallois had the happiness to be associated with the worthy priests of Jesus Christ who were slaughtered in the notorious days of 2 and 3 September.¹⁶

The Galois (there should be only one 'l') was Jean Galois, attached to the Royal Chapel in Versailles. He was killed in Versailles on 8 September 1792.

Two of the other priests killed in St Firmin were diocesan priests who had formerly been Vincentians, Jean-Charles Caron and Nicholas Colin. They were beatified along with the seventy other victims.¹⁷

Notes

1. The sparse biographical details about Jean-Henri Gruyer are with varying degrees of fullness in the following:
Catalogue du Personnel de la CM depuis l'Origine (1625) jusqu'à la Fin du XVIIIe Siècle, Paris 1911, p 287.
Notices sur les Prêtres, Clercs et Frères Défunts de la CM, Vol. V, Paris 1910, pp 51-53.
 Misermont: *Le Bienheureux François et les Martyrs de Saint-Firmin*, Paris, 1929.
 There are also references in various issues of the *Annales de la CM*, with the fullest account being that of Pierre Coste in Vol. 91, pp 842-845. Gabriel Perboyre, a relative of the *beatus*, wrote extensively on the confrères during the Revolution. He died in 1880 but his work was published later in the *Annales*. Most of his account Of Jean-Henri Gruyer is suppressed because he followed the source which confused Gruyer and Grillet, Vol. 73, pp 667-8.
2. *Recueil des Principales Circulantes des Supérieurs Généraux de la CM*, Vol. II, Paris 1879, p 607.

3. do,p608.
4. In spite of the different spellings the French pronunciation of the names Guillier, Grillet and Gruyer is very similar.
5. Misermont, op. cit, p 99 nl, and *Annales* Vol. 73 p 668, Show how this confusion arose.
6. *Recueil...* fas above) II, p 127 nl.
7. do, p 203.
8. Misermont, op. cit., p31.
9. *Catalogue...* (as above), p284.
10. In the Coste article referred to in Note 1 above his forenames appear in the opening sentence as Jean-Marie. This is clearly an error on the part of the editor or printer; in the earlier part of the article, dealing with Louis-Joseph François, Coste names him as Jean-Henri Gruyer (p 821).
11. At the time of his birth, 1734, Dôle was in the diocese of Besançon; in 1742 it became part of the new diocese of Saint-Claude.
12. The Latin *Proprium CM* for the Divine Office has a biographical note containing the following: *Sacerdotio initiatus apud civitatem S. Claudii (St.-Cloud)*. This is clearly a mistake. The translation of *S. Claudii* should be Saint-Claude. The Latin form of Saint-Cloud is *5. Clodoaldi*. Saint-Cloud is in the environs of Paris, whereas Saint-Claude is the cathedral town of the diocese for which he was ordained. The English translation of the *Proprium* has retained the error.
13. This document, as well as those referred to in the next two notes, are preserved in the French National Archives and are quoted in *Notices...*, Vol. V, p 52.
14. cfn 13.
15. cfn 13.
16. *Recueil...* (as above), II, p 246, has “Gouyer”. This is clearly a typographical error. Misermont points out that several manuscript copies of the letter have the name correctly spelt, (op. cit., p99). In the *Catalogue...* (as above) there is no confrère named Gouyer.
17. cf Misermont, op. cit., pp97,100, 223.

Provincial Archives

VISITORS OF THE PROVINCE OF IRELAND

The Province was canonically erected by Father Etienne on 24 January 1848. At that time there were three houses: St Vincent's, Castleknock; St Peter's, Phibsboro; and St Vincent's, Cork. Prior to 1848, the houses and the confrères were subject to the Visitor of the Province of the *lie de France*. What follows is a list of the Visitors; the date is the date given on the patent of appointment. With two exceptions, the originals of these patents are in the archives here.

1.	Dowley, Philip	25.01.1848
2.	McNamara, Thomas	8.02.1864
3.	Duff, Peter	15.03.1867
4.	Morrissey, Thomas	29.09.1888
5.	Walshe, Joseph	19.07.1909
6.	Bennett, James	29.04.1921
7.	O'Connor, Henry	18.01.1932
8.	O'Doherty, James	11.06.1942
9.	Sheedy, Joseph	19.05.1952
10.	O'Leary, Christopher	12.12.1955
11.	Cahalan, James	21.02.1966
12.	McCullen, Richard	23.02.1975
13.	Mullan, Francis	4.11.1980
		JHM 1.01.1981.

THE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY OF 1861

A. *The Assembly itself.*

The third Provincial Assembly of the Province of Ireland was held in Castleknock from the 3rd to the 9th of April 1861. There was to be a General Assembly in Paris later in the same year and on the previous January 25th Father Etienne had formally ordered the convocation of a Provincial Assembly. It was a small gathering — twelve in all. Fathers Dowley and Francis Cooney from Castleknock; Fathers McNamara and

James Dixon from Phibsboro; Fathers Neal McCabe and John McBride from Cork; Fathers Michael Burke and Cornelius Hickey from Sheffield; Fathers James Lynch and Thomas Murphy from the Irish College, Paris; Father Matthew Kavanagh, the superior, represented Lanark — no other member of that community had spent six years in the Congregation after vows and hence did not qualify for election as a delegate; and finally Father Malachy O’Callaghan, the Provincial Bursar.

Father McCabe was elected secretary, and Father Lynch assistant of the Assembly. Fathers McNamara and Lynch were elected as delegates to the General Assembly, while Fathers McCabe and Burke were the substitute delegates.

The Acts of the Assembly show quite clearly that there were deep divisions within the Province, and even within the Assembly itself. Indeed, this was one of the few topics on which the Assembly agreed unanimously.

“The Assembly deplores the license with which certain Missionaries of this Province take upon themselves — contrary to Rule — to condemn the actions of local Superiors and the central administration of the Province, thus causing confusion within the Province and giving scandal to those outside, and with unanimity earnestly requests the Visitor to use the most efficacious means to remove this abuse, and to stamp it out for the future.”

“The Assembly unanimously affirms that among the causes of the criticism and discord— so much to be deplored— in the Province is the lack of union and concord between the Consultors of the Visitor and the Visitor himself, and also the lack of harmony between the majority of local Superiors and the Visitor. This Assembly earnestly and respectfully requests the Superior General to take those measures which in his wisdom he will judge most suitable to remove these sources of discord, restore peace to the confrères and unity of action in the government of the Province.”

There was also agreement that the number of missions should be increased and also the number of confrères engaged in this apostolate. An ingenious plan was proposed and approved which linked the missionaries of Phibsboro and Cork more closely in this work. Perhaps it is in this context that the proposal — defeated by nine votes to three — to suppress the Sheffield house should be mentioned; having the care of souls this house tied down confrères who would otherwise be free to give missions. And also the proposal, passed by six votes to four—with two abstentions— that the Superior General be requested not to further increase in the Province the number of “parishes or quasi-parishes with

the care of souls attached, since they impede the giving of missions and other primary works of the Congregation.”

A further point of agreement was that “our house at St Vincent’s, Castleknock, should be converted, as soon as it be convenient, into a Seminary to which only aspirants to the ecclesiastical state be admitted.”

But on many issues there was open disagreement: on two occasions the Visitor had to decide an issue by the use of his casting vote when the Assembly split six against six. Also disagreement on the issue whether those engaged in giving missions should live together in a house to which no public church was attached — which in practice meant Castleknock. The Visitor and a group in the Assembly wanted the designation of missions, and of the missionaries who were to give them, to be in the hands of the Visitor and not to rest with the local Superiors of the houses to which the missionaries belonged. There were also a number of proposals aimed against Father McNamara — his method of collecting money for the church and schools at Phibsboro; his employment of a paid agent in organising these collections; his stand on the use of the Sign of the Cross in the Phibsboro schools etc. Some of these proposals were passed; others were defeated.

