

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

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Editorial

This edition of Colloque focuses, in many ways, on the early history of this Province and on its recent experience. Two articles deal with John Gowan, an early Vincentian, who, readers will remember, founded the Sisters of the Holy Faith with Margaret Aylward. James Murphy's article on nineteenth century Ireland sets such endeavours and attitudes in their broader historical context.

The current edition also contains a reflection on priesthood by Kevin Scallon; written in the light of the silver jubilee of his ministry to priests, in which he works so closely with Sr Brieghe McKenna. The report of the Vincentian Refugee Centre in Phibsboro marks the completion of two years of this work and the centre is now well into its third year. Bill Clarke's article is a response to the recent visit to the province by the Superior General and it is worth noting that, in line with Bill's thinking, a co-ordinator for youth ministry, Michael McCullagh, has recently been appointed.

For the first time, we are including some other literary forms and I am grateful to Eamonn Flanagan for permission to print some of his poems.

Sadly, the recent experience of the province has also included six deaths, some very sudden but all of them a loss. The deaths of Gearoid O'Sullivan and Tommy Fagan have been so recent that their obituaries will appear in the next edition.

“Taking the Heat”

Priesthood – Gripes and Hopes

Kevin Scallon CM

We must begin by purifying ourselves before purifying others; we must be instructed to be able to instruct, become light to illuminate, draw close to God to bring him close to others, be sanctified to sanctify, lead by the hand and counsel prudently... Who then is the priest? He is the defender of truth who stands with angels, gives glory with archangels, causes sacrifices to rise to the altar on high, shares Christ's priesthood, refashions creation and restores it in God's image...

St Gregory Nazianzus

I recently heard of a young man who left the priesthood because of all the negative publicity priests were receiving in the media. I thought it very sad. Not so much as a bloody nose for Christ's sake, no arrows through the chest, no bullet through the heart, no Miguel pro-like shout of *Viva Cristo Rei*. Just a whimper and slouch away.

But maybe therein lies the problem. In penal days persecution seemed like a glorious vocation. Perhaps if our young friend was being hunted through the mountains of Kerry or Wicklow or Donegal or through the Glens of Antrim in danger of his life; finding shelter and a place to say Mass wherever he could, things might have turned out differently. Though I suspect that even in Penal days there was nothing especially glorious about any of it. Persecution and martyrdom tend always to be somewhat uncomfortable. Then, "they" were doing it to us. Now, it is "our own" who are doing it. And, of course, our own have their special methods, namely, trivializing cynicism and mockery. In any event, we are living in critical times and we priests need to take a long, hard look at ourselves. Clearly we are not making the impact we used to. We seem to have lost our nerve, we have been struck dumb, cowed into silence, half-afraid to stand up for the gospel and the church.

People now see this about us; to say nothing of the darker aspects of the lives of a few. They see it and they are disappointed and confused by our timidity. They think that far too many priests have taken the easy path in just walking away from the priesthood, instead of toughing it out as they themselves so often have to do. It is not as if we did not know what to expect when we answered the call. No one ever said, least of all

the Lord, that following Him in this ministry was going to be easy. (cf Mt.10:16-25; Lk. 14:25-33) I have always been struck by this passage from Sirach; more and more so with the passage of time.

My son, if you come forward to serve the Lord, prepare yourself, for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not be hasty in time of calamity. Cleave to Him and do not depart, that you may be honoured at the end of your life. Accept whatever is brought upon you and in changes that humble you, be patient, for gold is tested in the fire and acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Trust in him and he will help you make your ways straight and hope in him.(Sir. 2:1-6)

The Church in Ireland today

A prominent Catholic journalist recently told me how furious he gets when he meets priests who seem totally ambivalent about their priesthood and who say things like “I wouldn’t advise any young man to become a priest nowadays.” One priest recently complained to me that the two priests he lives with have become so negative and cynical and demoralized that they hardly ever go out. All they ever seem to do is sit around watching television all day. Fr Francis Martin said at the Intercession for Priests this year that in all his years of travel, he has never come across anything like the anti-church, anti-clerical bias of the media in Ireland. It looks to me as if this is being orchestrated by people out to destroy the influence of the church; but maybe I am just being paranoid. They seem to want to transform our culture and religious values from Catholic/Christian to humanist/atheist. One way or another they have met with some success.

In the area of certain aspects of morality, Ireland now has some of the most liberal legislation in Europe. None of our elected representatives have been willing to stand up for our traditional values when these matters came to be debated in Dáil Eireann. There is virtually no opposition to anything the government wants to do and all appear to be singing from the same secular-humanist hymn-sheet. Similarly with the news media; few of them, even the local newspapers, ever defend our religious culture and traditions. Rather, they mock religious values and people every chance they get. There is no centre or balance anymore.

So there is a war going on over the soul of Ireland, and at the moment the church is not winning. One thing the church has to do (and this must begin with us priests) is to stand up and speak out against hypocrisy and lies and against unjust attacks on clergy, religious, and church institutions and teaching in general. I know that we have had our scandals but

these events, unfortunate as they are, should not prevent us from standing up for truth and justice. Recently, a priest told me how he was attacked by a man in a hotel down the country. The man said sarcastically "And who have you abused today, Your Reverence?" The priest went over to him and said very calmly; "Look sir, you don't know me and I don't know you. But, for your information, I have never abused anyone in my life: which is more than can be said for you. You have just abused me publicly in the presence of my family and my friends and if you had any decency you would apologise." Of course, he did not.

The message we carry

We are all aware that in the past the church has tended to speak out rather too much and often in angry, authoritarian and unloving ways. Nevertheless, we have to speak the truth in love and not a feigned love either but with the sincere love of Christ. There has been enough finger-wagging from the pulpit. People say it is time for the church to be humble and to remain silent. Well, maybe. It is certainly time for me to humble myself and repent of my sins, but as the Pope would and did remind us, there is a difference between the people who act in the name of the Church and the Church as the body of Christ. It may not be possible for me as a priest to defend my every action, but I must always defend the church. Recently, I spoke to a woman in public life who asked me why the clergy seem so reluctant to speak up on so many important issues. I said I thought it was because we are afraid. She looked at me and said "But you have the greatest message of all and as priests you should not be afraid; you should be willing to take the heat. I have to take it practically every day."

I really think that we priests need to come sincerely before the Lord and call ourselves to a deep, healing repentance. It is only when we do this that we will have the freedom and courage to call others to repentance. I believe that this is one of the great weaknesses of the priestly ministry in our time; our failure, to call ourselves and our people to repentance. Again, public opinion and our own timidity have prevented us from doing this. Sometime ago at a parish retreat, I gave a talk which I began by saying "Let me give you a list of all the things that were not done away with at Vatican II; starting with the commandments and the Sacrament of Reconciliation and going right through to Purgatory." I did it in a light-hearted way, but people, while they smiled, got the point. It seems that instead of renewing the pastoral practice regarding the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we have in effect almost abolished it. I am still convinced that this encounter with our merciful Saviour is by far the best therapy of all. As priests we need to grasp the nettle of preaching Christian morality with the Church.

I remember being in the Catholic University of America in 1968 when many of the most prominent theologians of the time held their famous protest meeting against the publication of *Humanae Vitae*. Even then, I recall how stunned I was to see so many priests and theologians speaking out so virulently against Pope Paul IV and a solemn declaration of the Magisterium. If they had read the encyclical more carefully they might have heeded Pope Paul's warning to priests in paragraph twenty-eight where he said "In performing your ministry you must be an example of the sincere obedience that must be given both inwardly and outwardly to the Magisterium of the church. For truly, you know that you are bound to such obedience, not only for the reasons given 'on behalf of a teaching' but also on account of the light of the Holy Spirit, whose guidance the fathers of the church particularly enjoy when setting forth the truth." (I-IV par. 28) Since that time we have witnessed a growing ambivalence amongst those entrusted with the moral guidance of God's people concerning the teaching of the church. For a long time now there has been a deafening silence from the altar on many important moral and doctrinal issues. When people never hear us speaking about important things related to faith and morals, they are in danger of thinking that it really did "go out" with Vatican II.

Then there is that core of mostly older priests who seem to think that somehow or other, proclaiming the gospel is no longer sufficient; that the sacraments need to be de-emphasised; that even Christ himself is not unique. They are convinced that we need to look to other religions and spiritualities and that maybe Jesus is just another way among several by which salvation comes to humanity. Others seem to be "arrested" sometime back in the early seventies. They appear to be unaffected by all that has happened to renew the life of the Church. Everything has passed them by; the experience of Charismatic Renewal, the revival of Marian Devotion, particularly with reference to Medjugorje, the phenomenon of Divine Mercy devotion, and the renewal of Eucharistic Spirituality. Most remarkably they seem to have little appreciation or regard for the person and the epochal Petrine Ministry of Pope John Paul II; a man whose spirit and teaching, I am convinced, will continue to influence the life of the Church for centuries to come. They also fail to appreciate the fine young priests who received their vocation in these movements of the Spirit. They regard them somehow as a "danger to the church." They disparage their piety and ridicule their orthodoxy as right-wing rigidity. No priest should ever close his heart to the need to be "converted anew everyday". There are many reasons why priests might feel angry and cynical and negative. But these are human emotions which extinguish the fire of the Spirit within us and removes the joy of the Lord from our hearts.

Youth

I often ask myself how I could ever get through to young adults today if I am not prepared to tell them about fundamental truths. I think the very first thing we need to tell them is not what they have to do, but who they are. We need to tell them that they are the children of God and the brothers and sisters of Christ our Saviour. We need to remind them that our God is a loving God, that he is a Father like the father in Luke Chapter 15: 11 ff. that he has a plan for their young lives, and that he wants them to live lives of dignity and self-control. Many young people sense a real need to be redeemed, especially from the falsity and futility of the modern-day lifestyles. They express this in many different ways, most extremely in suicide. If we speak to them about a loving God and Saviour, the Holy Spirit will witness to this truth in their hearts and they will be converted. Calling people to repentance is calling them to live according to the truth, and to live lives that refuse to buy into the great lie of our time which says, "You can have God or you can have happiness, but you can't have both." We know what the truth is and we do nobody any favours by not telling them the truth. We will not help young Catholics, nor in the end will they thank us, for letting them think that their abuse of their persons, especially their sexuality, is okay.

Mother Theresa was asked to give the graduation address at Harvard some years ago. She spoke to them about the importance for the church and society of rediscovering the values of chastity and virginity. People listened in stunned silence. Would any priest have had her wisdom to discern what was causing the disintegration of the lives of her young listeners as she did and would he have had the courage to say what she said? It seems not to matter that one of the most destructive forces at work in our contemporary world is the abuse of human sexuality. This grew out of the sexual revolution of the 1960's and has brought us such "blessings" as recreational sex, wide-spread adultery, marriage break-up, contraception, abortion, gay- rights, AIDS, etc. It has virtually destroyed the moral fibre and Christian culture of the western world and has made huge destructive inroads into the culture of our own land. This is a phenomenon which we priests cannot ignore and, however politically incorrect it may seem, we must have the courage to come against it.

Changing perceptions of the role of the Priest

In the last few decades a lot has changed for us priests. Old certainties disappeared and the emergence of a lay-oriented Church (for which we must thank God), has left us in the priestly ministry somewhat confused. Popular theologians have tried over the last thirty years to promote the

idea of a desacralised ministry. Cardinal Avery Dulles says in his book *The Priestly Office* that “many Catholic intellectuals in Europe and America either reject the concept of ministerial priesthood or redefine it in ways that make it scarcely distinguishable from the concept of ministry in Protestant Congregationalism.” The priest has now, as I am sure you have noticed, become the presider, as in presiding elder. Added to this, we have a degree of theological fuzziness where almost everything has become a kind of “sacrament or ministry” and where Jesus is just as present in the wine and cheese as he is in the Eucharistic Sacrifice. All of this has tended to create something of a crisis of identity in many priests. The priest has been told on the one hand that he is not all that different from a baptized Catholic. On the other, he is being told by the Pope that he is “configured to Christ to act *in persona Christi*”; modelled on the Christ who by his death on the cross; gave himself up in humility and love.

Then there has been the attack on clericalism and clerical culture as a whole. Clericalism, in the strict sense, is based on the notion that clergy are somehow superior to others in society and deserve, the privileges that go with belonging to such an elite. Thankfully, this is now dead or at least terminally ill. Unfortunately, what has suffered as a result has been a valuable aspect of clerical culture.

A Priestly ‘Culture’

There is, I believe, a necessary kind of clerical culture. The priest is different, his work is different, his hours are different, his week is different, he dresses differently, he prays differently. Among themselves priests have ways of relating and recreating and praying, which sets them apart from other people and causes them to seek the support and friendship of each other. I see this very clearly each year at the Intercession for Priests. Most priests feel at home in the presence of other priests and as the Intercession has shown, they like to pray together, repent together and seek healing together. Most of all, as we have witnessed so often at the Intercession, priests love to celebrate the Eucharist in a spirit of profound reverence and prayerful worship. Priests are not lay people. The priestly ministry is not the same as the priesthood of all the baptized. It never has been and it never will be. We are always going to have priests and they will always be men set apart. We should not deny this. We should never allow others to “blame us for being what we are”. However we may be perceived by others, we should never forget that our ministry is the holiest and most sacred in the church and in the universe.

Pope John Paul II

In *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, John Paul II gives us a beautiful description of priestly ministry;

God promises the church not just any sort of shepherds, but shepherds ‘after his own heart’. And God’s heart has revealed itself to us fully in the heart of Christ the good shepherd. Christ’s heart continues today to have compassion for multitudes and to give them the bread of truth, the bread of love, the bread of life (cf Mk 6:30 ff) and it pleads to be allowed to beat in other hearts - priest’s hearts: ‘you give them something to eat’ (Mk 6:37). People need to come out of their anonymity and fear. They need to be known and called by name, to walk in safety along the path of life, to be found again if they have become lost, to be loved, to receive salvation as the supreme gift of God’s love. All this is done by Jesus the good shepherd, by himself and by his priests with him. (PDV, 82)

But being priests “with Him” presupposes a unique union with Christ. In fact, by ordination our very human existence is altered. We are not only identified by our priestly ministry, we are actually defined by it. Through the laying-on of hands and the character of the Sacrament of Orders our very being is given over to the work of making present Christ, the head and spouse of his body the church. At the Eucharistic sacrifice, the priest offers Christ; but he also offers himself. And so, priesthood is not just a sacrament of functions to be performed, but a spirituality, a holiness of life centred on the eternal priesthood of Christ and a deep personal relationship with Him.

Prayer

This, of course, can not be done without a life of interior prayer. A priest has to be a man who prays; the priestly vocation is a vocation to prayer. Something that always impresses me about Pope John Paul II is the way in which he seems to live in a cloud of deep prayerfulness. In his case, this is no pretence; everyone knows that the first two hours of his day are spent in prayer. This was a great secret and gift that St Vincent gave to us when he asked us to spend an hour in prayer each day. He knew the state of the priests and people in his day and he knew what the conferes would need to remedy it. They needed to be men who knew Jesus Christ personally through a life of prayer. In the minds and hearts of people we priests are thought of especially as men of intercessory prayer; both at

the altar and at the “reading of the Office”. They know that there is power in our prayer. We know whose power this is; that it is the prayer of Christ and the power of Christ. Our Lady of Medjugorje is supposed to have told one of the visionaries that great as the power of her blessing is, it does not even compare with the power of a priest’s blessing.

How I pray is a personal matter. By now, most of us have found our own way. All that really counts is that by some means, I spend time with the Lord each day. Out of this should grow what Blessed Columba Marmion used to call the “spirit of compunction”; that abiding awareness, that liberating need to cast myself on the Divine Mercy. One of the most neglected ministries of the priest today, the ministry of Reconciliation, derives from the fact that so many priests neglect the Sacrament of Reconciliation for themselves. After all, the best way for me to speak to others about God’s mercy is that I experience it in my own life. Even though I am a confessor, I experience in my own body the struggles with sin and my need to cry out for mercy. When I give absolution to the faithful it should be with the same mercy and compassion that I know the Lord has shown to me. Priestly holiness consists in making Christ present in everything I do. Last Holy Thursday, I was meditating on this and afterwards wrote this prayer.

Jesus,
 You are in the Father;
 You are in me.
 You seal me
 With your priesthood.
 You mark me
 With your image.
 Speak with my voice,
 Look through my eyes,
 Listen with my ear,
 Touch with my hand.
 At the breaking of bread
 May they
 See you not me
 Hear you not me.
 Fill my stretched-out hands
 With
 Your life
 Your mercy
 Your healing
 And Your love. Amen.

A Personal Experience of Conversion

One of the great things I have learned as a priest is that the Lord is never finished with us and that in a heart-beat he can transform us by his grace. It is the experience of conversion, of that “big grace”; that baptism in the Holy Spirit, that is given to us. We know that it is given as a gift and we know who the Giver is. For me it happened in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in a priest’s house in Phoenix, Arizona, on a Saturday morning in August of 1974. It was an experience which changed by life. Through it Christ became real to me as never before. I began to pray very differently and to “experience” the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in my life and the use of spiritual gifts in ways I had never before known. I have always thought it was a pity that St. Vincent did not use the name Holy Spirit instead of Divine Providence. After all, Divine Providence is the Holy Spirit. But who am I to criticise St Vincent? He had a profound understanding of the working of the Holy Spirit and the importance of waiting on the Spirit. In his heart he knew well how necessary it was to rely on the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. And he received a charism of charity which has literally transformed the face of the Church for time to come.

The Holy Spirit

In John’s Gospel, Jesus promises us the help of the Holy Spirit. “I have many things to say to you, but you can not bear them now. When the spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I say that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.” (Jn 16:12-15)

The entire mystical tradition of the church is based on the truth that the Lord, through his Holy Spirit, speaks and acts in the hearts of even the poorest and most unsophisticated of His children. This presence and help of the Holy Spirit is something I need to remind myself of all the time. Except for sin, nothing happens in the Church or in the world that is not the work of the Holy Spirit. Even the most sacred moment of our ministry happens through the Holy Spirit. “Father, let your Spirit come upon these gifts so that they may become for us the body and blood of your son, our Lord Jesus Christ.” Priests need to be aware of the surpassing gift, which the Father and the Son have given to us. In everything, every thought and deed, every spoken word, I need to be asking myself whether I am being led by the Spirit or merely following some human spirit or personal agenda or bright idea of my own. I need to search my heart to know if the Holy Spirit is witnessing to what I find

there. In every aspect of my life I need to be the servant and the pupil of the Holy Spirit. At every moment the cry of my heart should be “come Holy Spirit!” I need to beg for the “anointing of the Holy Spirit” on my preaching and teaching; that “anointing” by which the action of the Holy Spirit stirs up faith in the hearts of those who hear me.

The needs of the Church

I have always been struck by something very prophetic which Pope Paul VI said in a general audience in November of 1972:

I have asked myself on several occasions what are the greatest needs of the Church...the Church needs...the spirit, the Holy Spirit, the animator and sanctifier, her divine breath, her unifying principal, her inner source of light and strength, her support and consoler, her source of charisms, her peace and her joy. The Church needs her perennial Pentecost; she needs fire in the heart, words on the lips, prophecy in the glance. The Church needs to be the Temple of the Holy Spirit...she needs to feel within her, in the silent emptiness of us modern men, all turned outwards because of the spell of exterior life, charming, fascinating, corrupting with delusions of false happiness. The churchneeds to feel rising from the depths other inmost personality, the praying voice of the Spirit, who as St Paul teaches us, takes our place and prays in us and for us ‘with sighs too deep for words’ and who interprets the words that we by ourselves would not be able to address to God. Living men, you young people, and you consecrated souls, you brothers in the priesthood are you listening to me? This is what the church needs. She needs the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit in us, in each of us, and in all of us together, in us who are the Church...so let all of you ever say to Him, ‘come’!

Since he was elected, Pope John Paul II has been saying that preparing for the Great Jubilee was the hermeneutic of his Pontificat. He has frequently spoken of a new springtime for the Church that would be ushered in with the beginning of the new Millennium. I believe that the signs are there if only we will open our eyes to see them. The Pope refers to these signs in the letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*. He recalls the vast numbers of pilgrims who came to Rome in all their variety. He recalls the World Youth Festival where the “young people, whatever their possible ambiguities, have profound longing for these genuine

values which find their fullness in Christ. Is not Christ the secret of true freedom and profound joy of heart? Is not Christ the supreme friend and teacher of all genuine friendship? “(NMI). Later on in paragraph 29 he writes:

I am with you always, to the close of the age. ‘ (Mt 28:20)...Conscious of the Risen Lord’s presence among us, we ask ourselves today the same question put to Peter in Jerusalem immediately after his Pentecost speech: ‘What must we do’? (Acts 2:3 7) We put the question with trusting optimism, but without underestimating the problems we face. We are certainly not seduced by the naive expectation that, faced with the great challenges of our time, we shall find some magic formula. No, we shall not be saved by a formula but by a person, and the assurance which he gives us; ‘I am with you’. It is not therefore a matter of inventing a ‘new programme’. The programme already exists; it is the plan found in the Gospel and the Living Tradition, it is the same as ever. Ultimately, it has its centre in Christ himself who is to be known, loved and imitated, so that in Him we may live the life of the Trinity, and with Him transform history until its fulfilment in the heavenly Jerusalem. This is a programme which does not change with shifts of time or cultures, even though it takes account of time and culture for the sake of true dialogue and effective communication. This programme for all time is a programme for the Third Millennium.

