COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the Congregation of the Mission

No. 24 AUTUMN 1991

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Editorial

This issue contains three articles on parish missions, the ministry which brought our Congregation into existence: in France in St Vincent's time, and in our Province in their post-war "heyday" and at present.

The last two issues contained Michael Prior's articles on our motto *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me* as studied by a scripture scholar. The next issue will contain Myles Rearden's study of this motto as it has been used in the Congregation over the years.

As we are still in the year of the fourth centenary of St Louise's birth there is another article on her.

In the Forum section Aidan McGing develops an interesting idea about the Common Rules; perhaps someone might like to take it further.

St Vincent de Paul and Parochial Missions

James O'Doherty

(This article was written for a proposed commemorative volume to celebrate the tercentenary of the death of St Vincent in 1960. The volume never materialised and this article has not previously been published. The only editorial changes made are: Long paragraphs have been divided, sub-headings have been introduced, the use of initial capitals has been lessened, sources of quotations have been inserted and scripture quotations from the Rheims-Douay version have been replaced by more modern versions).

Origins

Parochial missions are such ordinary recurring events in the religious life of a parish today [1960] that they call forth little wonder and even less excitement. They are expected by the faithful and prescribed by Canon Law as occasional parish fixtures. Very few people indeed think of their origins or query their utilities. Generally they are accepted by the people as good things that have come down to us from the remote past. And in some senses of the word missions do date back to ancient, if not even to apostolic, times. When we read of St Paul's missionary journeys to stir up and strengthen the faith of Christian communities already established in the true faith we are reading of something like a parish mission. So, too, when we read of a St Gregory or a St John Chrysostom making strenuous efforts through a series of special sermons to exhort a group of the faithful to the practice of a fuller Christian life we are reading of something that has the general outline of a parish mission. Later still in history we frequently find friars, especially though not exclusively Dominican and Franciscan, travelling around the country and preaching from the rostrum of the town church or square. More often than not this friar preaching was directed against a particular error in faith or morals peculiar to the place or time. It was done, however, in such a way as to call to our minds the general traits of a mission as we know it. In the middle of the sixteenth century came St Ignatius Loyola and the Jesuits, who gave a new impetus to the retreat and mission movement, especially to the retreat movement through the preaching of the "Exercises". This specialised and systematised preaching of the Jesuits, at the time of which we here speak, rarely reached the common people, and more rarely still the peasantry. Much of it was directed against the errors of the reformers, and it tended to cater for the better educated classes and city folk.

St Vincent de Paul

In the next century, the seventeenth, there appeared the man and the men whom the ordinary people, the working-class man, the small tenant farmer and his labourer, hailed and affectionately greeted as the "Priests of the Mission". As yet these priests had no official name but, like the tree, were known by their fruits. In the beginning, and for a short time, there was but one such man and one such priest to merit the popular designation. He was none other than St Vincent de Paul. By degrees he attracted and gathered around him a small band of missionary helpers. It was that small group of missioners that was given the popular title even before Roman authority had officially launched a new religious society into the Church under the official title of "The Congregation of the Mission". How well and truly St Vincent de Paul and his immediate followers earned and merited their name as "Priests of the Mission" is the subject of this paper.

Nobody seriously claims, least of all St Vincent himself, that St Vincent de Paul was the first or only priest of his age to give missions. What may be fairly claimed for our saint is that he took the mission idea, so adapted it, so remodelled it to suit the spiritual needs of the working-class family, especially the needs of the peasantry, that in his hands a mission became a most powerful instrument of grace and blessing to the people. It became *the* weapon of spiritual regeneration of the age, popular, instructive and effective of the greatest marvels of grace. Eminent ecclesiastics, who were in a position to judge, bear witness to the transformation of the countryside brought about by the missions of St Vincent and his band of associates.

The tone and terms of a letter written in the year 1647 by Jacques Lescot, bishop of Chartres, to mention but one such testimony, is only

the more eloquent by being an indirect rather than a direct fulsome eulogy of St Vincent and his missions. In inviting St Vincent to continue missions in his diocese he says:

Nothing is more necessary, nothing more useful. I shall determine nothing, neither the time nor the place, nor shall I limit your jurisdiction in any way. All is yours; in the words of Abraham I only say: *Ecce universa coram te sunt* (cf Gen 13:9). (Ill 181).

More eloquent eulogies of St Vincent and his missions might be recorded here but the generally admitted success of these missions, their gradual expansion, their nature and quality, is a much more interesting matter.

Extent of his missions

A fairly accurate picture of the extent of St Vincent's missions may be gathered from the following statistics. His first mission, purely tentative in character, was preached on the de Gondi estates. It was a one man effort in the year 1617 and was so successful as to encourage the saint to try another and yet another. So fruitful in good results were these early efforts, so numerous were those who approached the confessional, that the saint was forced to call in the aid of other priests, secular and regular. As missions multiplied, the difficulty of getting even casual help from the priests around him increased. We do not know how many missions were preached by the saint alone or with the help of other priests up to the date of the foundation of his own congregation in 1625. It is agreed, however, that between 1617 and 1625 he must have given at least forty missions on the de Gondi estates, in addition to those given in many other places.

The Congregation of the Mission

In 1625, when other communities had refused for one reason or another to undertake and pledge themselves to the work of country missions, he himself agreed to found, and did actually found, a new community. The object and end of this new family in the Church was to secure a supply and continuity of priests whose primary duty, after labouring for their own perfection, was to preach missions to the poor, especially the country poor. His own wishes, and those of the devout Madame de Gondi, were beginning to be realised, though not perhaps in the way

he had thought of earlier. With the birth of the new community he had associates whom he could mould especially for the missions, priests whom he could send where and when he pleased. From the birth of this community in 1625 up to the year 1632, when the mother house was at the College des Bons Enfants, St Vincent preached in person, or through his subjects, about one hundred and forty missions. In 1632 the mother house was transferred to St Lazare. From that year, 1632, up to 1660, the year of the death of our saint, the house of St Lazare alone gave about seven hundred missions, including at least three or four in Ireland in the dioceses of Cashel, Emly and Limerick. That picture, however, is not complete until we add the large number of missions given by other houses of the community established in twenty-five different dioceses inside and outside of France, but under the direction of St Vincent.

In the light of these facts no one can seriously call in question the accuracy of the verdict of the people of the day that St Vincent had proved himself the priest of the parish mission. He had surely earned his popular title of "Priest of the Mission" on a quantitive basis of assessment.

Quality as well as quantity

The quality of a man's work, however, is a much safer guide in assessing a man's work. Let us see if we can trace and find out the qualities and nature of St Vincent's missions. It has already been noticed in passing that St Vincent's missions had a very definite rural bias. They were instituted for the poor, especially for the country folk; to their spiritual needs they were adapted and tailored. It would be interesting to examine closely all those human factors which, with the help of grace, determined and fashioned the missionary vocation of St Vincent and gave his vocation the special rural bias that it had. I can but touch on some of the circumstances.

St Vincent was by birth the son of a peasant; in his youth and early manhood he saw the misery, physical and moral, of the countryside of his day. His experience, first as a young priest at Clichy, then as a priest tutor to the sons of a wealthy landlord whose tenants were in misery, confirmed his youthful impressions of the terrible misery of the rural population. As St Vincent was brought around the estates to visit the tenantry he saw only too plainly the urgent and appalling need for a social and religious reform of the peasantry. His further experience as a cure at Châtillon-les-Dombes, short lived as it was, served but to

strengthen his earlier impressions and to remove any lingering doubt that still remained. He was never a man of quick decisions; he always awaited the unmistakable signs of God's hand. Now in 1617 the finger of God pointed in one direction. He could no longer hesitate. He determined to dedicate the remainder of his life to the secrvice of the poor, especially the peasantry.

What form this apostolate of the poor and peasantry was to take was not yet clear even to himself. He must experiment and, if needs be, find out by trial and error. He resolved to begin by preaching a mission to his dear country folk. There was no error of judgement; the mission was found to be a most excellent instrument of his apostolate. Even while its form was yet in the making its value was plainly visible to him. As his experience as a missioner increased, the plight of his country folk was revealing itself in all its stark reality. He soon found that the conditions of his cherished poor were even worse than he had anticipated. Unbelievable ignorance in things of the spirit was widespread. Many of the ordinary people did not know even the principal mysteries of our religion, nor the importance, value or conditions of a good confession. Steadily, slowly but surely these circumstances were dictating the quality of the desirable mission.

To be of any real use the mission must be first and foremost instructive, instructive even in the elementary teachings of our religion. It must deal with such fundamental matters as man's purpose and destiny in life; the obstacles in the way of salvation, and the means provided by God to be used by man in pursuit of his destiny. During the mission these matters were dealt with in a series of sermons, one each day for the entire duration of the mission. The length of the mission was not for a fixed number of days or weeks. The only rule as to duration was that the mission be continued until all the people had been instructed in the necessary truths of the faith and had made a good confession.

Besides this more formal daily sermon, preached in the morning in France, there were two informal instructions per day. One of these followed the line of the little catechism, the other of the bigger catechism. Even then the instruction was not ended, for there was assigned one quarter of an hour each morning, before the sermon proper, in which was given a resume of the previous day's catechesis.

All the exercises of the mission were linked with the sacrament of penance, either as the preparation for a good confession, or as the result of a good confession expressing itself in the practical amendment of life. A good confession must be the climax of such a mission. Hence the teaching of the Church on the sacrament of penance got pride

of place in St Vincent's instructions. Again and again the nature and importance of this sacrament, its parts, its conditions, were so treated in detail that the hitherto worst instructed in the parish could scarcely fail to grasp what they had to do in order to make a good confession. Such a good confession was the immediate object of the mission, not indeed the ultimate object. Only when all the people were properly instructed, and had made good confessions, were they deemed to have "made" the mission. Enough has been said to indicate that the condition of the people to whom St Vincent's missions were mainly given gave his missions their first trait, that of being essentially instructive, and instructive even in the elementary matters of our religion.

Style of preaching

If the widespread ignorance of the country folk in matters of their deepest spiritual interest determined the instructive character of St Vincent's missions as it did, we shall see, too, that the circumstances of these same people added another trait to Vincentian missions. These missions had to be simple in form as well as in matter. Hitherto the style of sacred eloquence as it appeared with his contemporaries and immediate predecessors, that is with many notable orators, really disgusted St Vincent. With many of these supposedly great preachers quotations from Aristotle, Cicero, Virgil, were put almost on a level with the words of Christ, St Paul or St Augustine. People sometimes heard as much of the great poets as they did of the gospels: simile and metaphor afforded the preacher an opportunity to display his learning.

St Vincent had little use for studied and calculated elegance in the pulpit. For his very dear country folk flowery language, well balanced literary compositions, humanistic quotations, dramatic high-sounding oratorical devices were as much out of place as were bitter invective or other forms of undignified language. St Vincent did not allow the introduction of controversial topics into the pulpit, nor would he tolerate a harsh word against the heretic. He seems to have been profoundly influenced by the advice of St Paul to Timothy:

Do all you can to present yourself in front of God as a man who has come through his trials, and a man who has no cause to be ashamed of his life's work and has kept a straight course with the message of the truth. Have nothing to do with pointless philosophical discussions (2 Tim 2:15-16).

To reduce this advice of the apostle to practice St Vincent insisted on a great simplicity of speech as one of the chief qualities of his ministers and missioners. The missioner ought to be a simple man, not simple with the simplicity of the goose but with a simplicity analogous to the simplicity of God himself. He ought to be all of one piece, not a dual personality seeking God, as it were, with one hand and himself with the other. He must be singleminded, so singleminded as to shun, as a very great evil, any self-seeking or self-preaching. Does not the gospel itself proclaim:

If your eye is sound, your whole body will be filled with light (Mt 6:22).

Only when a missioner's eye is single is he a real source of light. Then will his simplicity reveal itself in his tone of voice, in his choice of words and phrases, as well as in his manner of handling his subject. The missioner must not shout, bawl or rant in the pulpit. He should use moderate or middle voice, the conversational style. Simplicity of form, however, must not be confused with carelessness or indifference. Carelessness is as much a great error as is over-elegance. To avoid such carelessness the missioner must prepare his instructions with even greater care because they are intended for the less educated.

For St Vincent it was a most serious fault in a missioner if he thought anything was good enough for the country people, if he were so presumptuous as to trust to his fluency of speech or command of language. St Vincent was quick to see where such carelessness would lead, to sermons without order, without precision or clarity, to endless repetitions, to pointless verbiage in which there would be little other than empty declamation.

Such simplicity of matter and form in missions could come about only when missioners had already a great love of God and souls. Simplicity was a product of love, an act of zeal, a re-presentation of Christ to his cherished poor.

"The little method"

Not content with these general and practical instructions on the manner of preaching St Vincent put his ideas on preaching into a condensed formula which he loved to refer to as "the little method". It breathes the very spirit of simplicity. It is the Vincentian method of preaching, approved and authorised since the days of St Vincent. It contains, in

addition, St Vincent's contribution to that reform of sacred eloquence in the Church at large that began in the Church of France in the seventeenth century.

Here, in condensed form, is St Vincent's explanation of the little method. A preacher's first duty is to make himself heard and understood; his second duty is to persuade. Now what do we do when we want to persuade a man to do something? Don't we point out to him the advantage of doing what we suggest? Don't we give him the reasons for doing it? Having done so, we tell him what is involved in our proposal, in what our proposal consists. We explain the nature of our proposal. Finally, we point out how he can do what we suggest; we give him the practical means. Nature, motives and means, all set out clearly and simply; such is the little method of preaching of St Vincent de Paul. To follow it it is not necessary to treat the points in the order in which they are here given, or even to make a marked distinction between them. All that is necessary is that they be there - whether overtly or covertly is at the taste of the preacher.

To this teaching on methods of preaching St Vincent added example. Those conferences of his that have come down to us might be taken as models by anyone wishing to know in what the little method consists. In them he shows himself simple in matter and form; he is always interesting, sometimes moving, sometimes even eloquent. This little method, ordered as the suitable method of preaching in the Vincentian Community, by degrees began to be adopted by the clergy at large. St Vincent himself inspired those clerics with whom he came in contact on his missions and through the Tuesday Conferences to the clergy. He inspired many of those with his own love for the little method so that he could say, as he did, on 20 August 1655:

If a man now wishes to be regarded as a good preacher he must preach in this way [the little method] without affectation. People now say of a man who preaches thus that he preaches as well as the best. This man works wonders, he preaches like a missionary, like an apostle (XI 286).

Later he asked the community to thank God for his goodness in giving to the community a method of preaching which *all* desired to follow. The little method had evidently begun to supplant the more grandiloquent methods of the past. Even Bossuet, in a letter to Pope Clement XI, is witness to the irresistible charm of the Tuesday Conferences - "His [St Vincent's] words are as the words of God". But

the great orator paid St Vincent a still greater compliment by modelling himself on him. The little method had become a new trait not only in the preaching of missions but also in pulpit eloquence generally. But there is still another trait to be found in St Vincent's missions.