B. *Background to the Assembly.*

The troubles of 1861 were not of yesterday. In January 1859 Father Dowley, for the second time, offered his resignation as Visitor. He put forward his advanced age — he was 70 — and increasing physical infirmities. “The Council (in Paris), though convinced that the good of this Province requires another Visitor with greater insight into the spirit and discipline of life in community, think that the Superior General, to spare the feelings of this confrère, should reply that his title as Founder of the Province of Ireland and the services he has rendered the Congregation are, in the opinion of the Superior General, excellent reasons for his continuing as Visitor ...” Father Etienne wrote to this effect, and Father Dowley decided to continue as Visitor. It is clear, however that all was not well in the Province.

Two years later, in January 1861, the General Council again considered the state of the Province. An Irish confrère had come to Paris seeking a dispensation of his vows and alleging as one of his motives for this step “the troubles in the Province”. “On this subject the Superior General said that the Province of Ireland is in a sad state... This evil springs from the lack of agreement between Father Dowley, the Visitor, and Father McNamara, the Superior of Phibsboro, as well as from the

never-ending building projects of the latter which give rise to criticism and particular divisions. The Council thinks that the only remedy is for the Superior General to summon a meeting of the Provincial Council (Fathers McNamara, Dixon and Duff) together with the local Superiors and have them answer a series of questions which he will submit..." This plan was never implemented.

A week later the General Council again returned to the question of Ireland. They decided to wait until after the Provincial Assembly before taking measures to deal with the present troubles, and expressed the view "that it was for reasons of prudence that Father Dowley did not take a strong line as Visitor, being convinced that Father McNamara had the complete confidence of the central authority in Paris. On the occasion of the General Assembly, a circular letter would be sent to the confrères pointing out that all authority rests with Father Dowley and that he merits their complete confidence; that attention would be drawn to the question of the collections, to the suppression of the Sign of the Cross, and that these questions would be submitted to the General Assembly." (Father McNamara had introduced the making of the Sign of the Cross into the Phibsboro school against the wishes of the then Department of Education.)

On March 27 1861, a week or so before the opening of the Provincial Assembly, Father Dowley writes from Castleknock to Father Etienne and gives his assessment of the situation:

"...I have now most respectfully and with the utmost diffidence to submit to your paternal consideration that much of the evils and difficulties of this Irish Province have of late years arisen from an abuse and misconception of the exemptions and privileges granted to the Superior at Phibsboro on the occasion of your last revered and dear visitation.

The sanction and authority given to Mr McNamara to carry on his buildings, his collections of money and rules for the Missions, without any further reference to the Visitor and his Council, impaired the authority in this Province. Mr McNamara, feeling — as he imagines — his independence, has gone to lengths which have given dissatisfaction to most of the confrères. Some went so far as to feel disappointed that the superior General ever gave such exemptions or powers to any confrère. *I believed then and now* that the Superior General never intended that such a use would be made of or such construction be put upon the approval he gave of Mr McNamara and his projects and his buildings

...

His poor school and educational principles were carried with the same high and independent hand... Father Burke, the local Superior

at Sheffield, has caught a little of this spirit of independence of the Provincial authority... I need not inform you of what... you know already, that these two confrères are distinguished for their virtue, abilities and successful zeal. But in my poor" judgement I think that if these mistaken impressions be not removed from their minds, if this spirit be not corrected, it may be taken up by others to the grievous loss and injury of the Province.

There is a *political spirit* among us. Those who could not be cured elsewhere, nearly all have been brought here. They are *quiet* and *silent*, but the *spirit* is there. So far it gives no disedification, but some uneasiness to the mind of the poor old Visitor. ... Singularly enough, and blessed be God, *virtue* reigns and the rule is observed everywhere. I leave it now to your own paternal heart and wisdom *what to say to us...*"

On the day the Provincial Assembly opened, April 3, Father Peter Duff, a Provincial Consultor and Assistant Superior in Castleknock, writes to Father Etienne:

"This house, thanks be to God, continues to edify, as it ought, all the confrères who visit us. Simplicity, cordiality, and the observance of our holy rule flowers in our little family. But notwithstanding the very estimable qualities of our confrères taken individually, some degree of an inquietude of spirit and disposition to express in conversation disapproval of works to which confrères in this Province are applied by obedience frs, I fear, got in amongst us. You, Very Honoured Father, have no doubt learned from various sources that due respect for authority has become impaired amongst us. I will venture to confide to your paternal heart what, in my inexperience, I think has helped to bring about this state of things: want of accord amongst those who held authority in the Province, and want of due dependence, seen by subjects perhaps both in acts and words, have, it appears to me, had a considerable share in the maturing of this unpleasant disposition...

... It appears to me the future prosperity of this poor Province depends very much upon a due investigation of the causes that have led to a misunderstanding, to a certain extent, of the nature of obedience, and the partial sapping of its foundations amongst us.

There is a very laudable desire amongst the confrères of seeing the missions carried on more and more vigorously, and indeed this is not to be wondered at, as each mission given by our priests is productive of such blessed and extensive fruits. But that desire, even for our primary work, seems to become deordinate when it makes one express his opinion in conversation against other works, marked out even by the highest authority in the Congregation...."

C. *Reaction to the Acts of the Assembly.*

When the Acts of the Assembly reached Paris they caused great concern to Father Etienne. It would seem that he consulted a number of the confrères of the Province on the discord and lack of unity manifested so clearly in the Assembly. The most interesting of the extant replies is entitled "*Observation on the Provincial Assembly of Ireland, 1861.*" It is written in French and is anonymous.

It starts by pointing out that for some time division, discontent and criticism have existed in the Province and that among the causes is the division and lack of harmony between the Visitor and his Council, as well as a lack of understanding between the Visitor and the local Superiors. This was clear from the proceedings of the Assembly which mirrored a similar division in the Province as a whole. The "Majority" in the Assembly represented one viewpoint; the "Minority" the other.

In almost every instance the "Majority" consisted of Fathers McNamara, Burke, McCabe, Kavanagh —all Superiors — as well as Fathers Dixon, Hickey and McBride. The "Minority" was made up of Father Lynch, the superior of the Irish College, Paris; Father Cooney, the delegate from Castleknock; Father O'Callaghan, the Provincial Bursar; and usually Father Murphy, the delegate from the Irish College. The "Minority" had the sympathy of the Visitor who voted with them on all disputed questions — with one exception, when he abstained.

The "Majority" almost without exception "favoured the retention of the existing order, so long established in the Province and so often approved by the Superior General"; while the "Minority" "advocated change and was the mouthpiece of those who for some time were noticeable for their criticisms and their discontent; the proposals to suppress the Sheffield house, to withdraw the *missioners* from Phibsboro, to change the method of the collections, to have a noviciate in Ireland, and other proposals which were rejected, emanated from the "Minority".

Up to this point the writer claims that he is dealing with facts admitted by all as true.

He next takes up the question: "Which of these viewpoints represents the mind of the Province; which has the better understanding of its needs; which has the better appreciation of its apostolate?"

"The Majority, as has been seen, is made up of a number of senior confrères who, since entering the Congregation, have been *actively* engaged in the different works carried on by the Congregation in the country. They have all been employed in the College, in giving missions, and in the works of charity attached to our various houses, such as Confraternities, Associations of Charity, visiting the poor in

their homes, Confessions, direction of the Daughters of Charity, and even in the care of souls.

The “Minority” on the contrary is almost entirely composed of confrères who, on the admission of all, are excellent in many respects, but who — because of poor health or other reasons — have been unable to play such an active role in the works and the administration of the Congregation.

It is quite natural that many confrères have felt that the mind of the Province is better represented by the “Majority” than by the “Minority.”

Having stressed his own neutrality, he continues:

“... as long as this “Minority” is seen to enjoy the favour and the sympathies of the Visitor, peace will not return to the Province. The Visitor will not enjoy the confidence of his Consultors; he will naturally be led not even to consult them. And the Consultors will be humiliated by seeing other confrères enjoy the confidence of which they are deprived.