Conclusion

As a priest friend of mine wrote once, “when the Lord is showering down his gifts, it is not a time to put up umbrellas.” We priests are a vital part of these blessings. The “Lord of the harvest”, the “Hope of Israel”, is “with us always” and will not abandon us. And as for those who oppose us? They have always been there; but in the end, the Church buries her undertakers. I sometimes wish I were forty years younger to feel the sap of this New Springtime.

A Creative Ministry to Youth

Bill Clarke CM

“I rejoiced when I heard them say...” This was my first reaction to Fr. Bob Maloney’s letter to the province (March 3rd 2001). In particular, I could see how several things fitted together, such as,

- 1) “The greatest concern, expressed by almost everyone I spoke with, is lack of vocations”
- 2) “I recommend that the province develop a creative ministry to youth.”
- 3) “I suggest, as did many confreres during the visit, that the province work at fostering European links.”

A New Continent

Our present Pope has remarked that each new generation is a new continent to be evangelised for Christ. Those of us who heard John Gallagher’s account of his experiences of the Youth Pilgrimage in Rome last year could see very clearly the fulfilment of the initiatives the Pope has taken towards bringing the gospel to this new generation. It’s great that John could join and be part of that movement – let’s have more of it!

John told us that he has linked with 3rd level students in his work with youth and there is no doubt that there is a great need for a gospel presence among this group. Fr Jim Caffery, Director of the Dublin Diocesan Youth Council, makes this point very clearly in the Irish Catholic of 31st May ‘01. From several case histories it emerged that young people who were attending Mass regularly before going to third level, ceased to do so during their courses there. This presents a strong challenge to get involved with third level students.

At present we have a presence in four third level colleges in Ireland; All Hallows, Maynooth, St Patrick’s and UCC and in Strawberry Hill in England. Each of these has its own importance, but the ratio of priests to students is strikingly different. In UCC there are only two priests for 12,000 students - I leave it to the reader to work out the ratios in the other four colleges, but I’ll bet it’s not 1:6,000! Let’s continue in UCC!

Co-Ordination

In a youth ministry co-ordinated by our province, the various confreres would meet to discuss what initiatives might be taken. Confreres doing youth-work in second level colleges, parishes or chaplaincies might decide to meet separately from those in third level, but first, perhaps, a

co-ordinator of youth ministry needs to be appointed. He would find out what youth-work is at present happening in each sector and then look for linkages leading to bigger projects such as pilgrimages, work-projects for the needy, retreats, participation in papal youth gatherings etc. These projects would take place in the summer-time. The co-ordinator would call meetings as needed.

In each of the above youth-events long-term preparation forms an essential ingredient. Thus, for the Youth Gathering in Rome, the participants were required to read and reflect on the Gospel of St Mark during the preceding year. It follows that local groups meeting with a Vincentian would engage in a programme during the year leading to a bigger event in the summer-time. This creates a dynamic of evangelisation as in the Youth Millennium Pilgrimage to Rome. The co-ordinator and the local Vincentians continue to accompany the group afterwards and to discern what next initiative the group or groups should undertake. To accompany the movement of the Holy Spirit involved in this it would be essential to have a full-time co-ordinator. He would lead the summer projects and support the local preparation and follow-up.

Europe

The Superior General's encouragement of European links can be readily applied to youth ministry, firstly because young people like to travel, see the world, meet other young people from other countries etc., and secondly because in other countries we have much younger Vincentians than we have here. Let me give an example of a linkage that could be built on. Some years ago Fr Jaroslav Jasso of our Slovakian province came to Cork and in very halting English read his appeal for help to the people of Sunday's Well. At first the response didn't seem to be promising, but then a group of Cork people who already had experience of helping Chernobyl children decided to take up Jaroslav's cause. They formed an association, acquired vehicles and supplies and drove in convoy from Cork to Kharkiv in the Ukraine. On this long journey they stopped at some Vincentian houses along the route. When the visit was completed they donated the vehicles for the use of the Kharkiv mission and returned to Cork by plane. Every year since then this Cork group has helped the Vincentian mission in Kharkiv and now Paul Roche, who was already quite involved with the group, has made Kharkiv his base of operations in the new Vice-Province of SS Cyril and Methodius. From among our youth-groups would it not be possible to join with the work of bringing aid to Kharkiv? Certainly worth investigating.

Take a local problem in Cork (and elsewhere): homelessness. *The Irish Times* of 12.6.'01 quotes the Director of Simon to the effect that they turn away at least 20 people every night from their Hostel because

they have no room (at the inn!) In the past two years homelessness in Cork has risen by 40%. Some of this has been caused by landlords charging higher rents due to the Celtic Tiger economy: they can get higher rents from people in good jobs. Cork Simon has 140 volunteers involved, but no doubt they would welcome some relief volunteers in the summer-time. At the moment they can't keep up with the work in hand.

Into such Irish projects as these we could invite some young Vincentians from other countries to come here and work with us, thus setting up an international volunteer exchange. I have worked on five similar exchanges in the past few years with the deaf community. They do take a lot of organising and effort, but the results have generally been very satisfactory.

Personnel

Fr Maloney writes, "I hope that at least a couple of confreres (some have already expressed interest in doing this) could begin some type of creative ministry toward the young, which might also be a source of vocations in the future." We need firstly to believe in the mission to youth, then to commit some confreres who are convinced about it and lastly to provide a welcoming structure for young people to join the Congregation. In regard to this last point, we really do need the European dimension. At the Maison-Mère in Paris, for example, you find an atmosphere of youth because a lot of students and young priests from many nationalities are living there while taking courses at the academic institutes in the city. This is the kind of young atmosphere into which we should bring prospective candidates. If we had some candidates, one of our Irish confreres should accompany them there and take part in the formation programme as a member of the team. If in the past all students for the priesthood were required to learn Latin, why not require Vincentian students to learn French? It would be a great advantage to them in their future lives as missionaries.

I am personally convinced that if we simply continue to do what we have been doing we will die out. If that were to happen, the charism and work of the Congregation would disappear from Britain and Ireland. That may yet happen anyway. But at this particular moment our General has called us to a fresh initiative which he describes as "A CREATIVE MINISTRY TO YOUTH". Let's at least try to answer this call and then leave the future peacefully in the Lord's hands.

“The Centre is above all else a place of hospitality and welcome”.

Annual Report of the Vincentian Refugee Centre, Phibsboro, 2000.

This report is, in the main, printed in the form in which it was presented. The contributions by the clients themselves, referred to by Donal Hayes, follow at the end of the report proper.

Origin and Development of the Vincentian Refugee Centre

In October 1997, St Peter’s Parish in Phibsboro became aware of an increasing number of asylum seekers/refugees living in the immediate area. While wishing to extend a welcome to the new arrivals, there was uncertainty as to how best to do that.

A general invitation to attend an informal meeting was issued through all B&Bs (Bed and Breakfast establishments) which provided emergency accommodation. Surprisingly, almost sixty people turned up at the meeting. The only agenda was to listen to the expressed needs of the people there. It became clear that the main problems were:

- a place to meet
- difficulty in obtaining refugee status
- lack of provision of English language classes
- daily boredom – for many the day ended at breakfast
- opportunities to continue with general education

Initially, English language classes were provided three times a week with the help of parish staff and local volunteers. A real need for information on social welfare and health was identified at time.

In September 1998, a Partnership project was formed between the Vincentian Community, the Daughters of Charity and the Society of St Vincent de Paul. FAS provided a worker to assist with finding private rented accommodation for those who wanted to move from emergency accommodation.

With increasing numbers visiting the Centre, it was clear that a place of hospitality was needed. The Parish made the Church sacristy available and following basic renovations and the addition of simple kitchen facilities the Vincentian Refugee Centre (VRC) was officially opened by An Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern TD, on 25th January 1999.

(Fr Brian Moore CM; administrator VRC)

A note from the Chair

The Centre, now in its third working year, is first and foremost a place of hospitality and welcome. We provide practical help in finding accommodation and we give advice on social services, education, and health, but we see that offering the hand of friendship as a very important part of what we do. Its value is all the more obvious when set against the comments made by visitors to the Centre on the lack of friendliness they encounter on the streets, along with the cold manner, the insults, and, all too frequently, the outright threats. We are reminded time and again of the extent, depth, and persistence of social unease felt by Irish people in dealing with foreigners, and how the *Céad Míle Fáilte* is found wanting. There is an obvious and urgent need for social inclusion and integration programmes which will help asylum seekers to adjust to a new way of life, and which will help Irish society to address its own racist attitudes.

The Centre, in tandem with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, plans to consult with local Conferences (SVP) in towns designated by the State as Dispersal Centres with a view to setting up Welcoming Committees. These should help to improve tolerance within the community, and to ease integration. The real day-to-day contact with asylum seekers, the listen-and-learn experience which the Centre has had over the last three years in Dublin, puts it in a unique position to deliver informed advice and practical support to SVP members working with local groups in this way.

Our clients vary hugely in their backgrounds, their religion, and their culture, but in the Centre we see a common ambition linking these people together. They come here to better their circumstances, to make a new life for themselves, and what has happened? They find themselves crowded into B&B accommodation or isolated in Dispersal Centres around the country, not allowed to work, denied supports, locked into a limbo of Total uncertainty, idleness, and loneliness. We really have a case to answer, one which would be greatly eased if a meaningful Immigration Policy were in place. We have made it clear, as have other agencies working in this field, that such a policy is a pressing need.

Part of our mission at the Centre is to encourage the celebration of cultural diversity. Offering hospitality, like we do at the Centre, is an important part of every culture; it is part and parcel of how people celebrate their national and religious festivals, just as we do on St. Patrick's Day. We have included in our report a flavour of how people in different parts of the world celebrate their culture and offer hospitality to one another. It is part of our attempt to encourage the Irish community to value diversity, to see the great possibilities in the people who come here as a way of enriching their own lives as well as our own culture.

Too often refugees are defined in terms of problems. Of course there are problems, but there are also tremendous benefits. They bring with them vibrancy, diversity of talent, and potential for economic input. We should celebrate their coming and be thankful.

Cuirimid fíor chaoin fáilte roimh Niall Crowley, CEO Equality Authority. Tugann sé dóchas agus misneach dúinn go léir é bheith anseo in ár measc. Spreagan sé muid chun leanúint ar aghaidh leis an obair thabhachtach atá ar siúl againn anseo san ionad.

(We heartily welcome Niall Crowley, CEO of the Equality Authority. It gives us hope and pride to have him here amongst us. He encourages us to continue with the important work that we have undertaken here at the Centre.)

Beir beannacht,
Donal Hayes (SVP)

Place of Hospitality and Welcome

The core mission of the centre is to provide hospitality and welcome to the refugee/asylum seeker. Hospitality is provided unconditionally, irrespective of religion, skin colour, ethnic background or the reason the person has come to Ireland.

Living in a society where racial abuse and hostility is commonplace, the need for a ‘Welcoming Community’ which recognises and values cultural diversity is greater than ever. The core mission of the centre is to provide hospitality and welcome to the refugee/asylum seeker. Hospitality is provided unconditionally, irrespective of religion, skin colour, ethnic background or the reason the person has come to Ireland.

Asylum policy developments in 2000

During 2000 the policy of Dispersal and Direct Provision was introduced. All applicants for asylum from April 9th 2000 were dispersed outside the Eastern Regional Health Authority, except Separated Children and a small number allowed to stay in Dublin on health grounds.

While dispersal allows for integration, especially in small urban and rural places, asylum seekers experienced great isolation due to lack of ethnic and cultural support in these areas. While approximately 6000 people were dispersed to 61 centres, a considerable number returned to Dublin to stay with people of their own cultural background.

The Centre extended a welcome to those on dispersal but the capacity to lend support was limited, as these people are not entitled to

rent allowance and only receive £1 5 per person per week as financial support. The introduction of direct provision (meals provided daily) has limited opportunities to interact with the local communities in the shops and in the market and has deprived people of the activity of preparing their own food. Many have found it difficult to adapt to Irish menus. Whereas dispersal allows for the possibility of integration, direct provision is a barrier to integration. The Centre would like to see all asylum seekers given supplementary welfare allowance and the opportunity of purchasing and cooking their own meals.

Fingerprinting for all asylum applicants was introduced as part of the building of a common EU database. While this will identify those that have applied to more than one EU state, it has also stigmatised asylum seekers, since as a nation we do not have an national ID system. For many people, this experience increased their trauma as they associated the experience with negative aspects of policing in their own countries. There needs to be more information given to asylum seekers on the need for fingerprinting and reassurance provided that it is only used for asylum purposes.

Manifestly Unfounded

Since September 2000 there was a considerable increase in the number of applications deemed manifestly unfounded. A manifestly unfounded decision can be appealed in order to allow an applicant back into the asylum process. This highlights an applicant's need to access legal help with their initial application form.

Only 10-15% have access to and avail of legal help with their Refugee Application Form. The Vincentian Refugee Centre believes that all applicants should have the opportunity to avail of legal help while submitting their application.

The Centre welcomes the appointment of the Refugee Application Commission and the setting up of the new Appeals Tribunal, which we hope will lead to a fairer and transparent asylum process.

Services and projects

During 2000, the centre developed its range of services and projects in response to the needs of refugees and asylum seekers:

- Information on social welfare, health and social opportunities
- Accommodation finding service
- Language training
- Women's group

- Special services for Unaccompanied/Separated Children
- Awareness programmes with schools, community groups and service providers

1 Information services

The Centre provided information on a range of topics; difficulties with accommodation made up 61 % of the queries dealt with during 2 000. The topic of accommodation is dealt with in some detail below. The Centre also helped people with queries on social welfare, education, English classes, work and volunteering as well as queries in relation to refugee status.

2 Accommodation finding service

Government policy on asylum seekers consists mainly of basic income and housing support provided through community welfare officers employed by the regional health boards. Asylum seekers, unlike refugees, are entirely dependent on state subvention for their housing need. Given their dependency on the income support provided, their accommodation options are restricted.

3 Difficulties faced

- As house prices continued to spiral, greater competition for limited supply in the private rented sector generally
- Rises in rents well above the limits accepted under the Social Welfare Allowance scheme
- Landlords prefer to rent to those who pay cash
- Discrimination and racism when seeking to access accommodation

Good Practice Guidelines

The Vincentian Refugee Centre is the only organisation that has a comprehensive housing service for asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland. Initially, the service started with issuing a daily list of available accommodation, taken from the *Evening Herald* the Irish evening newspaper. During 2000 a more structured and organised approach to providing the service was taken. Developments included:

1 Expansion of the search for private rented accommodation

In addition to the *Evening Herald* information was also gathered from:

- On line advertisements – various websites advertising accommodation
- Landlords – direct approach regarding their holdings
- Other newspapers and magazines – thorough daily and weekly

search

- Local advertisers – local newspapers

2 *Creation of computerised database*

The compilation of a database for both seekers and providers of accommodation has proved to be useful in understanding the needs and requirements of both groups and in creating good matches between the accommodation offered and the needs of tenants.

- Listing of landlords and estate agents
- Listing of tenants

3 *Maintenance of a pool of accommodation*

As people move to other accommodation we encourage tenants and landlords to inform us of the availability of accommodation so that we could offer it to others.

- Regular contact with households
- Monitoring developments at local/community level

4 *Follow up and support*

Our service has offered mediation and facilitation support to both tenants and landlords. This support service has proved to be worthwhile for both parties, approximately 30 people - both tenants and landlords availed of the service during the year.

- Mediation and facilitation;
- Ongoing support towards integration

Successful settlement

Developing the dedicated accommodation service led to a significant number of asylum seekers and refugee households securing accommodation in the private rented sector in Dublin and throughout the country.

Table 1. Number of Asylum Seekers and Refugee Households resettled through the work of the Centre during 2000

Types of Households	Dublin City & Suburbs	Co. Dublin	Elsewhere in Ireland
Singles	39	27	6
Childless Couples	46	18	14
Lone Parents	13	6	9
Families	36	42	17
Total	134	93	46

Table 2. Breakdown of Asylum Seekers and Refugee Households actively seeking accommodation on 20th Dec. 2000

Types of Household	Singles Couples	Childless Parents	Lone	Families
Total	243	182	127	476

Comment

- 10% of the those actively seeking accommodation would consider moving outside Co. Dublin
- 60% have encountered different forms of racism and discrimination when seeking accommodation
- 5% have been in emergency accommodation for over 3 years
- 40% have been in emergency accommodation for a period between 1-2 years

Recommendations

In order to maximise the access and provision of accommodation for asylum seekers and refugee households (and other low income groups) in limited supply situation the following priorities were identified:

- Adequate follow up support i.e. – Resettlement/Integration Officer based in the Centre to work particularly with most vulnerable groups, i.e., lone parents and Separated Children to help them integrate into the community
- Greater protection for tenants, including, security of tenure
- Anti-discrimination protection – including promotion of greater awareness and enforcement of Equality legislation
- Establishment of a Housing Court or Rents Tribunal to deal swiftly with disputes along the lines of a Small Claims Court
- Rent increase control and landlord registration
- Greater enforcement of health and safety regulations in relation to accommodation provided

Language training

English classes commenced in September 1999 and finished formally in June 2000. To cater for women and children English lessons were provided in their homes. A total of 150 students were catered for in three groups. All were learning English for the first time. Two groups met 3 times a week for one and a half hours, while a third group met twice a week for one and a half hours. While the emphasis was on teaching functional and social language, students also had an opportunity to tell of their own customs, heritage and celebrations. Social outings were planned jointly by students and teachers and included trips to Trinity

College, Glendalough and museums in the city, allowing students to become familiar with some of Ireland's heritage and customs.

In June, Fr Brian Moore presented certificates to students who had attended 12 or more classes. It was an enjoyable occasion and an opportunity to meet the students' extended families and friends.

Women's Group

The primary purpose of the group formed in 2000 was to get the women out of their hostel-type accommodation for a few hours once a week. They had the opportunity to meet other women in similar circumstances, to share concerns, worries and also to have some fun. The group comprised 20 women and an average of six met every week. The group generally met for two hours every Wednesday.

Group Activities

Knitting, taught by local parishioners, was initially the main occupation of the group. But finding friendship and support has been of benefit to the group. The local women were shocked by the poor conditions the refugee women lived in and the difficulties they encountered.

As a group evolved, it took on new tasks. At the first session the women replied to a letter in the Irish Times which stated that there was no need for a Nigerian to apply for refugee status in Ireland.

Women in the group responded to several calls for help to care for children while their mothers received medical treatment. Members of the group also visited refugees and asylum seekers in hospital, often at the request of the hospital looking for assistance in dealing with women who were very distressed.

The group visited Dublin Castle and the Chester Beatty Library. A group of women from the Lourdes Women's Group, Sean McDermott Street, Dublin also visited the Centre.

Safe Forum

A visiting psychologist spoke of the loss and separation that many asylum seekers face and of the psychological services that are available in Dublin. Many of the women spoke of the health problems that they had experienced since coming to Ireland. For some it was digestive problems due to the change in diet, for others it was stress caused by trying to deal with situations over which they had little or no control.

The group provided a safe forum to discuss common issues of concern such as the lack of facilities for women and children, the housing crisis, the difficulty in finding schools and the racism they routinely experienced. The fact that so many of them are living in limbo not knowing whether they can stay in Ireland or not causes much distress and

fear. The friendships formed within the group have continued outside.

Separated Children

Although there is no statutory definition of a 'separated child', the UNHCR definition is a "separated child is an alien under the age of eighteen who is separated from both parents and is not being cared for by an adult who by law or custom has responsibility to do so.' (*Separated Children Seeking Asylum in Ireland; A Report on Legal and Social Conditions. Irish Refugee Council, 1999*).

Sixty-three Separated Children came to the centre between September and December 2000. An important part of the work of the Centre was getting to know the young people and building up friendships with them, letting them know that there was someone who cared about them in their very difficult situation.

Table 3. Country of origin of Separated Children.

Country	Number	Male/Females
Nigeria	35	22 males, 13 females
Sierra Leone	6	4 males, 2 females
Somalia	5	5 males
Congo	3	1 male, 2 females
Angola	2	2 males
Camaroon	2	2 males
Ivory Coast	2	2 males
Afghanistan	1	male
Burundi	1	female
Ghana	1	female
Lithunia	1	male
Rwanda	1	male
South Africa	1	female
Togo	1	female
Uganda	1	male

Schooling

The first task was to find schools for the children. This involved liaising with the Principal or Home School Liaison Officers and explaining to the teenager the difference between types of schools. It involved going to the school with the teenager, contacting their Community Welfare Officer to ensure they got the Back to School Allowance which is inadequate. Many come without extra clothes and buying a pair of shoes uses up nearly all the allowance. The Centre has helped many of them receive Child Benefit to which they are entitled. All of the students found great support in school.