While the spiritual interests of the people were the first concern of missioners to rural families and workers generally, these missioners of St Vincent could not be indifferent to the temporal needs of a much distressed people. Hence, if the local clergy approved, it was the custom on Vincentian missions to set up charitable organisations of men and women for the relief of poverty and sickness. In a general way these organisations did what the St Vincent de Paul Society, what the Daughters of Charity, what Catholic Social Service guilds now do for the social betterment of the oppressed. This paper is scarcely the place to discuss these forms of Catholic action. I only mention the fact in a passing way as I also mention a final trait of St Vincent's missions. These missions were entirely free – they were not a charge on the parish. The expenses of board and lodging and of travel were all borne from either foundations or donations that came from the wealthy, whose interest had been aroused by St Vincent.

We set out to treat of St Vincent de Paul and parish missions. We had a look at the origins of missions; we have seen where St Vincent came into the picture, how his vocation to parish missions evolved. We saw too that it was the people who gave him his title of Priest of the Mission. We have suggested that it was the needs, the special needs, of the people to whom he generally preached, that gave his missions a quality and a nature that made them something new in the Church of the seventeenth century. For his missions were, firstly, for the poor and working classes of the country; secondly, they were essentially catechetical; thirdly, they were simple in matter and form; fourthly, they were preached in a new style of sacred eloquence; fifthly, they were in some measure a relief to the temporal necessities of the people. Having seen these facts, do we not feel that the popular name "Priests of the Mission", as well as the official one, has been well and truly earned by St Vincent de Paul and his missioners?

Vincentian Parish Missions 1950-1980

Thomas Bennett

Some time ago I was requested to jot down some memories of Vincentian Parish Missions from 1950 till 1970. My first reaction was an obvious one, namely that it is common knowledge to all. But on reflection I realise that many things which were standard and normal in the Irish Province for people of my generation are now unknown to a younger generation. My mission experience extends from the mid-1950s till 1980.

In the early 1950s the missioners were based in four houses. Phibsboro, not a parish in those days, was the central mission house, with a long established tradition of conducting missions. On average, about ten missioners lived there. Sunday's Well, not a parish at that time either, had five or six missioners. Lanark, which was a parish, also had about the same number. Sheffield, also a parish, had four missioners. At a rough estimate, about twenty-five missioners were operating at this time. This number was occasionally augmented by some of the parish staff. The superior of each house made the arrangements with the diocesan clergy and his own mission team. It was only many years later that a Mission Director was appointed in the Province. It was a workable system, but now and then there was the odd hiccup! A frantic phonecall from Phibsboro to Sheffield or Lanark requesting missioners did not always have the desired result. The Lanark superior knew from experience that the Glasgow clergy always had their dinner under their belts before they thought about booking missioners for Lent. Dublin got is reply: "We're fully booked up!". Parish missions in England and Scotland took place mostly in the autumn and in Lent. In Ireland they were held in Lent, and especially after Easter until early summer.

The parish mission was the big event of the year in the country places of Ireland. The time after Easter was ideal; the crops were planted and the long summer evenings were approaching. The churches, for there were two or three in each parish, always looked neat in their fresh coat

of paint. Accommodation for the missioners was prepared in the Parish Priest's house and in that of the curate. The missioners were met at the nearest railway station or bus stop. On the first Sunday morning, as the missioners strolled up to the church door, the local men congregated outside the door and wondered which one of them was "the violent one". They knew from long experience that missioners of contrasting styles and temperaments were sent to them. Generally they were not disappointed in their expectations. Mission stalls, with a copious supply of rosary beads, statues, crucifixes, prayer books and medals, were already erected in the church grounds. The scene was set; it was now up to the missioners to deliver the goods!

The mission programme followed the established pattern: early morning mass with a short instruction. These instructions could be described as a refresher course on some aspects of the people's spiritual life, such as preparation for confession, justice, charity, 2nd and 5th commandments, prayer, the passion of Jesus, the Church. At times local problems and needs indicated other talks. On the Monday and Tuesday mornings the missioners' work revolved around the visitation of the sick and elderly, and also a visit to the schools.

The number of homes visited ranged from thirty to seventy. The missioners, accompanied by the local priest, set off by car along the twisting narrow roads and journeyed into the hills. Frequently the sturdy Volkswagen, much in vogue, had to be abandoned and the latter part of the journey made on foot. It was worth it. In these homes, sprinkled round the countryside, they met "the salt of the earth". Their joy at receiving absolution and the Lord from the missioner is a memory that remains.

The children in the schools could not be deprived of a close-up view of a real live missioner! They expected him to quiz them on catechetical matters great and small; and so he did. Time and place were fixed so that the children could be absolved of all their big sins! A missioner must tell stories, and the success of his visit could be judged from the peals of laughter that echoed through the school.

But the main event for the parishioners was the mission sermon in the evenings at 8 pm. All work stopped. Many travelled long distances on foot. Men, women and children converged on the church long before the starting time. Children were packed around the altar steps, in order to make more space for their elders. The format was: rosary, sermon and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The main sermons were on salvation, sin, the sacrament of penance, marriage, family life, the mass, and the Blessed Virgin. Each missioner had scope to use his own

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special charisma in raising the hearts and minds of his congregation to God. One missioner led the rosary, usually for a special intention. Brief announcements followed; maybe time for a humorous story. A suitable hymn introduced the main speaker, who always knew that this was the moment of truth. While the wayward were reminded of their unsatisfactory state, at times in forceful language, all were coaxed and encouraged to strive for new heights of Christian living. It should be remembered that in those days the microphone system was not installed in many country churches. The missioners' vocal cords were highly tried.

The phrase "going to confession" was the common parlance of the day. Everyone in the parish went to confession during the mission. This was a mammoth task for the missioners. It also required no small degree of faith and courage from some of the parishioners. Confessions were heard in the middle of the day, beginning before noon and ending about 3 pm. Dinner in the parochial house followed; often neighbouring clergy were invited. The meal, which was truly splendid, tended to be a lengthy affair. Thoughts about having to preach later in the evening were temporarily put aside; it was no place for weaklings!

The closing of the mission on Sunday evening was always a moving occasion for all. At the morning masses the whole parish received their Lord, with renewed devotion and gratitude. In the evening they returned to the church for the great finale. They richly deserved the congratulatory words from the missioner. Each held a lighted candle while the renewal of baptismal vows and profession of faith took place. Rosary beads, miraculous medals and other pious objects for their houses were blessed. The papal blessing was given. After benediction a spirited rendering of the hymn "Faith of our Fathers" brought to an end a memorable week.

In the major towns and cities parish retreats were conducted. For many towns they were yearly events. Parish missions, on the other hand, were conducted at intervals of five years or more. The wisdom of having the yearly event was often debated. Some thought that the impact was not as great as it might have been. In 1960 a General Mission took place in Cork city. Over sixty missioners from many religious orders were involved, and it continued for a month. A few years later twenty Vincentian missioners took part in a like mission in Derry city. Galway also staged one around that time. Belfast always figured prominently in the mission list. But in the late 1960s there were signs of a serious political upheaval across Northern Ireland, and when it came everyday life for Catholics, especially in Belfast and Derry, was

fraught with danger. Still, our missioners continued to work in these cities and other northern towns.

In the 1950s about half a million young Irish men and women left Ireland to seek work in England. While it was Ireland's loss it was England's gain. The nation was recovering from the rigours of the war period. There was a great spirit of work and co-operation throughout the land. Many Catholic churches and schools had been severely damaged by bombing during the war, St Vincent's, Sheffield, being one case. The task of getting them into operation again was tackled with great enthusiasm.

It was chiefly to London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham that the Irish flocked. As a result, new churches had to be built, others enlarged to cater for the increased Catholic population. It was a rewarding and exciting time to be a priest working in England. On the national level the majority of the population had ceased to be church-going. During these years the demand for missioners was greater than ever. Missions were conducted in a different style from that already mentioned. Catholics in any area were very much in the minority. Preaching the Good News of the gospel was, as always, the very core of the missioner's work. But one of the most demanding and necessary tasks was the visitation of the homes. The attempt to visit all the Catholic homes of the parish did seem impossible, but it was done, and in two weeks. Armed with the parish visiting book and a fistful of mission literature the missioner started off about eleven in the morning and continued door-knocking until about 12.30. Sometimes the local priest accompanied him. High-rise flats looked daunting. Door receptions, at times, did nothing to boost his morale. In the afternoon parish visitation continued from 4.00 to 6.30. Darkness may have shrouded the long streets and little alleyways, but many homes were beacons of light that made it all worthwhile. The mission service in the evening consisted of the mass, with the sermon preached after the gospel. An increased attendance each night indicated that contact with the homes was bearing fruit. But there were many disappointments. The missioners made themselves available for confession and consultation after the mass. The hospitality of the local clergy was always more than welcome at the end of a long day. The day's work was reviewed, and humourous happenings recalled. In the mornings there was an early mass, with an instruction. This was followed by another mass at 10.00, attended by mothers who had taken their children to school at 9.30. Many senior citizens attended this mass and instruction; not many of these would return in the evening. Schools were visited and mass arranged for 396 Thomas Bennet

the children either in the school or in the church. The children were wonderful ambassadors and brought news of the mission home. Every means and opportunity available was used to advertise the mission. In most parishes prayers for its success were offered for two months before the event.

The north east of England was well known to Vincentian missioners, from the Humber up to Middlesbrough and the thickly populated areas surrounding Sunderland and Newcastle. The skies may have been cold and grey but the faith there was heartwarming. Sheffield, a city well-beloved by many Vincentians, seldom enthused about any missionary efforts. In the north west, places like Whitehaven, Keswick and Cleator Moor come to mind; over the years many people from Co. Wicklow settled there. It seems that the ore and tin mines were the bind.

Older missioners used to say that you hadn't really given a mission until vou had been to Glasgow. The Lanark house was well placed for this. Most of the missions were conducted in the archdiocese of Glasgow and along the Ayrshire coast; occasionally an invitation came from Edinburgh. The people of Glasgow had known both prosperity and great poverty. Many parishes along the Clyde depended on the shipyards for their daily living. It was a precarious situation to be in. Work conditions in the shipyards were pretty grim and demanding. Often there was no work and "Johnnie Walker" was not the answer; but he did help! In the 50s and 60s many new towns and housing estates mushroomed around the city; these brought their own problems. Yet the people retained their great sense of humour and a down-to-earth Christianity that was born out of hard times. The Lanark missioners were familiar with the inner city parishes and latterly with the new towns. Mission attendance was very high. While visiting their homes the missioners soon found that many of their forebears had come from Donegal and Derry. In the distant past they had come to Scotland yearly to plant, and later help in harvesting, the crops. Many finally settled in Scotland.

In Wales the Catholic population was small but growing. Vincentians gave missions in a few towns in the diocese of Cardiff. In the mid-seventies an event worthy of note took place in mid-Wales; a Vincentian missioner conducted a mission free of charge!

At the close of the 70s many changes had taken place. No longer were missioners stationed in Cork, Lanark or Sheffield. The mission team was greatly reduced. Society was changing fast. The diocesan clergy were grappling with the new situation. During the 70s the strategy of the Vincentian mission was changing for Ireland and

England. Some Parish Priests desired it, others did not. But the central point was always held by our missioners that their work was the evangelization of the people. How it may be done, or how it is being done, is another story.

Missions in the 1980s and 1990s

Jay Shanahan

Michael McCullagh is a man of many stories, but there are few that have the colour of that which he relates about an incident during a mission in Ravensdale, Co. Louth. Last September Michael and I went there to give a week's mission. Ravensdale stretches from near the Ballymascanlon Hotel, on the Dundalk-Newry road, eastwards almost to Greenore. On this mission we were accompanied by Pauline MacDougall, a former post-primary teacher from England, at the request of the Parish Priest, Fr Bobby McKenna.

On one of the days that we visited the sick Michael visited an elderly man who lived alone by the shore of the sea. Michael had heard the man's confession and prepared him to receive communion. Holding the host in his hand Michael proclaimed: "This is the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world; happy are we who are called to his supper", to which the man responded: "Where are ye stayin'?" Michael explained that he was staying with the Parish Priest, and proceeded anew with the rite of reception of communion. Having received his risen Lord the man remarked: "And where is the other priest stayin'?". "Fr Jay is staying with the curate". A short pause followed ... "And the woman?". Michael, with the wisdom of the Spirit (that is imparted in abundance to Donegal men) discerned that, like most Irishmen, the third question was the one that he really wanted answered, replied with the same composure: "Oh Pauline ... eh, ... Pauline is, eh, staying ... she's staying at the Parish Priest's house too". The man sat in his seat, peaked cap in his hands, stared out the window at the lapping waves and only uttered "Oh my God!" To this day Michael likes to think that that utterance was connected to his dialogue with the Lord in his mouth rather than that with the priest in his house.

Having read James O'Doherty's article from 1960 I became con-

scious of how things have changed and yet some things remain the same. When I was visiting a parish lately a child was asked: "What is a mission?" She replied: "It's a time for buying cameras". We eventually came to see that the little girl was talking of the tiny cameras that show different scenes from Lourdes or the Holy Land. Though this was a part of the mission scene in the 1960s it is a far cry from the "ordinary occurring events in the religious life of a parish today" of which James speaks.

That change in the nature of missions and their popularity is reflected in the numbers of missions that are given. Tom Bennett, in his article, states that "in the early '50s the missioners were based in four houses", and their number was around twenty-five. We live in changed times and those times show us as a community which has three men on permanent mission in Ireland (and that will be reduced to two as Pat Collins will be leaving the mission team).

Part of the change has been the increasing request for missions in the Dublin area. Yet for all the change, and the need for change, we continue to hold on to some of the rich tradition that we have received from Frs Bennett, Gallagher and O'Kane and, more recently, from the great efforts of Aidan Galvin, Reggie Deaton and Kevin Scallon.

On reading Tom Bennett's article I was struck by how something was lost between 1970 and 1980. Tom states that the children were a big part of the promotion of the mission in his time. While this was perhaps part of the mission model in those years it was Michael McCullagh who prioritised it in our present model of mission, about which more will be said later.

Pat Collins' pioneering work in the area of morning "workshops" has proved highly successful, and I have tried to complement the tradition that we have inherited through morning sessions on prayer, in conjunction with Michael's work.

Our efforts to carve out something new is based on two ideas. First, there is a shift in the modern Church in Ireland. This shift is best seen in a move from religion based on authority to a religion based on experience or, as Pat put it, "the move is from an experience of authority to the authority of experience". (This is best seen in the 10 day "trial pack" which is often advertised in papers and magazines).

Second, there is a growing desire within people for a deeper understanding of scripture, and a growth in our need for personal prayer. Our hope is that the workshops come some way towards meeting this need.

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Our heritage

What are the traditions that we have inherited from those who have gone before us? Essentially they are:

The visitation of the sick
The importance of confession
The significance of preaching
The value of the daily eucharist.

In the model that we received the topics were set out, and we have retained them. The evening service would run as follows:

Sunday: Salvation
Monday: Repentance
Tuesday: Reconciliation

Wednesday: Community (Forgiving others)

Thursday: Eucharist Friday: Suffering

Saturday: Our Lady (Vigil mass on Saturday evening)

Sunday: Discipleship.

The topics at morning masses would cover themes such as: parents and children; the Holy Spirit; St Vincent; the Sacred Heart; remembering our dead; and others. The evening service would include rosary, benediction, scripture and homily.