Local Superiors will consider themselves overlooked in the government of the province and will become discontented. Young confrères, aware of all this, will be encouraged to complain, will begin to criticise the actions and the administration of their local Superior, and thus disunion and bitterness will be perpetuated in the Province.

I know well enough the confrères who make up the “Majority” and the “Minority”. No one has a greater love and respect for the Visitor than I have. But I sincerely regret that he has been deprived in a certain sense of the help of confrères who have always been remarkable for their devotion to the Congregation and for their zeal and intelligence.

I have observed the progress of the Congregation in Ireland for twenty three years and, in my view, it owes in great measure its development to the activity, zeal and intelligence of Father McNamara. Without him it is very probable that there would be no houses of the Congregation in England or Scotland. The house at Phibsboro is almost entirely his work. The house of the Sisters at Richmond is due to him, and it is he who has rescued our Sisters at William St. from their difficulties and who, in every instance, shows himself ready to help and support them. He has organised our missions and has trained practically all our missionaries in preaching and in the functions of their holy ministry.

In the “Minority” are a number of confrères who, ever since I knew them, have never been content. They have always been critics. They have criticised the buildings, the architects, the national schools (at Phibsboro); they are opposed to any kind of school for the poor, opposed to visiting the poor because we should not have the care of

souls; criticised Father McNamara because the Archbishop placed too much confidence in him. They were against our foundations in Britain and Scotland, against one because it needed too much from the poor to support it, against the other because it put us in contact with a rich family from whom we should keep our distance; against the Daughters of Charity because they do not belong to the country; and finally as soon as a reason for criticism is removed, another is found.

What is very remarkable is that practically all the “Minority” have always held extreme views in politics...”

Father McNamara also submitted “Observations on the agitation which for some time has troubled the Province of Ireland.” In general he repeats what is contained in the document just quoted. He does add that the confrères behind the agitation “lack the necessary experience to appreciate what they criticise and condemn. They have either occupied no post of administration or have spent all their lives in Seminaries ... While condemning so many things, they have nothing to propose in their place ... The leaders are no more than four or five in number. But by their intrigues, and above all as a consequence of the sympathy shown them by the Visitor, they have shaken some others, and thus present quite a considerable front.” He also pinpoints the differences between the Visitor and his Council: “These concern 1. Phibsboro, from which he wishes to remove the missionaries: 2. Sheffield, which he wishes to suppress: 3. The general orientation of the works of the Province which he sees in a completely different light from his Consultors.”

When he comes to deal with the fundamental causes of this agitation, he has no hesitation in placing the responsibility on the shoulders of Father Dowley:

1. There is no *central* administration properly so called in the Province. The Visitor does not act in harmony with his Consultors. He summons very rarely the Council of the Province. The matters which he ordinarily submits to it are affairs of petty consequence, while he reserves to himself decisions of vital concern to the administration (of the Province); for example, the changing of confrères, the appointments to administrative posts in the houses of the Province; missions and retreats— *where* and *when* they should be given etc, etc.

2. His remarkable sympathy with the confrères who by their criticisms and agitation disturb the peace of the Province. This sympathy was so clearly manifested throughout the deliberations of the Provincial Assembly that it was impossible not to note it.”

Besides consulting some members of the Province, Father Etienne set up a Commission in Paris to advise him as to the action he should

take to restore peace and harmony to the Province. Among the measures suggested were the following:

1. Strongly support the authority of the Visitor whom all esteem, venerate and like.
2. Insist that he hold a meeting of the Provincial Council monthly, that he take it seriously, and does not limit it to the discussion of insignificant matters.
3. Strengthen the composition of the Provincial Council....
4. Maintain the present situation, that is, retain the houses at Sheffield and Lanark.
5. Authorise the continuation of the building projects at Phibsboro, and the present method of making collections.
6. Make quite clear that it pertains to the local Superior to designate the place and date of missions, and to send, as he chooses, the missionaries of his house.
7. Encourage enthusiasm for the mission apostolate.

It is perhaps worth noting that a member of the Commission remarked: "Fathers Dowley and McNamara have expressed a singular esteem and great affection for each other."

D. Father Etienne's Circular to the Province, 15 August 1861.

In the main he follows the advice tendered by the Commission. It had recommended the strengthening of the Provincial Council. To the existing Council — Fathers McNamara, Dixon and Duff— he added Father Timothy O'Keeffe. Father Malachy O'Callaghan remained as Provincial Bursar. The appointment of Father O'Keeffe is indeed surprising: his name is not listed in the Register of the Province, nor does it occur in the Minutes of the Provincial Council. Born in Mallow on 31 March 1819, he entered the Congregation in Paris on 3 October 1842, returned to Ireland on 2 October 1843, and took his vows on 4 October 1844. In 1853, He was placed at Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where he died on 11 February 1885. It would appear that he never took up this appointment as Provincial Consultor, for the Minutes of the General Council, 23 September 1861, note: "As a result of representations made by Father Dowley, it was decided that the Council of Ireland would remain as it had been previously".

The Provincial Council was to meet regularly each month: Consultors and local Superiors were to communicate with the Superior General on the occasions fixed by the Rule. All were to have the greatest respect for the venerable Visitor, and were to obey him, regarding him as Father Etienne's representative in their regard. The consequence of fidelity to

these prescriptions would be “to banish from your conversations all criticisms and murmurings against the administration charged with regulating the affairs of the province ... Finally, it remains to remind you that the work of the Missions merits all our preferences and we should regard as our greatest title to glory that we have been raised up by God to engage in it...”

E. *Conclusion.*

Father Etienne’s circular did not restore peace to the Province. During the three years, 1864-1867, that Father McNamara was Visitor, there are indications of perhaps even greater discord than was prevalent in 1861. For the latter, none of the leading figures was altogether blameless. Father Etienne evidently gave Father McNamara extensive permission — at least Father McNamara thought so — which allowed him act independently of the Visitor. This could not but make Father Dowley’s position, to say the least, very uncomfortable. Father McNamara, and to a lesser extent Father Michael Burke of Sheffield, appear to have acted for the most part independently of the Visitor. Father Dowley was to blame in not making greater use of his Provincial Council: he did not have regular meetings and, more serious, he did not consult them on some important decisions concerning the administration of the Province. He was also at fault in siding so openly with one of the two groups within the Provincial Assembly; perhaps he was under pressure from the younger elements within the Province. His efforts to centralise the apostolate of the missions brought him into conflict with the local Superiors of the house to which the mission ers belonged.

The 19th century Irish Vincentian tended to be a very independent person — with strong views which he was prepared to follow. It was a troubled period in the history of Ireland, and doubtless this had its effect on life in the Little Company. There are, however, strong and clear indications that the confrères lived according to the Rule, and worked extremely hard at their various apostolates. Perhaps these troubles were no more than growing pains in a Province just over a dozen years in existence. It is well too to recall that in this same year, 1861, St Patrick’s College, Thurles, and St Patrick’s College, Armagh, were offered to the Community. It was also the year that Father John Gowan took over full-time the direction of the nascent Holy Faith Community.

FATHER JEAN-ETIENNE GINOUVIÉ (1835-1877)

Father Ginouvié has the distinction of being the only Frenchman to have become a member of the Irish Province of the Vincentians. Born in Montpellier in 1835, he entered the Maison Mère in Paris on 29 July 1855, and was ordained a priest on 18 June 1859. An Irish confrère with him in the Seminary was surprised at his interest in the English language. Apparently, some time prior to his entering the seminary, a Protestant boyhood friend fell dangerously ill, and the future Father Ginouvié promised to work as a priest in some Protestant country if his friend was converted to Catholicism. He was, and died a fervent Catholic. So on entering the Vincentians he asked the Superior General, Father Etienne, that he be appointed to a Protestant country after ordination. Father Etienne agreed and Jean Ginouvié took up the study of English.