Access to Post-Leaving Cert courses is not allowed unless they have got refugee status. The Centre considers that it is unfair that these students are excluded from third level education.

Not all of the young people wished to continue with schooling while others had finished their schooling in their country of origin. For these, information on adult education courses was provided and they were encouraged to attend. Many attend a free IT course in Trinity College. One young man joined a rugby club and attended English classes in the Centre. Another did voluntary work while at the same time gaining experience as an optical technician. A young woman is studying English for her Junior Cert while another is learning English in preparation for Secondary School.

Accommodation and Support

Accommodation for these teenagers is not suitable; with six sleeping to a room in hostels. They are expected to study under such conditions. It is also unacceptable that many don't have the facility to cook in their hostels and must spend their money in fast food restaurants. Neither is it acceptable that some come home from school and have to cook for themselves.

The ERHA has set up a special unit to work with Separated Children but social workers are not available after hours. This service is not good enough as often it is at night that the teenager will feel upset and lonely. For example, one teenager's relationship with her boyfriend ended; she argued with him on the street with the result that she was taken to Mountjoy Garda Station. She was distraught and hysterical. The Gardai contacted the Centre for support for her. Another teenager was referred to the hospital because of digestive problems but she had never been to a hospital before. She contacted the Centre and the social worker accompanied her.

Many have had very traumatic experiences in their country of origin. The Centre has good contacts with psychologists working with asylum seekers. The young people often visit the Centre before their appointment with the psychologists for extra support as they are often reluctant to deal with their past horrific experiences.

"Disappeared"

Another concern is that some separated children have 'disappeared' in Ireland. One teenager from Burundi known to the Centre "disappeared" as did some others. While the Gardai had been notified, no posters of missing Separated Children have been circulated to NGOs (Non-Government Organisations). This raises questions about the trafficking in children for the purposes of prostitution and other forms of exploita-

tion which need to be investigated by the appropriate State services.

Awareness programmes

As part of its mission, the Centre seeks to create awareness of the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in Ireland. 41 presentations were made to various groups during the year. A representative from the Centre spoke about the Centre's work, outlining the asylum process in Ireland, while two refugees or asylum seekers talked about why they had to leave their own country and what it's like to live in Ireland as a refugee or asylum seeker.

Table 4. *Presentations by group*

Type of group	Number of presentations
Schools	2
Society of St Vincent de Paul (including presentation at the National Day)	7
Gardai (Henry St, Limerick)	1
Religious communities	6
Parish centres/retreat groups	7
Hospitals	2
Support groups for refugees/asylum seekers	3
Third level colleges	3
Total	41

Number of visitors registering at the Vincentian Refugee Centre in 2000

The total number of family units newly registered at the Centre during 2000 was 958 (excludes spouses and children). The highest number came from Nigeria, Congo and Romania which reflects the national trend. The Centre dealt with over 1000 queries from those registered. The Centre also continued to have contact with asylum seekers and refugees who had registered during 1998 and 1999.

Table 5. *Breakdown of queries at first visit during 2000*

Accommodation	626	61%
Social Welfare	87	8%
Secondary Education	52	5%
English	88	7%
Status	49	5%
Other (work-/volunteering)	66	5%
Adult Education	28	3%
General	59	6%
	1025	100%

On average, the Centre had between 10-12 contacts with each family unit giving approximately 12,000 visitors to the Centre over the year. The Centre helped them deal with a particular problem or issue and offered them hospitality and friendship. Every effort is made to provide a personal service to those coming to the Centre. Staff do not simply provide information to people but follow up queries and issues with State services, accommodation providers and other providers of social services until the issue is resolved. For example, Centre staff may accompany people to schools and hospitals if that is what is required; other queries may be followed up by telephone or letter.

Because of the difficulty in finding accommodation, over 61 % of queries are in this area. An Accommodation Officer was appointed during the year to develop this service specifically.

As the legislation and structures relating to Asylum Seekers and Refugees evolved and became more complex, dealing with individual queries in this area also became more demanding and time-consuming to follow up and complete.

Table 6. *Countries of Origin of visitors to the Centre*

<i>Europe</i>		<i>Asia</i>		<i>Africa</i>			
Armenia	1	Afghanistan	1	Algeria	28	Kenya	17
Albania	1	Azerbaijan	3	Angola	29	Liberia	4
Bulgaria	12	China	2	Central Africa	1	Libya	3
Belarus	5	Iran	2	Burundi	3	Niger	1
Estonia	1	Iraq	13	Benin	2	Nigeria	363
Georgia	9	Jordan	1	Cameroon	17	Rwanda	4
Kosovo	36	Kazakhstan	1	Congo Brazz	1	Sierra Leone	25
Latvia	3	Lebanon	1	Congo	58	Somalia	38
Lithuania	11	Palestine	3	Egypt	1	South Africa	14
Moldova	10	Pakistan	5	Ethiopia	4	Sudan	7
Poland	20	Sri Lanka	1	Gambia	1	Togo	4
Romania	119	Tajikistan	1	Ghana	12	Uganda	2
Russia	22	Uzbekistan	1	Guinea	1	Zimbabwe	2
Turkey	2	Total (Asia)	35	Ivory Coast	10	Total (Africa)	652
Ukraine	12						
Yugoslavia	1						
Total (Europe)	226						
<i>Other</i>							
Ecuador	1						
Unknown	5						
Total	6						

Statement of Financial Policy

The Centre agrees to:

- Utilise grants and donations solely to further its stated aims and objectives
- Furnish funders with progress reports and financial data as and when requested
- Return to funders any monies not used in implementing particular and agreed objectives
- Provide the funder, within two months of completion of a particular project, with a detailed account, signed by two officers of the Board, describing the disposal of funds
- Indemnify funders as to all claims arising from third parties in respect of the grant/donation

Governance

The Centre is a Partnership and its legal status is that of a company limited by guarantee. It was incorporated on the 31st May 1999 and has its own registration number. The Registered Offices are at St Peter's Church, Phibsboro, Dublin 7

CELEBRATIONS IN OUR HOMELANDS;
WRITINGS FROM THE CLIENTS OF THE VRC

Celebrating Religious Festivals in Iraq

ALI AND FATIMA

In Iraq we celebrate both the birthday of Jesus Christ on Christmas Day and the birthday of Mohammed in the month of Rabia Al-Aual in the Arabic calendar. At Christmas, we exchange gifts with our Christian friends, decorate the house, send cards and have special meals. For Muslims, Jesus is one of the prophets and we honour his day.

Mohammed's birthday is a special day in our religious calendar. We visit the Mosque, meet with family and friends, eat traditional sweets and give money to poor people.

During Ramadan, we do not eat between sunrise and sunset so that we can experience the pangs of hunger like the poor. The three-day festival of Eid Al-Fitter follows Ramadan. It's a time of special celebration every year. Again, we visit family and friends, prepare special food and everyone buys new clothes to mark the occasion. It's a time too when we give to the poor – offering help and support to the less privileged is an important part of our culture.

This year, we are going to Mecca on pilgrimage for the 5th March. There we will visit the House of God, Al-Kaaba. Travelling to Mecca is very special for Muslims and we feel privileged to be able to do that. But we will return in time to be celebrate St Patrick's Day in Ireland – a place where we have received great hospitality and welcome. A place where we can live in safety.

Independence Day in Nigeria

DAVID

Nigeria marks her Independence Day on October 1st each year since 1960 when Nigeria obtained independence from the British.

Cultural activities are diverse with 250 ethnic groups divided into three major cultural groupings – the Yoruba, Igbo and Hausa. Each culture celebrates in its own way. While Independence Day is still important in Nigeria, only the resolution of the political situation can bring back the beautiful celebration of the Day in its early years.

The Igbo tribe usually present a dance called the ATTILOGWU DANCERS, a fascinating acrobatic display and the MASQUERADE Festival (mmou), the YAM FESTIVAL (Iriji). The Yoruba tribe present historical dances symbolising their origin. These tribes believe that they migrated from the Middle East. The Yoruba dances also include the BATA dance which has a striking similarity to tap dancing in American and Ireland. There is also the parade of the RIVER GODDESS (Yemoja). The Hausas also present a show called the DURBAR. The Durbar is a show on horseback with ancient warriors wielding spears, bows and arrows, celebrating the history of this mainly Muslim people.

Freedom Day in Poland

SYLVIA AND KATHARINA

In Poland, on the 3rd May each year, we celebrate Wyzwolenie or Freedom Day. It marks the liberation of Poland at the end of the war in 1945. In the towns and cities there are church services, followed by parades in the streets. There is a great air of festivity and celebration – just like we saw last year on St Patrick's Day in Ireland. People dress up in national dress, there's lots of singing, dancing, drinking and eating of traditional foods like *Bigos* and *Pienoszki* – cabbage and meat with dill rolled into a pie – absolutely delicious! It's a day for the children especially. There are fireworks and fancy dress and, to add to the fun, the firebrigade comes and watersprays the crowd – the children love it! It's a great day for celebration of the community together.

Independence Day in Romania

OVIDIU

1st December is our National Day in Romania, like you have St Patrick's Day in Ireland. On that day we celebrate the formation of the state of Romania in 1918. It's only since the Revolution of 1989 that we can celebrate this day. It was not encouraged under the old regime. While the day is celebrated all over Romania, there is a special celebration near the town of Alba Lulia in the province of Transylvania. Many thousands of people gather on the Field of Liberty outside the town for special celebrations. There are formal parades and speeches from the politicians. But there are parties and informal get-togethers as well. People dance the Hora Unirii or Union Dance on that day. There is lots of music and singing too. It's very cold at that time of the year, so people drink mulled wine and eat special dishes like *Mici* and *Cozonac*, traditional Romanian dishes. People in Romania are very poor and life can be a struggle but it's important for people to celebrate their own culture.

Easter Vigil

The birds have flown away into silence,
As a high golden moon looks through the trees.
The faithful move like streams in confluence,
Where new fire, swirling in the April breeze,
Sets ablaze Easter torches, and a wide river
Of flame flows into dark spaces of heart.
Adoring prayer and song to the Giver
Rise in solemn overture at the start.

Three times 'Light of Christ; *Deo gratias*'
Rings out, and each face is a sun, unique
From touch of God's finger and Saviour's Mass.
Scripture fills the tall nave of minds that seek.
Why do we walk through the dark of this night?
To calm our fears of death, sin, oblivion,
To change the horror of despair to light,
Rising from the deep tomb with our Champion.

Saint Augustine of Hippo

Eamon Flanagan CM

You delved into Platonic ideas
And tussled with theories of Manichees.
Cicero was a mentor in your youth,
When you travelled all roads, searching for truth.
While still a professor of classic prose,
You sat like a child, hearing great Ambrose,
In a proud Empire and cultured Roman,
When Christian saints walked the streets of Milan.
Monica dreamed and moistened stones with tears;
Praying, heroic, your mother appears.
You said her love and unique ambition
Were your Catholic faith, and contrition.
Baptized, you rose up and flew on fleet wings:
Truth; and love of divine and human things.
You were monk and priest, soon to be bishop.
Your labours reaped an unparalleled crop.
Your ascesis and love consumed your faults;
Your life is an example that grace exalts.
You strove with a brilliant mind to gather
For us the pure store of a Church Father.
You were filled with God, Beauty ever new,
Eternal, who saw you blind, deaf, and through
Your bold defence sent darts to oust what seemed
True, but was false; you were a man redeemed.

Saint Louise De Marillac

You knew famous nobles and saints,
In days of absolute monarchs;
You decided to wash Christ's feet
Among the poor as hierarchs.

Amid trials of faith, you prayed
In your parish Church for a ray
Of hope, and luminous graces
Leaped in your heart on Whitsunday.

Widow and mother, you noticed
Springtime in the face of a child;
Your sunlight of affection shone
With truth to raise up youth defiled.

Breathing the air of fresh charisms,
You desired to have a withdrawn
Contemplative place, but Vincent
And you found a new, undreamt dawn.

And then into the marketplace
Came your mystic self to marry
Prayer with compassion, to soothe poor,
Sick, all human loads to carry.

You went with Ladies and Daughters
Into wars, famines, plagues, all needs
On earth. And today a great tree,
Evergreen, has grown from the seeds.

Vincentian Heritage, later rather than sooner

Con Curtin CM

Many years ago, when I was a student in Blackrock, the late Father Jim Thompson CM gave us this advice during a theology class: “You have heard the maxim of St. Francis de Sales: ‘Ask for nothing, and refuse nothing’. It does not work. I tried it for 26 years and the result was: I got nothing. I have now changed over to the gospel maxim ‘Ask and you will receive. It is much more satisfactory.’” When a confrere asked me indignantly, “How did *you* get on the course?” I replied with characteristic modesty “For outstanding service to the community”. The truth is that, following the above advice, I simply asked the Provincial when he was visiting our house and he kindly let me go.

This article is not a comprehensive diary of all the places we visited - just a few fleeting impressions. In fact we visited so many places in such a short time that I cannot recall clearly all of them. I’m told the idea for this Heritage Foundation was suggested at the last General Assembly. At first it was intended only for younger confreres up to 55 years of age. Recently it was extended to include older confreres.

We had guidance and help from Fr John Rybold from the USA and from our Spanish confrere, Fr Julian Diaz Catalan. We were greatly helped by Fr Rybold’s encyclopaedic knowledge of St Vincent and our Vincentian saints. Each of us was provided with a large portfolio with interesting information on all the places we visited. What impressed me was the vast extent of St Vincent’s activities ranging over such a huge part of France and into Spain at a time when travel was so cumbersome compared with modern conveniences. As well as visits to the various places associated with St. Vincent and the Vincentian saints, we had very interesting lectures on the history, the constitutions, the vows and the Superiors Generals.

As many of the confreres are familiar with the more important sites associated with St Vincent, here are a few fleeting glimpses of the less well known aspects. The visit to the home of St John Gabriel Perboyre was very memorable. It is a humble peasant’s house away in the heart of the countryside. In the living room there is a rough wooden table around which the family dined. There is a cross, carved in the table to mark the place where St John used to sit. Obviously the hard-working, frugal life on the farm prepared him for the hardships of his missionary life in China.

Of special interest to me was our visit to Marqueze, an outdoor ecological museum in the Landes area. It is about 75 kilometres north of Pouy. The Landes is a flat area – often waterlogged with poor soil. The museum portrayed the peasants' toil as they struggled to eke out an existence. I cannot forget the scraggy sheep, which were kept not so much for their meat but for their droppings, which were used to fertilise the soil. At that time even soap was home-made and beehives were a regular feature. I realised that it was only an approximation of how it was in St Vincent's time but the mock-up of the peasant house made it realistic. It caused me to reflect that it was to people such as these that St Vincent preached, people who, as Father Dodin points out, had an average life expectancy of 40 years.

Our visit to the archives, housed in chambers underneath the Maison-Mère was very interesting. We were guided by Br Paul Henzmann and I was especially thrilled to hold in my hand a manuscript letter of St Vincent himself.

We had a few very enjoyable days at Château L'Eveque where the Daughters of Charity have a retreat house and home for old people. We said mass every morning in the parish church where St Vincent was ordained. Only one side-wall and transept remain and there is a copy of the document signed by the bishop recording the ordination.

A rather interesting experience was our visit to the vineyard, formerly owned by the Vincentians where the famous wine "Chateau de la Mission" is still being made. We got a very warm welcome from the manager and staff. The only snag was, he went on and on about the process of winemaking. The day was fiery, warm and I was thirsty. The foremost thought in my mind was "Is he ever going to give us a drink?" I felt we would be able then to judge the wine for ourselves. Finally, he invited us inside to the beautiful reception room in what was formerly the residence of the Vincentians and gave each of us a glass of white and a glass of red. An excellent conclusion to our visit!

Apart from the spiritual side of the course, it was pleasant to be in Paris in June when the beautiful city was at its best. In our free time myself and my two confreres from the Anglo-Irish Province, Frs Hugh McMahon and Rod Crowley enjoyed just sitting outside a café on the Boulevard de Montparnasse sipping coffee, watching the crowds pass by and savouring the atmosphere.

On reflection the Heritage Course has given me a new realisation of the richness of our Vincentian Heritage. I knew St Vincent wanted us to be humble about the congregation. He referred to it as 'the little company' saying that we Vincentians are only 'gleaners' in the great work of the Church's harvest compared to the great orders in the Church. Nevertheless, it is important for us to have a healthy regard and

realisation of the richness of our Vincentian heritage. Nothing is so helpful to instil this regard as the course I was privileged to take part in. I am deeply grateful to the Congregation for this privilege. The only regret I have is that I did not experience it earlier in my life.

John Gowan: A Vincentian Vocation in Crisis

Jim McCormack CM

John Gowan began his Vincentian seminaire in 95 rue de Sevres, the Mother-House of the Congregation of the Mission, in Paris, on August 12th, 1850. He was then thirty-three years of age, and had been a priest of the archdiocese of Dublin since his ordination on April 10th, 1840 – the day after his twenty-third birthday. Archbishop Murray ordained him in his private oratory in Mountjoy Square, towards the end of his third theology year in Maynooth College.(1)

The first ten years of his priesthood were spent in the parish of Roundwood and the district of Glendalough, also known as the Seven Churches. Why he left this fruitful ministry to become a Vincentian is not clear. We know that subsequently he was an admirer of Fr Philip Dowley, sometime Dean at Maynooth College, who along with some of his students formed the nucleus of the new Vincentian Community. Their paths may just have crossed briefly in the summer of 1834: Gowan matriculated in the Rhetoric Class on August 26th of that year, and Dowley was just then pulling up his roots from there prior to joining the nascent CM Community in September. (2)

At all events, there must have been a lot of talk in Maynooth in the late 1830s when Gowan was a student there, about its first off-shoot, now geographically quite close, in Castleknock; headed by one of its former outstanding personalities in Dowley, who was managing the new college as a junior seminary, through which all aspirants to priesthood for Dublin Diocese had to pass, before proceeding to Maynooth or some other Major Seminary. Later, during Gowan's years in Co. Wicklow, the early – sometimes dramatic – Vincentian Missions, as in 1842 at Athy, not far from Roundwood, would have got a good airing in clerical circles.(3)

These circumstances serve to indicate that Gowan was familiar with the new community, its ideals, and some of its personnel, though hardly explain his decision. Fowler asserts that Gowan acted in this matter with the advice of his confessor (unidentified) - indeed had been considering doing so almost from the time of his ordination, and would have made his move sooner had it not been for the exceptional circumstances of the Famine.(4)

Margaret Gibbons quotes Gowan, in turmoil over the decision whether to go or stay, sharing with an unidentified friend: 'The uneasi-

ness of my mind made me ill: yet it was remarkable that when I had fixed my resolve to go and offer myself to St Vincent, I got well; but like Pharaoh of old, neglecting to make good my promise, I relapsed into my former illness.’(5)

More piquantly, one of Abbot Marmion’s biographers recounts that when Marmion as a young curate was thinking of becoming a Benedictine he talked it over with John Gowan, his confessor, who told him what happened when he had gone along to Archbishop Murray and said that he would like to become a Vincentian. The Archbishop had demurred - nothing was to be gained by such a move; but Gowan had replied : ‘I want to be a Religious because here [Wicklow] I find no one to reprove and correct me in view of my perfection; when I have religious superiors I am sure of being told when I am wrong.’(6) If this was so, his needs were to be amply met in the years ahead.

John Gowan entered the seminaire with the burden of an established reputation: ‘one of the most esteemed and humble of the Dublin curates’, his Provincial forewarned the powers that were in Paris.(7) We don’t know what he thought of his time in the French capital, or what anyone there thought of him, but soon enough there was concern that this sojourn was not doing his health any good. At an Irish Provincial Council meeting on January 27th 1851, it was resolved that ‘lest the health of Mr. Gowan should suffer by a longer stay in Paris and with a view to having his services available during the coming mission, the Visitor may invite him home, permissu superiorum.’(8)

We don’t know when he got back to Ireland, but on May 30th it was arranged that he should be sent to help the missionaries at Ballybohill (Co. Dublin), during the last week of the mission. Vincentian parish missions were to be a staple employment over the next several years. Indeed before he made his vows (August 15th, 1852), he had already notched on his cincture the extraordinary Oughterard mission (April-May 1852), which ranked along with that at Dingle in the primitive mythology.

John Gowan and Margaret Aylward

The earliest firm date that links John Gowan with Margaret Aylward is February 28th, 1853: he writes a few lines from Waterford where he is giving a mission.(9) It was an association that was to strain his commitment to the Vincentian Community to breaking point.