In all this the function of the missioner has not changed much. It has remained a two-pronged ministry, kerygmatic and sacramental. Although this has worked well we have found it necessary, for the following reasons, to augment what we have:

The model of arrival, preaching, sacramental renewal, and exhortation lacked the involvement of lay people in its preparation.

Where extensive visiting of the homes was undertaken the net result of those attending the mission was, for the most part, unchanged; i.e. people will go if they want to, and visiting makes little or no difference.

The number of priests available for missions has decreased and we do not have the same resources available.

Huge numbers for confession are no longer apparent except, perhaps, in the north of Ireland.

And so, by reflection, necessity and a share of divine providence, we began, mostly since October 1990, to develop a new model of mission.

The new model of approach

The new model of approach is more lay centred. Perhaps the value of it would be lost on our friend in Ravensdale, but it has certainly developed the perception of the Church as a communal body.

On some experimental missions we have had lay people with us. This idea is still in its infancy for several reasons. One of them is suitability of lay person and missioners, another is relationship of the lay person with the people to whom we go; (the idea is still unthinkable in most rural missions). A third consideration is the availability of lay preachers. While we have attempted this approach (the lay person has always been a woman) it has brought mixed reactions; most of them have been very favourable. It is something that we will continue to evaluate as a possibility for the future.

The second model that we are working towards is one which we have modified from the model of the Catholic Missionary Society as used in England. In this model the focus is on the community, and the preparation for the mission lies in their hands. With this approach the work starts long before the mission, and the "preached week" is really only a part of a far greater parish plan. This model would be undertaken along the following lines:

Stage 1: Call and survey

The parish comes together, or rather a representative group gathers and discusses the needs of the parish. Is a preached retreat what is needed, or how can the parish best be served? This initial meeting would generally be the result of preaching the previous day by one of the mission team, and this meeting would take place at least six months before the "preached week", if such a week was desired. A result of this meeting would be the appointment of a chairperson and committee. Sometimes a "census of need" or something similar (e.g. a parish survey) would be a focal point for the committee and community. Thus we name stage 1 "Call and survey".

Stage 2: Visiting and awareness

This could take place in the week preceding the mission. Members of the community go from door to door to invite the different families to come to the mission; the missioners also do this. The evening times 402 Jay Shanahan

in this week allow the possibility of meeting with different collective bodies in the parish (e.g. faith friends, young parents, etc.).

Stage 3: The event

This is the preached week as we know it. It is a week where we focus on the Lord and on the Church, and use much of what we have inherited and which has proved highly successful. Again, the schools are targeted as another attempt towards "evangelization in the home".

Stage 4: The plan

Following the week of retreat the ideal is to now draw up a plan for the next one to five years. The idea of this plan would be to establish something that would be conducive to the growth of the community spiritually and socially. This concludes the involvement of the missioners with the parish.

The advantage of this model is that there is a greater possibility of reaching those homes where there might not be contact made. The home visits that are made by lay people are also less "authoritative" than if made solely by priests. The other positive aspect of this model is that because there is so much time and energy invested by those within the community in this type of mission there is a greater possibility of lasting effect.

A big advantage of our involvement in All Hallows has been that there is greater collaboration between the mission team and All Hallows as a centre of evangelization. Thus we are informed of advances in the world of lay ministry and have what biologists would call the perfect "symbiotic relationship", where one feeds from the other to the mutual benefit of both. We learn from theory, and ministry learns from our experience.

Does it work? Do parishes "buy into" this model of mission? I believe that the facts speak for themselves, and the facts are that we have managed to maintain an appeal to rural parishes while trying to meet the requests of needy city parishes who are struggling for new forms of mission and evangelization. The model that we use received enthusiastic support from the parish renewal teams in Dublin, Wicklow, Cavan, Antrim, Wexford, Waterford, Cork, Tyrone and, of course, Louth. The requests for missions that we have received take us up to May 1993, and I am writing in May 1991. Deo gratias.

There has been a lot of pain in our development. We are still not

finished in our search for alternative forms of mission, but what makes the Vincentian mission unique is, without doubt, a combination of humour, compassion and generosity of effort, which have been the hallmarks not just of the Vincentian missioner but, in my experience, of Vincentians at all levels in the fields of education, parish administration and spiritual formation. That generosity of spirit has been particularly obvious in men like Pearse Gallagher, Frank Mullan, Sean Johnston, Fergus Kelly and Aidan Galvin who have helped us at difficult times at no little cost to themselves and their respective ministries. To them we owe a great debt of gratitude as, indeed, to the staff (Vincentian and non-Vincentian alike) at All Hallows. Whatever the uncertainties of the future it is a reassurance to know that the spirit of mission of men who pioneered this work in France over 350 years ago and handed it on to the contemporaries of James O'Doherty still lives on as the world of Vincentian missions evolves and progresses towards a new millenium.

She will find them again: Musings on St Louise

Thomas Lane

There are many ways of phantasising about heaven. Much depends on whether you start with the immortality of the soul or with the resurrection of the body. In the days of Louise the focus was largely on the immortality of the soul. Is it any wonder that when she began to doubt its reality her world tended to fall apart? By hindsight we might be surprised at such concern for the soul in a woman who would do so much for the well-being of so many living bodies. In recent times our body/soul language has been changing somewhat as we get glimpses of the mysterious unity of the human person. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council has directed our attention towards the resurrection of the body and, indeed, a kind of resurrection of the whole created universe. In a very powerful section of the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World we are assured that

when we have spread on earth the fruits of our nature and enterprise ...

according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, we will find them once again, cleansed this time from the stain of sin.

illuminated and transfigured,

when Christ presents to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom (# 39).

This text of the Council has as its focus the image of finding and of its variant, losing and finding, to which the Lord often returns in the gospel, and which provides a whole programme for Christian living.

All her life, and especially from the moment when Vincent said to her in 1629 "Go, in the name of the Lord, Mademoiselle", until her death in 1660 Louise spent her energies spreading on earth the seeds and the fruits of her nature and enterprise. She did this according to the command of the Lord and in his Spirit, whom she welcomed into her life at many retreats in preparation for many pentecosts. She took more

than her share of blame for her contribution to the world's sin, and she was willing to pay any price for the cleansing of its stain. In faith and hope she knew that one day she would be rewarded for spreading on earth the fruits of her nature and enterprise, though I think she would have been surprised to be told that she would actually find them again. But, as the one whose first great religious experience was a pentecost "light", she would have loved to hear of a heaven where every good thing she had done would be illuminated and transfigured.

As I re-read her works and the story of her life I can easily see why the Church officially declared the heroic quality of her virtues. There were many riches of the kingdom which she had already found even on this earth, but there were others which were only dawning in her life and which remained incomplete. She will find these fully only when Christ will finally present the kingdom to his Father. I like to think that in five areas in particular - differing in importance and centrality - she will then find the full transfiguration of the fruits of her rich nature and her wide enterprise, a flowering which she was willing to forego during her earthly existence.

She will find peace; she will find affection; she will find healing; she will find beauty; she will find laughter.

She will find peace

Louise found some peace in her life-time, but it was a limited and intermittent peace. Maybe her own summing-up, to Vincent, as late as January 1660, is the best of all: "Our Lord has put me in the state of bearing everything peacefully enough". One would have thought that her experience of God and her blending of prayer, work and relationships had all the ingredients for the forming of a woman of peace. The underpinning of all her approaches to God was richly trinitarian. Even the young Daughters of Charity were taught to model their recreations on the relationships of Father, Son and Spirit. In her prayer she kept continually delving into and "honouring" the mystery of the unfolding humanity of our Lord, son of the Father and son of Mary. The designs of God's providence loomed large in her thinking and praying. Her first biographer, Gobillon, assures us that she had "a love, or rather extraordinary ardour," for prayer. She entered into it, he says, "with strength,

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sublimity and wholehearted affection". The story of her growth in prayer has often been told. It moved from the bewildering multiplication of devotions and aspirations, out of which she never fully passed, to a growing centring on the God within her. Nobody could fault her search for a perfect blending of prayer and work, from her first experience of the Charities till the time when her arm gone gangrenous could no longer be stretched out to the poor. Humanly she was acknowledged by all to have the organisational ability, the fine practical judgement, and the ability to assess people and situations which made Vincent look to her and ask "What do you think, Mademoiselle?". As for her relationships with the Daughters of Charity and her other collaborators there must have been few who dissented from Vincent when in his conference on her virtues he praised her love and concern, and added, maybe with a little understatement, "if by human infirmity she sometimes fell into a little act of hastiness, there is no reason to be astonished at that".

All the ingredients, you would say, for a heart at peace. And still there is good evidence that these rarely added up to real peace. Like joy, this is a fruit which the Spirit gave her sparingly. The reason must be sought in the "double agony" that went deep in her. The first agony came from her temperament, aggravated no doubt by the insecurity that came when the realities her family background dawned on her. All would admit, I think, that there was in her make-up a deep element of anxiety. Calvet made his famous addition of the word "neurasthenia". He adds that she was scrupulous; Fr Dirvin says that this is the wrong word. The more one explores words like these, the more one recognises the difficulty of reading the facts of yesterday in the light of the psychological and other insights of today. But the anxiety element in Louise was real and I believe that Calvet's picture is basically right. Some would say that the whole topic should be given a rest. Maybe, but raising it is a strong reminder how grace gently invades and uplifts the weak parts as well as the strong parts of the human psyche.

Louise's anxiety sometimes expressed itself in her over-sensitivity about the topic of sin. Gobillon tells us with more than usual directness that

the enemy tormented her by her own virtue ...; he inspired in her such a great fear of sin and applied her mind so forcibly to the consideration of faults ... that she found it difficult in her meditations to turn away from them.

She herself reported that, even after her confessions, her sins would stay before her. In her letters to her devout uncle, and later to her director, she continually sought the reassurance that would keep her from the resulting depression and heavy sense of guilt. Her attitude to sin sometimes led her to a rather morbid understanding of the place of suffering in the Christian life. The late Sr Mary Basil Roarke DC described her as "enjoying suffering". She did not always show an appreciation of the redemptive aspects of suffering. I think she used words literally in her frequent assertions that all the disorders of the community were to be blamed on her own sins. This attitude persisted in spite of frequent scoldings from her director. Even in the glowing letter which Sr Barbe Bailly sent to the other sisters after Louise's death she said that

her life was a continual martyrdom ... She told us before she died that she considered herself unworthy to bear the name of Sister of Charity, for she had such a low opinion of herself.

But the topic of Louise and the sense of sin went overboard and Louise continues to surprise us with what she considered to be the real sins. She wrote to a Sister that secretiveness could do us more harm than diabolical possession of the body. And she looked on the collapse of the ceiling in 1642 not as a punishment for sin but as "a grace from God ... and a great sign for the establishment of this little family".

With Louise's anxiety must be linked her depression and her fear. Even with all the glows that come to her at various pentecosts there continued to be many times of regression to these depressions and fears. In 1644 she was "greatly distressed over a fear about predestination ... it has oppressed my spirit". Even after her Pentecost retreat of 1645 she said:

My heart ... has reason to fear lest the mercy of God grow tired of extending itself to one who has ever displeased him.

She wrote that during her Pentecost retreat in 1651:

I seemed to be overwhelmed by I know not what all-encompassing terror. It diminished somewhat as I meditated on sin.

She then goes on to say that the words "God is who is" gave her entire tranquility. Significantly, in her retreat notes she adds: "I persuaded myself vividly that God was present in my soul". The word "per-

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suaded" is very interesting. In 1653 she told Vincent enthusiastically about the mystical favours she had received on her days of recollection. The words "God is my God" had provided her with a "transport of joy". Vincent, who had once begged her to "live content among the reasons for your discontent", knew his directee when he wrote on the margin of the letter that she should accept God's caresses in preparation for some cross he was preparing for her. The cross soon came in the "alarms and excursions" at the Daughters' house in Nantes. And five years before her death Louise was still expressing the fear that she might be shipwrecked as she entered the home port of her voyage. Even in her second-last Christmas she was still lamenting "my indifference to my interior state and everything that pertains to the service of God and my salvation". In her last illness she said that it was quite reasonable for evil to dwell where sin abounds. God was exercising his justice on her. But she did see clearly that wherever God exercises his justice he exercises mercy.

Louise's second agony was a variation on the theme of the first. Her son Michel was, from the earliest stages of his life and right up to Louise's death, a kind of symbol of all that was involved in the first. His moods, his waywardness, his strange disappearances, helped to foment many of her feelings about sin and its consequences, about blame and about guilt, about the evils of rejecting the grace of vocation, about the attitudes of those who asked "Rabbi, who sinned?" Even in her letters on strictly community affairs the name of Michel would appear from nowhere. One of every two letters she wrote to Vincent up to the founding of the Company spoke of Michel. Even when brighter times came he remained a cross to her. When he settled into a reasonably happy marriage he became deaf and lost his job. And when Louise did finally think that she would get no more trouble from him clouds began to gather on the "in-law" horizon.

It would appear that Louise had her real moments of peace, but these kept alternating with moments of darkness and turbulence. Calvet does not exaggerate when he speaks of the necessity to hear out to the end the "plaintive voice, the voice of a woman most pathetic in her weakness". She spoke of it, he says, to none but her director. This, he claims, was perhaps why she was sometimes so depressed. To her Daughters, he says, she showed her other sides: her awareness and her peace.

In the life of Louise the two sides somehow co-existed to the end. They were never integrated. Maybe it is in the continual enduring of this breakdown of integration that much of her real holiness lay. It certainly called forth in her the need for power, that "gentle power" for

which she prayed to her beloved St Louis. She herself saw clearly that "we cannot have peace with God, with our neighbour, with ourselves, unless Jesus Christ grant it to us". But she did have her moments of real peace. These were the Spirit's assurance that "God was really God". She will find all of them again, illuminated and transfigured, when Christ will present to his Father an eternal and universal kingdom of peace.

She will find affection

There is good evidence that Louise received and gave a good deal of love and affection in the course of her life. Though she grew up without the normal supports of mother-love it seems very clear that her relations with her father were always loving and supportive. He was to say unambiguously that she had been his greatest consolation in the world. The atmosphere in the convent school at Poissy seems to have been warm and secure, and the young Louise must have been the recipient of much affection, not least from her cultured and refined great-aunt. What her relationship was later with the mysterious "good, devout spinster" in the Paris *pension* we can only surmise. Though marriage for her was a second choice, there is evidence that Louise enjoyed a real married bliss, a bliss made richer by the birth of Michel. It would appear that Louise's later married years, though marred by her husband's sickness, were blessed by their own share of love and affection. and Louise was lovingly to pray for her husband on the anniversaries of his death. In spite of all the anguish that Michel was to cause her and the suppression of her human emotions and instincts which she sometimes appears to have made, her relationship with him was basically a mother-son relationship. The experience of loving and being loved as daughter, wife and mother was to stand Louise in good stead when she came to form the new Daughters and teach them to love and reverence the poor. There was an assurance and a charm about her own presence and her words that made even the men come to listen to her on the quiet when she was addressing the charities.