In 1859, the year of his ordination, St. Mary's, Lanark, was founded. Father Etienne was very anxious that the offer of Mr Monteith be accepted. Father Dowley pleaded shortage of personnel. Father Etienne, mindful of the promise he had made Father Ginouvié, appointed him to Lanark, and thus, accompanied by Father Matthew Kavanagh, the first superior, and Father Thomas McNamara, he set out from Dublin for Lanark on 5 September 1859.

He was to remain in Lanark for less than two years. It was an unhappy period for him. He was alone with Father Kavanagh. The Minutes of the General Council (December, 1860) note that Father Ginouvié "is not happy. He is discontented with his Superior, and would like to be a member of a larger community where he could enjoy the advantages of community life. Also there is the impression that he has no taste for hearing Confessions." The basic trouble would seem to have been that his knowledge of English was inadequate to meet the demands of the apostolate. Father Kavanagh, a gifted preacher, undertook the task of training Father Ginouvié for the missions "but by focussing only on the imperfections of the beginner, he showed a severity towards Father Ginouvié which sometimes had the effect of discouraging him." On May 29, 1861 Father Dowley writes from Castleknock to Father Etienne: "Mr Ginouvié arrived here yesterday evening. I trust in God we shall succeed in making this dear confrère useful and happy."

A letter of Father Ginouvié to Father Etienne — written from Lanark in August 1860 — is extant. It concerns the arrival of the Daughters of Charity. Apparently Father Ginouvié had been sent south to accompany them to Lanark. He comments on the curiosity aroused by their cornettes and rosary beads; so embarrassing was this that he had to secure a

separate carriage on the train. At first, it was much the same in Lanark, and on one occasion when they foolishly ventured down the town on a Fair Day some boys threw stones at them — an incident which greatly angered even the Protestants. But that stage passed and they were soon hard at work in the schools and in visiting the poor and the sick.

In 1861 he is appointed to Cork. There he was to find a congenial Superior in Father Neal McCabe, the future Bishop of Ardagh. Fr McCabe involved him immediately in the work of giving missions, and before the end of 1861 he was a member of the team which gave missions in Cloyne and Bandon. He encouraged him and was very pleased with him as a missionary. In the course of a letter to Father Etienne, he writes: “Father Ginouvié is very good — truly pious, zealous and regular. Very efficient in the works of our state and exceedingly amicable. I do all in my power to make him happy and I think I enjoy his confidence. He is a true Israelite in whom there is no guile”. In the following year, 1863, he again writes to Father Etienne: “Father Ginouvié in excellent health and spirits. He seems happy, and gives great satisfaction in the discharge of his duties. He is willing, zealous and very efficient in preaching, hearing Confessions, and all the other functions of his state.” The picture that emerges from the many references to his work in giving missions is that he was a successful missionary who worked in this apostolate not only with the members of the Cork community, but also on occasion with missionaries stationed in Phibsboro.

However this apostolate was to be interrupted in 1865. The Annals of Sunday’s Well note: “1865. December 8th. Father Ginouvié left here to found a new house at Bullingham, Hereford, England. He found it an unfavourable engagement & returned the following April.’ We can fill in the picture to a certain extent from the Minutes of the General Council:

- “ 9.10.1865 The family responsible for the foundation of the Daughters of Charity at Hereford, England, wants a house of Missioners to be established in the same area. They are willing to provide 2,500 francs. The Council advises acceptance, and the appointment of Father Ginouvié to take charge of this new foundation.
- 13.11.1865 As the founder of the house of Bullingham wishes to have Missioners as soon as possible, the Council advises the acceptance of this foundation of 2,500 francs, and that M. Ginouvié be sent there immediately while awaiting the opportunity of sending him a companion.

- 5.03.1866 The owner of Bullingham has offered to arrange with the Bishop of the diocese that the Mission of Ross in England be entrusted to the Missioners. M. Ginouvié, consulted on the matter, is of opinion that the arrangement, such as it would be constituted, is not tenable. The Council decided to turn down the offer.”

And that was that. Father Ginouvié returned to Cork and resumed the apostolate of giving missions. A strange feature of this affair is that no reference at all to it appears in the Minutes of the Provincial Council. Presumably the application was made directly to the Superior General and the fact that Father Ginouvié was a Frenchman may have influenced Father Etienne’s way of acting. The Bullingham episode confirms the impression gathered from other such incidents that the General Council in Paris was extremely sympathetic to any request for a foundation in England. This sympathy is partly explained by their anxiety to have the Irish Province involved more and more in Great Britain to care for the spiritual needs of the Daughters of Charity. The question of a Vincentian foundation in the Bullingham area surfaced again in 1872, but it came to nothing due to shortage of personnel and more pressing needs. It was not until 1954, with the acceptance of a parish in Hereford that the Vincentians came to this area.

In November 1866 Father Ginouvié writes at some length to Father Etienne to give him the good news that the Board of the North Infirmary, Cork, despite the open opposition of the Protestant Bishop, had voted — almost unanimously — to entrust the care and administration of the hospital to the Daughters of Charity. Father Ginouvié regards this as a signal victory for the Faith over heresy! He also speaks in glowing terms of their new Superior, Father Daniel O’Sullivan whose sister, a Daughter of Charity, was to be martyred in China. Father McCabe had been appointed Superior of the Irish College, Paris, in place of Father James Lynch, appointed Coadjutor to one of the Vicars Apostolic in Scotland.

In 1867, he is elected as the deputy from the Cork house to the Provincial Assembly which opened in Castleknock on April 24th. In 1870 “The Cinquantaine of the Superior General’s vocation was kept (as) a great feast at Paris. Fathers O’Sullivan and Ginouvié were there from this House (Sunday’s Well). It was a memorable day — August 4th 1870. The war between France and Prussia had just commenced. The confrères had soon to disperse. The result to this House was that we gave hospitality to Father McNamara, Rector of the Irish College, Paris, Mr Rolando,

(an) Italian confrère from the Maison Mère, and Mr Reynolds, an Irish confrère, professor in the Grand Séminaire, Angoulême.”

On January 10th 1871, the Provincial Council decided that “Mr Ginouvié is to be appointed Assistant to the Local Superior, Cork, *if* the latter approves of the appointment.” Apparently, he didn’t as the Minutes of February 6th note: “At the request of the Local Superior, Cork, it was considered well not to appoint for the present the Assistant to his House.” Another commitment interrupted his work on the missions during the Spring of 1871: “...Father Reynolds was on the Mission at Clara instead of Father Ginouvié, as he by permission of the Superior General was engaged during the Spring preaching and making collections for the French people reduced to great distress by the Franco-Prussian War. About £3,000 were placed by Frs McNamara & Ginouvié in the hands of the Superior General to be distributed to those in distress. The people of Ireland manifested the deepest sympathy for suffering France.”

In February 1872 he is in Sunderland giving two missions with five other confrères including Fathers Malachy O’Callaghan of Castleknock and Cornelius Hickey of Sheffield. “These Missions were very successful. The people were as earnest as at Missions in Ireland. The Bishop and clergy were very much pleased.” And then his life again takes a surprising turn. The Annals of Sunday’s Well record: “1872. April 1st. Father Jean Ginouvié was removed from this house to be superior of a new Foundation at Everingham, Diocese of Beverley, England.”

Under the diocese of Middlesbrough, the 1980 English Catholic Directory lists: “Everingham, York, SS Mary and Everilda, nr The Hall. (1553; 1836; cons. 7 Feb 1839).” In the 19th century Everingham seems to have been at the disposal of a wealthy Catholic family the head of which was Lord Merries. One of his daughters, Sister Maxwell, was a Sister of Charity. In January 1872, the Minutes of the General Council state that Lord Merries had offered Everingham to the French confrères. Father Ginouvié is instructed to investigate the offer and report to the Superior General. He does so in the following letter:

“Beacon Lane, Liverpool.
4 January 1872.

“...As you requested I have visited the relations of Sister Maxwell to find out everything about the new foundation which they offer us. I hasten now in all humility to give you a report on it.