The relationship began as that of confessor-penitent. As President of a branch of the Ladies of Charity, she thought that she should have a Vincentian confessor and spiritual director. The confrere who had fulfilled that role, Fr Thomas Kelly CM (like Margaret Aylward, a native of Waterford), died on November 6th, 1852, and she was put in touch -

quixotically, though providentially as she came to believe - with John Gowan, sometime between that date and probably the start of the mission season of Lent 1853.(10)

As the 1850s progressed, Margaret Aylward's religious concern focused more and more sharply on the need to save poor children in Dublin, especially the orphaned and abandoned, from the well-organised forces of proselytism, by attending to their Catholic religious instruction, as well as to their physical well-being and personal development. This vision concretised itself in the first instance in the establishing of an orphanage, under the patronage of St. Brigid - this latter at the instigation of John Gowan. It was an orphanage with a difference: the children were to be fostered out to good families in country areas where they could grow up as sons and daughters of the household in a Catholic milieu.

It seems that John Gowan used his many clerical contacts, both from his Dublin Diocesan days, and latterly from missions, to implement this fosterage scheme in rural parishes. The work expanded, and Gowan, though still on the Vincentian mission and retreat team, was drawn more and more into it. Gradually it became clear that some sort of stable organisation was needed, whose total concern would be in confronting the consequences of proselytism in the educational field and providing a Catholic alternative; and that it would be desirable that a priest be in the forefront of the project.

Sometime in 1860 John Gowan approached the Vincentian Visitor, Philip Dowley, on the matter and apparently requested permission to give himself full-time to it. Dowley stalled, pointing out various objections. Gowan and Aylward, though, had by this time the interest and support of Archbishop Cullen, and on October 3rd, 1860 Gowan wrote as follows to Dowley: (11)

My Very Dear Father,

The grace of our Lord be forever with us.

I felt very strongly urged this morning during my thanksgiving to write to you on the subject of our last conversation. It appeared to me that I should make an effort to put the matter out of my head. I could not. It also occurred to me to pray to that effect; to this I felt a great repugnance. On reviewing what you said I am more strongly inclined to think that the work in question is the work of God. Because -
The Archbishop agrees to permit it. I need not tell you what a wonderful concession this is under all the circumstances. It is agreed that it is a good work.

That good will come of it – even the saving of one hundred children and even this should the present Govt. remain a year in office, and more wonderful still should they keep their word and more wonderful still even though they should be able to do so.

The only objections are that the Clergy of the Diocese may not be pleased and that Paris may refuse its assent. To the first, Fr. McCabe who knows me and the feelings of the Clergy better than any man in Dublin, says my Mission would be acceptable. But give me leave to lay the project before Fr. Kennedy, Fr. Roche, Dr. Yore, etc. and we shall soon do away with that objection.

Ex parte rei it is admitted that Paris could not refuse its assent, its only objection then will be on personal grounds. Here is indeed a valid objection for I feel in my inmost heart that had I the virtue and the sanctity required the thing would have been done before this. But wretched as I am I feel that God asks me to do Him this service in the person of His little helpless outcasts and He will supply what is wanting. Perhaps I might add that no man's fidelity in the Congregation has been more severely tested and the same God who assisted me in these trials will know how to attach me more strongly to my vocation while engaged in this work.

I am persuaded that you cannot in conscience bar the salvation of so many poor children and you know that it is not a question of one hundred, but to speak modestly, of many hundreds and of their generations. You know that I esteem you and love you and therefore when I speak boldly you will put it to the account of my intense conviction that God requires your co-operation in this good work. Say to Paris that the A.Bishop wishes it, that it is of extreme necessity, and that it will in some time conciliate the estranged affection of the Clergy to the Congregation, and say besides what yr. own loving heart will suggest and Paris cannot hesitate.

Pardon me, but I must ask you to consider this matter in yr. Meditations, put yourself before the tribunal of God and before the Guardian Angels of these children and say how you will be able to answer for letting them perish? Undoubtedly the faith and the souls of thousands are in your hands, not a doubt of it, say a few words in their behalf and you give them faith and to the majority eternal life.

You will find that a great increase of charity, peace and

harmony among parties now somewhat estranged will be the consequence of this work.

With the utmost confidence in God and Our Lady and the Guardian Angels of these poor children that the work will be done.

I am with all dutifulness and affection.

Yours, J. Gowan C.M.

This letter – a powerful piece of moral blackmail – raises many questions which are not easily answered. We know that the Vincentian Community in Dublin just then was at odds with the prevailing ecclesiastical establishment, with Thomas MacNamara and John Gowan at the eye of the storm. There was, in fact, a strong personality and policy clash between Gowan and the Superior in Phibsboro. The latter's high-powered fund-raising schemes for his seemingly interminable building projects cut across similar collections for St. Brigid's, with considerable animosity ensuing; and both parties succeeded in embroiling the Archbishop in the resultant fall-out. Furthermore, MacNamara was now the great champion of the French Sisters (Daughters) of Charity continuing in North William Street. Ironically their coming there had been first mooted by John Gowan and campaigned for by Margaret Aylward to help implement her own plans; but the French were unwilling or unable to adjust to the boarding-out type of orphanage and, to the Archbishop's unease, proceeded to think in terms of constructing a sizeable institution of the type with which they were familiar.

All this meant that the Gowan-Aylward venture, which had the backing of the senior Dublin clergy, was regarded with hostility by MacNamara and other confreres as an anti-Vincentian enterprise.⁽¹²⁾ As well as this, in the identity crisis that was now beginning to rack the Irish CM Province, and which would seek resolution at the Provincial Assembly of 1861, these two strong personalities, Gowan and his Superior, were in opposite camps. They must have found each other's presence in the small community at Phibsboro quite a strain.

The involvement of Etienne

Gowan and Dowley, though, got on well, and despite his hesitations the Visitor passed on to Paris Gowan's request - perhaps without consulting his Council. The Superior-General replied very quickly and clearly through Salvayre: he did not see how he could oppose M.Gowan's inspiration as it appeared to come from God; it had the Archbishop's approval; and it was a Vincentian work very dear to the heart of the Founder.

Etienne suggested that in the circumstances it might be better if Gowan transferred from Phibsboro to Castleknock; and that to prevent misunderstandings both MacNamara and Sister Virien (the Superior in North William Street) should be informed that the new venture had the Superior-General's blessing.(13)

What happened next is not easy to piece together, for there has been an almost total cover-up in official sources. It would seem that when Etienne's decision reached Dublin, very strong exception was taken to it – one must presume by Thomas MacNamara, and perhaps by others, Dowley among them. A meeting of the Provincial Council - the first in three months – was held on October 22nd, a minute from which provides the only, and none-too-informative at that, break in the tight-lipped security in which the whole affair was buttoned up: 'It was agreed that the Visitor will write to the Superior-General on the subject proposed by Mr. Gowan.' This cryptic sentence is the first and last mention of the affair in the Provincial Council minutes.(14)

The proposed letter that Dowley was to send to Paris, does not seem to have survived, nor are its contents referred to in the minutes of the Council in Paris. Presumably it conveyed the dissatisfaction of (at least some of) the Provincial Council with the decision to let Gowan have his way – possibly going as far as to indicate that such a course was unacceptable. At any rate, the next we know is that Etienne has written to Dowley countermanding his original decision.

Once again, this letter does not seem to have survived, and there is no reference to it having been discussed at the subsequent Provincial Council meeting on November 29th.(15)

On that date Margaret Aylward, from the prison cell where she had been since November 6th serving a six-month prison sentence for contempt of Court, wrote to her influential Roman friend and confidant, Dr. Kirby, recapitulating the whole genesis of the project envisaged by herself and John Gowan, and asking that the latter be named "Apostolic Missioner", and be free from Vincentian restraint to work for St. Brigid's. It's clear from her letter that she considered that the tide had turned against them, and that thus the normal channels of influence were closed - including that through the Archbishop; despite her reiterated assurances to Kirby that he was in full sympathy with them. Her comments on Gowan are interesting:

'One seems to have received an inspiration from Almighty God to devote himself under obedience to this work. Filled with zeal, with burning love, with talent, prudence and great humility, his soul grieves for the number of the Church's children who are torn from her bosom (sic) and reared in

heresy, and he would willingly give his heart's blood to save them. He has manifested this desire or call to the Archbishop: his Grace wished him to speak of it with one of his Parish Priests, whose opinion he respects very much [Canon McCabe], and he pronounces his desire to have all the marks of a "divine inspiration", and says that in Dublin no one at all could be got so suitable for the Mission. I should have told you that Fr. McCabe has known this priest for nearly thirty years, they were at College together, and he declares that no man will receive so cordial a welcome from the priests of Dublin - that from his unpretending, unassuming manner they will receive him into their parishes where none other would be received so well... His name is Revd. John Gowan, many speak of him as a saint. The Archbishop spoke to Fr. Dowley about him; he did not appear anxious to second his desire, of course he gives the highest character of him. The Archbishop told me to speak on the subject to Mr. Dowley... I declined, not believing I could influence him.

After some time His Grace desired me to go at once to Mr. Dowley. I did so but found him as expected - not inclined to entertain the subject - asked why the Archbishop did not apply one of his own priests to the work. I know it is not agreeable to lose the services of a good priest in a Congregation even for a while, but thousands of souls will be deprived of the sight of God forever if this design be not carried out. The wonder is that if a 'mitre' be offered in that Congregation to the Fathers no difficulty is ever made by the heads. The Archbishop is very anxious to get him for the work...He is attached very much to his Congregation. A person who knows him thoroughly has declared that he never undertook anything which did not succeed.'(16)

Kirby, not surprisingly, told her that if she was waiting for the Roman machinery to grind out an answer to her satisfaction she could be waiting a long time, and that she would be better advised to keep plugging away at CM officialdom in Dublin. But it was too late for that: her having ended up in jail, however unfairly, was probably the coup de grace to her hopes of getting John Gowan - the Vincentians could reasonably argue that they did not wish to become embroiled in some new controversy in Dublin, one which of its nature looked like generating indefinite confrontation with the forces of Proselytism.

On December 21st Dowley explained to Cullen that the John Gowan case had been submitted to Paris for judgement and that the Superior-

General's final word on the subject was that Gowan should be sent at once to the confreres' house in Cork. He adds by way of explanation that Gowan's own 'peace and happiness as well as the vital interests of the Congregation requires this change...' (17)

It would seem from this letter that the initiative was Etienne's, though MacNamara, also writing to Cullen, clearly makes it Dooley's doing. Cullen was disappointed, and feared that Gowan's removal would be interpreted as directed against Miss Aylward. Still, he felt it was useless for him to interfere in the case any further. Then, as if by afterthought, lobbed a hand-grenade of his own: "After a good deal of deliberation I have come to the conclusion that the French Sisters of Charity are not suited for this country. Will you be so good as to give the necessary notice to the Superior and Superioress as the stipulation requires that they should receive four months notice before the Sisters are removed.(18) Poor Dooley!

Sister Virien, Sister-Servant in North William Street, took the announcement with Gallic phlegm: 'As children of St. Vincent, with true resignation to the holy will of God' - though perhaps, also, not too displeased at the prospect of returning home.(19)

Gowan in Paris

John Gowan had a different perception of how God's will manifested itself. At any rate he had no intention of being rail-roaded out of town and shunted into the Cork siding. Within a fortnight, having spent Christmas in the bosom of his confreres, he is on the high seas heading for Paris and a show-down there.

As the ship nears Holyhead he writes to Margaret Aylward in her Grangegorman cell:

I shall go at once into France and sleep to-night in, I hope, Rouen; look about me to-morrow morning and go into Paris to-morrow evening. I shall not write again till I have some news. Suppose four or five days. We must endeavour now to give ourselves entirely to God. These extraordinary circumstances have arrived unexpectedly; it is therefore our duty to rely firmly on God, to be perfectly calm and not to allow any kind of passion to sway us. We must pray very much. We must above all have recourse to the Mother of God. We must humble ourselves in every way that we possibly can in order that Almighty God may find the least possible obstacles to his grace...(20)

And having exhorted her not to be precipitate in any thing, he adds a

postscript which assures her that he is perfectly at ease. He signs himself simply “J. G.” without adding, as was his usual practice, “C.M.”.

Four days later, the minutes of the General Council of the CM in Paris record the following rather startling information: M. McGowan [sic], missionary at St. Peter’s Phibsboro, and currently in Paris, has asked to be dispensed from his vows for the following reasons

- because of the advice of the most enlightened men
- it is not possible for him to go along with many of the things being done in the Congregation
- he has no confidence in his Superiors
- because of the abuses he has observed
- because of the collections that are being made in opposition to the Decrees which require that our functions be fulfilled gratis
- because of the tensions in the Province – in a word, it is good neither for himself nor the Congregation that he should remain.(21)

Nothing that we have hitherto known of John Gowan’s life in the Community really prepares us for this. The one hint that we have had is that given by himself in his letter to Dowley of October 2nd 1860, in which he claims that no man’s fidelity in the Congregation has been more severely tested. Whatever this meant, it seemed to have been something that he had come to terms with. It is very hard to make the reasons cited for this unexpected request to the Superior-General add up. (Part of the problem may lie with the succinctness of the minutes just quoted). It’s true that the tensions in the Province were very real and were about to come to a head at the 3rd Provincial Assembly.

The ‘abuses’ that he mentions possibly had to do with varying interpretations of the vow of poverty : Gowan had the reputation of being a particularly strict observer in this matter; indeed, in a short memoir by a near-contemporary he is described as a ‘purist, if not a jansenist, in the good sense of the word.’(22) Whatever these alleged abuses were, it’s worth saying that when Dowley is writing to Etienne on the eve of the Provincial Assembly, and speaking very openly about the Province’s divisions and problems, he asserts that ‘virtue reigns and the rule is observed everywhere’. Nor did the question of abuses loom large at the Assembly itself.(23)

John Gowan was by no means unique in not having confidence in his Superiors. He certainly didn’t have much in Thomas MacNamara or his policies; and though he liked Dowley and got on well with him, there was a widespread feeling in the Province that Dowley was ‘past it’. In fact he had submitted his resignation more than once,(24) and though

Paris reckoned that it would be for the good of the Province that he go, in the end they declined to accept the resignation, fearful of what might happen if MacNamara succeeded him as Visitor - fears that were duly realised.(25)

The collections of which Gowan speaks, were indeed a controversial issue. As well as MacNamara's fund-raising enterprises, the practice was growing up on some of the Parish Missions of the local clergy availing of the missionaries' popularity and the euphoria generated by them, of instigating collections for general parish funds. Quite a few of the confreres were unhappy about this: they did not wish these Missions in any way to be associated with money collections; but it was proving hard to get the local clergy to ignore this heaven-sent gift horse.

Who 'the most enlightened men' were, who advised Gowan on his course of action, can hardly even be speculated about, unless they were the Dublin Diocesans such as McCabe, Yore, Kennedy and Roche mentioned in the October 3rd letter - and also by Margaret Aylward in her letter to Kirby of November 29th. And surely he consulted Cullen again after Paris ruled against him and ordered him to Cork, or confirmed that order. Presumably he had an assurance from the Archbishop that he would be accepted back into the diocese, though it is hard to imagine that Cullen actively encouraged him to seek a dispensation; and we have Cullen's word for it on December 22nd that he did not see any point in involving himself further in the case.(26)

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the comprehensive list of reasons attributed to Gowan for seeking a dispensation is that the reason we would most expect to find is conspicuously absent, namely, his desire to continue to work with Margaret Aylward - and this was surely the crux of the problem as far as the Provincial Council in Dublin was concerned. Yet it is not even alluded to, never mind high-lighted.

There is a hint that his local Superior, MacNamara, surmised that something portentous was afoot. Writing to Cullen on December 29th, 1860 - his first letter to him since the personally very upsetting ruling about the Sisters of Charity had been made - he admits that he has been emotionally caught-up in the whole business and says:

As for Mr. Gowan, his case was beyond my competence and I am glad it was so. However I will permit myself to mention that Mr. Dowley was left with no alternative having in view Mr. Gowan's own good and the interest I may say of more than this house. To be more secure he [Dowley] referred the matter to the Superior-General who not only approved the order but required its enforcement.

A community, as your Grace so well knows, is a

labyrinth to those outside, and I very much fear that this act of authority is to have a painful justification...(27)

The ‘painful justification’ seems to suggest that he knew or suspected that John Gowan, rather than comply with the decision that he should go to Cork, was intent on leaving the Congregation. Presumably Dowley also knew what was happening, but we have no evidence that he was in contact with Paris in the few weeks prior to Gowan’s arriving there.

All in all, the story behind the Paris Council Meeting of January 1861, remains something of a puzzle. Hardly less enigmatic is the fact that within three days, John Gowan changed his mind, or had it changed for him. Again, we just do not have the information to say what exactly happened, but there are some indications. In a letter to the still-imprisoned Margaret Aylward, dated January 12th, 1861, he alludes to and partially, though obliquely, recapitulates a letter to her of January 10th, in which evidently he had explained his change of mind about seeking release from his CM vows:

I wrote you a good long letter two days ago, giving an account of the state of things. I hope you received it. I am fully confident that the Alm.God is better pleased with the course I have taken. No doubt I would be justified in taking the other I think. But I believe now I see a prospect of great good and we must never allow self to stand in the way of God’s greater glory... Fr. S. tells me that my visit here was most providential and will be productive of great good. I trust in God it may, because there is no doubt that the Congr. following its proper spirit is eminently suited to many of the wants of Ireland. Please God in a short time you will be able to say Resurrexit...The friends whom I loved ten years ago here, just arrived with myself, they came I may say from the ends of the earth. You could not imagine what a happiness to all parties to embrace one another again...(28)

Exasperatingly, his letter of January 10th does not seem to have survived. Still, that of the 12th adequately enough shows his new state of mind. While still deeming his earlier attitude justified – that is, presumably, his decision to leave the C.M., though that is not actually said – he now thinks that God is better pleased with the course he has now taken: presumably to hang in with the Irish Vincentians.

It seems as if he has been coaxed [by Etienne? by Salvayre? – who is likely to be the Fr. S. of the January 2nd letter] to consider that his apos-

tolic vision for the Irish Province – which presumably included the Margaret Aylward enterprise and his personal association with it – was very much in keeping with the true spirit of the Congregation of the Mission; that this spirit, in consequence perhaps of the forthcoming Provincial Assembly was about to re-animate the Irish Province; that the latter had very much to offer Ireland in her hour of spiritual need; that he, John Gowan, in a spirit of self-sacrifice should remain a Vincentian and play a part - perhaps a significant part – in the Province’s providential destiny; and [though again it is not actually said, nor is it recorded in the Minutes of the Paris Council] there was an assurance that he could remain in Dublin and, at least for the time being, continue his spiritual ministrations to Margaret Aylward and her work.

Further, it is possible that he may have got a hint of the mooted clerical formational works which the Province was just then being directed towards, e.g. the seminaries in Armagh, Thurles and Ferns, which doubtless he would have viewed as being in keeping with the true spirit of the Irish Province.

It may be noted here that Gowan – in some ways unexpectedly - seems to have belonged to that wing of the Province designated as the “Minority” at the 1861 Assembly: he was not a delegate to this latter, but his closest confidant in the Congregation, Francis Cooney who was on the staff of Castleknock College, was a Delegate on the Minority side, whose leader was Philip Dowley. This group was particularly concerned about Ireland’s spiritual needs, especially her educational needs, and inter alia, felt that the Province should concentrate its energies on Ireland rather than, e.g. on attempts to convert England, of which the Sheffield foundation was the none-too-plausible presenting thrust.

Furthermore – and this may have been at the heart of Gowan’s position – the Minority wanted control of Parish Missions removed from local Superiors, notably from MacNamara at Phibsboro, and placed under the direct administration of the Visitor, with the missionaries living together in their own community house. Some of the Minority were considered by their critics to be excessively nationalistic, and indeed John Gowan during his pre-Vincentian Co. Wicklow curacy, had to be reined in by the Archbishop, Daniel Murray, for intemperate activity.(29)

The divided Assembly, probably sensing that matters could never be satisfactorily resolved until the Dowley-MacNamara era had passed, de facto allowed the Province to develop on all fronts – the underlying tensions eventually settling down over the decades into a low-level simmer between missionaries and educationalists; though their differing apostolates had not originally been seen so baldly as the locus for discord.

The Aftermath

The Paris Council met again on January 14th, and this time it noted simply that the Superior General had informed the Council that M. Gowan “has changed his mind for the better; that he must not be put back with M. MacNamara but with M. Dowley, the Visitor, for whom he has always had the greatest respect. For this reason the Superior General asks M. Dowley to keep him with him, and the Council concurs”.(30)

There is no evidence that Etienne consulted Dublin between Gowan’s arrival in Paris and his change of heart – not later than January 10th, there would scarcely have been time for him to have done so. But it’s quite possible that he did consult Fr. James Lynch CM, Rector of the Irish College. It is from him that we learn, in a letter to Cullen dated January 15th. 1861, that on that morning John Gowan was on his way back to Ireland determined to persevere in his Vincentian vocation, and that the Superior General had given Fr. Dowley ‘his cordial sanction to his continuing – under the wise guidance of Fr. Dowley – his spiritual care of Miss Aylward.’(31)

So Lynch was obviously right up with events. From this it seems reasonable to conjecture that Etienne, and possibly Gowan, had consulted him. He was to be prominently on the side of the Minority at the impending Provincial Assembly, so he would have understood at least some of the matters that were troubling John Gowan, and been sympathetic.