From the beginning her letters to the young sisters are full of the language of real affection, peppered with items of news about relatives and friends. This language of affection sometimes almost overflows as, for example, in the letters to Sr Hellot. At the centre of her final testament is a heart-word: the sisters were to live in great union and cordiality. This was a kind of shorthand for all she had been continually saying. To sisters in any form of distress she was particularly support-

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ive. Fifty of her letters to Sr Jeanne, who was in a situation of distress in the hospital in Nantes, are extant. There is a lovely touch in her letter to Sr Barbe: she told her gently that it was good for her to be in a situation in which she, like her masters the poor, had need of help, cordiality and gentleness. But the same Sr Barbe didn't escape being rapped on the knuckles when Louise judged that she hadn't related well to her companion: "By your want of cordiality ..., by your disdainful manner..., you have forgotten that ... when you were placed over her ... this obliged you to be a mother to her, more even than a corporal mother... which requires of you a greater kindness and charity". Like Vincent, Louise didn't hesitate to pull out all the stops on the mothering theme. He had told the sisters that a sufficiently strong motive for tending to foundlings was that there is at times a certain pleasure in doing so. They could not have enough affection for them, he said. Louise must have fully concurred with his advice: "God, who takes the place of father ... provides for all their [the foundlings'] wants ...; look upon yourselves as their mothers ...; what an honour to consider yourselves the mothers of children of whom God is the father ...; you will resemble the Blessed Virgin because you will be at one and the same time both mothers and virgins". Interesting words in our days which are experiencing some revision of male/female, married/celibate, language.

The relationship between Louise and Michel is often presented in problem language. But, under God's providence, it provided many opportunities for the young sisters to exercise those tender qualities which were always set before them as an ideal by both Vincent and Louise. Michel was a well-known visitor in the communities of the Daughters. Many of them nursed him in his illnesses. It would appear that Michel's daughter, in turn, came to have a special place in the sisters' communities. She drew out of them many reserves of affection and came to be accepted as "the little sister".

Many imponderable questions about human affection surface when one tries to express the closeness of the relationship between Vincent and Louise. Their relationship, and the language in which it was expressed, was now that of director and directee, now that of two close collaborators, and now that of two intimate friends. Very often it is not easy to see which aspect of the relationship was primarily at work. For many years, in a more male-dominated world, it was common to say that Vincent was the one who made Louise's talents and gifts to unfold. Nowadays it seems widely accepted that the process was mutual. Sr Mary Basil did not hesitate to say that as time went on Vincent could not get on without her. The affective

relationship between the two has been described in many ways. Fr Dirvin at one stage talks of their "brusque intimacy". At another, he wonders whether Louise was afraid of their mutual affection. At another, he recognises in the two "fullblown, the unafraid affection of the saints". Calvet says that "on both sides and in both hearts there was a clear-sighted affection, naive in its intensity". A recent writer describes Vincent and Louise in their friendship "not standing face to face gazing into each other's eyes, but standing side by side looking in the same direction ..., not the 'we' of two people enthralled in each other ... but rather directed to the mission that God had given them". This is a modern description, but I'm not sure that it would satisfy many moderns. However we describe the relationship between the two there is no doubting that it was one of real mutual affection. My own favourite illustration of this affection is the well-known letter in which Vincent wrote "I am, in all the stretch of my affection ...". He erased the words and replaced them with "I am, in the love of our Lord ...". Fr Coste says that he found the first phrase "too tender". But she could still read it, and we can still read it. And there is no evidence that Vincent ever said "destroy that wretched letter".

That is my favourite illustration, but the most provocative and evocative one is the account of Louise's death-bed wish. The story is familiar. She hoped for a visit from Vincent. He decided against it "for her greater perfection". Maybe it was his way of applying the rule he had once imposed upon himself not to visit her without being summoned for something necessary or useful. Then she hoped for a letter. It never came. But he did send a priest of the Mission. And the rest is silence. I suspect Sr Mary Basil was right when she said: "He should have gone to see her".

Both stories illustrate powerfully the incompleteness of any human affection, relationship, friendship. From Louise's side something of her many-faceted relationship with Vincent is perpetuated in the unique links she ensured would persist between the Daughters of Charity and the Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, and the directors appointed by him.

There were many dawnings of real affection, real love, and real friendship in the life of Louise de Marillac. None of them became a fully-developed affection, a fully-developed love, a fully-developed friendship. But she will find them again, illuminated and transfigured, in the kingdom of love.

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She will find healing

It was recently claimed that Louise's knowledge of medicine was probably superior to that of anyone in Paris in her time. It would be a hard claim to prove but it might be as difficult to disprove it. Certainly there were many times when she prescribed with the authority of one who would acknowledge the claim. She prescribed for saints and sinners, for high ecclesiastics and low. The concern for each other's health in the correspondence of Vincent and Louise is well known. Like other mortals Vincent was, in Louise's conviction, not above the need of bleedings and purgings. She introduced him to the many glories of the cup (or was it the glass) of tea, especially at retreat time, and he was not too impressed. She once asked Sr Hellot to tell Brother Alexandre, the infirmarian in St Lazare, that he should purge Monsieur Vincent without delay "for I think he needs it". And having said that a mixture of chicory syrup and peach-blossom syrup would do him good she added delightfully "You will know how to handle this message". In her first letter to Vincent in the last year of their lives she told him it was absolutely essential that he should purge himself well but gently; she told him to avoid perspiring; he should not induce a sweat by artificial means; his evening nourishment should not include bread and wine; herbs would build up his blood; there was great merit in cornachan powder for children and old people. Only days later, in a letter expressing many fears that the Company might disintegrate, she suddenly returned to the topic of his health and dropped the clanger: "I think it [your health] would improve if you let yourself be treated as you would command somebody else to be treated". She was articulating a pastoral principle of much wider application than what concerned health care.

She had an exquisite feel for the importance of good food. She made many sets of rules for sisters who were infirmarians and pharmacists. They range from directives about not allowing the purgative, significantly called "catholican", to go stale to advising sister servants to change sisters who show signs of tiring of an office. The garden sisters at the mother-house were to raise herbs for supply to the pharmacies of the hospitals the community served. Louise's remedies could sometimes be questioned. Of a sister who had very bad eyesight and was in danger of losing an eye she wrote: "Give her whatever remedy is necessary but the best one is a cauterisation at the back of the head".

Louise's contribution to the medical world was not merely in the prescribing of remedies. She designed programmes for what today we would call occupational therapy. She made strides from institutional living to a type of foster-care for children. The hospital in Angers has

been described as the first public hospital in France. In collaboration with the Augustinian nuns the Daughters in the Hôtel-Dieu were to work wonders at the improving of the standards of medical care. In the administration of medicines and cures Louise combined realism and the delicate personal touch. She thanked a sister for giving her the kind of fruit that her toothless gums could chew. In thanking another for some food she cautioned her "to please line the basket with hay and put it even between the food ... You did not say whether you had made the cake yourself; if so, you are a good baker ... our sick would thank you for it with all their hearts".

While Louise respected doctors and surgeons she generally preferred to keep them at arm's length. During one of Michel's more serious illnesses Vincent had to tell her: "Submit to the doctor". He added, significantly "but who can throw off opinions held from time immemorial?"

Our generation in Church and world has much to say about many facets of the word "healing". From all directions the approach being recommended is "holistic". We are continually reminded of the interaction of body, mind and spirit. Some religious writing stresses the distinction between healing and curing. The focus of Louise's service of the sick was largely on curing. But there are some expressions of her insight into the deeper meanings of healing. Being herself what we would now call a wounded person, in need of many healings, she was well suited to illumine the process whereby people move from sickness to health. What a searching insight she showed in a letter to the Abbé de Vaux:

The mind of our Sister Clemence may be strengthened when the organs of her body, weakened by her sickness and its remedies, are. It is my opinion that a multitude of things should not be asked of her, especially as regards her memory and imagination. Let her go without making meditation for a long time.

Elsewhere she advised: "Take care of one another as much for the health of the body as for the health of your souls". She saw the healing power of grieving. When Fr Blatiron died in Genoa she asked Vincent to let his grief take its course: "For his love, give nature what it needs for its relief and what is necessary for your health". But the real gem comes not in any of Louise's remedies but in the tribute paid her by one of her Daughters: "When we were ill she would come to see us, and it seemed to us that her visit healed us".

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Louise de Marillac sowed many beautiful seeds of curing and healing. She had not time to put them together in an integrated programme for body, mind and spirit, but the elements are always there. She will find them again, worked into beautiful patterns, in a fully healed universe.

She will find beauty

An early biographer of Louise said that she liked beautiful things, les belles choses. She was put in some touch with the world of the beautiful when she studied philosophy and literature. The extent of these studies has been exaggerated but it is certain that they were formative factors in her life. She got another feel for the world of the beautiful in her study of Latin. Again, I suspect this was limited enough. She got much of the Church's liturgical Latin on her ear in the day to day life of the convent in Poissy. Graciously or mischievously Vincent didn't translate the Latin religious texts which he quoted in his letters to her. But Poissy itself was her real introduction to the beautiful. Founded by her beloved King St Louis it had been built up over the centuries, and it became a kind of permanent cultural exhibition. She must often have gazed at its stained glass window depicting St Louis kissing the wounds of a leper. The message of the window was eventually to come to the forefront of her consciousness and it became one of the driving forces in her discovery of who were her real lords and masters.

As regards Louise's own appearance Calvet's assurance came as a surprise to many readers, that she belonged to a handsome family and that she herself was handsome. I suspect that most of Calvet's readers decided that her portrait painters did not serve her well. Was it the beauty in her own face and eyes that made the image of Vincent seem "repugnant" in that mirroring she had of him in her first pentecost experience?

It is beyond doubt that she became a practitioner in the world of the beautiful. Gobillon assures us that her father had her instructed in painting and that she "continued to practise it in the different stages of her life as far as her infirmities and occupations allowed, and some of her devotional pictures are still kept in her family". Biographers have told us about her water colours, the linking of her name with large oils, especially "The Lord of Charity" in the mother-house of the Daughters of Charity in Paris. Some writers have wondered as to whether, especially in her years of widowhood, her paintings of the heart of Christ

anticipated something in the devotion which was soon to become prominent as a result of the experience of St Margaret Mary and the preaching of St John Eudes.

But Louise's love for beautiful things soon gave way to the demands of urgent tasks of charity. The only design that came to grip her attention was the design of God for the poor. The cultivation of the sense of the beautiful demands leisure. There wasn't much place for this leisure in the life of a woman who had to deal with the harsh realities of the houses of the poor around the country charities, in the practicalities of her listing the kind of people whom it would help to have in the hospice of the Holy Name of Jesus: clothmakers, bootmakers, shoemakers, button makers, muslin workers, lace makers, glove makers ... Louise had more than often to deal with illiterate and awkward women and many people who had to live from hand to mouth. She had to form young disciples who were human diamonds at various stages of cutting. She had to deal first-hand with the grim world of galley slaves and of Paris hospitals. Is it any wonder that it was her gifts as a manager rather than as a woman of the beautiful that took over? And this suited M. Vincent admirably. Vincent was not one, as he saw it, to waste time in cultivating a sense of the beautiful. There is no evidence that he had a feel for the world of beauty in the ordinary sense. For him, beauty was within the person. He would have resonated well with some modern emphasis on "doing something beautiful for God". Beauty, for him, is from within, in people who are beautiful because they lead beautiful lives. I think that, in his eyes, the beauty of the altar frontal was the least important part of the enthusiasm which he showed in his letter thanking Louise for what she was doing in making ornaments for the chapel in St Lazare. He thanked her for the very "beautiful and comfortable" frontal. His appreciation of the frontal was not aesthetic rapture. Rather it overwhelmed his heart with joy to see her heart in it. And he assured her that he would one day tell her of the several ideas it generated in him. As far as I know, he didn't.

Louise picked up Vincent's practical approach to beauty. At the conference after the death of Barbe Angiboust one of the sisters remarked that mankind should wonder at the artist who painted such a master-piece. Vincent asked Louise what she thought. Neither of them picked up on the artist metaphor. When Louise did speak of the beautiful it was about spiritual beauty. An example is the beautiful things God let her see as she prayed on Mary's Immaculate Conception. And she told Sr Barbe that the beautiful altar cloth which she sent to Paris was "a little too beautiful for the Daughters of Charity". In her letter to an architect

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in 1654 Louise insisted that the finished article must be as rustic and simple as possible. The building must not be large and elegant, but poor and humble. Moreover the parlour and kitchen at St Laurent must be turned into a schoolroom and a place for blood-letting and dressing the sores of the poor. Is it any great wonder that over the centuries the furnishings and ornaments of houses of the Daughters of Charity and of the Priests of the Mission have not usually been noted for their beauty?

And still Louise de Marillac never totally lost her sense of real beauty. It was reflected in the elegant language which she could shape and chisel. I think it was more than practical concern that made her ask the ailing Fr Portail in 1659 that the book of rules should be in heavier paper, with weight and substance, and covered with parchment. The examples could be multiplied. Louise never really lost her love for things beautiful. But she sacrificed much of it for the good of her chosen lords and masters.

She will find it again in the splendour of the true, in the kingdom.

She will find laughter

Nobody would take up a seventeenth century religious book and expect a laugh on every page. Even allowing for that, one would have to say that Louise was a woman of high seriousness. When she set out in 1648 to visit some country charities Vincent was obviously afraid that Louise might prove heavy weather for her more demonstrative companion, Madame Goussault. He asked her to be cheerful, and to force herself to "lighten somewhat that little seriousness which nature has given you and grace has sweetened". Over the years, Vincent made several efforts to puncture this "little seriousness". When he advised her to change Michel to be a pensioner at the Jesuit school in Clermont he anticipated her financial anxieties and wrote, with tongue in cheek: "Mais quoi, must we believe that one who loves holy poverty to a sovereign degree will not know how to impoverish herself?" It must have been more with a smile than with exasperation that he said his famous "Our Lord surely did well not to choose you for his mother!". In his efforts to wean her from her "little seriousness" and her excessive devotions he advised: "Go patiently, go prudently, be as happy as you can". Fr Dirvin notes at various stages in the correspondence "sardonic humour", "teasing", "playfulness". An example of this playfulness is Vincent's letter in 1627: "What shall I say to you now about him whom your heart cherishes so dearly in the Lord? ... He is improving

somewhat ..., however he has been advised and urged to go to Forges [a health resort featuring mineral springs] and to go there tomorrow". He ends with the equivalent of "Don't tell!". Louise Sometimes responded in kind, giving as good as she had received. In 1644 she wrote: "So the good God wishes you to be ill. May he be blessed for it! But does he not also wish that you have the charity for your body that you have for the poor? If I may dare to say so, my most honoured Father, I tell you that he wishes it absolutely".

Only a few years before her death she asked Vincent to allow her to pretend to be one of the bashful poor and to "beg you for the love of God to do me the charity of giving me the alms of a little visit, of which I have great need". In case he had missed the point she added in a post-cript: "if your charity could come today?". When Vincent had, over a series of letters, used the terms "your sisters" and your "daughters", leading up to "I received your letter yesterday and your outline of the rule for your daughters", she replied "they are also your daughters".