Lord Herries, the father of Sister Maxwell, offers us the parish of

Everingham which forms part of his property and consists of two small villages with a catholic population of 300 souls in all. The church is very beautiful and is attached to the castle.

Lord Herries binds himself to provide:

1. A furnished house large enough to house three priests & a brother. It is six or seven minutes distance from the church. There is also a vegetable garden attached to the house.

2. £180 sterling, i.e. 4,500 francs, annually for the support of two missionaries and a brother. In return Lord Merries requests:

1. Two missionaries for the parish.
2. Mass daily at 8.30.
3. One Mass per week for his intentions.
4. That the confessions of his family be heard at 4.00 p.m. on Saturdays and the vigils of feasts.

Such, most Honoured Father, are the terms proposed for the new foundation.

Here now is my humble opinion. I give it in all simplicity and submitting it in advance to your decision.

As for the material side, the conditions seem to be advantageous, 4,500 francs being sufficient, in my opinion, for the support of the confrères who besides will have their stipends and a small income from the parish.

Moreover, the family of Sister Maxwell are truly excellent in every way and will do everything in their power to help our confrères.

The new foundation also offers advantages from the spiritual point of view. Our confrères will be able to accomplish much good here, not only with the parishioners, but also among the Protestants residing on Lord Herries' property.

Moreover, this foundation will be a kind of foothold for our confrères who from there can take care of our good Sisters.

Permit me now, most Honoured Father, to raise certain objections, leaving it to your wisdom and prudence to decide the matter.

1° It seems to me that the parish is too small and will not provide work for two confrères: up to the present a single priest always sufficed for all the needs of the parish. Besides, this mission does not promise to develop.

2° It would be difficult for the priest who has to celebrate the daily Mass at 8.30 a.m. to be expected to rise at 4.00 a.m.

3° Everingham also seems to me to be rather too far distant from our Sisters: the nearest house is almost five hours away by train.

Such, most Honoured Father, is my view on the new foundation

offered us. I have spoken quite openly, and in all simplicity. I will add now that, despite all my objections, I would feel disposed to accept the offer made to you.

Lord Herries would like a reply as soon as possible so that he can discuss with Monsignor the withdrawal in good time of the priest who cares for the parish.

Allow me, most Honoured Father, to assure you of my readiness to obey you in any arrangement you may make in my regard. I place myself entirely at your disposition..."

This letter so impressed the General Council that at their meeting on January 8th 1872 they accepted the foundation, appointed Father Ginouvié superior and decided that another priest and a brother would accompany him. As in the case of the earlier foundation at Bellingham, the Minutes of the Irish Provincial Council make no mention of the Everingham foundation.

For a start all went well, but in March 1873 the first signs of trouble appear. Three entries from the Minutes of the General Council complete the story of the Everingham foundation:

- “17.03.1873 M. Ginouvié writes from Everingham Park to say that at present everything goes well in his house, and that the only trouble comes from Lady Herries, the wife of the Founder, who would like to prevent his visiting the houses of our Sisters and his exercising his apostolic zeal elsewhere. M. Ginouvié is to be informed that, provided the conditions of the Contract are carried out, he is in no way to be disturbed by unjustified complaints made to him.
- 5.01.1874 Further complaints from Lord Herries about M. Ginouvié and his companion have been made to the Superior General. The council, having considered in depth the inconveniences arising from the immobilisation of two confrères in the small parish of Everingham, is of opinion that the Contract with Lord Herries should be rescinded. The Superior General decides to suppress the house at Everingham.
- 6.04.1874 M. Ginouvié whose house at Everingham Park is to be closed on May 18 is authorised to come to the Maison Mere. With regard to the personal indemnity of 1,200 francs received as damages in consequence of an

accident when travelling by train, he can dispose of this sum for charitable purposes. It was also decided that the furnishings and books belonging to the house at Everingham should be left for the present with our Sisters in Liverpool.”

On his return to England from Paris, it would seem that he was appointed to Sheffield and from there resumed the work of giving missions. In May 1875, he writes to the Director General of the Daughters of Charity to plead that a Miss Hall be permitted to rejoin the Daughters, and adds “My life is rather like that of a Wandering Jew. Always on the move. It is to be hoped that I don’t resemble him in every respect.” In August 1876 he returns to Cork and continues to give missions. Less than a year of life remained for him.

The *Annals of the Congregation* (vol. 42, pp. 497-502) gives an account of his death and obsequies. In February 1877, he left Cork to give a mission in Dungarvan. On the opening Sunday night he gave an excellent sermon on “Salvation”. On the following Tuesday, having celebrated Mass he mounted the pulpit to give the instruction on Confession: there he suffered what seemed to be an attack of apoplexy: he did not lose consciousness and was able to say to the people “I am not feeling well; I’ll have to stop.” He then collapsed. It was a stroke and his left side was paralysed. He realised what had happened and was perfectly resigned to God’s will. A further stroke eight days later carried him off. Great crowds attended his obsequies in both Dungarvan and Cork. The Bishop of Waterford presided in Dungarvan and the Bishop of Cork in Sunday’s Well. In the funeral procession through Dungarvan the members of the Philharmonic Society walked immediately after the Cross and the coffin was carried on the shoulders of six men “who were changed every few minutes to allow those who wanted to share in this privilege to get their opportunity.” After the Solemn Requiem in Sunday’s Well, his remains were placed in the crypt.

The account in the *Annals* concludes with this tribute. “Father Ginouvié has well earned during his all too short life in Ireland all these marks of consideration and gratitude from both clergy and people, because of the great sacrifices he had made for them. At the outset of his priestly life he had left his family and country — which he loved tenderly — to devote himself to the salvation of the Irish people. He had given about a hundred missions and retreats during the fifteen years he had lived in these countries. All his sermons were carefully prepared and never failed to produce wonderful effects on his audience. Having

mastered the English language which he spoke and wrote very correctly, he began to study Irish to make himself more useful in certain parts of Ireland where Irish was still spoken. Already able to hear Confessions in Irish, he was preparing himself to announce the truths of the Faith in the language of St Patrick when the Divine Master, satisfied with his good will, called him to his reward." At the time of his death he was only forty two years old.

JHM.

(The following is a copy of a printed sheet in the archives. There is no indication of its source.)

ST PETER'S CHURCH, PHIBSBORO

Phibsborough Church has a great history, in which the guiding hand of God is plainly visible. Providence has made it the instrument by which untold blessings have been showered on the whole of Ireland.

I. It was built first as a school by Catholic laymen to defend the Catholic children of the north side of the city against Proselytism. It gave the first strong blow to the Irish proselytisers in 1827 by rescuing 390 catholic children who had been attending proselytising schools.

II. Through Phibsborough Church the Living Rosary Devotion was first introduced into Ireland in 1839.

III. In Phibsborough Church, A.D. 1841, the first Catholic Lord Mayor of Dublin for over 200 years — the great O'Connell — presided over the *first public meeting* of Dublin Catholics for a charitable purpose, viz. the enlargement of the Phibsborough Church.

IV. Simultaneously with the Father Mathew Movement, Phibsborough Church took the lead in the Temperance cause in Dublin, from 1839 to 1846. Its Total Abstinence League numbered several thousand men.

V. Through Phibsborough Church, God gave to Ireland the inestimable boon of Parochial Missions and Retreats. From it the first Irish mission went forth in 1842. Since then it has sent out every year a staff of priests who go about from parish to parish all through Ireland *giving free* Missions unremittingly.

VI. During the famine years, '46, '47, '48, the Conference of St Vincent de Paul and the Ladies' Association of Charity attached to St Peter's, Phibsborough, supplied food and clothing to the poor of almost the whole north side of the city of Dublin.

VII. The deaf and dumb of both sexes, children and adults, had been entirely neglected until in 1846 a movement was begun in Phibsborough, which has resulted in the present magnificent institutions for deaf-mutes at Cabra.

VIII. In Phibsborough Church the first branch of the Ladies' Association of Charity was established in 1846, and the first branch of the Confraternity of Perpetual Adoration in 1848.