Furthermore, he was in regular correspondence with Cullen, and hence in touch with the broader ecclesiastical scene in Dublin. It seems likely that Etienne, Lynch and Salvayre helped Gowan to see the Irish Province in a less gloomy perspective and persuaded him to back off from the brink. It also seems plausible that meeting some of his old friends from his seminaire days of some ten years previously, awakened happy memories and softened his current attitude towards the Little Company.

When Gowan got back to Dublin, Dowley made the following arrangements for him: he was to live in Castleknock – which got him away from MacNamara; it wasn’t as handy as Phibsboro, to the sphere of his interests, but it was a lot nearer than Cork. And he was permitted to visit Margaret Aylward in prison twice a week, to hear her confession and give her whatever spiritual consolation she needed. According to Dowley, this arrangement gave satisfaction to all parties.(32)

If so, it didn’t for long. It soon became clear that the prisoner was not going to be satisfied with anything less than John Gowan’s full availability to St. Brigid’s. She took the hint from Kirby that the road to Rome was a cul-de-sac, and doubled back towards Cullen again. Her man-handling of the Archbishop, who was reckoned a doughty combat-

ant in his own right, is impressive:

Now my Lord, you will get the help that is necessary, a letter from Your Grace to the Superior General will do all. To save you trouble I send you one, which embodies all that is necessary, and if you write and send this, all will be done – I thought it shorter to write this, the truth of the whole business is in it...

Now My Lord do send this letter and the thing is done – it would probably be better to send it under open cover to Mr. Dowley, and to save trouble I write two or three lines to him in which the first could be enclosed if Your Grace thinks well of it – now my dear Lord do send this off this day, get the help at once there is no time to be lost – the work can't be let drop or fall away, a woman could no longer direct and manage it successfully - there is no doubt but Your Grace will get Father Gowan for the work if you write this letter – do post this day. M. Etienne is the Superior General's name – Rue de Sèvres (33)

She knew Cullen's weak point and exploited it: the thought of Catholic children being subverted from their faith, and hence eternally lost, was one which would not let him sleep peacefully. Yet, he did not wish to take up the matter again with the Vincentians after all that had gone before – especially the 'odium sororum'. So the Primate, Dr. Dixon of Armagh, was inveigled in on the case. He was a gentle soul, and a popular man with the Irish Vincentians: he had facilitated their administrative take-over of his Diocesan seminary in Armagh. His brother was a member of the CM community at Phibsboro.

This new onslaught, fronted by the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, and marshalled by a woman who wouldn't take 'no' for an answer and who would soon be unleashed again, quite unnerved poor Dowley, as we see from his subsequent letter to Etienne:

...to my great surprise the Primate Dixon called here on Wednesday last in reference to the Armagh seminary, and among other things informed me that he was commissioned by his Grace Dr. Cullen 'to beg and request that I would permit Mr. Gowan to devote his zeal and services to the great St. Brigid's Orphanage', which I understood to mean that this confrere's time and attention should be devoted to the promotion of the temporal and spiritual interests of this charitable institution by all the means in his power. The

Primate has gently supported this demand of Archbishop Cullen. Most Honoured Father, I shrink from such a responsibility. I feel such a step too much for me, looking at the perilous and momentous consequences involved in it, without obtaining the will and judgement and decision of Our most Honoured Father upon the whole case. However anomalous it may be to set a confrere aside for a work which is not under the care or direction of the Congregation, it might be dangerous to refuse a compliance with the wishes of the Archbishop. Your wisdom and charity will, I respectfully pray, 'decide' for me with as little delay as possible and direct me what to say and do. Mr. Gowan is here as your pastoral charity arranged for him: he is quiet, moderate and edifying. Unfortunately - I say this in the strictest confidence - anything that is said and done for this orphanage is looked on by some of our confreres as done in opposition to our dear Sisters of North William Street. This known feeling had much to do with the former displeasure of the Archbishop...(34)

On March 4th the Paris Council deliberated on this, and was clearly unhappy about the turn events had taken: on the one hand concerned that 'the aforesaid Mlle. [Aylward.] could fall into further excesses of zeal which could injure the honour of the Congregation', yet on the other hand not wishing to defy the Archbishop. Next day Etienne wrote to Dowley saying that he thought it would be dangerous to resist Archbishop Cullen, and that if he insisted on having his way, despite all C.M. reservations, then Dowley should submit. Not only was it important that the Vincentians should give an example of obedience to ecclesiastical authority, but it was also important that the Archbishop shouldn't think that his decision about the Sisters was in any way affecting the dispositions of the confreres towards him.(35)

Dowley duly went to Cullen and then reported to Paris that he had explained to Cullen all the reservations that were felt about the proposed appointment of John Gowan, but had submitted when he saw that the Archbishop was displeased about further resistance. Dowley added that all the confreres in St Peter's were unhappy about this submission - even though such a practice had been advocated by St Vincent - and he felt that the Superior General should pronounce a moratorium on any further discussion of the whole affair by the confreres.(36)

Conclusion

And that, substantially, was that. Margaret Aylward had got her man.

She saw it as Cullen's appointment and thanked him for arranging it.(37) There were a few rumbles: MacNamara was afraid that Cullen was going to insist that Gowan live in Phibsboro. And when MacNamara was made Visitor in 1864, Gowan was momentarily apprehensive that there might be some change of policy. But he was left unharassed to do his work with the Orphanage, and with the burgeoning Sisterhood growing up in association with it – though there was continuing friction between MacNamara and the Orphanage about collections for their respective enterprises. Gowan, with the permission of the Superior General, transferred back to Phibsboro in the summer of 1866: the daily journeys between Eccles Street and Castleknock were a nuisance, and meant that he could not fully participate in C.M. community exercises; and, anyway, MacNamara, very reluctantly, had gone to live in Castleknock on becoming Visitor – such was the established practice.

In following his star for the next thirty-six years, from the traumatic events of the winter of 1860/61 until his death, it's hard to avoid the conclusion that John Gowan in the process became a rather peripheral figure as far as the Irish Province itself was concerned. His name rarely occurs in the minutes of the Provincial Council meetings; there is no mention of his appointment to the work of St. Brigid's Orphanage; no mention of the Holy Faith Sisters or of his direction/formation of them; no allusion to his work as Spiritual Director in Clonliffe College, nor as Professor of Sacred Eloquence in Maynooth.

A partial explanation of this, of course, is that his 'case' was considered by the Irish Provincial Council to have been taken out of their hands, and was in a way directly answerable to the Superior General.

Happily, there is no hint of any recurrence of his dissatisfaction with the Community. In 1871 he visited St Vincent's birthplace. And in a letter to Margaret Aylward has left a nice little memoir of what obviously was a happy occasion: the visit was part of a pilgrimage of thanksgiving, to Lourdes in the first instance, which he had promised Our Lady on the successful outcome of an operation for the cataracts on his eyes:

I made a pilgrimage this morning to Our Lady of Buglose and had the happiness to say Mass at the altar of the Miraculous statue, and I offered it for you alone. I hope to celebrate tomorrow in the room where St. Vincent was born and shall offer it up for the SS of the Holy Faith... I am delighted with this place and everyone in it. I am received in the Houses of the French confreres with even more cordiality than I would be in Ireland. How beautiful is the Catholic

Church which gives us friends among the stranger!...I paid a visit today to the Church where St. Vincent was baptised and to the mill where he used to get his father's corn ground. This is a very primitive place and everything remains nearly as it was in S.V's time - the dress, the language - the stile[sic] of the houses - and best of all the faith of the people - nearly everyone salutes the priest. The buildings of the Berceau - the church and the houses are far superior to what I had imagined. They are really both beautiful and convenient. The old oak tree under whose branches S. Vincent emptied his purse to the beggar is here still. It is more than 400 years old. The house tho' simple does not betoken so much poverty as he represented his family to be in. There are six apartments on the ground and a loft under the tiles. I had about my neck today the stole which he used in preaching his first mission... (38)

Years later, after another illness, he convalesced in the erstwhile dreaded Cork, and once again it was a happy Community experience for him:

I am most comfortably lodged in a cheery room overlooking the sea (sic) with a prospect of half the city and a fine view of the country to the south and west which whether viewed by sunlight or moonlight appears a kind of paradise. All here receive me with the greatest cordiality and seem to think they cannot do enough to assist towards recovery of my health. It is really a happy thing even in this world to be a member of a community...(39)

House Visitation notes by various Provincials all testify to the edifying witness of John Gowan's life in the Vincentian community - indeed even at the height of the controversy in 1860/61 there is no suggestion other than that he was regarded as a holy man acting from disinterested motives. At the extraordinary Visitation of the Province in April/May 1877, Fr Mariano Mailer had this to say about John Gowan in his report:

Mr. Gowan, John: a very fine confrere, of excellent disposition; he keeps the rules and obeys them conscientiously. He goes to Maynooth, where he teaches, I believe, the course in Sacred Eloquence. It is an honour for the Congregation to have a Professor in the famous Maynooth College. Some

consider him a bit rigid about poverty and in connection with educational matters. I am not inclined to believe this: anyhow, his virtue safeguards him from going to any extreme. Il est docile.”(40)

John Gowan outlived all the protagonists in the strange events of 1860/61: Philip Dowley, Paul Cullen, Thomas MacNamara, Primate Dixon, John Baptiste Etienne, and Margaret Aylward. Paradoxically, by the time of his own death, January 16th, 1897, at the age of 80, he must have been far and away the best-known Vincentian in the land.

NOTES

1. Irish Vincentians have traditionally referred to their time of noviciate as the *seminaire*. Both Fowler and Farrell, and hence authors who rely on them, incorrectly have John Gowan going to Paris in 1849. The official Ms Register of Personnel in the Irish C.M. Archives now at Raheny [ICMA] gives the date of his ordination to Priesthood as “May 1840”. [cf., Anonymous, *A Sketch of the Life of Father Gowan*, C.M., 39pp., printed by John F. Fowler, 3 Crow Street Dublin, 1900. The author may have been a Vincentian colleague of Gowan’s; and Rev Ernest R S Farrell, CC, BA, “Rev. John Gowan, C.M.(1817-1897), Founder of the Sisters of the Holy Faith and Pioneer of the Anti-Proselytising Movement”, *Irish Messenger Series*, 24pp.,1927. This relies on Fowler, but has its own “Q” source. Farrell was a priest of the Archdiocese of Dublin. Also, Congregatio Missionis, xix Martii, Anno Domini, MDCCCXXXIX - a Ms Register in ICMA which lists the personnel of the Irish Province. The first name is that of Philip Dowley; John Gowan is no.55.]
2. In 1839, Fr Philip Dowley went to Paris to do a six-month *seminaire*. He was one of the first group of six Irish aspirants to make vows in the new Community, on November 1st 1841. The Irish Province of the C.M. was canonically erected on January 24th, 1848, with Dowley its first Visitor/Provincial.
3. For a study of Irish Vincentian parish missions in the mid-19th century, James H. Murphy, ‘The Role of Vincentian Parish Missions in the “Irish Counter- Reformation” of the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, *Irish Historical Studies* , xxiv (1984), 152-71 ; and Patrick McCrohan, “The Future of the Irish Vincentians in Britain: an Historical and Theological Perspective on their 1985 Mission Statement”. Unpublished. Copy in ICMA. For Gowan’s Maynooth Matriculation date, Patrick J Hamell, *Maynooth Students and Ordination Index 1795-1895*, 74.
4. Fowler, 18.
5. Gibbons, Margaret, *The Life of Margaret Aylward*, (London, 1928), 127. She does not give a source for this, but the author had access to oral tradition within the Holy Faith community about J Gowan.

6. Raymond Thibaut, *Abbot Columba Marmion. A Master of the Spiritual Life*, (1949), 39.
7. Dowley to Salvayre, Castleknock, July 26th, 1850: ICMA Box 1875, File 1850. Salvayre was the CM Procurator-General in Paris, who seems to have been the Superior-General's contact man for English-speaking correspondents. Dowley was even more enthused about the other Irishman who entered the seminaire on the same day as John Gowan, namely Dr James Taylor, Rector of Carlow College. He did not take vows; exivit in pace.
8. Minutes of Provincial Council Meetings [MPC], ICMA, 75.
9. Holy Faith Glasnevin Archives [HFG]. JG/PL/05. No.1.
10. According to Margaret Gibbons, she came forlornly to St. Peter's Phibsboro seeking a new Vincentian confessor. 'All the priests are strangers to her; how shall she make a choice?...An old woman approaches. "Do you want to go to Confession, ma'am?" she enquires. With a touch of surprise the lady assents. "Go up to the gallery, then", directed the other in an authoritative sort of way. "There's a priest 'hearing' there, and *he's the man for you.*" It was Father Gowan...We are told that Miss Aylward ever after regarded the old woman as a messenger of Heaven in disguise.' (Emphasis in the original). Gibbons, 120-121.
11. HFG.JG/CL/06. No.135. The letter is headed: 'St. Peter's Phibsboro. Feast of Angels Guardian.' It is not dated, but the envelope bears the postmark, Oc 3 1860.
12. The relationship between MacNamara and Cullen has been explored in Sr. Brid Lyng, "The Relationship Between Father T MacNamara and Archbishop Cullen, 1854-67", History Department, Maynooth College, 1979.Unpublished. Regrettably, the coming of the French Sisters of Charity (as the Daughters of Charity were then known in Ireland) to Ireland does not yet seem to have been fully researched. The Sisters began work at the North William Street house on May 14th, 1857: cf. signed account by Sr Josephine Virien, 9th June 1884 to the Very Reverend P Duff: "I am the only surviving witness..." ICMA Box 1876-99, File 1884.
13. Salvayre to Dowley. ICMA B2 GM (John Gowan File). Typed copy HFG. JG/CL/06. No.136. The date of this letter is not altogether clear: it could be either October 13th, 1860, or September 13th, 1860. The latter looks slightly more likely on epigraphical grounds, though if this were correct it would present problems. The contents of the letter would make best sense if the date were November 13th, 1860.
14. ICMA MPC p.182.
15. We know that there must have been such correspondence because of Dowley's letter to Cullen, Dec21st, 1860: Dublin Diocesan Archives [DDA], Priests 1860, 333/2. This and subsequent references to the DDA in this chapter relate to the Archbishop Paul Cullen correspondence 1850-1878.
16. Margaret Aylward to Kirby in Rome, Grange Gorman Prison, Dublin, November 29th, 1860.HFG.Mc/K/12.no.26 (b).
17. Dowley to Cullen, St Vincent's, Castleknock, 21st Dec.1860. Draft, DDA. *ibid.*

18. Cullen to Dowley, 22nd December, 1860. Draft, DDA. *ibid.*
19. Sr Josephine to Cullen, North William St, 31st Dec.1860.DDA. Nuns 1860, 333/6.
20. John Gowan [without his customary C.M.] to ‘My Dear Margaret’, January 3rd. No year cited, but it must be 1861. JG/PL/05, no.9.
21. Minutes of the Vincentian General Council in Paris [MGCP], January 7th, 1861.
22. Rev T O’ Herlihy, C.M., “Abbot Marmion as Spiritual Director”, in *Abbot Marmion, An Irish Tribute*, ed. Monks of Glenstal Abbey, Mercier Press, Cork, 1948, pp.106-114,], 108.
23. For some of the background to these tensions, which were complex and full of paradoxes, JHM, “The Provincial Assembly of 1861”, in *Colloque, no.4*, (Spring 1981), 22-32; and, for a particular perspective, James H Murphy’s (ed.) fascinating, *Nos Autem, Castleknock College and its Contribution*. Gill and Macmillan, (no date given, but c.1996), *passim*, but especially 26-48; also, Patrick McCrohan, *op.cit.*, chp.viii, and *passim*.
24. Dowley to Etienne, March 27th, 1861, from Castleknock, in JHM, “The Provincial Assembly of 1861”, *loc.cit.*, 26 ; and James H. Murphy (ed.), *loc.cit.* 26-48.
25. Thomas MacNamara was appointed Irish Visitor/Provincial, Feb.8th, 1864.
26. Cullen to Dowley, 22/12/1860. Draft, DDA. Priests 1860, 333/2.
27. MacNamara to Cullen, St Peter’s Phibsboro, 29/12/1860. DDA. *ibid.*
28. John Gowan to Margaret, Rue de Sevres, January 12th HFG. JG/PL/05, no. 12.
29. People had come from Dublin to Wicklow to start political clubs, with a view to agitating for the repeal of the Act of Union. Fr Grant, the Parish Priest of Wicklow reported, on request, to Murray that Gowan “who had the most foolish notions on politics” was encouraging this agitation. Gowan promised Murray he would not attend any political meetings in future, but protested that Murray’s Wicklow informant [namely, Grant] had “grievously misrepresented him”. DDA. Dr Murray 1848, 32/4, nos.24, 27, 28.
30. MGCP. January 14th, 1861.
31. James Lynch to Cullen, Irish College Paris, 15th January 1860 [this ought to read 1861]. DDA. Priests 1860, 333/2. James Lynch was Rector of the Irish College in Paris 1858-66: the first Rectorship under CM administration.
32. Dowley to Etienne, Castleknock, 1st March, 1861. ICMA Box 1875, File 1861.
33. Margaret Aylward to Cullen, Grangegorman Prison, Dublin, Feb.14th, 1861. DDA. Important & Nuns 1861,333/8.
34. Dowley to Etienne, 1st March, 1861, *loc.cit.*
35. Etienne to Dowley, Paris 5th March, 1861. HFG. JG/CL/06, no.137 (typed copy in French).
36. MGCP. 11th March, 1861.
37. Margaret Aylward to Cullen, DDA. Important & Nuns 1861, 333/8. Part of this letter, including the address and date, is missing, but it probably dates

- to the end of March or sometime in April 1861. Gowan saw it as Etienne's appointment: cf. Gowan to Etienne, undated, but probably the first half of 1866; typed copy in ICMA. John Gowan File, Box B2, CM.
38. John Gowan to Mother Agatha [Margaret Aylward], 8th November, 1871. HFG.JG/PL/05,no.24.
 39. Same to same, Jan.18th, 1878. Ibid. no.27.
 40. ICMA Report by Mariano Maller CM of his Extraordinary Visitation of the Irish Province of the CM, April-May 1877.

Dom Marmion and Fr Gowan

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translation by the editor.

General opinion considers Dom Columba Marmion OSB as one of the surest and deepest spiritual writers of modern times. Although, in the opinion of the great monk himself, the formation of his soul was begun by a Vincentian whose lessons, however, were to continue throughout the life of Dom Marmion, and to exercise their influence on that life. We may be excused for taking a certain legitimate pride in this. In order to verify this fact, it is sufficient to cite the biography of the pious and wise Abbot of Maredsous.

In the area of piety, he, like many of his companions, came under the influence of Fr John Gowan, of the Congregation of the Mission. Few were as fine and ascetical a figure as this son of St Vincent de Paul. It is enough to stop for some minutes before his portrait in the great hall of Holy Cross [Clonliffe College, Dublin] in order to understand the considerable impression he must have made on these souls. A tall frame, thin, marked by the privations and ardour of his zeal; strong chin; dark, almost sombre, eyes, which still bear the memory of the sight of the horrors of the 1846-1850 famine; a high forehead, framed by a crown of white hair; all traits emphasizing the virtue of asceticism.

Born in 1817 (1), attracted early to the priesthood, John Gowan, after a number of years of ministry in the diocesan clergy, was totally consecrated to God on entering the Vincentians. Dedicated to the missions, he gave himself to them without counting the cost. His reputation for sanctity, even more than his reputation for eloquence, followed him everywhere. A man of prayer, a priest full of zeal, he sought only to be an instrument in the divine hands. From the start of Holy Cross, he was named confessor and spiritual director there. His conferences have remained famous. He had the gift of communicating to hearts the supernatural spirit of which he was filled. With great humility, he never ceased to recommend this virtue to those souls he directed, even to the end of his life (1897); he insisted greatly on the necessity of receiving reprimands and corrections well. His devotion to the passion of Jesus was particularly lively. When he touched on this subject, he did so in

accents so powerful that his listeners were touched even to tears.

The influence of Fr Gowan on Abbot Marmion was real. It was he who inspired in him his love for the virtue of humility and especially his ardent devotion to the sufferings of the Saviour. "If", he told him constantly, "you meditate frequently and attentively on the sorrows of Jesus, while making the Way of the Cross, you will rapidly come to perfection; you will not lose your fervour and you will receive many graces". This is the language of saints. Abbot Marmion submitted to this suggestion; he developed, from that point on, the habit of doing this exercise, daily and piously. We can state that, from that out, he never missed it.