The claim was recently made that Louise was a woman who loved to laugh. It is, I think, an exaggerated claim, but she was capable of laughter. It was not always a laughter that would appeal to some of our sophisticated tastes. In a description of a journey to one of the charities she writes: "Our recreation lasted well beyond our prayers ... I would give Catherine lessons in reading and pronunciation. Her replies and speech made us laugh till we cried". (She did write elsewhere: "never make fun of a sister who does not speak well, unless you are certain that she doesn't mind it"). It must be admitted that Louise's ability to enjoy had what she saw as built-in correctives. "We all made fun of ourselves in the Orleans coach", she once wrote, "and were very gay, without by the grace of God failing in the observances". But there were moments of spontaneous wit and humour. She was not beyond a play on words, as when she asked Fr Portail, whom she may have suspected of enjoying bad health in Rome: "You will not mistake paradise for Paris, Monsieur. What would we do?"

She once told the impeccable Sr Julienne Loret that her letter did not smell of the poor but of a scent not permitted to Daughters of Charity. Her humour had the marks of humanity and compassion. She laughed at herself when she missed a good dinner because Sr Hellot had been preaching the benefits of fasting. She reassured the Abbe de Vaux that a sister who was in some wars had a "very free temperament" rather than an evil will. There were even moments when she enjoyed being a VIP; she once described the honours she had received in Nantes and she was amused when she was taken "for a great lady". She added: "I will burn

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for that one day, and what a come-down I will have!". She teased the sisters who were "living gloriously" by having *sabots* (wooden shoes), and she told them "you must keep us informed about them".

Louise could laugh. Louise was capable of seeing the humour of a situation, but this took a very secondary place in the life of a very serious woman. Her moments of humour and laughter were dawnings that did not always reach the full light of day. But she will find them again – when she enters into the joy of the Lord in the kingdom.

Conclusion

The centenaries of saints, like those of their canonisations, are a time for a celebration of holiness. The fourth centenary of the birth of St Louise is a reminder, if reminder is needed, that holiness can co-exist with many human limitations and much under-developed human riches. The perfection to which the Lord has called us will ripen only when he has handed over his kingdom to his Father. This has not happened yet. Louise de Marillac spread on earth the fruits of her nature and enterprise. She also sowed many seeds of peace, affection, healing, beauty and laughter which will come to full flowering only in the final harvest time.

From the Superior General's talks in Latin America, 1983-89

Selected by Luis Huerga

Luis Huerga has been working on a volume of collected talks and letters of Fr McCullen which will appear in Spanish shortly before the General Assembly of 1992. For this issue of Colloque he has prepared a selection from Fr McCullen's talks in Latin America which are given in chronological order. The English wording is that of Fr McCullen.

A LOAN OF OUR ARMS AND HANDS

To a group of lay people in Pacaja, Brazil, 23 July 1983.

Our arms and hands are almost everything to us. If we had not arms and hands we could not till the soil, we could not fish, we could not write, we could not lift up a child. Thanks be to God, we have arms and hands. With our arms and our hands we can do much for ourselves and we can do much for others. What we make with our arms and our hands we can give to others: to our families, to our friends and to those who have less than we have. Can we give our arms and our hands away to anyone for a loan? No, we cannot, except to one person, and that person is Jesus Christ. In fact he is asking us every day for a loan of our arms and our hands. When we work with our arms and our hands and provide money to buy food for our families, we are lending our arms and our hands to Jesus Christ. When we use our arms and our hands to help a poor person, an aged person, a sick person, we are lending them to Jesus Christ. He himself has said: "If you give (with your hands) a cup of cold water to a little child, you are giving it to me". Jesus Christ is always asking us for the loan of our arms and our hands. The only time he will not accept our arms and our hands is when we use them to do violence to others, to steal from others, to damage the property of another person. When we do that we not only cause pain to others

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but we hurt Jesus Christ, who is God himself. And it is a terrible thing to offer an insult to God. To offer an insult to God by our arms and our hands is almost asking God to curse our arms and our hands.

Jesus Christ depends on you to make this community a better place by the work of your arms and your hands. Try to be at all times the arms and the hands of Jesus Christ, and not only will you receive a blessing from him but he will make sure that after your death you will possess the house which he has promised to prepare for those who act justly and show love to others during their life.

AN IMPRACTICAL TASK

To Vincentians and Daughters of Charity, Petropolis, Brazil, 1 August 1983.

In the last two decades or so the entire world has become more conscious of poverty here in Latin America. The task of helping so many poor on this continent is endless and indeed at times must seem almost impossible. Many times, I imagine, you must feel like the disciples who thought that the alleviation of hunger in the circumstances was an impractical task. We must think, however, of Jesus Christ who through us can still do what we might think to be impossible/Even if you can do very little to alleviate the physical sufferings of the people among whom you work, the poor will always look to you for an expression of the compassion of Jesus Christ when you try to meet their needs. The state and other agencies can do much to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. These agencies, however, don't always bring the compassion of Jesus Christ which was at the heart of all that St Vincent and St Louise did for the poor. To his community in St Lazare St Vincent said one day: "Let us then be merciful and let us exercise mercy towards all in such a way that we will never encounter a poor person without consoling him, if we can, nor, when he is ignorant of the faith, without teaching him in a few words the things which it is necessary to believe and which he must do for his salvation. O Saviour, do not permit that we abuse our vocation and do not take away from this Company the spirit of mercy, for what would become of us if you should withdraw from it your mercy? Grant us, then, that, along with the spirit of gentleness and humility". (XI, 342).

REACHING THE 99

To Vincentians and Daughters of Chanty, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 9 August 1983.

As I speak to you I am conscious that I do so in the most populous city of your country, and one of the largest cities in the world. I imagine that, at times, you must feel that it is not a question of leaving 99 sheep and looking for the one that is lost, but rather of leaving one sheep and searching for the 99 that are lost ... You live daily with the problem, or rather the challenge: "How can we reach the millions of this city with the good news which in the name of Jesus Christ the Church wants to bring to them?".

To me it is always a clear manifestation of God's grace that, in the face of so many millions who are not in direct contact with the Church, priests and religious and lay leaders do not lose confidence in the task of trying to reach the crowds with the message of Christ. So often the visible results of your dedication to God's people, and especially to his poor, are very meagre and unspectacular.

There is, however, much encouragement for us in the final phrase of today's gospel: "It is no part of your heavenly Father's plan that a single one of these little ones would ever come to grief" (Mt 18:14). We make our plans: our pastoral plans, our provincial plans, our community plans, with a view to reaching the 99 ... We do well. Let us not forget, however, the allusion which our Lord makes today to "the plan" of his heavenly Father. That is the plan which matters most, and all our pastoral plans take account of that great plan which in this life remains for us in large measure hidden from our eyes. "Who has known the mind of God? ... O the depths of the wisdom of God" (cf Rm 11:33-34).

It should be a source of confidence to us that God has his own plans for reaching the 99, that everything does not depend on us. Certainly he seeks and counts on our co-operation in reaching the 99. The truth is that God's grace, God's love, God's wisdom is not exhausted when I myself reach the point of exhaustion, frustration and failure in what I try to do for Him in the salvation of souls, in the search for the 99.

BE RESOURCEFUL

To Daughters of Charity, Nicaragua, 18 September 1983.

You live your lives here in Nicaragua with an acute sense of pain that comes from injustice. Our Lord, as today's gospel (Lk 16:1-13) shows, was not unaware of the unjust practices in the society of his day.

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Scripture commentators point out that the parable of today's gospel is among the most difficult of those spoken by our Lord. It is difficult because it is open to misinterpretation. At first sight it would seem as if our Lord was commending injustice and what we call sharp practice; that, of course, is not true. What our Lord equivalently is saying to his friends is: "In your work for the coming of God's kingdom do not be afraid to take initiatives. Be resourceful. Do not always be content with the obvious".

Our Lord did not commend injustice, but he accepted it as a fact of human existence. Our Lord was and is the supreme realist. I have sometimes wondered if our Lord did not intend this parable to be read immediately before or after his parable about the cockle in the wheat (Cf Mt 13:24-30). All injustice will not be eradicated from this world before Jesus Christ comes again. That, of course, is not an invitation to just sit and do nothing. Taking the two parables together, that of today's gospel and that of the wheat and the cockle, we will find much wisdom in that old prayer which goes: "Give me, Lord, the courage to change the things I can change, to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to see the difference".

SINS OF OMISSION

To the Daughters of Charity, Guatemala, 25 September 1983.

When we read the parables of our Lord in which there is a diversity of character, have you ever noticed that we tend to identify with the good and dissociate ourselves from those who were failures? When we listened to this morning's gospel were you on the side of the rich man or were your sympathies all for Lazarus? I think all of us would take our place with Lazarus and not with the rich man. It can, however, be helpful and at times revealing, if we try to put ourselves in the place of those characters whom we do not approve of, and to make a defence for them.

Supposing, then, you were asked to be an advocate for the rich man and to make a defence for him. What could you say to the judge on behalf of your client? You could begin by reminding the judge that your client, Dives, never raised a finger against Lazarus, never did any violence to Lazarus. He did not steal anything from Lazarus. In fact he did quite a lot for Lazarus. He first of all allowed him to sit near his table, and you know what that meant. His sores brought all the dogs of the place to his house, and that was often embarrassing to Dives. Yet

Dives, your client, put up with all that. Dives allowed Lazarus to have the crumbs that fell from his table. The crumbs of which the gospel speaks were not small particles. They were rather large-sized hunks of bread which the guests had used to wipe their hands, at a time when there were no knives and forks. You could also say in defence of Dives that, although he lived sumptuously, he had made his money honestly. He owed no debts.

Your defence of Dives is quite plausible, yet the sentence which was passed on him was severe. It is our Lord who tells the story and we must presume that Dives was justly condemned. If Dives was condemned, it was because of his sins of omission.

A MAN OF PEACE

To "campesinos" ("peasants"), Ilobasco, El Salvador, 4 October 1983.

Today is a feastday in heaven, for in heaven God and all his saints are honouring a very simple man who lived 800 years ago in a little town in Italy. His name was Francis. He was not exactly a *campesino*, for he was a son of a merchant who had a shop in the little village. However, he knew *campesinos* very well. Francis could have become rich, but he decided to leave his father's home and, more difficult, to leave or give away the money he had. Francis had fallen in love with Jesus Christ, and he decided that he would spend his life and his energies going round to *campesinos* and to villages and towns persuading people to love Jesus Christ and to obey the Church which Jesus Christ had founded.

Francis gave away everything. He wore a very simple cloak, he did not carry money with him. He depended on the goodness of people to give him sufficient food to eat. His house was the simplest construction. Francis did not mind, for he was in love with Jesus Christ, and when you love a person you are prepared to suffer much because of your love.

Although St Francis was not a *campesino* he loved *campesinos* and he loved all the things which *campesinos* work with. Francis loved the birds of the air, the beasts of the field, because they had been made by the hands of God. He loved the sun, the wind and the rain, for all these things were made by God. St Francis loved to tell the sun and the moon and the rain and the animals to praise God, because he had made them all.

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Because St Francis loved Jesus Christ and because he was full of gratitude to God for all that he had made, he was a man full of joy and was able to bring joy into the lives of many other people. Soon a few companions gathered around Francis in order to live like Francis and with Francis. The group became known as Franciscans, and the group has many imitators in the Church today.

St Francis was a man of peace. Indeed he wrote a very beautiful prayer: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hate let me sow love". That is a prayer which we could say every day: "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace; where there is hate let me sow love". We could not only say the prayer every day but, more importantly, we could do something every day to be an instrument of God's peace. You use a plough to till the soil. Let yourself be a plough which God can use to sow peace in your family, in your village. You sow seeds in the ground. St Francis says: "Plant every day a few seeds of love in the soil where you see hate and violence". Perhaps you may not live to see the harvest of the seeds of peace and love you sow. That does not matter. What matters is that you allow yourselves to be instruments in the hands of Jesus Christ, who was a man of love, of peace and justice. Remember what Jesus Christ has said to us all: "Do to others what you would like them to do to you". You would like others to be just to you. You would like others to help you. You would like others not to harm you or your family. Well, that is what we must do to others. Be just, be helpful, be peaceful, and God will make you a strong instrument of his peace and love and justice. And he himself will be your reward.

CHRIST AS LIBERATOR

To a group of lay people, Mexico City, 6 May 1984.

Five years ago here in Mexico there was a big meeting of all the bishops of Latin America. The Pope came and spoke to them, and through them to all the people of this great continent. An important document was written and approved by all the bishops and also by the Pope. The document has much to say about Christ as liberator and about the Church as a force for liberation in Latin America. Listen to these phrases: "Christ alone makes young people free ...; young people ought to experience Christ as a personal friend who never fails ...; young people should feel that they are the Church ...; in the Church young people come to feel that they are a new people, the people of the Beatitudes with no security but Christ, with the heart of the poor ...; builders of peace and the bearers of joy and a complete liberation

project, aimed principally at their fellow young people. The Virgin Mary, generous and loyal believer, educates young people to be the Church" (Puebla, 1183-1184).

Many people in the large cities of your country have to live in conditions that cause them to be like the two disciples; they have lost hope. The two disciples must have felt that a great injustice was done to Jesus Christ on Good Friday. We in our times see, and sometimes experience, much injustice. Is there no way of changing things? Yes, there is. The gospel of today suggests an answer. Christ is with you, who are his disciples. Christ is with us, who are his Church. He will help us to overcome injustice, just as he overcame the injustice of Good Friday. Only one condition is necessary, that, like the disciples, we listen to him and listen to his Church. It is necessary to keep close to him and to keep close to his Church. Walk with him, as did the disciples, and we will find that our eyes will be opened and strength will be given to us to move forward and to change the injustices of our time into victory for justice, for love and for peace.

How long the story of humanity will last we do not know. Of this, however, we can be certain, that there will be a happy ending to that story because Jesus Christ has died, Jesus Christ has risen, and Jesus Christ will come again.

BE PEACEMAKERS

To the Children of Mary, Guadalajara, Mexico, 13 May 1984.

The Popes have consecrated the world to the Immaculate Heart of Our Lady because that has been Mary's wish, and because in doing so they were promoting and securing peace in "this valley of tears". Each one of us can do something to bring a little more peace into this world. It is not only governments that have the responsibility of promoting justice and peace in the world. In the homes in which we live or the places in which we work we are being invited all the time to be, by our words or our silence or our acts, instruments of God's peace. "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace", prayed St Francis of Assisi, "where there is hatred let me sow love; where there is sorrow, joy.". Be peacemakers, not troublemakers, among those whose lives you touch. Be an instrument of peace and reconciliation and you will be a true child of Mary. Be a peacemaker and you will be consecrating the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Be a peacemaker and work for justice, show love and you will be, like Mary, an agent of life, of sweetness and of hope. You can be certain that, if we are instruments of peace

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during our humble lives, she will "after this, our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus".

A NEW DAWN FOR THE CHURCH

To a group of lay people, San Francisco de Macoris, Dominican Republic, 11 October 1985.