IX. In 1854, Phibsborough Church gave new hopes to Catholic Dublin by raising the first spire erected on a Catholic Church in Dublin since the Reformation.

X. In 1855, the first "Commercial Young Men's Association" was established in Dublin by a priest from Phibsborough Church.

XI. In 1856, Phibsborough took up again its work against Proselytism, by establishing the Nuns of the Holy Faith Order, whose special mission was to combat Proselytism. This institution has saved, and is daily saving, thousands of Catholic children from the wreck of their faith.

XII. In 1870, was established in Phibsborough the Sacred Heart Sodality, now so widely scattered through Ireland— an association which has saved countless victims from drunkenness and other vices and which has brought happiness to so many Catholic homes.

XIII. The famous Dominican, Father Burke, speaking of the last onslaught on the faith of the Irish people, says: "Well do I remember the Vincentian Fathers coming down to that Western land, and with powerful words, and with holy sacramental action, and with self sacrificing labour almost superhuman, standing there, and guarding that faith, bringing back the fallen, and putting to flight for ever the agents of heresy that had dared to invade this land for the corruption of our children."

COMPLAINTS

Father Bartholomew Gorman was born in Crosserlough, Co. Cavan, in March 1872, entered the Congregation in 1897 and was ordained in 1901. After ordination he was stationed in Castleknock until 1905 when he was transferred to Hammersmith. He spent two years there before being changed to Phibsboro. In 1912 he was appointed to Ashfield, and from there in the following year he wrote to the Superior General making a series of complaints. His letter was in English and Father Fiat sent it to Father Patrick Boyle, then Rector of the Irish College, Paris, with the request that he translate it into French and comment on its contents.

With one exception, the complaints themselves are not of any great

interest, and it must be remembered that they came from a confrère who had “Superiors on the brain” — to use the phrase applied by a confrère to Father Gorman some years later. More interesting are Father Boyle’s comments.

Father Gorman complains that Father Morrissey, Visitor during his early years as a Vincentian, was subject to prejudices: “full of kindness for some confrères and hostile to others.” Father Boyle comments: “As regards Father Morrissey, others have spoken in the same way of his prejudices and of his lack of openness which some attribute rather to a lack of finesse in speaking of matters when he was not free to reveal all.” Father William Byrne, his superior in Hammersmith, had persecuted him, and was disliked by his community and visiting confrères. Father Boyle: “As for Father Byrne, it is true that he is not liked: but if he has decided that he did not want his house — which does not belong to the Congregation — inundated with confrères during vacation periods, and if he doesn’t want to admit those who arrive after midnight — and perhaps in some cases coming from the theatre — he should not be judged severely. Perhaps he is a bit abrupt and impetuous.” The fault of Father Geoghegan, his superior in Phibsboro, was that he merely “tolerated” him, gave him a cold welcome on his return from a mission, and when at home in Phibsboro, put him on the late Masses on Sundays and asked him to preach “which was injurious to his health and prevented his sleeping on the two following nights.” This time Father Boyle had no sympathy: “As regards Father Geoghegan, no confrère of the Province is so forgetful of himself and so devoted as he is.”

The following is by far the most interesting of his complaints: “In the Irish Province a privileged group, all natives of County Meath (C.M. stands for County Meath), occupy the important positions of superior, assistant and bursar. In the past it was Fathers McNamara and Duff. The situation today is:

Phibsboro: Father Geoghegan, superior: Father Ward, assistant.

All Hallows: Father Ballesty, bursar: Father Moore, Superior emeritus.

Castleknock: Father Paul Cullen, superior: Father Macken, bursar.

Lanark: Father T. Gavin, formerly assistant and bursar in Armagh.

The other Meathmen are: Father E. Cullen, named a superior, but because of certain obstacles, unable to assume office: Fathers E. Gavin and Kiernan who keep themselves apart from the group: Fathers J. Ryan, Furlong, O’Farrell and Moran, two of whom aspire to office. Only one Meathman — Father J. Hegarty — has been sent to Australia, while the only three priests from Kilmore diocese, one of whom has just died, have been sent to Australia.”

Father Boyle has this to say: "As regards the privileged group of Meathmen, similar observations have often been made in the Province. In the past the positions have been filled by confrères from this diocese. At present I would not dare to say that there is any abuse, or any real grounds for complaint on this head."

Of Father German himself, Father Boyle writes: "For my part I know very little about Father German and his talents. I am inclined to think that he takes too literally the compliments paid to him by his bishop and by others. One would need to know whether his superiors and confrères found him manageable; and this I don't know. As regards his affirmations, there is an element of truth in them, but mingled with some strong feeling and exaggeration."

In 1918 Father German left the Congregation, was dispensed from his vows, and worked as a secular priest in various Australian dioceses until his death in Red Hill, Brisbane, on 5th January 1939.

JHM, January 1981.

Forum

PARISH MISSIONS by Kevin Scallon, C.M.

The tradition of giving Parish Missions was highlighted last year by the appointment of three confrères to the work — Scan Johnston, Aidan Galvin and myself. The hope was that it could be a fresh start which would underline the general acceptance amongst confrères of what St Vincent set down in the Common Rules that “the giving of Missions is to be the first and principal of all our works for the neighbour”, and that “the Congregation ought never to neglect it under the pretext of any other pious work”. (Common Rules, chap. 11, para. 10).

The recommendation in the “Commission Report on Missionary Activity” that our Missionaries should live under the same roof so that by living together they could share their insights into doctrinal and practical developments, was recognised by us as of great importance. We were equally convinced that the structure of our community life, both at home and during our Missions, should give priority to the first end of the congregation, and so we agreed on the following Order of Day for our life here in St Joseph’s:

7.15 a.m.	Mass
8.45-9.45	Morning Prayer in common
10.00	A meeting when necessary
11.00	Coffee
12.45	Prayer during the Day
1.00 p.m.	Light Lunch
4.00	Tea
6.30	Evening Prayer
6.45	Dinner

During the Missions we would hope to be able to pray together for the hour before morning Mass and, where possible, to share Morning Prayer from the Divine Office with the people. We felt strongly that such a witness of personal commitment to Jesus Christ in our own lives would be more help to both clergy and people than all our sermons put together. Pray that we will be able to live up to these ideals.

For October and November 1980 we made out a programme of Workshops on various topics of importance starting off with a visit to Armagh to observe the Men’s week of a Mission being given by the Redemptorist Fathers. From conversations with them, and later with our

own Fr Kevin O’Kane, one or two things began to emerge. Firstly, that the basic format of a Parish Mission is still Morning Mass and Evening Devotions, the Mass lasting three-quarters of an hour, and the evening session one hour or less but never more. The second fact related to the fixed nature of the Mission season which runs, roughly speaking, from the beginning of Lent to the end of June, and from the beginning of September through to the beginning of December. There were many other things which came up during our conversations, not the least being the importance, where possible, of house to house visitation.

The weeks that followed were devoted to prayer and to Workshops on Evangelii Nuntiandi, St Vincent and the Missions given by Fr Tom Davitt, and Lumen Gentium which was given by Fr Tom Lane. Following this we went into a detailed preparation of a Mission programme of sermons and instructions. We agreed that the list for the average week’s Mission should come under the following general headings:

Sunday	Salvation
Monday	Prayer
Tuesday	Marriage and The Family
Wednesday	Reconciliation
Thursday	The Eucharist
Friday	Our Blessed Lady
Saturday	Suffering and Healing
Sunday	Discipleship and Evangelisation.

We decided we would not have Mass with the Evening session of the Mission except on Thursday and for the Healing Mass for the sick on Saturday afternoon. The Instructions for the morning Masses came under the following headings:

1. St Vincent — The Caring Church today.
2. The Scriptures—The Word of God.
3. Vocations — to the Priesthood and Religious Life.
4. The Sacred Heart — The love of Christ.
5. Forgiveness — Family unity.
6. Formation of Conscience — Authority and Obedience in the Church.
7. The Children’s Mass on Saturday morning.