Sometimes, it was following a lecture which awoke in him such inspirations, and so vehement was the desire in him to strengthen his spiritual life that he set out, in this way, to undertake pious works. A story told in the life of St John Berchmans suggested to him the idea of making a spiritual pact with two of his friends. This undertaking, approved of by Fr Gowan and duly signed, obliged them to pray each day for each other for three special intentions; to obtain a great devotion for the Blessed Virgin; for real humility; and for ardent zeal for souls. Moreover, each of the signatories promised that if, after death, he was, as he hoped, admitted to the joy of the Lord, he would invoke God's blessings on the survivors. Later scattered in their different callings, the three friends never again saw each other without recalling their commitment. The life of Dom Marmion lets us see how their prayer had been answered.

Already he was apprenticed to that zeal with which he would later burn. To obey his director, he once spent all his holidays visiting, with a companion, the poor of the city, offering them, besides material aid, the spiritual alms of a comforting word. Equally under the guidance of Fr Gowan, who was particularly attracted to the protection of the faith in the souls of children in opposition to the protestant proselytisers, he undertook, with two seminarians and a layman, a Sunday school for the religious instruction of young boys. He dedicated himself to these two, sometimes punishing, commitments, with the inexhaustible ardour of youth, even though he saw that the Sunday school would not have lasting success.

If he appreciated the spiritual advantages which the tutelage of a master like Fr Gowan offered him, he took account more and more of what souls, dedicated to perfection, but conscious of their fragility, gained in security, aid and merits, once they set their perseverance under the aegis of religious vows. He had, doubtlessly, read – because he was and always remained an ardent reader of the lives of the saints – he had read, in St Bernard, these life-giving words of total renunciation; "In the

cloister, one falls more rarely, one picks oneself up more rapidly, one goes forward more assuredly, one is made more fully holy and death is more joyous”.

It was especially the idea of obedience, the means *par excellence* of perfection and union with God, which pushed him towards the cloister. He, naturally, opened himself on this subject to Fr Gowan. He [Gowan] was better suited than anyone to understand and approve the aspirations of his penitent. Had he not himself left the secular clergy in order to consecrate himself totally to God in the Vincentians? And he told the young teacher that when he had asked permission of his archbishop to enter religion, the latter had answered;

“A religious? An excellent and virtuous priest like you? You have nothing to gain by the change”.

“Alas, my lord, I wish to become a religious because here I find nobody who will reprove and correct me with regard to my perfection; when I have religious superiors, I am sure that they will tell me when I am wrong”. (2)

Faced with such a lofty motive, the archbishop was swayed. (3)

From that moment, the intention of Abbot Marmion, long nurtured in secret prayer, approved by Fr Gowan, agreed on finally by his archbishop, was sealed; he would enter the abbey of Maredsous. That is why he, faithful to this thought, habitually made the way of the cross after his thanksgiving. We remember that this devotion had been awakened in him from the time of his entrance into Holy Cross College by Fr Gowan. From that time, he remained always faithful to the suggestion of this holy religious, and we can say that he never missed a single day of this exercise.(4)

NOTES

1. In Skerries, Co Dublin. He was the fifth of eight children. Studies at Maynooth. Appointed to the district of Glendalough, he gave himself tirelessly to the care of his parishoners during the famine. Having become a Vincentian, his principal work was the struggle against protestant proselytism and the foundation of the institute of ‘Sisters of the Holy Faith’ for the instruction of the youth. He died in January 1897, full of years and of merits. Cf Rev. E. Farrell, *Rev. John Gowan, C.M.* Dublin, 1927.
2. Dom Marmion often told of this trait and drew from it the necessity of conforming to grace whatever its reprimands. We said above that Fr Gowan himself often insisted on the necessity of receiving correction well.
3. God, however, allowed him to gain from this, for the dioceses of Dublin was the first to benefit from the ardent zeal of Fr Gowan.
4. 2 Nov. 1920. ‘*Hoc anno vovi viam crucis*’

Religion and Education

J H Murphy CM

This article is, in essence, the sixth chapter of James' forthcoming book which will be a social, cultural and literary history of nineteenth century Ireland.

A central issue in the first third of nineteenth-century Ireland had to do with the position of the Catholic majority within society. It was a wide issue which was symbolised in the demand for the right of Catholics to sit in the House of Commons. In one sense it was a piece of hyperbole to call the winning of this limited measure Catholic Emancipation. In another, it was an aptly dramatic image for the broader struggle, a struggle which had such important consequences for the Protestant Ascendancy. The defining of a political nation in largely ethnic and religious terms might have been avoided had the obstacle which caused its formation, the denial of Catholic Emancipation, not mistakenly been kept in place at the time of the Act of Union.

By the end of the nineteenth-century, the Catholic Church in Ireland had become large, powerful, cohesive and assertive, especially on such issues as its support for denominational education. It had begun the century largely quiescent, loyal and moderate. Many factors contributed to the transformation but not the least of them was the galvanising effect of the vigorous proselytism to which the Catholic community was subjected for most of the century, largely from sections of the Established Church.

Surprisingly then, while the political agenda for the first half of the century was set by the rise of a Catholic nationalism led by Daniel O'Connell, the religious agenda was set by the Established Church. In 1801, the Established Church in Ireland became part of a new united church with the Church of England. Its dilemma was summed by in 1838 by the prime minister Lord Melbourne who told Queen Victoria "that the Established Church was *generally* kept up for the Poor, as the rich could afford that themselves; whereas in Ireland...the Established Church is *only* kept up for the Protestant feeling of the United Kingdom and not for the Poor who are almost all Roman Catholics."⁽¹⁾ It was a parlous position to be in, especially with the social, economic and political position of the Protestant Ascendancy now under attack. From the Church Temporalities Act of 1833, which reduced the number of its bishoprics by ten to its disestablishment and disendowment by Gladstone in 1869 the Church of Ireland provided an easy target for

Whig and Liberal governments anxious to be seen to be bringing reform to Ireland in their attempts to win over Catholic nationalist opinion.

From an early point in the century the Church had sought to bring about reform within its own ranks, which had the effect of extending its pastoral outreach. The number of benefices was increased from 1,120 in the 1780s to 1,395 in 1832 and 1,518 in 1867. In 1787 there were 1,001 churches. By 1832 the number had risen to 1,293. At the same time the opulence of clerical lifestyles was being curtailed. In 1830 the primate's annual income was £14,00. By 1867 it had fallen back to £9,000.(2) The number of clergy increased by a half in the first third of the century. At the same time the number of parishes without a resident clergyman was cut by a half. The number of parish schools and the number of residences for clergy both more than doubled and nearly seven hundred churches were built or enlarged.(3) But all of this was not enough to sustain the church's position as the establishment. Whereas in England the Established Church has maintained its established position down to the present day in a secularised society by embracing liberalism, the strategy which some sections of the Church of Ireland embraced in the early nineteenth century was quite different. It was an attempt to convert the Catholic population.

There were two ideological driving forces behind this move which were eventually to dominate the Church of Ireland, in an alignment which in other circumstances was not an obvious one. The first was the 'high church' tendency which valued ecclesiastical structures and hence the establishment. The second was the evangelical tendency which put a premium on the inner experience of personal conversion.(4) This latter movement conveniently restricted the miraculous to the inner life and allowed believers to live their outer lives according to the empirical norms of modern society.(5) For many evangelicals Catholics with their apparently externalised sacramental system lacked that element of personal conversion necessary for salvation and were thus the objects of particular pity and zeal.

For the most part Established Church evangelicals were less concerned with denominational boundaries and were prepared to cooperate with dissenters in their work of conversion.(6) Indeed, the first Protestant missionaries in Ireland were a group of Irish-speaking Methodists in 1799, though at the time Methodists were still attached to the Established Church and it would not be until 1816 that a significant number of them in Ireland broke away to form their own church.(7) For the most part though the prevailing evangelical theology of the Church of Ireland ensured that many who might have become dissenters could remain in the establishment.(8) Power le Poer Trench, a recent evangelical convert, was made archbishop of Tuam in 1819. On the other hand

the church's two senior clerics for most of the period, Lord John George Beresford, archbishop of Armagh (1822-62), and Richard Whately, archbishop of Dublin (1831-61), were not supporters of evangelicalism.

Over the first seven decades of the century as many as five major trends or phases can be detected in the evangelical campaign, focusing successively on education, polemics, colonies, English evangelism and charities. The period until 1822 was one of often low-key educational work by Protestant societies, some based in England and some in Ireland. Among them were the Church Mission Society (1799), the British and Foreign Bible Association (1804), the Hibernian Bible Society (1806), the London Hibernian Society (1809), the Religious Tract and Book Society (1810), the Sunday School Society of Ireland (1811), the Irish Evangelical Society (1814), the Irish Society [officially "The Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their Own Language"] (1818) and the Scripture Readers Society (1822).(9) As time went on these societies began to take on a more evangelical hue. In particular the Kildare Place Society (1811) which ran hundreds of schools throughout the country, and which might have formed the basis for a national system of education, was taken over by evangelicals in the 1820s, causing those Catholics including Daniel O'Connell who had supported it to withdraw.

On 24 October 1822 the high church archbishop of Dublin, William Magee, took things a stage further when he publicly called for a 'Second Reformation,' one which would bring about the conversion of Ireland's Catholics. This led to a period of public polemics between Protestant and Catholic controversialists in which evangelicals came up against Catholic spokesmen who were their equal in energy, such as James Warren Doyle ('JKL'), the Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin (1819-34), whose natural inclination was for moderation. A six day debate took place in Dublin in April 19827 between Fr Tom Maguire and the Rev. Richard T.P. Pope which Maguire was reckoned to have won. In Carlow, 18-19 November 1829 three Protestant and three Catholic controversialists engaged in public debate.(10)

The supporters of the evangelicals included a number of landlords such as Lords Farnham, Roden and Powerscourt. Among the issues which were to haunt the Second Reformation were charges of economic and cultural imperialism and that conversion was tainted by financial inducement and landlord pressure. In the last months of 1826 some 250 persons were converted on Lord Farnham's Co. Cavan estate, an event which caused such consternation in Catholic circles that five bishops were dispatched to investigate it. By spring 1827 some 1,340 converts were reported nationally. It was an aberration, however, and by the middle of 1827 the converts were returning to Catholicism.(11)

Nonetheless, it was now clear that it was possible to convert Catholics. The next two decades were to see the flowering of a new Protestant literature and journalism. They were also to see a focusing of efforts to convert Catholics in 'colonies,' specially financed areas in which converts could be gathered together. The two most prominent such experiments were in Achill and Dingle. The Rev. Edward Nangle founded the Achill colony in 1831 and publicised his activities through the *Achill Missionary Herlad and Western Witness*. His colony flourished for two decades and survived for more than four. The Rev. Charles Gayer, an associate of the Irish Society, began working in the Dingle area in 1838, founding colonies and making over 800 converts by 1845. However, his work received a fatal blow in the early autumn of 1846 when a Catholic 'mission' was held in the area by the Vincentian Fathers, such events representing the beginnings of a more effective resistance by the Catholic Church to evangelical incursions.(12)

During the traumatic years of the famine there were accusations of 'souperism,' that the provision of food relief had been made dependent on conversion.(13) The case of the well-meaning Rev. William Allen Fisher of Kilmoe, Co. Cork who provided a sacramental service which even included confession for the Catholic population of his parish who had been deserted by their priest and was later reviled as a 'souper' is illustrative of the difficulty in determining the truth.(14)What was undoubtedly the case was that the famine was seen in the Protestant providentialist thinking of the time as judgement by God against the Irish and as a new opportunity to convert them.(15)Evangelical activity intensified and in 1849 the Rev. A.R.C. Dallas founded the Society for the Irish Church Missions to the Roman Catholics, with its headquarters in Exeter Hall, London. During this English-based phase of the Second Reformation 125 stations were established in twenty-four parts of Ireland and it was claimed that 35,000 Catholics had been converted.(16) However, by 1863 it had run out of steam.

Meanwhile, in urban areas and especially in Dublin proselytism was often associated with charitable work. The most notable example was that of the Smylie Homes, founded by Ellen Smylie. Her schools and homes for poor Dublin children, which were partly funded by the Irish Church Missions, openly selected children from Catholic and mixed religion families in preference to Protestant children. Margaret Aylward helped to found the St Brigid's orphanage as a Catholic counter to Smyly.(17)

The Second Reformation petered around after disestablishment. The Church of Ireland turned into a ghetto church in the south of Ireland and embraced a common Protestant identity with the Presbyterian Church in Ulster.(18)From the early 1890s, in what came to be known as the

Anglo-Irish literary renaissance, a group of Anglo-Irish writers made a bid for cultural dominance in Ireland in perhaps unconscious imitation of the ambition for religious dominance of their evangelical forebears.(19)

The Presbyterian Church enjoyed a very different trajectory from the Church of Ireland during the nineteenth century. The first four decades were spent in struggles over various theological disputes which resulted in the majority of Presbyterians embracing conservatism and effectively ending the radical tradition which had inspired the United Irishmen. Henry Montgomery was the leader of the liberal grouping which had arian and unitarian tendencies. However, he was progressively outmanoeuvred by Henry Cooke, leader of the conservative faction, and Montgomery and his supporters left the Synod of Ulster to form their own Remonstrant Synod in 1830. Meanwhile Cooke worked for the unity of conservative Presbyterians and in 1840 the Orthodox Seceders and most of the Synod of Ulster combined to form the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland on the basis of the Westminster Confession. Cooke was also a strong advocate of an alliance between the Presbyterian Church and Church of Ireland in the common Protestant cause.(20)

The Presbyterian Church was becoming more cohesive politically and theologically but it was in danger of withdrawing from its earlier communalism into a middle class identity. Two opportunities presented themselves mid century to reverse the trend but neither was fully embraced and the slide towards middle-class respectability was unchecked. The first arose from the same providentialist view of the famine which had spurred on Established Church evangelicals to redouble their efforts. The famine seemed to some to offer the Church the chance to move beyond its Ulster-Scots ethnic identity and to open its doors to Catholic converts. When nothing came of this possibility there were experiments in the 1850s in returning to the open air preaching which had been a feature of the earlier communal phase in the Church's existence. This experiment prepared the way for the second opportunity, the 1859 Revival in which 100,000 people were reported to have experienced religious conversion. However, the effects proved short lived, mostly because of the reluctance of many Presbyterian ministers to endorse the bodily manifestations and altered states of consciousness which were reportedly part of the experience of many converts.(21)

In 1834 there were 664,940 dissenters in Ireland and 853,160 members of the Established Church but 6,436,060 Catholics.(22) Catholics constituted 81% of the population, though in view of the disproportionate affects of the famine on the Catholic population this

figure would drop to 78% by 1861, 77% by 1871 and 74% by 1911.(23) In 1861 Catholics constituted 50.55% of the Ulster population but ten years later the figure was 48.9%.(24) In 1871 whereas Catholics were over-represented among labourers (87%) and shopkeepers (83%), they were dramatically under represented among the higher professions such as barristers (30%), doctors (34%), solicitors (37%), civil engineers (34%), architects (34%) and bankers (27%) and even among merchants (42%).(25) The Catholic emphasis on education had its roots not only in a fear of proselytism but in an urgent desire to increase the middle-class Catholic base. From the point of view of the Church as an institution both the absolute number and the proportion to the population of full time religious personnel - diocesan and regular clergy, nuns and religious brothers - was of great importance. The early nineteenth-century in fact saw a relative weakening of institutional strength in this regard, with the dramatic rise of the pre-famine population and the loss of the continental colleges which had trained priests before the French revolution. Whereas in 1731 there was one diocesan priest for every 1,587 Catholics, by 1800 the ratio had worsened to one for 2,678. Even though the number of such priests rose from 1,614 to 2,183 between 1800 and 1840 the ratio continued to worsen. It was only in 1871 with the continuing rise in the number of priests and the post famine decline in population that the ratio improved to one for 1,560 and returned to the level it had been at 140 years before.(26) By contrast the number of nuns showed an exponential increase across the century from 122 in 1800 to 8,000 in 1900.(27) By contrast with their Established Church contemporaries Catholic clergy lived modestly. Bishops were paid £300 per annum and parish priests £65.(28)

The closure of most of the continental colleges had been compensated for to a degree by the foundation of Maynooth College in 1795. It was financed by a government fearful of the influence of Jacobinism on the Catholic clergy. In 1826 there were 391 students at Maynooth, 120 at other Irish seminaries and 140 in the continental colleges which had managed to survive or reform after the Napoleonic wars. Maynooth had its critics in the early nineteenth century, not least among the Ascendancy, whose constant cry was that it was advancing persons to the priesthood from a very low social and economic background and was thus socially and politically subversive.(29) Official investigations, however, showed that the students at Maynooth were mostly from the middle rank of the tenant farming class though some were from more comfortable backgrounds while some were the sons of merchants or tradesmen. The cost of an education at Maynooth put it beyond the reach of the poor. Ironically, the middling farmers were to come to dominate post-famine Ireland and its nationalist politics, in tacit alliance

with the majority of priests who came from similar class backgrounds.(30)

Clerical discipline was not universally strong. In 1785, John Butler, the Catholic bishop of Cork, left his ministry and converted to the Established Church on assuming the barony of Dunboyne. In 1835 Francis O'Finan was appointed bishop of Killala but did not remain in his appointment for very long because of the opposition of some of the younger clergy who felt that one of them should have been appointed. Around the same time a Co. Monaghan curate, Edward O'Callaghan, was suspended by his bishop but stayed on in his parish, supported by an armed body guard.(31) There was then a certain laxity in clerical discipline often marked by disputes, drunkenness and avarice, though priests under ecclesiastical censure were generally credited with special powers by the peasantry. Discipline may indeed have deteriorated in the early nineteenth century due to the poor training of some priests ordained during the disruption caused by the French Revolution.(32)

Most debate among historians, however, has focused on the religious practice of the laity, specifically on the rate of Sunday mass attendance. Some have argued for a rate as low as 40% whereas others argue for a much higher rate, taking into account those excused from church attendance on grounds of age, illness, distance from the church and the need for someone to remain at home to mind the house. What is clear though is that mass attendance was highest in English-speaking towns and rural areas and lowest in rural Irish speaking areas. Geographically, mass attendance was highest in the area south of a line between Dundalk and Killarney with its heart in what is termed the 'Catholic core' area. Economically, it was the area of greatest Catholic prosperity.(33)

By the end of the century clerical discipline was strict and attendance at Sunday mass had risen to the nearly total levels that were to be maintained at in Ireland for most of the twentieth century. Clearly something had happened both in terms of the pattern of religious observance as controlled largely by the clergy and in terms of the embrace of that religious observance by the Catholic population. In addition expectations of what constituted a practising Catholic also changed because the relatively low levels of Sunday mass attendance in the early nineteenth century did not cause the clergy great anxiety and foreign observers often commented on the religious fervour of the Catholic Irish.

Great efforts were made to reformulate religious practice strictly along the lines of the sixteenth-century Council of Trent. There was a boom in church building to the extent that the finance for it has been considered a significant factor in the development of the Irish economy for the period. (34) Regulations were enforced to limit the administration of the sacraments to the church building. Marriages, for example,

had hitherto been performed in people's homes.(35) The system of station masses, although of no great antiquity was also frowned on. Stations were occasions when the people of an area would gather in a specified house for mass and were thought to be occasions where unseemly behaviour might occur. Patterns and wakes were of course equally frowned on. Thus Canon Michael Murphy of Upper Killeavy employed the South Armagh Yeomanry to help him suppress a local pattern, known for drunkenness and fighting. However, some traditions such as the penitential pilgrimage to Lough Derg made the transition to the new era.(36) In place of the discouraged practices was a new emphasis not only on the sacraments but on more individualised devotions such as the rosary, the stations of the cross and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Religious confraternities of men and women were also encouraged to perform various religious and charitable functions, but they were clerically supervised bodies. Finally, an enormous investment was made in hospitals, schools and other institutions and religious orders were founded or imported to provide them with personnel. The Catholic Church came to match the state in its creation of new centralised institutions and regulated practices.

If all this answers the question as to what took place, then the questions when and why remain to be answered. There is some disagreement and a variety of views on when the institutional reform took place. Some hold that the reform occurred gradually in the century from 1775 to 1875.(37) Others believe that the 1790s were key years for reform, under the leadership of John Troy, archbishop of Dublin (1786-1823).(38) Another view is that the first half of the nineteenth century was the most important time, especially with the advent of new and zealous religious orders such as the Vincentians.(39) Finally, there is the view that the post-famine period, the years between 1850 and 1875, constituted a decisive 'devotional revolution' in Ireland.(40)

These divergent views can to an extent be reconciled by bearing in mind the difference between laying the ground work for reform in theory and its practical implementation. Tridentine devotions were introduced in the eastern, English-speaking parts of the country, for example, at a much earlier date than in the western Irish-speaking areas. It was certainly the third quarter of the nineteenth-century before they had taken definitive national hold.