One of the messages which the Church received from the Spirit of God at the Second Vatican Council was that it should do more for the poor of the world. Over the past twenty years the Church has increased its interest in the poor. Not only has the Church tried to lighten the sufferings of the poor but it has tried also to be more efficient in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ and his Church to the poor. When the Pope was here with you last year he made many important statements. One of them has impressed me greatly: "He who lacks material resources may be poor, but he who does not know the way which God marks out for him is even poorer". Perhaps the reason why this statement of the Pope impressed me so much is because it expresses in one sentence the ideal by which St Vincent de Paul lived. St Vincent was interested in feeding the hungry, visiting prisoners, caring for the sick, educating the poor, and he founded communities and groups to continue his work. But he was also intensely interested in helping people, particularly the poor, to be reconciled with God, to cherish their faith and to be loval to the Church. In one word, St Vincent de Paul was not interested only in the bodies of the poor, but in their souls also. There are some people who are only interested in improving the material conditions of the poor. That is important, certainly. Without any doubt it is important to keep searching for peaceful ways of securing greater justice for the poor. However, that is only half the work. Every poor person has a soul. Every poor person has a responsibility to save his soul. Every poor person has need of help in that task. It was St Vincent de Paul's great achievement that he worked to save both the bodies and the souls of the poor. He worked to save the whole person. "What does it profit a man", asks our Lord, "if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul?" (Mt 8:13). What, my dear friends, will it profit us if we gain the whole world for the poor but do not help them to find the way which will lead them to God and the happiness of heaven?

Let us listen once again to the last words which the Pope spoke to you a year ago tomorrow:

With the torch of Christ in your hands, and full of love for man, go forth, church of the new evangelization. Thus you will be able to create a new dawn for the Church and we shall all glorify the Lord of truth with the prayer which Columbus' seamen recited at dawn: "Blessed be the light and the holy cross and the Lord of truth and the holy Trinity. Blessed be the dawn and the Lord who sends it to us. Blessed be the day and the Lord who sends it to us".

SPEAK TO THEM OF GOD

To the Daughters of Charity, Haiti, 14 October 1985.

The calls of the poor here in Haiti must, I know, be very insistent. However, do not let the action of service extinguish the light of reflection and contemplation. It is good and necessary at times "to leave God for God", to quote St Vincent's celebrated phrase, and to cut short your time of prayer and reflection when the necessity of serving the poor requires it. However, it should not be a frequent occurrence. The time for reflection, meditation and, I may add, rest and repose, is necessary if you are to continue serving the poor or, I should say, if you are to continue to think of yourselves, as did St Paul, as *servants* of Jesus Christ. It is only when we have come to think of ourselves as servants of Jesus Christ that he can, with security, send us out as *apostles*.

I am sure that, as Daughters of Charity of St Vincent, you are happy to be close to people who are very poor. You must think of yourselves, despite your weaknesses, as gifts of God to them. You have been sent to the poor of Haiti not only to alleviate their sufferings and misery but also to open their minds and hearts to God, and to him whom he has sent, Jesus Christ. The poor need help to care for their bodies. They also need help to care for their immortal souls. As apostles of Jesus Christ it is important that you act as he did, caring for the needs of the body while using every opportunity to speak to them of God, and of his love for them.

THE CATECHISM OF THE anawim.

Cuba, 7 October 1987.

The rosary is a simple and humble prayer, for centuries beloved by simple and humble people, the *anawim* of God. If the Miraculous Medal can be considered the catechism of the *anawim* of today, then the rosary must be considered one of their most cherished prayers.

We, who are members of St Vincent's family, must never allow

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ourselves to forget that on the same occasion when our Lady told St Catherine Laboure that she loved the two communities of St Vincent she also referred to the fact that we were not praying the rosary well. Some people say that the rosary is not suited to modern people. Do not let them persuade you to give up the practice of praying the rosary daily; and, if you have given up the rosary, would not this Marian Year be a suitable occasion to start praying it again?

However distracted we may be when we frequent the school of the rosary we are in the company of Mary who, of all our race, has seen furthest into the mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Of all humans it is she who will best teach us how to show to the world, and to the poor, "the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus". Of all humans, it is she to whom we will turn when we begin to feel the things of the earth slip from our grasp. Of all humans, it is she who will deliver us safely from the womb of time into the light of eternity.

LIKE THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

To Vincentians and Daughters of Charity, Lima, Peru, 8 October 1987.

Here in Latin America the temptation to be discouraged by the fact that the rich may be getting richer and the poor poorer is a very real one. The Church, however, I think, can take heart. Is it not true that in the past twenty years the missions of the Church and of our two communities have been stirred, and have become more sensitive to the needs of the poor and to the claims of justice? The Spirit of God has been at work amongst his elect, and for that let us rejoice and give thanks to God. The final phrase in today's reading is a very beautiful one in which Malachi speaks of the sun rising "with healing in its rays" (MI 3:20). For the poor of Peru you are like the sun of righteousness and through your work for them they are finding healing through the rays of your presence. And the gospel, what an encouragement it is to prayer (Lk 11:5-13). I recall on one occasion in recent years, before she died, my mother saying to me: "There are some people today who say we should not be acting like beggars with God and asking for small, little, unimportant things for our lives. I for my part", she said to me, "like very much the phrase of St Paul in which he encourages us: In all things let your petitions be made known to God (Phil 4:6)". The gospel of today reminds me of a very popular film of some years ago which had as its title Never Take No for an Answer. It was a very touching film, the story

of a very young orphan boy who had no home and was trying to survive in this world. He had as his slogan: "Never take no for an answer". If he was refused work, for instance, by one employer he went to another. He refused to be cast down in his spirits and he would say to himself: "Never take no for an answer". God wants us to have something of the persistence of that little boy when we go to him in prayer. He never wants us to take "no" for an answer. At times he does seem to answer with a "no". It is out of his love, or perhaps it is an invitation to us to be more sincere in our asking, to be more open with our hearts and minds to receive the gift which exceeds our imagination.

A SENSE OF PROPORTION

To Daughters of Charity in Argentina, 9 October 1987.

I have been deeply impressed by the range of apostolates for the poor to which you have engaged yourselves. You feel keenly the needs of the poor and you spend yourselves in trying to meet them. Could I respectfully suggest to you that you do not try to answer all the calls of the poor? If we do not keep this sense of proportion in the living of our lives we may feel unconsciously that we must help all the poor. Then, when we cannot, a certain sense of frustration and annovance is born within us and, later, a dissatisfaction with our particular community and our Province, which, in turn, breeds discontent with our vocation. That is why I say that even in our service of the poor we must try to maintain a sense of proportion. If I mention the importance of keeping a sense of proportion in our lives, even in our service of the poor, thus avoiding excessive or indiscreet zeal, I do so because I feel that the urgency of your work must weigh heavily upon your hearts. That word "urgency" evokes for us St Louise's motto: Caritas Christi crucifixi urget nos. Yes, through prayer, reflection and obedience let us make sure that all sense of urgency in our lives is coming from the "Caritas Christi crucifixi". St Vincent said in a conference on 23 May 1655:

There are very many poor Daughters of Charity who lose a great deal by their own fault. They serve the poor, they come and go, they wear themselves out, and all for nothing when they follow their own will. Sisters, you may do all you please, but the best of your actions will not be meritorious without this virtue [of obedience] (X 83).

430 Luis Huerga

A SAFE RETURN

To a group of lay people, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 13 October 1987.

Four or five years ago a family comprising father, mother and two children came from Colombia, South America, to visit Europe. They went to Paris and on the vigil of the feast of our Blessed Lady of the Miraculous Medal went to pray in the chapel of the rue du Bac. When they had prayed they spoke with some Sisters and bought some miraculous medals and asked the Sisters to pray for a safe return to Colombia that night. It was midnight when the plane, a large jumbo, took off from Paris, making one stop at Madrid. Shortly before the plane was due to land at Madrid (and it was now the 27th of November, the feast of our Lady of the Miraculous Medal), it crashed. The father of the family does not remember very much except that he himself got up off the ground in the dark and in the fog and, groping his way along in the dark he saw a woman with two children coming towards him. The two children were his own and the woman was his wife. They were the only family to be saved from the couple of hundred who were on that plane.

TUNE MORE FINELY

To members of CLAPVI [Conference of Latin American Vincentian Provinces], Rio de Janeiro, 1 July 1989.

When we immerse ourselves in the social problems of our day we tend to draw up armies of people and label them, so that we may command them. It may facilitate our planning to a certain degree, but we run the risk of seeing people only in categories of good and evil. We run the risk, too, of dividing the world into well-intentioned and badly-intentioned people. The reality is, of course, that there is evil in the hearts of good men and good in the hearts of evil men. I often feel that there is need to tune more finely our assessments of people, so that we will not divide the world into two categories of black and white, of good and evil.

If we fail to tune our critical faculties finely there will be danger that our preaching to our people will be ineffective. A few weeks ago at the annual meeting of the Superiors General in Rome I heard one Superior General say that he made a practice of listening to many homilies, particularly in countries where there were deep divisions between the rich and the poor. He noticed that many priests seemed to get no further

than denouncing the inequalities that existed, without offering nourishing bread to so many of the poor who listen to us priests preaching.

We cast priests today in the role of prophets. We speak in the name of the poor; we articulate their sense of grievance. That is good. However, we must also, like the Old Testament prophets and like Jesus himself, be filled with compassion not only for the poor but for every person who is born into this world. The word "mercy" is a rich word in Hebrew and carries several shades of meaning. It can mean leaning over and reaching out to someone; it can mean suffering with and sharing out of pity; it can mean relieving someone, stopping their groans by helping them to breathe. There is no need for me to remind you that everywhere, and perhaps particularly in Latin America, each of these meanings of the word "mercy" can find an apostolate that will give expression to it.

Forum

A commentary on the Common Rules?

Has the time come to provide a commentary on the Common Rules (CR)? We have been so influenced by St Vincent not to take ourselves too seriously (and this is part of our charism) that the proposal might appear presumptuous. Yet there is a lot to be said in its favour.

For one thing, if we accept that the CM was the model for most of the men's congregations founded during the subsequent 230 years, we are dealing with an influential historical document.

More crucially for us we live at a time when religious communities are returning to their origins, as they seek fresh inspiration. We also are looking back, and in the process we are preparing for a revival in our community, God willing, perhaps after it has been reduced to being the stump of Jesse. What could be closer to our origins than Vincent's self-disclosure in the CR, freshly understood through modern scholarship? Far from being a bookish exercise it would be a work of *pietas*.

Present day scriptural research has given us just the sort of techniques (e.g., the search for implicit quotations, redaction criticism) which would make such a commentary successful. If we consider the riches drawn from the scriptures by modern scholarship we can hope for similar results from a study of the CR, the lifetime reflections of a great and holy man, who first did before he taught (CR 1:1). It would also connect with the modern flight from abstraction ("the virtues") towards the cult of concrete experience, for it records Vincent's own religious experience.

It might be objected that, since our new Constitutions have in effect rewritten the CR and adapted them so successfully to the twentieth century, a commentary on the CR is unnecessary. However, in the end nothing could altogether replace a study of Vincent's own words, cleared of all the subsequent interpretations which have accumulated around them over the last 330 years. In fact we might ask ourselves whether as a Province we had sufficiently close contact with our founder during the first crucial years, and whether we did not rather see him through nineteenth century French eyes. French Catholicism

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had a most extraordinary influence in Ireland during those years. (I am not criticizing a religious tradition which, among other things, produced so many saints; I merely ask whether our forebears saw it or St Vincent, surely a legitimate question). Fr Johnny O'Connell, whose memories went back to the 1890s, insisted that awareness of St Vincent in the Province came late in his life, perhaps as a result of Fr Leonard's translations. A commentary on the CR would bring our founder further into focus.

As I see it, a commentary should set out to identify three separate types of text which occur in the CR. First, there are the passages which reflect contemporary social conditions during Vincent's lifetime, so different from ours that they may have little relevance today. An example would be the injunction (CR VIII:3) to have our heads covered during meals, a seventeenth century custom amply documented in paintings of the time. If such passages were illustrated from contemporary records they would help us to understand the social background of the first Vincentians.

The second category of texts in the CR would probably be the most difficult of all to isolate and comment on. These are the borrowings from other rules (I suppose there are such) and from various religious authors. Vincent was his own man and he spent several decades elaborating the CR. If he borrows from others he will not be a mere plagiarist; he borrows because the borrowed words express exactly what he wishes to say.

There would be two stages in considering such borrowings: the first would be to isolate the borrowed texts and identify their sources. The second stage would be far more rewarding: it would enquire first into the significance of Vincent's choices; what light is thrown on his own doctrine by the fact that he chose this passage and not others from the author (or rule) in question; and, further, how has he changed the emphasis of the borrowed quotations so as to fit them into his own doctrine? Anyone who has compared parallel passages in the synoptic gospels even superficially will know that the evangelists change the wording and the emphasis of their sources to fit into their overall doctrine. Similarly, I believe that redactional criticism applied to the CR would yield some very interesting results.

Such a textual exercise would be difficult and not everybody would follow the *minutiae*, but it would show very clearly, more clearly perhaps than Vincent himself realised, what was peculiar to his doctrine. The results would certainly clarify both the workings of his mind and what his original charism was.

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There is an exact parallel here to our understanding of the scriptures. A medieval saint would see more profoundly into the true meaning of the gospels than a modern scholar, qua scholar, but the scholar can reveal intended meanings that would never occur to the saint and future saints will automatically take into account the work of the scholars. Similarly, future Vincentians would be deeply influenced by a new understanding of the CR, without necessarily going into the technical minutiae.

Finally, there are the passages which are purely from Vincent himself as, for instance, CR 1:1 "The purpose and nature of the Congregation". Perhaps these passages could be best explained by showing how Vincent himself lived them out.

It is possible that sections of the CR would not fit into any of the before-mentioned categories. I am thinking particularly of passages which might have been influenced by an author who is not quoted directly, such as Benet of Canfield. I suppose the line between this sort of text and those at least implicitly quoted (category two above) would at times be slender enough. Another example may clarify better what I mean. Some authors have pointed to similarities between the doctrines of Vincent and St John of the Cross which can scarcely be accidental, but where no direct borrowing can be proved. Work already done on, for example, the early library in St Lazare or on what Vincent read might be a starting point here. Perhaps all one could do in such cases would be to point out the similarities and leave it at that.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise the close connection between the CR and Vincent's own life. He was a man of integrity, in his own language a simple man, who, on the whole, did himself what he recommended to others. In many cases, as I have said, incidents from his life and passages from his conferences and correspondence would be the best commentary on the CR.

Modern research on the gospels, if I may return to the theme, has shown how closely they reflect not just theories but also the reaction of the early Christian communities and their leaders to the whole Jesus event, what he said and did, and the significance of his death and resurrection. This research has extracted far more meaning from the texts than a previous age might have thought possible. Is it too much to hope that we can hope for similar results from research into the CR?

Aidan McGing

[Would any confrère, at home or abroad, like to comment on the above?]

FORUM 435

"Thanks for the memory": Reflections on a Vincentian Week.

Remembering is, at present, a strong new theme in theology. Or rather, like the contemplative movement, it has been rediscovered. The existential now had a good innings, and indeed is always necessary, of course. But, in a balanced realism, the story of our past fuses into the present in a creative way.

This is what we were about in the Vincentian Week in Damascus House (12-16 November 1990), aware, as so many of the psalms, that the Lord "is our refuge from one generation to the next" and so we can confidently pray to the same Lord to "fill us with your love" (Ps 90). The great deeds of the Lord in the past are a promise of love and protection now and in the future. And we know that abundant energy comes from the memory of important events and people. "Do this in memory of me".