Each confrère is expected to be ready to preach on every one of these topics for half an hour at the evening session, and for 15 minutes at the morning Mass.

If it all seems very modest, and not at all like the brave new world

so long expected, it is only because that is the way it is at the moment. We are keenly, painfully aware of the many recommendations contained in the Commission Reports which for the moment we have to leave untouched. We are also aware of how small a number 3 is and of the need to expand the whole approach to the preaching of God's Word, involvement of lay men and women and the use of mass media. And every day we grow in admiration of the great Vincentian zeal and dedication of the small band of confrères who, without a great deal of support and encouragement from the rest of us, have persevered in this primary work of the Congregation, especially over the last very difficult 20 years.

The problems they had to face are the same ones we shall encounter. The seasonal nature of the work will probably not change much in the immediate future. For that reason, even though at the moment our policy is not to accept invitations to give school Retreats, we would like to put ourselves at the service of our confrères in the schools during the weeks available in December, January and February. The benefit of this to all would seem to be obvious. The summer months of July and August would be set aside for holidays and for the giving of Retreats to Religious and Priests.

At the moment we are committed to give Missions in Bundoran, Navan, Derry and Knock, and we have been in touch with Fr Michael McCullagh with a view to giving a prolonged Catechetical Mission to the travelling people in September of this year, 1981.

The support and enthusiasm of the confrères has so far been very gratifying. Please continue to intercede for us, and for the renewal of this great work of St Vincent. Obviously not every confrère will feel drawn to or gifted for it but at least in our hearts we should be ready to hear St Vincent when he tells us that "each one shall be so devoted to the Missions that he will always stand ready to conduct them whenever obedience calls him" (Common Rules, chap. 11, para. 10).

THE PORT HARCOURT MISSION: 1970-76

Helping a Church in distress

i The first commitment

No diocese in Nigeria was more severely affected by the Civil War of 1969-'70 than the diocese of Port Harcourt. In other dioceses where the foreign missionaries were expelled there was at least a quorum of Nigerian personnel to replace them. Port Harcourt, however, had only

one priest and one sister native to the diocese. During the war some diocesan priests from other parts of Nigeria had been sent on loan to keep up the spirit of the scattered Catholic flock, but they were never more than three in number and could be recalled at any moment by their bishops.

It was in these difficult circumstances that the Apostolic Delegate in 1970 asked for Vincentian priests to come to the aid of a diocese in grave need. Two other societies had been previously approached but they did not accept. The Jesuits of the New York province agreed to send two men but as these never got entry visas, they sent a priest who had been working previously in Lagos. He reached Port Harcourt in September 1971.

The Vincentian commitment began when Fr Roderic Crowley came down from Ikot Ekpene to help the missionaries found in the Biafran enclave at the end of the war. These were held under arrest and then tried in Port Harcourt during the first two months of 1970. The sad state of Port Harcourt itself impressed all who saw it at that time. It was like a ghost-town: shops and houses boarded up, churches closed, parish houses looted or occupied by the army, high grass growing up to the roofs of luxury bungalows, factories locked up and the giant oil industry struggling to re-commence operations after a three-year halt. Fr Crowley first moved in with a Nigerian priest in the parish of Christ the King and from there he began repairing the parish house of Our Lady of Lourdes, Creek Road. This abandoned house had been stripped of windows, doors, furniture, electrical fittings and plumbing. With some financial help from Rome it was rehabilitated and furnished and became the main Vincentian centre for the period that we worked in Port Harcourt. From here Fr Crowley re-activated three of the churches in the city and visited stations in the delta of the Niger also.

Meanwhile in response to the Apostolic Delegate's appeal Fr Cahalan asked Frs Pdraig Regan, Frank Murphy and myself to give a year to the diocese of Port Harcourt. We gladly agreed and in early August 1970 we applied for our visas. We were committed to a holding operation until larger numbers of priests could be brought into the diocese.

ii A Return to life: 1971-'75

When Fr Regan and I reached Port Harcourt in March '71 we brought the number of priests to eight: three Vincentians, three African priests on loan, one diocesan of Port Harcourt and one Irish Holy Ghost Father. Although there were some slight changes of personnel, particularly the advent of the American Jesuit mentioned above and the return of one

Nigerian to his own diocese, the number of priests remained at eight until the beginning of 1973. This was a diocese in which more than forty priests had worked in pre-war days: Holy Ghosts, Benedictines, Jesuits and Nigerian secular priests. At that time there were 14 parishes, 9 second-level colleges and the Junior Seminary of the Sacred Heart. Sisters numbered about the same as priests and were mainly involved in educational and medical work. There was a heavy Catholic population in the town, particularly of Ibo people. During the war, however, the Ibo people fled and very few returned leaving the Church thinly-supported after the war. The challenge was thrown down to the Rivers Catholics of the diocese to become a self-supporting church and this was the big challenge we faced as missionaries in the area: to build up the indigenous Church from the chaos of the war.

With so few priests in the field and so many parishes vacant it was difficult to know where to begin. Bishop Ekandem of Ikot Ekpene, the present Cardinal, while retaining his own diocese had been appointed Administrator of Port Harcourt. He took the Sacred Heart Seminary as his first priority and rested his hopes of an indigenous priesthood on the education of Catholic students there. Accordingly he persuaded the Nigerian Army which was occupying the campus to release four classrooms and in these the Seminary re-opened in 1971, two of the rooms being used as dormitories. I started work there in April of that year and thus began a Vincentian involvement which lasted until the summer of '75 when the first class took their West African School Certificate Examination.

Fr Regan was appointed to the rural parish of Ahoada, about 40 miles from the city. Since the Army was occupying the parish house, he had nowhere to live so he based himself at Creek Road and toured out from there. The road became more and more flooded as the wet season advanced and was frequently impassible even to Land Rovers, so it was finally arranged that a Nigerian priest who was in a neighbouring parish should run Ahoada as well, while Fr Regan took over Our Lady of Lourdes and a rural parish bordering the city.. He remained in charge of Our Lady of Lourdes until he left in 1976.

While we all struggled to give normal Church services to our people, to arrange the instruction of catechumens and children for Holy Communion and to give some religious service to students in second-level colleges, the relief of post-war distress and the launching of social development programmes went on as well. Sr Philomena Lally D.C. set up a rural medical programme of clinics and maternities, financed first by Caritas and later by the Nigerian Government. This led to further

development of medical and social works and to the establishing of the Daughters' Seminary for Nigerian candidates in 1974. Fr Crowley and Fr Frank Murphy after him worked as co-ordinators of relief and development for the diocese. The prison chaplaincy was also provided by the Vincentians but all the priests were at that time committed to two or three jobs and all shared in the frustration of seeing so much to be done and lacking the sheer gift of bi-location to do it.

Sacred Heart Seminary started under very trying conditions with the Army occupying four-fifths of the buildings and maintaining a guard-post at the gate. In the first two years only one priest was on the staff, trying to administer, teach and run a parish at the same time. After that things improved and we had two, three and finally four priests on the staff at the time we handed over. The Army gradually vacated all the buildings and moved to its own barracks. Even though the finances often seemed to zero downwards and we had the greatest difficulty in getting good teachers, the work was always worthwhile as this was the only Catholic school of any kind in the diocese. About seven or eight young men from that period are progressing through the Senior Seminary at present, providing a great hope for the future of the diocese.