Key figures in the reform included Daniel Murray, archbishop of Dublin (1823-52), who encouraged the foundation of several important religious orders. In politics he was generally moderate and cooperative with the government.(41) By contrast his successor, Paul Cullen, archbishop of Armagh (1849-52), and of Dublin (1852-78), who was created Cardinal in 1866, was assertive in his advocacy of Catholic rights.

Cullen presided over the synod of Thurles (1850) which codified much of the reform of the clergy and religious practice already introduced by individual bishops over the previous fifty years, though many of these reforms were resisted by the Gaelic nationalist, John MacHale, archbishop of Tuam (1834-81), who remained one of the few independent forces in a hierarchy which was increasingly dominated by Cullen.

By temperament Cullen was a nationalist but accepted the status quo of the Union in his pursuit of the enhancement of the status of the Church and Catholic community. He maintained his distance from governments but was equally keen to keep priests out of politics and to condemn more extreme forms of nationalism such as the Fenians.(42) His own attempts to establish a political party under the influence of the hierarchy in the National Association (1864) failed.

Cullen was a keen supporter of the ultramontanism of Pope Pius IX and played a prominent part at the First Vatican Council (1870) at which seventy-three Irish-born bishops from Ireland, America and the British colonies, were present.(43) Ironically, his unifying of the Irish bishops in fact reduced the openings for Roman interference in the Irish church which was always suspect in Ireland because of the British government's attempt to influence papal policy for Ireland.(44) Thus in the 1880s the bishops, under the strongly nationalist William Walsh, archbishop of Dublin (1885-1921), were strongly resistant to papal condemnations of the Irish land war.(45) The land war also coincided with the reported apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Knock, Co. Mayo, in 1879. Her silence during the apparition enabled it to be embraced by Catholics of a variety of political persuasions and social classes.(46)

In fact the Catholic Church's interaction with nationalist politics led to the creation of a stable, liberal-democratic political system in nationalist Ireland.(47) This reached its apogee in 1994 when, under the influence of the nationalist Thomas Croke, Archbishop of Cashel (1875-1902), the bishops gave their support to the Irish Parliamentary Party in return for its support for their policy on education. It was a consensus between the Catholic Church and Irish nationalism which survived the traumatic fall of the Irish nationalist leader, C S Parnell, in a divorce scandal.

As for why Tridentine Catholicism was embraced with such alacrity by the majority of Irish Catholics the reasons must be more speculative. It has been suggested that Catholicism acted as a substitute for the dying Irish language as a marker of national identity or that the strict sexual mores of tridentine Catholicism suited the economic priorities of the rising farming class, centring on the accumulation of capital. As farming families could now only afford one heir, celibacy or emigration was the

only options for non-heirs, a choice reinforced by the Catholic prohibition on extra-marital sexual activities.(48)

The sexual puritanism considered so characteristic of Irish Catholicism may thus have fulfilled economic ends, as well as being an acquiescence in a desire for middle-class Victorian respectability.(49) Such considerations complement the picture of an oppressive church imposing its views on an unwilling population, believed by later generations of urban intellectuals intent on individual self-realisation.(50) They also explain the relative failure of the clergy in imposing its will in other areas of life such as the excessive consumption of alcohol,(51) the practice of late marriage and emigration, all of which met with clerical disapproval. In particular clerical power in areas of violence agrarian (52) and political agitation was definitely limited. Priests developed strategies to balance official ecclesiastical condemnations of revolutionary violence, so as not to alienate their congregations. The activities of historical revolutionaries could safely be praised. Symbolic nationalist gestures, such as the boycotting of state occasions, could be made and a humanitarian sympathy could be extended to imprisoned revolutionaries such as the Fenians, whose actions had been condemned.(53)

The issue which preoccupied the Catholic Church above all was that of education. Seen by evangelicals as a means of converting Catholics from superstition to Biblical Christianity and by governments as a means of converting Catholics from disloyalty and backwardness to loyalty and progress, education was an issue over which Catholic leaders become more and more convinced of the need for denominational control.

The illiteracy rate in Ireland dropped from 53% in 1841 to 33% in 1871 and 14% in 1901.(54) Even in the first quarter of the century two fifths of children went to school. The Kildare Place Society was in receipt of government grants and by 1831 was educating 140,000 pupils. Most children who attended school, however, were pupils at small private schools somewhat misleadingly termed 'hedge' schools.(55) Much of this educational provision was inter-denominational.

In education and in other areas the perceived backwardness of Ireland paradoxically paved the way for the creation, at considerable government expense, of the most modern and centralised experimental systems in educational provision, far ahead of anything available at the time in Britain.(56) In 1831 the government introduced a system of national education at primary level which was intended to be multi-denominational with shared secular and separate religious education. Presbyterians came out against it but by 1840 had won concessions. The Established Church was disgruntled at what it saw as a Whig attack on

its position. By 1839 its Church Education Society had been set up to rival the national schools system and Established Church opposition continued until 1860. Catholics were divided and would have preferred a denominational system. Archbishop Murray supported it but was opposed by MacHale. Nonetheless, after some suspicion, Rome allowed the church to embrace the new system, (57) though schools run by the Christian Brothers continued outside the system for many decades. In fact the National Schools developed in practice into a system of denominational education with clerical managers. Thus by 1870 only 5% of the Catholic children attending National Schools were at truly multi-denominational schools.(58)

Third-level or university education was the next battleground when in 1845 Sir Robert Peel announced the establishment of three colleges at Cork, Galway and Belfast, which were eventually to form part of the Queen's University. Though nondenominational they were obviously intended to meet the needs of Catholics in the case of the first two and of Presbyterians in the case of the third, Anglicans already having Trinity College Dublin to meet their university needs. Quickly dubbed the 'godless colleges' by the O'Connellites, the colleges had their supporters among the Catholic hierarchy, such as Murray once again. Attempts to gain concessions such as multiple denominational chairs for religiously-sensitive subjects failed however. The colleges were opposed by MacHale and eventually by Cullen, the new power in the land. Though the Belfast College was a success those in Cork and Galway were relative failures.(59) Cullen founded his own Catholic University in 1854 with the idealistic educationalist and Anglican convert, John Henry Newman, as rector. Because its qualifications lacked state recognition this, too, was a failure, apart from its Medical School, whose students could take exams in state-recognised institutions.

An impasse had been reached with the hierarchy demanding denominational endowment and British governments adamantly resisting it. In 1868, Lord Mayo's plan for a non-endowed charter for the Catholic University failed. Gladstone's 1873 scheme to amalgamate all existing university institutions in Ireland led to the downfall of his government. An unsatisfactory but workable compromise was found in 1879 by the Tories who established the Royal University as an qualifications body whose examinations could be sat by men and, indeed, women, from any institution or none. Fellowships of this university were awarded to the staffs of a variety of educational institutions including the Catholic University, now reconstituted as University College Dublin, under the direction of the Jesuits. The eventual partial moderation of the hierarchy's demands led to a final solution in 1908 and to the establishment of two government-funded teaching universities, the Queen's University of

Belfast and the National University of Ireland which subsumed the Queen's Colleges at Cork and Galway and U.C.D. into an unofficially Catholic grouping.(60)

By contrast with the university sector secondary or intermediate education was tacked with a slightly less protracted struggle. It was a much smaller sector compared with that of primary education. In 1871 there were 587 'superior schools' in Ireland with 24, 170 pupils compared with nearly half a million national school pupils.(61) Only half the pupils in secondary education were Catholics. There was a relatively large endowed sector under the control of the Church of Ireland, though there were a number of prestigious Catholic secondary schools such as Castleknock, Clongowes Wood and Blackrock Colleges. The solution hit on to accommodate the needs of Catholics in secondary education in the 1878 Intermediate Education Act was a system of indirect endowment similar to that applied to the university question the following year. Pupils were paid scholarship money and their schools fees based on their performance at public examinations. The payment-by-results element, however, which was also introduced into national schools in 1879 had a deleterious effect on the quality of education.

The nineteenth century thus ended with the state having entrusted considerable patronage and financial power into the hands of the Irish Churches in the educational arena. It was an outcome unforeseen by the Whig utilitarians of the 1830s who had begun the process or by their enemies, the new Irish Tory *littérateurs* who saw the written word as a prime weapon against Catholic superstition.

NOTES

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Golden Jubilee of St. Paul's College, Raheny

Closing Mass; Homily preached by Frank Mullan CM
Tuesday May 29th 2001

Readings; Ecclesiasticus 3;17-24
Ephesians 3:14-19
Matthew 5: 1-12

There's a deal of homespun wisdom in that first reading from Ecclesiasticus. "Don't try to understand things too difficult for you ... concentrate on what has been assigned to you". That's as good a reason as any why I shouldn't be attempting to explain the whole Philosophy of Education in this homily. You could, though, get near the meaning of education in a quote from the second reading from St. Paul "out of his infinite glory may God give you the power of his spirit for your hidden self to grow strong."

Celebration of a Jubilee is a terrible temptation to indulge in nostalgia. St Augustine was once asked why he thought the "good old days" of the past were so much better than present days. His reply: "probably because they are past". Any way, said he, it's a foolish question to ask. In other words; learn from the past, but don't live in it

We speak of St. Paul's having built up a tradition. True enough, but we should remember that tradition doesn't mean simply repetition of what was done in the past, but innovation born from the past in answer to the needs of the present day. In other words: learn from the past but don't live in it.

Archbishop Romero offers a timely message for us to day: "Remember", he says, "we can't do everything and there is liberation in that (there certainly is). This enables us to do something and do it well. We are workers, not master builders, ministers, not Messiahs."

We can do something and do it well reminds me of our studying Tennyson's *Ulysses* in the old days in St Paul's:

Come, my friends, 'tis not too late
to seek a newer world —
Some work of noble note may yet be done
not unbecoming men who strove with gods

In our facing together that work of noble note there's another salutary message from poetry, this time Christopher Fry's *The Sleep of Prisoners*

Thank God our time is now
 when wrong comes up to face us everywhere-
 never to leave us till we take
 the longest stride of soul man ever took.
 The Enterprise is Exploration into God

Yes, God comes into our lives. There's a marvellous little black lady in *The Colour Purple* who says somewhere: "Even if you think God ain't there, trying to do without him can be a great strain!"

The real purpose of Education is to reach out towards truth and grasp it. Christ said: I am the Way, the Truth and the Life... If you make my word your home you will learn the truth and the truth will make you free.

By now it's a bit of a cliché to say that the first casualty in war is truth. Before we ever get to war truth is already a casualty in the commerce and politics of today. "The Spirit of truth will be my witness", said Christ. That Spirit comes to us at this time of Pentecost, so let us pray that the Spirit of God will guide and shape the future destiny of St. Paul's.

We claim that St. Paul's is a College in the Vincentian tradition. Well, for St Vincent, Christ and the Holy Spirit were everything: Christ who claimed that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life. That should be the hall mark of Vincentian education. And in these days when people are much more aware of the need for Social Justice in our society (much more than the people of Vincent's time ever were) let St Paul's always have, as one of its priorities, the education of youth to plan and work for Social Justice in the Ireland of today.

John Hewson C.M.

The whole province was shocked to hear of the sudden death of Fr John Hewson. He had just returned to Lanark on Thursday afternoon, 4th of January, after doing a supply for the Daughters of Charity at Southport and was in great spirits. He paid his usual First Friday Communion visits to the sick and house-bound. Though he felt a bit out of sorts, he still celebrated Mass in St. Mary's Hospital on Saturday, 6th January. He died early on Sunday morning, 7th of January, to the great shock of us all.

He was born in Cabra Road, Dublin, not far from St Peter's Church. His family were all great workers in our parish. John became an altar server under the late James Crowley CM and finally joined the Vincentians after leaving St. Vincent's School, Glasnevin, run by the Christian Brothers.

He started his priestly life in St. Mary's, Lanark, after his ordination in 1961. He worked in several of our parishes, namely Hereford, Bristol, Goodmayes, Warrington and he finally returned to Lanark in 1999.

I had the privilege of working with him in Lanark and Warrington. He was a tireless parish visitor and knew them all intimately. His personal relationship with the parishioners was the secret of his success. I got a letter from a parishioner in Warrington saying: "We were all stunned to hear of his death. He was so long here, we looked on him as one of ourselves."

John's special gift was the care of the sick and elderly. He was very warm hearted and hugged them on his visits. Furthermore, he gave them his constant time and attention. He was chaplain to Winwick Hospital, Warrington, for eighteen years and was highly regarded by the patients and staff.

In community he was very good-natured. He put himself out for any visitor to the house and delighted to prepare a meal for them, even if they arrived late at night. He was a great mimic and provided us with much fun as he imitated different confreres.

He was a true Vincentian, very humble, simple in his manner, very friendly. Now, God has called him to his reward. He is survived by his sisters, Eileen, Sheila and Clem, (a Holy Faith Nun, Sr Perboyre), and Vinney, his brother. John was 65 years of age last August.

Con Curtin CM

JOHN HEWSON CM

Born: Dublin - 2 August 1935
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1954
 Final Vows: 8 September 1959
 Ordained priest: 27 May 1961 in Clonliffe College
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid,
 Archbishop of Dublin.

APPOINTMENTS:

July - September 1961:	St. Peter's, Phibsboro
1961-'66:	St. Mary's, Lanark
1966-'70:	Our Lady's, Hereford
1970 -'71:	St. Mary's, Strawberry Hill
1971-'73:	St. Cedd's, Goodmayes
1973 -'76:	Christ the King, Bristol
1976-'80:	Our Lady's, Hereford
1980-'99:	St. Stephen's, Warrington
1999-2001:	St. Mary's, Lanark
Died:	7 January 2000
Buried:	Lanark

Maurice Carberry, C.M.

The theme of the first reading at the Mass on the morning following the death of Fr Maurice Carberry was taken from the Book of Wisdom of Sirach and, as we prayed, it seemed to me providentially appropriate, for *wisdom* was a quality we certainly associated with Fr Maurice. For Sirach, God was all, the only God, the Almighty Creator who brought order to all aspects of life both natural and moral. God, the source of good, acts justly but also forgives. In the Old Testament *wisdom* is associated with skill, common sense and human knowledge. But, here in Sirach, *wisdom* is hidden in God and is understood as reverence, devotion and awe in the Divine presence. To have this quality is a great blessing and brings with it many other blessings, including long life to one who has it. The connection between *wisdom* and God is very close.

This extract from scripture seems to me to encapsulate the philosophy and life of Maurice and the wisdom he practised and loved. For him life was, in fact, remarkably simple:

God revealed himself in His son, Jesus Christ.

Christ founded his Church and through it reveals himself to us.

Therefore, Jesus and his Church are to be loved and served.

Causa finita est.

Morning Meditation, the Mass, the Divine Office, private prayer and the Rosary took up much of Maurice's day. The Church Maurice had grown up in until his mid-fifties was the one in which he was happiest. Meditation was always silent so shared prayer didn't much appeal to him. When saying Mass in private he always used Canon 1. He devoted much time to saying his Office, always anticipated and disliked any variation that deviated in the slightest from the manner prescribed by the Church. His appointments he accepted absolutely and humbly as the Will of God, the duties of office to be performed to the best of his ability.

Maurice first came to Castleknock from his native Athy in 1923 and remained there until taking his BA. He entered the Vincentians and was ordained in 1923. In the first twenty-four years of his priesthood he taught for periods in Castleknock, in St Patrick's, Armagh, until the war, then in St Paul's, Raheny, theology in St Joseph's, and was spiritual director in Clonliffe and St Kevin's, Glenart. In 1959 he returned to Castleknock where he spent the remainder of his life. For some of those years, I was with him in community, and I have to say his presence at all community exercises was a marvellous example for all of us and for me, at least, I admit, a constant spur. His regularity, devotion and reverence are greatly missed.

If I were to try to sum up Maurice in a few words it would be 'Catholic humanist.' I use the term 'Catholic' deliberately because a few weeks before he died and on one of the last occasions he was in the community room, while discussing an article in the *Irish Catholic*, he argued most cogently for the use of 'Catholic' rather than 'Christian' on account of present-day perception. Being a Catholic informed his whole life. At times, out of pure mischief, one of the community would voice a mild criticism of some church matter and almost automatically Maurice would take the bait and spring to the defence of the Church. He would not consider himself infallible but it was clear in an argument ('discussion'?) that, as he said on one occasion, 'It isn't so much that you are wrong as that you aren't right!' Maurice was widely read but during his later years, being retired, he was able to read the daily papers and *The Tablet* thoroughly and so at table he could talk on most subjects with authority and succeeded in keeping our community meals quite lively.

Earlier, when describing Maurice I used the term 'humanist'; it was just the other side of the coin. Perhaps an illustration would help. A confrere remarked that, when Maurice was the spiritual director in Glenart, he was with him on one occasion and, as they drove out the gates on his day off duty, a sort of metamorphosis seemed to take place. The burden of office fell from his shoulders and he visibly relaxed. For Maurice enjoyed all facets of life to the full. He liked his food, and on feast days a glass of sherry, a good wine at the meal, followed by a Benedictine were the order of the day, and 'the custom of the Congregation from time immemorial.' In moderation, of course.

Maurice was a very good golfer. Up to just a few years ago he made his way each year to the British Open on his motor bike. A fellow Vincentian wrote of him: 'He was a great golfing partner...he maintained his skill for a very long time and was always a keen competitor...he was game for anything...he was actually my director in Glenart...of course, he had his own inimitable approach to things and his point to make...but charity generally prevailed...I enjoyed him.' Maurice loved his holidays. During part of them he would do a parish supply and then become an interested, curious and observant tourist. On his return he regaled us with anecdotes, the most humorous of which surely was the icy glare he got during the 1950 Holy Year from Pope Pius XII for appearing at a general audience in St Peter's dressed in a tonsure suit and not a soutane. It was said by some at his funeral that his death marked the passing of an era. But I'm not sure. For such a serious person it is amazing the number of anecdotes, many of them humorous, that are associated with him and by which he will live on in our memory for a very long time.

He enjoyed all sports and up to two or three years ago attended our

school cup rugby matches, Lansdowne and international games. Throughout his life chess had a special interest for him. In fact, a few months before his death he travelled alone by air at the age of 92 to London to see the Chess World Championship. And he was clearly delighted when Fr Clyne supplied him with a community car for his own exclusive use. For the last year of his life he gloried in it and the freedom it gave him. "I had to wait 91 years for this! "

When he had finally returned to Castleknock, he took up seriously the cultivation of roses and it is he who was responsible for the magnificent displays that have each year helped make the college grounds a place of beauty.

Maurice spoke often of the fact that he was from Athy which reminds me of a humorous incident. It occurred some forty years ago during recreation in our community room at a time when there were fourteen or fifteen confreres in Castleknock. A group of us young priests were chatting among ourselves at one end of the room and Fr Paddy O'Donoghue made some remark about the railway and quality of land (the word 'bog' was mentioned) in the environs of Athy. Suddenly from the far end of the room there came, "Paddy, I'm from Athy and you're not. I know about these things and you don't." The space between the two protagonists opened and it was like High Noon!

Maurice's attachment to Athy was really a family one. He had a deep affection for his family and felt responsibility for them. When his brother, Fr Brendan, became a canon in the Dublin diocese his pride was evident (incidentally, Maurice had a very soft spot for the Dublin priests as he had been their spiritual director; and at the time of his death one of them remarked that he had been "the only ray of good sense in Clonliffe during his years there."). He visited his sister, Betty, each year in Paris, he married his nieces and nephews and followed their careers. It was clear that they returned his affection and benefited from his *wisdom*, involvement and love.

Perhaps the most fitting final words about Fr Maurice were the words written by his niece, Pauline. "He remained close to his family of origin all his life, but the Vincentians were there, perhaps, even more close and important to him...We have happy memories of the celebration of his Golden Jubilee in 1983 and his 90th birthday celebration - the wonderful hospitality we received and the insights we gained into the community life and his relationship with its members and all done with such graciousness and humour. We will miss him, but he has left a rich legacy of memories. Thank you for the beautiful liturgy and the unforgettable funeral procession to his final resting place in such a sacred corner of the earth - where earth meets Heaven".

John Doyle, C.M.

MAURICE CARBERY CM

Born:	Athy, Co Kildare, 4 May 1908
Entered the CM:	7 September 1928
Final Vows:	8 September 1930
Ordained a priest:	10 June 1933 in the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, by Bishop Wall.

APPOINTMENTS

1933-'35:	St. Vincent's, Castleknock
1935-'39:	St. Patrick's, Armagh
1939-'40:	St. Joseph's, Blackrock
1940-'49:	St. Vincent's, Castleknock
1949-'54:	Holy Cross College, Clonliffe
1954-'57:	St. Kevin's, Glenart, Arklow
1957-'59:	St. Paul's, Raheny
1959-2001:	St. Vincent's, Castleknock

Died:	20 February 2001
Buried:	St. Vincent's, Castleknock

Matthew Barry C.M.