José-Maria Roman, former Provincial of the Madrid Province, enthusiastically informed and inspired us in the course of our seminar. We can say that "our heart burned within us", walking and talking along the road of our Vincentian history, while wonderful vistas opened before our eyes. We heard about the present from the account of the past. This learning will hopefully give us wisdom not "to repeat the mistakes of the past which ignorance of history leads to"; (paraphrase of Fr Roman).

The complexion of our communities, Congregation of the Mission, Daughters of Charity, and other Vincentian groups was coloured by the cultural tones of the several eras through which they passed. Before the French Revolution the Daughters and the Vincentians were largely confined to France, but had also spread to Poland, Italy and Spain. In those years there occurred the good work of systematising the acts and writings of the founders. Biographies of St Vincent and St Louise were produced to gather the heritage into accessible form. Numbers grew, but only gradually, through the 18th century. As seems inevitable in communities a certain relaxation entered as the century wore on. There were splendid celebrations in Paris for Vincent's canonization in 1737. But there is no convincing evidence for the event's influence on his foundations. The Vincentian "hiddenness" seems to have its origin in the years soon after the founder's death. Maybe this was due to an excessive interpretation of St Vincent's words on humility.

The French Revolution and its aftermath had devastating effects on the Vincentian families. In fact they ceased to exist on French soil, and that meant virtual extinction. It was not till about the 1830s that

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powerful fresh vigour was pulsating once more in the Vincentian body. St Catherine Labouré and the Miraculous Medal apparitions were indicative of new fruitfulness. This had a big impact on the Daughters. A deep sense of being loved by the Mother of God subsequently carried beneficial results. The medal of the rue du Bac became a sign and means in their apostolate. The Children of Mary are a visible expression of this. Sr Rosalie Rendu, the beloved friend of the Paris poor, came to be the symbol of the true Daughter of Charity.

Through the 19th century, in the post-Revolution restoration, some women's communities joined the Daughters' Company. The best-known is that of St Elizabeth Ann Seton in the USA. Jeanne-Antide Thouret (canonised in 1934), a young Daughter of Charity before the dispersal of 1792, founded a congregation of sisters who still bear the emblem of St Vincent. Frederic Ozanam and his companions were similarly inspired in founding the Society of St Vincent de Paul in 1833. Through them the world of academe moved in solidarity and compassion with the tenement people of Paris.

Jean-Baptiste Etienne (Superior General 1843-74) was the outstanding figure of the renewal. He was firm, resourceful and energetic, and he laboured to create a strong united Congregation. A man of high enterprise, he was equal to the task of negotiating with civil rulers, as when he intervened to secure our Italian foundations in 1856. As the Vincentians and Daughters increased massively in numbers he emphasised a central organization. As a lover of St Vincent he eagerly sought to diffuse his doctrine. He opened the Berceau in 1864. It was the age of rationalism and this undoubtedly exerted its presence, while Maynard's biography of St Vincent in the bicentenary year of his death (1860) caught another trait of the period, the romantic, thus begetting orphanbearing in the popular iconography of the saint [See page 442].

The long leadership of Antoine Fiat (Superior General 1878-1914) continued and consolidated the restorative work. In the political sphere nationalism retained its strength until World War I, but Marxism and laicism gained ground. Laicism dealt severe blows to our communities in France, and it is arguable that they have never fully recovered there from that onslaught. Fr Fiat's special contribution was a interiorisation of our charism. He supported the publication of St Vincent's works and a new biography of St Louise. Pursuing his call to the heart in the midst of our ministries he promoted the Miraculous Medal and established an association to advance that devotion. He also consecrated the two communities to the Sacred Heart. It is possible that the more religious forms in the Sisters' lives have their source in this period.

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Between the wars and later our Congregation became more widely international. The Daughters reached multitudinous figures, becoming more specifically recognised and canonically clarified as a Company in the Church. Both our communities, like most others, feel the terremotive impact of the "Great Change" brought about by contemporary technocratic culture. Our recent Superiors General have been courageously leading us in these critical times, under the ensign of Vatican II.

Fr Román touched on certain remarkable Vincentians from among the ranks. I mention two from this century. One was Fr Judge in the United States, who founded the Trinitarian community. Another was Fr Vincent Lebbe, who had a modern vision of foreign missions and gave great support to native bishops in China [See pages 439-441]. We have been seen, and see ourselves, as people of moderation, prudence and safety. Perhaps we have also to grapple with the new, the unusual and the exceptional. We are rightly wary of singularity, but one wonders do we raise its spectre too easily in mounting the vigil for peace.

The episode on the Spanish Daughters was gripping. The vast increase in Spain shows how the Vincentian charism appealed to Catholic girls there over the decades, as it now appeals to the young lay Marian Vincentians. The Daughters' history in that country had many vicissitudes in relation to the central administration of the Company. With Mother Guillemin in the 1960s total harmony was happily achieved at last.

A very stimulating and authoritative reflection was presented by Fr Román on St Vincent and the Jesuits. The founder of the Mission had a special veneration for St Ignatius and his Society. He invited them to assist him in his early missions, and he sought their counsel more than once. He even sent his first novice-master. Jean de la Salle, to receive instruction from them. Yet, for St Vincent, there is always a clear distinction between the two communities. The texts borrowed from Ignatian writings are of a general and practical nature. The shape and purport of Vincentian retreats were quite different from the Ignatian spiritual exercises; this was highlighted when the Pope asked ordinands in Rome to attend the retreats at St Vincent's newly-established house. A symbolic (but, to Fr Román, very indicative) expression of Vincent underlies the separate identities. St Vincent once said that he and his companions were "gleaners behind the great harvesters". This surely points to us, not as doing menial work but as sent to the neglected, the despised, the poor to be evangelised. The up-front ministry and leadership of the Jesuits in regard to the poor of today is seen as consistent with the Society's espousal of various central ecclesial concerns all 438 Forum

through its history. Like St Vincent, we learn from the Jesuits but do not imitate them in their all-out mode of resource deployment. We have a different charism.

Fr Román, like a new Homer, sang our story down through the years, the glory and the anguish, the episodes of heroes and heroines in the calms and storms over the long trajectory of the centuries. He sang with competence, good humour and in a contagious zest, and I never saw him nod through all the enthralling drama of divine initiative and human inspiration. It was gratifying to see the role of our own predecessors in the epic: the admission of home-grown Irish Vincentians by Jean-Baptiste Nozo, the Superior General, in 1839 (cf Colloque 10, p. 319); our confrères' part in the China missions; priestly formation at the Irish College, Paris; the origin and growth of the Australian Province; and, most recently, the new fruitfulness of our Nigerian brothers.

All the magnificent people and works of love are a cause for emotion and deep thanks – a well-told story brings its own catharsis. We thank the Lord, Fr Román and all those great people who have made the memory green again. So we have the urge of a fresh impetus to continue confidently, playing each our own part together, with our prophetic Vincentian gift, now and always.

Eamon Flanagan CM

Miscellanea

Vincent Lebbe

I first heard the name of Vincent Lebbe from Kevin Murnaghan when he was our professor of dogma in Glenart in 1950-52. We were told that he was a Belgian Vincentian who had worked in China and had left the Congregation to become a diocesan priest there. His differences with the Congregation had apparently arisen over basic missionary approaches in China. Kevin apparently did not fully approve of Lebbe's ideas, which came across to me as mainly involving European missioners in China adopting Chinese customs and attitudes much more than was normally done. Two confrères have recently, independently of each other, directed my attention again to Lebbe. Gearoid O'Sullivan gave me a photocopy of a piece which appeared in *The Tablet* of 29 September 1990, and Eamon Raftery sent me a photocopy of an article which appeared in *Omnis Terra* No. 216, March 1991.

Vincent Lebbe died in Nanking on 24 June 1940, aged 63. On 21 September 1988 the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints gave permission for the start of the process for his beatification.

Vincent-Frederic-Marie Lebbe was born in Ghent, Belgium, on 18 August 1877, entered the Congregation in November 1895, took his vows in November 1897, arrived in China in March 1901 and was ordained in Peking on 27 October 1901. As his missionary work developed certain things began to strike him more and more. In the area of Peking where the diplomatic missions were situated he noticed that the buildings were all in European style, guarded by foreign soldiers. The cathedral and the other churches he saw were also built in European style, and in the sanctuary of at least some of them were foreign flags but never the Chinese flag. The Catholic Church in China seemed to him to present a foreign image, even the image of a foreign invader, and to operate under the protection of the foreign invaders. This image naturally turned many Chinese against the Church.

A second image which disturbed him was that Chinese priests, no matter what their seniority, were always ranked below European priests no matter how junior these might be. When he was sent to a small village near Peking he decided to be "Chinese with the Chinese". He

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adopted a Chinese name, tried to master the local language as much as possible and wrote to his young sister to send him her long hair so that he could wear it as a pigtail.

In what he called *An essay without title* he rejected four types of missionary approach:

- 1. *The protectionist* approach. After the Boxer Rebellion in China in 1900, in which Christians were maltreated, European powers insisted that the Chinese protect Christians, and especially foreign missionaries.
- 2. The *Spanish* approach. This was that of the Spaniards in America in the 16th century, based on a sentence in one of the parables: "Force people to come in to make sure my house is full" (Lk 14:23). Though this was in vogue for only a short while Lebbe realised it had sown deep hatred.
- 3. The *works* approach. This means building schools, hospitals, orphanages and similar "works". Lebbe felt that these absorbed time, money and personnel to the detriment of evangelization.
- 4. The *money* approach. This was simply distribution of financial aid to catechumens, who were obliged to leave their normal occupations for the period of preparation for baptism.

In 1905 he was transferred from his country village to the city of Tien-tsin. He gradually distanced himself from the *money* approach, to the annoyance of his superiors who cut off his supplies; this was a turning point in his missionary work. He also distanced himself from the protection of foreign powers, and aimed at developing a local clergy dependent on indigenous bishops. In 1910 there were fifty bishops in China, but none of them were Chinese. Many foreign missioners, even though many years in China, did not have an adequate command of the language.

He adopted a new approach, inspired by the evangelization method of the primitive Church, namely *preaching*. He made use of the new technology of printing as an aid. He opened conference rooms where the needs of the people were discussed, together with seeking in the gospels for means of meeting these needs. What was said was printed for circulation, at times up to 30,000 copies. He started a weekly paper and later a daily one. He also worked at forming a Catholic elite who

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would help in the spread of Catholicism among the ordinary people. He saw that for this to be successful there would have to be Chinese bishops.

His ideas were considered by his superiors to be "revolutionary" (in the bad sense) and he was moved to a more isolated assignment, and then in 1917 down to the south where the language was totally unknown to him. After six months there he wrote to the bishop setting out his ideas on the missionary apostolate. The bishop did not reply to him, but sent the letter to Rome. Here it met with a reception far different from what the bishop had expected. Cardinal van Rossum, Prefect of *Propaganda fide*, saw Lebbe's point of view and passed the letter on to the Pope. When Benedict XV published his encyclical *Maximum illud* on the missions in November 1919 it included all the basic ideas of Vincent Lebbe.

In 1920 Lebbe was recalled to Europe by his superiors. In 1926 Pius XI decided to ordain the first Chinese bishops, and Cardinal van Rossum invited Lebbe to attend the ordination in St Peter's on 28 October 1926. He had previously been asked to suggest one name, and his suggestion was accepted. Six Chinese priests were ordained bishops, two Vincentians, two Franciscans, one Jesuit and one diocesan priest.

Lebbe returned to China in 1928, and became a Chinese citizen. In 1933 he asked for dispensation from his Vincentian vows, which was granted in July of that year; from then on he was a diocesan priest until his death in 1940.

An interesting portrait of St Vincent

A Daughter of Charity in England was recently shown a painting of St Vincent by a lady whose mother had bought it about fifty years ago in a junk shop in London. At the time it was bought, and for very many years afterwards, neither the purchaser nor her daughter were aware of whose portrait it was; they simply liked it as a painting, head and shoulders, of a kindly smiling man. At some stage, long after its aquisition, someone identified it as a portrait of St Vincent de Paul. It has been shown to art experts in England and they have given their opinion that it is a seventeenth-century work. This is very interesting, since the portrait is that of a rather younger Vincent than in the well-

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known portraits.

In the bottom right hand corner there is the head and shoulders of a young child. The art experts have said that this seems to have been added in the nineteenth century. They also suggest that this addition may cover the artist's name and/or a date.

The owner hopes to be able to bring it to Paris and get some specialist opinion there and perhaps explore the possibility of having the child's head and shoulders removed from the original surface.

The Daughter of Charity in question has promised to keep me informed about any further developments in this matter.

TD

OBITUARIES

Father Thomas Dougan CM

The boys of St Patrick's College, Armagh, used to have a football song which went something like: "We are the boys of Sandyhill, who fought with heart and might". I'm sure young Tom sang it with feeling, for no pupil had a greater right than he to claim to be a Sandyhill boy. He was born and bred at the foot of Sandyhill, his home touching the college grounds, within sight and sound of the cathedral which shares the hilltop with the college and Ara Coeli, the cardinal's residence. Tom's primary school was in Bambrook, also at the foot of Sandyhill and overlooked by the college. As a boarder in the college he looked down upon his home, so near and yet so far. After ordination he was back at Sandyhill for some eighteen years. Tom was truly an Armagh man, and proud of the privilege.

It was fitting that Tom's apostolate was mainly in education; he had so much to give, in his own inimitable way. He was an enriched and enriching person. His was an enquiring mind, with a thirst for knowledge, so that his interests were manifold. He was a fount of information, and the answer that seemed improbable was invariably correct! He was blessed with a good memory so learning came easily to him, but he carried it lightly; lesser mortals could be comfortable in his company. If needs be he could quote from St Thomas Aguinas, or he could rattle off (with suitable voice) reams of Shakespeare or poetry which he had learned with his fellow pupils at Bambrook P.S. But poetry and song had a special place in Tom's heart and he could voice them with feeling. In the Senior Certificate examination on leaving Armagh he and Tom Fee, his life-long friend and later cardinal archbishop, led the field in Northern Ireland in Latin and Irish. These two subjects were talents which Tom subsequently exercised to the full. The breviary in Latin was his preference, and no bother to him. He was known as an extremely gifted scholar in the field of Irish (Gaelic) scholarship; it was deep within his being and became a way of life for him: the language, literature, history, culture, saints, spirituality ... Yet 444 Obituaries

this was very gently conveyed at surface level. There was no danger of his cornering a captive audience.

Tom died on the feast of the Conversion of St Paul, the birthday of the Little Company. He treasured his priesthood and Vincentian identity. He was at ease in the company of fellow-priests, especially those from Armagh whom he knew from schooldays and during his time on the college staff. Tom's faith was strong and uncomplicated, nourished by the eucharist and the scriptures. During the sixties the confrères in Armagh had the opportunity of listening to scripture talks given by the Servite Fr Neal Flanagan, then stationed in Benburb. Tom was one of the group who attended, and the experience enkindled in us a love of the scriptures which had a lasting effect. At any rate Tom added Irish and Scots Gaelic versions to his English translations of the bible.