The two Vincentian bases, therefore, were the parish of Our Lady of Lourdes and Sacred Heart Seminary. We ran various other parishes as the need arose, but it was hard to see how all these commitments could be kept up indefinitely while we had many Nigerian candidates who needed a full Vincentian formation. Where were the personnel to be found to do all these things? Four Kiltegan priests had come into the diocese in 1973 and were followed by others each year. Since this society had large numbers of missionaries at its disposal, was the Vincentian mission accomplished?

iii The Withdrawal

Fr McCullen came for his first visit in Eastertide of 1975 and found that there were eight Kiltegan priests working in the diocese as well as a bishop from the same society, Mgr Fitzgibbon, who had replaced Bishop Ekandem in 1974. It was obvious that St Patrick's, Kiltegan, could supply far more priests than the Irish province of the Vincentians. This, of course, would not in itself be a reason for leaving. We could only leave good works for more urgent good works. In 1970 the needs of Port Harcourt were urgent. By 1975 it seemed that if we withdrew, the St Patrick's priests would replace us. Two indigenous priests had also been ordained for the diocese.

But what was more urgent? Fr McCullen put the ideal of 'indi-

genisation' before us, the need to put the Nigerian members first in our thinking and planning. In practice he put forward two means to the end: 1. the establishment and staffing of a novitiate-house for our candidates and 2. the establishing of a mission-house in the strongly Catholic area of Owerri/Onitsha where our Nigerian confrères could be employed in the primary work of the Congregation. How could this be done with so few ordinations in Ireland and so few available for the mission? The only answer seemed to be to cut our commitments in Port Harcourt where we could be readily replaced. So Fr McCullen and his council finally decided that the holding operation was over.

We left Sacred Heart Seminary in Summer 1975 and Our Lady of Lourdes, Creek Road, in the following summer. As might be imagined, many debates and discussions took place among us about the new direction we had taken. We had put down roots and were now pulling them up again. After the unsettling period of the war, here was another unsettling move. At least we saw our places taken by Kiltegan priests and the diocese never slipped back to the low number of the team-of-eight we had in 1971 and '72. Looking back now we can see that the Seminary of St Justin has put five groups through and that the mission-house has been established in Oraifite.

iv Loss and Gain

It is a good principle of the apostolate 'to give and not to count the cost, to labour and not to seek reward save only that of doing his holy will.' It may seem a bit selfish to speak of *Gain* in relation to a mission like this, as if our concern were to expand our own empire. Nevertheless this is always an element in human work, even when that work is a work of God done by men. It is very difficult to be completely detached from the wish to take on works that will help ourselves, or bring us vocations in plenty, as if we were working for ourselves rather than for the Church and the world. In Nigeria, however, we were pushed very hard by young Nigerian men themselves who wanted to join our community, particularly Timothy and Anthony Njoku. Others had followed in their footsteps and we were very badly caught for proper formation facilities. It was certainly unfair to these young candidates not to give them a true community formation and to provide some definite works for them to do after ordination. These works in the long run should benefit the Church and people of Nigeria even though we might have to withdraw from some apostolates in order to train our own members. So a hard decision for the present could yield rich fruits for the future.

Port Harcourt did not favour our programme of indigenisation for

many reasons. Yet we did gain from this mission in community terms as well. The base in Creek Road proved to be the launching-pad for the Nigerian candidates who were knocking on our door. It was here that we conducted a number of retreats for aspirants in 1971. It was as a result of these retreats that the decision was taken to send Timothy and Anthony Njoku to Ireland for their novitiate and thereby to commit the community to a policy of indigenisation which continues to have far-reaching effects on every aspect of our work in Nigeria today. From Creek Road also the vocations-work was continued for five years and led us to the building of the seminaire of St Justin's.

Of course it is upsetting to take a sudden change of direction and abandon works into which much labour has been poured. Still the province had made a generous response to the needs of Port Harcourt. it was rewarded by an influx of candidates which leaves us today in October 1980 with two priests, 14 students and 8 novices. Even if we never got any vocations it was still a privilege to be called upon to go far from home to help a people in distress, sheep without a shepherd. This is the privilege of which St Vincent wrote to Charles Nacquart when sending him to Madagascar, "A divine call as ureat and adorable as that of the greatest apostles and saints of the Church of God!" (Coste. *Life and Labours*, Vol. II. p. 59.).

William Clarke.

OBITUARY

Father Christopher O’Leary, C.M.

In our Community as we grow older we have had to suffer the passing of so many of our confrères. Suffer, yes, because their going always leaves a void that time must fill.

Yet, while we miss them, we thank God for them, for the happiness they now enjoy and for what their living among us has meant.

Some have, as we say, done their Purgatory here by long and painful illness, some by a helplessness in the evening of their lives, made still more difficult by their keen wish to continue when ill health no longer permitted. So it has been with Father Christie O’Leary, our most recent loss.

Ever since his ordination Fr Christie filled several and important positions in the Congregation, and yet, because he was an ideal Vincentian, never seeking publicity, it is not easy to eulogize about him. Many years ago, a Holy Faith sister said after Father Christie had given a retreat in Glasnevin: “He is a Vincentian to his fingertips”.

Yes, he held offices of distinction without the sound of trumpets. During those early years of ordination in his parish work in Sheffield he attended to his priestly duty quietly, but with a constancy and fervour that left his name a happy memory among the many old and loyal parishioners of Solly Street. During his Mission days in Ireland, England and Scotland he was faithful to the traditions that were handed down by mighty missionaries of the past, and there lay his success as an apostle of the Gospel.

Like many of his contemporaries, Fr Christie did not take kindly to changes in Liturgy at the beginning though as time went on he gladly accepted and appreciated them. But like so many, he disliked change for change sake, which was an evident side effect of Vatican II in many instances. It was always obvious too that he set the plan of his priesthood in the pattern of those older Vincentians whom he knew and revered in his younger days.

He had a gentle pleasant way of speaking in his sermons and in his conferences. I recall too a pleasing tenor voice when singing — particularly do I remember one St Vincent’s Day long ago in the year of his ordination when we spent our happy holidays in Sunday’s Well. I see him still giving us his favourites “The Bells of Shandon” and the “Conemara Boat Song”. That singing voice was a family gift. As Fr

Christie in his teens breathed Vincentian atmosphere and served Mass at the altar in St Vincent's, there too his father and mother through many years sang in Fr Gaynor's famous choir.

As bursar, as superior, as provincial, he had a very keen business mind, but always tempered with a genuine spirit of poverty.

The Irish Province owes a debt of gratitude to Fr Christie for his foresight in accepting and furthering the Mission to Nigeria. In that as in many other efforts during his term as Provincial we see his grand Confidence in the Providence of God. What reward must have awaited him for that alone when he answered God's call! How many prayers of the African people will be his portion! Happy he always was to welcome our Missionaries whenever they returned from their labours, and they did appreciate his visits to them. On each occasion of his visit he found the journey and the African climate a strain but he did not hesitate to take on his visitation to that distant land.

Fr Christie answered God's final call after a very short period of parting. Without doubt he would have wished it so. Because of the serious eye trouble he suffered during these last few years, he could no longer attend to all his priestly work and that surely was a cause of worry to him. No doubt he felt as St Vincent told him in the Holy Rule — he felt himself to be "an unprofitable servant". But far he was from that. His daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice was his greatest consolation. That he cherished above all, insisting until the day he went to hospital that he be allowed to say Mass. His Divine Office — when he was unable to read anything else he daily with great difficulty fulfilled that Office and his every day was hallowed with many a Rosary.

His love of his native city by the Lee was second only to his love of the Congregation and it is fitting that he rests there now among his dear ones.

He sleeps
in Finbarr's ground where Shandon towers.
Now, he, with God's elect his vigil keeps,
Through all the sunlit and the moonlit hours, he sleeps.

P.O'L

CHRISTOPHER J. O'LEARY, CM.

Born: Cork, 23 December 1904.

Entered the Congregation: 13 September 1924.

Final Vows: 14 December 1926.

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

APPOINTMENTS

1929-1944	St Vincent's, Sheffield (Superior, 1938-1944).
1944-1946	St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1946-1948	St Mary's, Lanark.
1948-1950	St Peter's, Phibsboro.
1950-1956	St Vincent's, Sunday's Well (Superior).
1956-1966	St Joseph's, Blackrock (Visitor).
1966-1980	St Peter's, Phibsboro.

Died 30 November 1980.