Though some months have passed since we first heard the sad news of Mattie's untimely death in Nigeria, the reality is still hard to accept. Big in mind, heart and body, he was loved and respected by all who met him. Private by nature, Mattie was very diffident in regard to his own abilities. He would much prefer to be one of the group rather than seek a leadership role. However, his potential for leadership was very apparent from his early years.

Mattie was the eldest boy of the Barry Family who farmed extensively at Maynooth, Co Kildare and Summerhill, Co Meath. The family bond was always strong and later as a priest at Castleknock he loved nothing better than spending time working on the farm, either with his brothers or brothers-in-law.

A talented tennis player he was outstanding at rugby and was captain of a very fine Castleknock Senior Cup Team, which narrowly lost the Leinster final to Blackrock College in 1955 in extra time. Mattie enjoyed his school days, particularly the camaraderie and bonhomie of boarding school life. His contemporaries remember him for his integrity, his sense of fair play, good humour and caring attitude. This was born of a deep faith and love of God, and no one was surprised when at the end of his school days, Mattie intimated his intention of entering the Vincentian Community.

During his seminary days one readily appreciated his keen interest in farming, for whether it was ploughing, harrowing, bringing in the harvest or silage Mattie was always to the fore. He was serious and diligent about his studies and obtained a BA from UCD in 1959. However, it was in the study of Theology and especially the Scriptures that he really found his niche. It was a love that was to remain with him all his life. He liked nothing better than having a cup of tea and reading the latest book on Theology, and at a later date enter into a serious dialogue with a friend.

The fruit of his reading was very apparent in his conferences and homilies. His big presence and gentle voice enabled him to communicate easily with any group. His talks to the boys at Castleknock were always interesting, well developed and to the point. Many of his former pupils still recall Fr Mattie's good advice.

After his ordination in 1963, Mattie was appointed to St Vincent's Castleknock where his administrative and leadership qualities quickly came to the fore. Within the year he had taken over as Senior Dean. His personal qualities quickly endeared him to the boys, to whom he was affectionately known as "Mattie". After four years he was appointed

Prefect of Studies, his favourite role at the College. His preparation and attention to detail ensured that everything moved smoothly throughout the day and the entire school year. His human touch and good humour never deserted him, and when things went wrong he had the good sense to see it in its proper perspective.

Nine years after his ordination Mattie was appointed as one of the youngest Presidents of the College and he proved to be a most successful and popular President. Having been Dean and Prefect of Studies for the previous eight years, he understood how the College functioned, and his knowledge of the boys was second to none. As President he was most approachable and particularly welcomed those boys who were experiencing some difficulty. His counsel and good advice were sought by parents, staff, pastmen and fellow Head Teachers.

Mattie had a mischievous sense of humour and whether it was with a boy arguing his case in the office or a colleague at table, he loved to string one on in endless debate until his hearty laugh gave the game away. One of his regular sparring partners was Brother Michael whose advice he would seek on some inconsequential farming matter. As they argued the pros and cons, Mattie waited for Br Michael's knock out blow "Ah, Mattie you know nothing about farming, you are just a Meath rancher".

His ambitions and vision for the College in his early years were far reaching. He hoped to set up a Governing Body, upgrade the residential side by having study bedrooms for the senior pupils, and to consolidate the work he had initiated as Prefect of Studies. Yet it was also a time when the various Religious Orders were beginning to question their deep involvement in education. The Vincentians were no exception and Mattie found the debate to be too personal and divisive. Never one for an acrimonious debate, he opted for a more reconciliatory role. His first concern was to discern what God was asking of us and to ensure unity and good will among the confreres.

During the pressure days of his Presidency, Mattie developed two new pastimes, walking and gardening. When not in his office one could be certain of finding him walking along the Bull Island or in the green house preparing plants for the College rockery which was his pride and joy. The College night secretary at the time was an Indian lady, who would inform all callers, that "Fr Barry was at the Grotto". The inevitable reply was "Oh, I understand, I will phone later". As Superior and President Mattie will be remembered for his sensitivity, encouragement and good judgement.

Despite his busy schedule as President, Mattie was a member of the Provincial Council for nine years, where his wisdom and caring concern for others was greatly appreciated. As a Provincial Councillor he was

responsible for purchasing the site and supervising the building of De Paul House, Celbridge.

Mattie was also a member of the executive of the Catholic Headmasters, where he was highly regarded by his fellow Head Teachers and would have been in line for office with the CHA if he had not been invited by the Superior General to become Director of the Daughters of Charity in England and Scotland.

With his move to England in 1980, a new chapter opened in his life. Working alongside the Daughters of Charity he was introduced to the world of the poor and he readily admitted that it was a real eye opener for him. His subsequent visits to famine torn Ethiopia 1984 and 1985 had an equally profound effect on him. On one occasion while food was being distributed Mattie observed an emaciated old man take a large crust, limp back into the shade and sharing it with four others. It made a lasting impression on him and as Fr Richard Mc Cullen commented in his homily at his memorial Mass in Castleknock, *'the centre of gravity of his life had shifted from the first to the third world'*.

After completing his term of office as Director to the Daughters of Charity in England, Mattie volunteered for the Nigerian Mission. His work there would largely centre on the formation of young Vincentians and Daughters of Charity. After a six month orientation period at Ikot Ekpene, he returned to Rome in the spring of '87 to study spirituality. In the following year he completed the Loreto Formation Course in Dublin. He was Director of the Seminaire at St Justin's, Ogobia for three years and in 1991 became the Regional Superior of the Vincentian Mission. In 1994, he was appointed as Director to the Daughters in Nigeria. This work involved extensive travel throughout the country and staying at various missions. It was while doing so that he developed a unique mission of his own.

For some months prior to his coming home on leave, Mattie would scour the various theological and spiritual book reviews, and prepare an extensive list for purchasing on his arrival home. During his break he would also collect a wide variety of novels from family, confreres and friends. Once he had read the books, Mattie would put them in the boot of his car in order to share them at a later date with the various priests, sisters and others that he met in his rounds. For them he was both a resource centre and mobile library, and they highly valued his contribution to their isolated lives.

On completing his six years he became Spiritual Director to the Vincentian students at Blessed Ghebre-Michael House, and Parish Priest of Abiakpo, where he sadly died some nine months later.

In his journey through life, Mattie could best be described as a pilgrim. He lived a simple life style and travelled light. He easily moved

from one phase of life to the next and was never one to hanker after the past. His love of sport, his keen interest in farming, and his work in education were readily put behind him as he sought to fulfil his new mission in life. A favourite quotation from Helder Camara, on which Mattie pondered a lot, sums up his spirit. “*Say, ‘yes’ to the surprises which interrupt your plans and crush your dreams, giving your day – perhaps even your life – a completely new direction*”. Though his death was premature for a man of his physique and health, we can be certain that Mattie found it easy to let go of this earthly life and open up to the surprises of the eternal life.

The sentiment expressed by Sister Zoe O’Neill DC at his memorial Mass in London is most apt. “*Fr Mattie strode into our lives like a breath of fresh air. He was a strider. He strode all over Ethiopia; bringing his laughter, inspiration and gentle presence. He was a long strider and so he reached the Divine Presence ahead of the rest of us*”. May he rest in peace.

Kevin O’Shea C.M.

MATTHEW BARRY CM

Born:	Dublin – 11 October 1936
Entered the CM:	7 September 1955
Final Vows:	8 September 1960
Ordained priest:	30 March 1963 in, Clonliffe College by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop of Dublin

APPOINTMENTS:

1963-’80:	St. Vincent’s, Castleknock
1980-’86:	St. Vincent’s, Mill Hill
1886-’87:	Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria
1987-’88:	St. Joseph’s, Blackrock
1988-’91:	St. Justin’s Seminary, Ogbolia,
1991-’94:	St. Vincent de Paul, Enugu, Nigeria
1994-2000:	St. Justin’s, Ogbolia
2000 – ’01:	Bl. Ghebre Michael, Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria
Died:	14 April, 2001
Buried:	Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria

Requiem Mass for Fr. Matt Barry CM

Castleknock College, 22nd April 2001

Readings: Revelation: 1:9-13,17-19; John 20:19-31

It was sometime in the mid-eighties: Fr Mattie, in his role as Director of the British Province of the Daughters of Charity, went to visit the Sisters who were working in Ethiopia. Those were the years of the great famine in that country when the nations of the West were energized into a new sense of solidarity with and responsibility for the hungry of the world. Returning to London, Mattie stopped off at Rome and came to see me. Those weeks he had spent in Ethiopia had grooved themselves into Fr Mattie's heart and he spoke about the experience movingly.

I have forgotten the precise details of our conversation, except for one. In the course of his visit to a famine stricken area, Mattie saw bread being distributed to a host of people. Leaving the scene he came upon an emaciated man who had succeeded in picking up what was not much more than a large crust of bread. The man limped over to the shade of a tree, sat down and was then joined by three other equally skeletal men. The proprietor of the hunk of bread then proceeded to break and to divide it into four pieces. He sat back and invited the three other squatting figures to take whichever portion they wished. It seems that such was one of the refined traditions of Ethiopian culture, which even famine could not suppress. Mattie went on to remark to me that, while we of the western world could bring much material aid to the famine-stricken people of Ethiopia, he hoped that in doing so we would never so overwhelm them that they would lose the refinement of such a costly unselfishness that he had just witnessed and experienced. It was a moment in Mattie's life, I think, when, like Thomas of today's gospel, he had put his finger into the marks of the nails and his hand into the side of the Risen Christ, and was never to forget it.

Those of us who remember Mattie in the years when he was studying theology in Glenart will recall him as one brimming over with youthful energy, playful good humour and generosity. Scripture study and silage making, tractors, trailers and Trinitarian theology, hen runs and homiletics were all so many power points for the release of his energies. There was something of the character of Thomas of today's gospel in Mattie. Perhaps we overlook the fact that the Thomas of today's gospel was more than the doubting sceptic that history has tagged on him. It was Thomas too who some weeks earlier in a rather impetuous burst of generosity had encouraged the other apostles to go the whole way with our Lord: *Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we "may die with him"*. (John 11: 16) It was Thomas too,

who, during the last supper, on hearing our Lord say that the disciples knew the way to the place he was going, immediately voiced the question: "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" (John 14:5) Thomas was nothing if not a down-to-earth-practitioner - and generous, you would say, to a fault.

While Mattie's genius was not of the speculative kind, he would read widely - and ruminate and ponder much on what he had absorbed and then, when the opportunity arose, would share the bread of his reflections in any forum of discussion. "*Be not faithless but believing*" is our Lord's counsel to us today and Christian thinkers have since consecrated the ideal of *fides quaerens intellectum* - which could be broadly translated: *Let your faith be always a topic of reflective reasoning.*

Isomehow think that Mattie's visit to Ethiopia in 1984 or 1985 was not the first time he had gone into mission territory. As a student in Glenart with his knowledge of French he translated and turned out on a gestetner machine copies of a small French book entitled *The Missionary Ideal of the Priest according to St Vincent de Paul* by a Fr Delarue. Are we to see that project of his student days as prophetic in character, for is not a great life but a thought of youth carried out in mature years?

It was here in Castleknock as Dean, Prefect of Studies, and President that he would live out sensitively and sensibly St Vincent's missionary ideal for some 17 years - before he was appointed Director of the Daughters of Charity of the British Province. Then, in 1986, he launched out into the deep of the growing Vincentian presence in Africa's most populous nation - Nigeria.

I think it would be true to say that some of us here in Ireland seemed to lose sight of him somewhat after that. Only every two years would he return to Ireland, and then he would rest and read and reflect - spending a sizeable quota of his time in St Joseph's, Stillorgan Park. If he was not exactly a forced exile on the island of Patmos - as was St John of the second reading - Mattie as a missionary could easily identify with the opening sentiments of that particular reading. *My name is John, and through our union with Jesus I am your brother and share your sufferings, your kingdom and all you endure.*

And brother Fr Mattie was to the young members of the Vincentian Vice-Province of Nigeria. Brother too, to the fast growing number of Daughters of Charity in Nigeria. It was no surprise then that in 1992, enriched by his experience as Director of the Daughters of Charity in England, he was asked to assume that same role for the Sisters in the Region of Nigeria - a region which just yesterday was officially constituted a full Province of the Company of the Daughters of Charity.

"*May the Divine Goodness*", prayed St. Vincent in a letter to a missionary, "*unite... all hearts in the Little Company of the Mission...The*

strong person will relieve the weak one and the weak will cherish the strong... And so, Lord, Your work will be done as You would like, for the building up of your Church, and Your workers will multiply, attracted by the fragrance of such charity “ (SV 3:104) Fr Mattie was indeed a strong person – big and masculine in body and bone, encouragingly hearty in his laugh but for all that a man with an eye and a heart for the weak one. *And the weak will cherish the strong.* Those of us who at any time worked with Mattie as a member of a council or lived with him in community will have remarked on his penchant – almost a partiality - for the one whose head was just above water – and for whom Authority might feel that all life-lines had been used up. It was Mattie who invariably, before a final decision was taken, would lift the living stone that was at risk of being rejected and would draw attention to a niche where it just might fit. An often quoted phrase of St Vincent – *Love is inventive to the point of infinity* - was a logo for Mattie. Therein lay the reason why the weak - the sister or the priest or the pupil who felt they had not been understood or felt somewhat marginalised – cherished Mattie as one who might bring them in from the margins, plead for their acceptance and find room for them in the inn.

In these last years particularly there was, I think, much of the ascetic in Mattie. The centre of gravity of his life had shifted from the first to the third world. Those four men under the tree in Ethiopia seem to have found a permanent home in his heart. He may well have shared the vision of Patrick Kavanagh in his poem *The Ascetic*:

That in the end
I may find
Something not sold for a penny
In the slums of Mind.

That I may break with these hands
The bread of wisdom that grows
In the other lands.

For this, for this
Do I wear
The rags of hunger and climb
The unending stair.

May our celebration of the Eucharistic sacrifice this afternoon and our prayers lead Fr Mattie onto the unending stair that is the vision of the beauty, the truth and the goodness of the God who is love and who loved him to the end.

Richard McCullen CM

Vincent O'Brien, C.M.

“Vinny” as he inevitably came to be known, was in many ways a walking miracle. During his preparation for priesthood in the seminary in Blackrock, he began his studies for a Science Degree in U.C.D. This was interrupted after one year. He was duly ordained in Clonliffe on 28th May 1950. He recently celebrated his Golden Jubilee, with his six original companions.

For the next 20 years he taught Maths and Physics in Castleknock College, after taking a B.Sc. in Cork University followed by a H.Dip. in Education. In many ways, Science was his life, though he used his inventive genius to involve himself in various extra-curricular activities with the students. These included the construction of boats which were used successfully on the nearby River Liffey.

After that he took a M.A. in Religious Studies in St. John's University in New York. From then on he entered the second phase of his life when he joined the Nigerian Missions. There he accomplished some great and varied achievements. You could well describe this period as the “full flowering” of his talents and abilities.

His special contribution was in the field of education. He was almost obsessed with the idea of the inequality of the educational opportunity available to Nigerian youths in comparison to their counterparts in Ireland, and he determined to make his personal contribution to remedying that. In fact he felt that half the staff in Castleknock should follow him out for that reason. He taught briefly with the Holy Ghost Fathers at Mount St. Michael's Secondary School in Aliade. He moved from there to Emmanuel Sceondary School, Ogbokolo, which he soon came to head up. This became a Vincentian-undertaking and other Vincentians joined him there. He gathered a very good staff around him and the school came on in leaps and bounds. He spent some thirteen years there, until 1986.

When he transferred to Ogochia in 1988, his educational bent still remained strong. He established a Nursery/Primary School and eventually a Secondary School from scratch with the involvement of the local community. By dogged perseverance, this school proved very successful. Even when he was in hospital in Ireland one of his main concerns was how things were in the school.

By this time he had developed another wing which came to be at least as large. This was the developmental side of his life where he worked wonders for the local community which no doubt contributed greatly to his being offered the chieftainly title of “Ogone of Uboju” (‘The Accomplisher’).

His deep concern for the economic welfare of the people around him became a driving force in his life. He devised a great many schemes and undertakings from rice mills to water tanks, from growing of sisal to rearing of pigs and poultry. He proved himself to be expert in whatever he undertook. His trips home involved him in a great deal of fund-raising. There are few aid agencies that he left untouched. His home people played an important part in this. In the midst of major projects, Vinny had time for the small man too and on many occasions I have seen a host of people outside his door in Ogbia.

Vinny's skills were many sided. He became an accomplished accordion player and no social occasion was complete without his giving a performance. Vinny was a man of strong and definite ideas. At the Annual General Meeting of the Community he would wax eloquent on the need to ensure an adequate level of academic performance by our students, and if needs be to set up our own examinations. The formation values he believed in, he held fast to and was quite willing to share them.

Vinny was certainly a bit of a genius. I suspect he would have done well in a space programme but he was happy to exercise his genius in a remote village in the middle belt of Nigeria. He was humble and didn't look for praise or renown for himself. His likes are not easily come by. He will be a hard act to follow.

Vinny always remained devoted to his family. Shortly before his own death, he left his sick bed to be present at the funeral of one of his brothers and even took an active part in it. At his request he was buried close to his family grave in Nurney, Co. Kildare, after courageously enduring some months of illness, during which he was in the loving care of the Daughters of Charity.

Rod Crowley CM

VINCENT O'BRIEN CM

Born: Kildare, 9 April 1925
 Entered the CM: 7 September 1943
 Final Vows: 8 September 1945
 Ordained priest: 28 May 1950 in Holy Cross College, Clonliffe
 by Dr John Charles McQuaid, Archbishop
 of Dublin.

APPOINTMENTS:

1950-'60: St. Vincent's, Castleknock
 1960-'62: University College, Cork – B Sc degree
 1962-'70: St. Vincent's, Castleknock
 1970-'72: St. John's University, New York
 – MA in Religious Studies
 1972-'73: Mt. St. Michael's Secondary School,
 Aliade, Nigeria
 1973-'86: Emmanuel Secondary School,
 Ugboklo, Nigeria
 1986-'88: St. Vincent's Secondary School,
 Anwule, Nigeria
 1988-2000: St. Justin's Seminary, Ogbia, Nigeria
 2000-'01: St. Vincent's, Castleknock

Died: 26 April 2001
 Buried: Nurney, Co. Kildare

Tribute to Fr. Vincent O'Brien C.M.

Barry Miller

The only reason I got up here is because if Uncle Vin was here he would get up and say something. There are a few things he would do – number one he would write it down beforehand (he might have to search in 4 or 5 pockets before he found it but he would have it written down); Number two, even though he would know and respect where he was he would be somewhat casual and informal and you would not know what he might say next. As well as that he would be light-hearted and he would have some moral or message that we were to take home.

Anyway, I was thinking of Vin arriving in heaven and I could envisage him having terrible problems getting in. Saint Peter would be at the gate and he would say “Sure you know me, Vin” and Vin would be stumped. Ye might not know it but even though Vin had a great brain and was very intelligent, he was a bit of a scatterbrain. Eventually Vin would see someone else coming and would quietly ask of them “what’s your man’s name?” They would reply “Peter” and Vin would be relieved. Then Peter would say “what did you do on earth Vin?” to which the response would be “Well, I was a priest for over 50 years and I set up all sorts of schools and orphanages and did great work in Nigeria and other places and so on.” Peter would of course say “came on in”.

When Vin would arrive in he would have lots of people to see – Uncle Tommy, his father, his two mothers, his brothers and baby sisters. Someone would land a piano in front of Vin and he would play (‘head and shoulders, knees and toes’ and a few more). There would be a few beers and maybe a good few beers and a general party into the night. Then I realised all of us down here would have a problem because we wouldn’t be able to get in. Vin would be up in the high office with God and he’d install a lap-top for God and as we know God is a loving God who forgets and forgives all our sins; well now God would have everything on file and when you’d arrive up there you would be asked your name and Peter would tap it in and God wouldn’t be able to forget any more.

Then I realised it wouldn’t matter if you ended up down below anyway because Vin was always a man for the underprivileged especially in Nigeria and if he didn’t come down beside you and give you a lift up he would sink a well in heaven and pipe down water to you.

Anyway I’m sure Vin is looking down on us now as he always liked to keep in touch with what was going on and with the developments in

the Church and in technology (besides he won't need to read about evolution any more as he will know it all). He will of course want us to use all the modern technologies but would remind us to still make time for one another.

All in all he was a priest. As they say "By their fruits ye shall know them". Well, I think Vin's fruits were evident for everyone to see so I think the moral is that when we have talents in different areas to try and use them well like Vin and not put our lamp under a bucket.

Finally, I heard him say recently that we should not say of people who have died "may he rest in peace" but rather "may he rest in continuous activity". So I'll say it now "May he rest in continuous activity, Amen".