St Colmcille was the symbol of his Gaelic roots and identity. Because of the saint's association with the island of Barra in the Hebrides his votive mass was frequently offered by Tom during his holidays there. I remember Tom once saying that one of the joys he looked forward to in heaven was meeting St Colmcille. His devotion to the saint was intense, something he shared with people in Donegal, so that it spanned the intervening years and reduced them to a mere yesterday. To him the saint was larger than life, his memory green and vibrant. He had a collection of Columban books and put a few of them in my direction. Tom was great at searching through dusty shelves in community libraries and finding a "pearl". He had little trouble in finding 9 June in the missal; he had a special regard for that mass, the introductory verse of which stirred his contemplative heart: "If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell at the sea's furthest end, even there your hand would lead me, your right hand would hold me fast". The communion verse was particularly dear to him, and by mentioning the fact he shared a treasure. I think the verse gives a clue to his great love for the priesthood and the eucharist, and indeed his spirituality. It is taken from the First Book of Kings. The going had been rough for Elijah; he was at his wits' end and about to give up, hungry and weak, but an angel comes and offers him food. The verse reads: "He ate and drank and in the strength of that food he walked to the mountain of the Lord" (1 K 19:8). I think it reflects Tom's spiritual life: his felt need of Christ, his hunger for, and nourishment in, the eucharist, sustaining him as a priest in his pilgrimage of faith to the mountain of the Lord.

The mountain of the Lord is evoked by the hills of the island of Barra, with its Columban and Vincentian connections. It was par-

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ticularly pleasing to Tom that St Vincent had sent a namesake to the Hebrides in 1652. Dermot Duggan is part of the living tradition of Barra. As long as the hills stand in Barra his name will be remembered, enshrined as it is in place names: Altair a'Dhugain, where Dermot celebrated mass on the hillside near Ben Heaval; Fuarain a'Dhugain, where the water was got for the mass; and Beal a'Dhugain, the pass over which the people came to mass. When you climb up to these places the scene is just as Dermot saw it in the 1650s. And probably it looked the same in the days when St Colmcille and his missionary monks sailed among the islands of the Hebrides.

Tom and I got hooked on Barra, going there annually for some twenty-five years. It was home from home, among Gaelic speakers, fellow Celts, sharing their faith and culture, forming friendships, especially with the priests of the diocese of Argyll and the Isles. In our get-togethers with them our conversation never flagged, ranging over many and varied topics: theology, philosophy, Celtic history, culture and spirituality. And, back at home during the "close season", Tom would follow up in his findings on things Celtic in exchanges of letters, articles and books. The bond of friendship between Argyll and the Isles and the Vincentian community was symbolised by the presence of the Vicar General, Canon John MacNeil, at Tom's funeral; he represented Bishop Wright who was unable to come personally.

Barra has so much to offer. Tom had a great love of nature, and there he had time to stand and stare, and contemplate the beauty ever new. "Nimis!" was a frequent response to the changing colours of sea and sky, the majestic hills, the long sandy beaches. Then there is the sea-life: the birds, with diving gannets taking pride of place; inquisitive seals popping up here and there; an eider duck and her brood gliding by. Tom had located a patch of quivering grass, and each year it was part of the ritual to make sure it was still there. Needless to say, he took ecology seriously and he did his bit with his tree-nursery at St Paul's which claimed his constant care. For Tom there was a unity between the seen and the unseen. It was probably he who gave me a copy of *Island Hermitage*, attributed to St Colmcille, which mirrors Tom's soul:

Delightful I think it to be in the bosom of an isle, on the peak of a rock, that I might often see there the calm of the sea. That I might see its heavy waves over the glittering ocean, as they chant a melody to their Father on their eternal course. That I might see its smooth strand of clear headlands, no gloomy thing; that I might hear the voice of the wondrous birds, a joyous course.

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That I might hear the sound of the shallow waves against the rocks; that I might hear the cry of the graveyard, the noise of the sea. That I might see its splendid flocks of birds over the full-watered ocean; that I might see its mighty whales, greatest of wonders. That I might see its ebb and its flood-tide in their flow; that this might be my name, a secret I tell, "He who turned his back on Ireland". That contrition should come upon me as I watch it; that I might bewail my sins, difficult to declare. That I might bless the Lord who has power over all Heaven with its pure host of angels, earth, ebb, flood-tide.

That I might pore over one of my books, good for my soul; a while kneeling before Heaven, a while at psalms. A while gathering dulse from the rock, a while fishing, a while giving to the poor, a while in my cell. A while meditating on the Kingdom of Heaven, holy is the Redemption; a while at labour not too heavy; it would be delightful.

Tom valued friendships and sustained them. He was a community man. Somehow he always seemed to be in good form, even before breakfast! His humour was special; it made for companionship. There could be hoots of laughter when Tom was in company. It might be what he said or how he said it, his facial expressions, how he carried himself. Tom did not grow old. He kept in touch with friends and pursued shared interests. He had a ministry of the letter and the phone-call. You might get a letter from him in his perfect handwriting, completely in delightful Douganese Latin, something he might have tossed off without effort, while his reader would be reaching for the dictionary.

One Sunday we were crossing over to the island of Eriskay on the ferry with the Barra football team. They were a man short so Tom "volunteered" me for goals. We were beaten 7-0. Tom's humour and light-heartedness disguised his learning and scholarship, his deeper concerns and interests. He could relax, perhaps with a crossword book which would best most people or a cowboy book or a "whodunit". I don't think he would have willingly missed a repeat of *High Noon* on TV. And among the cowboy actors John Wayne was the star. On Barra he would be tuning in to the GAA commentaries and results, keeping in touch with the fortunes of Armagh clubs, with the county his main concern. He had done his stint for Armagh when he was a trainer of the college senior team. Boxing was another strong interest, which was out of character for Tom was a man for peace and was particularly sick at heart over the discord and violence in Northern Ireland. Angling

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was another hobby, but he was a gentle angler not too concerned if he caught nothing. Through photography he kept alive the memories he cherished.

Friendship brought Tom back to Armagh a week before he died. He visited the college, no longer a Vincentian house, as was his wont, where he was made to feel very welcome. This was reflected in the hospitality shown by the college staff on the day of his burial. Tom's funeral was on the feast of St Thomas Aquinas, who had meant so much to him. The mass in Dublin was a touching farewell from relatives and confrères, friends, colleagues and pupils. Later in Armagh a special service of evening prayer was attended by priests and people in a crowded cathedral. Archbishop Daly quietly slipped in among the priests Tom knew so well. The college playing-fields (the Patch and the Pentagon) separate the cemetery from Sandyhill. There Tom's body was laid where he wished to be, near the graves of his confrères, facing the cathedral on the height, the symbol of hope and resurrection. May he rest in peace.

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart, Naught be all else to me save that thou art; Thou my best thought in the day and the night, Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Joseph Cunningham CM

THOMAS DOUGAN CM

Born: Armagh, 8 April 1922.

Entered the CM: 20 November 1941.

Final vows: 21 November 1943.

Ordained a priest in Clonliffe College by Dr John Charles McQuaid,

archbishop of Dublin, 29 May 1949.

APPOINTMENTS

1949-66 St Patrick's, Armagh.

1966-67 Studies at Fordham University, New York.

1967-70 All Hallows.

1970-72 St Mary's, Strawberry Hill.

1972-75 St Peter's, Phibsboro.

1975-91 St Paul's, Raheny.

Died 25 January 1991.

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Father Patrick Brady CM

Fr Paddy Brady's death came suddenly and as a surprise. He seemed to have recovered well from an illness three years previously and he was planning a holiday in Italy when he fractured his hip, suffered a heart attack after the operation and passed away two days later. He is sadly missed in the community room in Phibsboro where he spent most of the day for the last five years watching television, smoking Hamlet cigars and dozing quietly.

Although hard of hearing he was keenly interested in everything going on around him. He had grasped the facts, was well-informed and alert to the end. In fact he always gave the impression that he knew that you knew that he knew some other relevant snippet of information that was best left unmentioned. His chuckling smile and wide-open eyes were his gentlemanly version of a nod and a wink.

Fr Paddy was always the gentleman. He is still remembered for lifting his 1940s hat when greeting ladies in the street, and there are many stories of how he happened to find himself having afternoon tea with the Queen and morning coffee with Haile Sellassie. He moved easily in high circles and had a fund of anecdotal material covering nearly every political shot fired from Galway Bay to Istanbul since the turn of the century.

Shots of another kind, on the golf course, were his relaxation and favourite sport. He was a member of Milltown for many years and played with enthusiasm and some skill. A few months before he died he asked me to drive him to his old club to pick up his clubs and clean out his locker. It was a beautiful spring morning. We sat on the veranda, had a cup of coffee and watched a few drives. He eased himself out of his chair gently, we drove away slowly and he was quiet for a long time.

He loved travelling and meeting people, and his various appointments during his years of ministry saw him move back and forth frequently across the Irish Sea.

He studied philosophy in Gateacre, theology in Blackrock, further studies in University College, London, and, later on, finished his classics degree in Cork. During his years in Strawberry Hill he developed a great rapport with the local librarian and is credited with setting up the modern library in St Mary's College.

Amid all the travels and changes Fr Paddy never lost his equilibrium.

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He had two anchors throughout his life, his family and the Church, from which he reached out to all other relationships and connections. They provided the cleft in the rocks from which he could view the passing political and ecclesiastical storms. It was an inspiration always to listen to him speak with such affection and interest about his nephews and nieces, grandnephews and grandnieces. He always had energy for another family baptism, or to discuss the likely candidates for a vacant see. His brother, Canon Macartan Brady of the Dublin diocese, kept him keely interested in diocesan affairs right to the end. Firmly rooted in his family and Church he stood tall and weathered well the accelerating changes of this century.

Fr Paddy's obvious devotion to the Church was an indication of his deeper commitment to God who seemed so real to him. He spoke with alarming familiarity of God and the things of God. He will be best remembered by many for his legendary exclamation, on hearing the news of anyone's death, "Gone to God!".

Brian Doyle CM

PATRICK BRADY CM

Born: Lisnaskea, Co. Fermanagh, 17 March 1908.

Entered the CM: 7 September 1927.

Final vows: 1 November 1929.

Ordained a priest in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin by Dr Wall, auxiliary bishop of Dublin, 21 May 1932.

APPOINTMENTS

1932-35 Sacred Heart, Mill Hill.

1935-36 St Joseph's, Blackrock.

1936-37 St Mary's, Lanark.

1937-44 St Vincent's, Castleknock.

1944-48 St Vincent's, Sheffield.

1948-52 St Vincent's, Cork.

1952-59 St Mary's, Strawberry Hill.

1959-66 St Leonard's-on-Sea (adscriptus St Vincent's, Mill Hill).

1966-91 St Peter's, Phibsboro.

Died 8 May 1991.

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Brother Jerome Collins CM

Jerome died suddenly on the morning of 25 August 1991. He had contracted some sort of a chest infection and was being got ready to be taken to St Michael's Hospital, Dun Laoghaire, when he suffered a heart attack. He was seventy-eight, and had been a patient in the Hospital of St John of God for twenty-nine years, more than a third of his life, the longest-resident patient there.

For those of my generation in the old St Joseph's on Temple Road Jerome will always be remembered for two words: "No jam!", with the vowel-sound of the noun modified after the fashion of West Cork. He was in charge of the kitchen, though the seminarist folklore had it that he was to have trained as a gardener in the Albert College, Glasnevin. The students and seminarists had "elevenses" consisting of tea, bread and jam. The latter was a peculiar concoction, prepared by Jerome. It was a mixture of jams of various flavours, liberally diluted with water. It was basically of a red colour, though badly-dissolved lumps of orange marmalade were often discernible. Because of its rather fluid consistency it dripped through the slices of bread and left its mark on tablecloth and soutane. It was, however, very welcome to us and we always considered that the quantity supplied was insufficient, but appeals for more were normally met with "No jam!". Apart from this I do not remember that he impinged much on our life.

I cannot recall meeting him between the time I left the Rock for Glenart in 1950 and my coming to Stillorgan Park in 1982. By then he had already spent twenty years in St John of God's, and as well as his mental illness he had suffered some sort of cardiac trouble as well as a stroke and was confined to a wheelchair and had somewhat impedimented speech. I visited him regularly over the last nine years, and we brought him to St Joseph's for dinner on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday most years; for a couple of years he declined to come, but then resumed the practice.

A number of things impressed me on my visits to him. He was extraordinarily well-informed and up-to-date on everything in the Irish Province, and knew where each confrère was stationed. In spite of being so long absent from life in a community house, and of being so completely institutionalised in St John of God's (which he referred to as "home"), he never lost his interest in community affairs. He

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noticed anything of Vincentian interest which might appear in the daily papers.

Another noticeable characteristic was his prayerfulness. His breviary and some old-style prayerbooks like *The Treasury of the Sacred Heart*, his *Imitation of Christ* and a Knox New Testament were well thumbed from constant use, and many of the Brothers of St John of God and lay staff members mentioned to me over the years how much time he spent at prayer. When a new oratory, with the Blessed Sacrament, was opened some years ago on the same floor as St Raphael's ward he spent a lot of time in it; the main chapel is on a different floor and this caused some difficulties for a wheelchair patient.

I usually visited him on a Sunday afternoon. Very often he was watching TV, perhaps a GAA match, with other patients. He was glad of the visit, asked some questions, received items of community news, but his eyes kept turning back to the screen. On good sunny afternoons he would often move his wheelchair out to the unused handball alley and station himself in a sheltered warm spot, reading a book; he read quite a lot.

If he was not at TV or on the alley I might find him in his room; this meant that we could talk for a longer period and go over various matters in more detail. He had, in his room, various "mementos" in suitcases: letters, cards, photographs, and I sometimes found him simply going through these. After his death I discovered that these things were clearly carefully selected; he was not a magpie who hoarded everything.

In the spring of 1988 he asked me if he could go to Lourdes in the invalid section of the annual Dublin Diocesan Pilgrimage. I replied with a cautious affirmative, wondering if this was just a passing notion and not sure of how the hospital authorities would view it. I found the latter point no problem, but they thought he would not raise the matter again. In fact he did, and was obviously quite serious about it. He had previously been to Lourdes in 1970. I checked with the pilgrimage office and found that they were booked out, but would put him on the waiting list in case there were cancellations. I explained the situation to him and he accepted the facts. No vacancy occurred, so he did not go. As soon as it was possible I put his name down for the 1989 pilgrimage, and when the time came for the practical arrangements he was still enthusiastic. Everything went well and he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. This pilgrimage was some sort of a turning point for him and it was after it that he resumed his Christmas and Easter visits to St Joseph's.

Twenty-nine years as a patient in a mental hospital is a difficult

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life-situation to have to face, but Jerome seems to have accepted it and was, no doubt, a source of blessings for the community in the way St Vincent would have seen it.

Thomas Davitt CM

JEROME COLLINS CM

Born: Woodfield, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, 12 April 1913.

Entered the CM: 15 June 1934.

Final vows: 1 July 1936.

APPOINTMENTS

1936-50 St Joseph's, Blackrock.

1950-61 St Vincent's, Cork.

1961-62 St Kevin's, Glenart.

1962-91 St Joseph's, Blackrock. Died 25 August 1991.