

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Editorial | 424 |
| Preparing for the Provincial Assembly | 425 |
| Opening Address to the Assembly <i>K O'Shea</i> | 429 |
| Minutes of the Provincial Assembly | 438 |
| Opening Talk <i>S Peralta</i> | 448 |
| Closing Talk <i>S Peralta</i> | 452 |
| The Challenges put before us by a Multi-Cultural Society <i>B Keenan</i> | 454 |
| The Challenges posed by Lay-Ministry <i>M Synnott</i> | 457 |
| Directions for Planning <i>The Ember Team</i> | 459 |
| Mission Team Survey | 472 |
| On Being Superior in a Seminary <i>T Davitt</i> | 496 |
| Two Letters of George Kelly CM (1841-75) <i>T Davitt</i> | 502 |

Editorial

This edition of Colloque is principally concerned with the Provincial Assembly of the Irish Province held in April of this year. It was a time of meeting, of deliberation and of challenge for us as we reflected on the theme of our forth-coming General Assembly.

The Provincial Assembly was based on the work done in the local communities in the months beforehand and its deliberations will feed into the planning processes of the Provincial Council.

Besides the challenges for the future which we named for ourselves, we were also challenged by others with whom we share the vinctian charism and the texts of two of these, Breege Keenan DC and Margarita Synnott, are published here as well as the talks given by Seraphin Peralta CM of the province of the Phillipines, who facilitated the Assembly. Unfortunately, we do not have the texts of the prayers and reflections in which Pat Griffin, of the Eastern Province USA, animated both the retreat which preceded the Assembly and the Assembly itself.

At the end of the Assembly, the Ember Mission Team, under the directorship of Maureen Treanor, launched its new brochure and its plans for the future. We include some of the research work done by the Team as it planned for its new future as we think it may be of interest to our readers to see how the new system evolved. Already, the new process seems to be bearing fruit and we wish the Team every blessing in the future.

Finally, we include two articles by Tom Davitt on letters from our history. They remind us that we do not walk alone and that other vinctians in other times have faced challenges.

In August of this year, when the drafts of Colloque had gone to the printer, we were all saddened by the death of Brian Magee, Parish Priest of Sunday's Well, Cork. Though the death had been expected, it is a great loss to all who knew Brian. His obituary will be published in the next issue of Colloque.

Preparing for the Provincial Assembly

Letters from The Preparatory Commission

Letter One

The process of preparation is a simple one and follows the outline of the Consultation document from the General Curia.

Topic; Our Vincentian identity today, having lived the new Constitutions for 20 years – an evaluation and three challenges for the future.

It is intended that this process should involve us all. It is in the life of each missionary and each local community where we live out the Vincentian identity today. (Preparatory Document)

We suggest three steps in preparation;

Step One;

Each confrere, in his own time, can reflect prayerfully on the topic and then set down his own evaluation of our living of the Constitutions and what he sees as being the three challenges for the future.

Step Two;

- (a) During the months before January 2003, each community can meet for a time of prayer and, following that, for a time of reflection and sharing in which each member can, if he wishes, submit his evaluation and three challenges for reflection and discussion by the community. We leave it to each local community to decide how best to work this process in its own situation (on one day; over a period of consecutive days; over a period of weeks; with separate days for each element or otherwise).
- (b) From the reflection and discussion, we ask that each local community submit, to the Preparatory Commission, a communal evaluation of our living of the Constitutions and three challenges for the future. As far as possible, we ask each community to focus on naming or choosing just three challenges and framing one evaluation. We ask for these submissions to be made to the Commission, at Provincial Offices, Raheny, by 31st January 2003.
- (c) Of course, any individual confrere remains free to submit his own evaluation and challenges if he so chooses.

Step Three;

The responses will be collated and presented to the local communities in time for further reflection and discussion before the Provincial Assembly.

Letter Two

Finding Water in the Wilderness

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. (Gen 21;19)

As we get closer to the Provincial Assembly, we would like to thank you for your participation in the process so far. To those who still have to send the reports of their community meetings, perhaps you could try to get them to us by the end of January. The structure of the days of the Assembly will depend, in great part, on the responses from the houses. Please send your responses directly to Eugene Curran at All Hallows'. We have some suggestions for personal and communal sharing in the months before the Assembly.

- Reflect on the story of Hagar (Gen 16; 1-16 and 21;8-21) to whom God also promised many descendents, who wandered in the wilderness and who found and named God there. Based on the story of Hagar, the theme of the Assembly will be 'Finding water in the wilderness'.
- As you reflect on the three challenges you have named, perhaps your community would invite some of your colleagues from the various apostolates to come and share with you what they consider to be the main challenges facing us in the years ahead. This could be done in the context of a conference, at a meal or over drinks. Besides our own reflections, we need to hear what those who value the congregation and the charism consider the most significant challenges ahead for us. Individual confreres might like to talk to other people and note what they have to say.
- Make a list of all the apostolates that the confreres in your house are engaged in; both those which are appointments and others which people undertake personally. Making the list needn't be too formal a thing; do it in whatever way suits your local community.
- Read the Consultation Document from the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly. We have had this in mind in planning this process but, at this stage, it may be of assistance to you in your further thoughts and reflections. The longer version is available from the Provincial Office, but this may be handier for reflection.
- Keep the Assembly in your personal and community prayers and ask the Lord's guidance on all those involved in planning it.

Letter Three

Finding Water in the Wilderness

Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. (Gen 21:19)

Thank you to all the communities that have returned their submissions and reflections to the Preparatory Commission.

As you can imagine, there was some variety in the challenges proposed for consideration and, for the purposes of clarity and to aid our reflections and prayer in preparation for the Assembly, we have gathered these into six broad categories:

- *Deepening our awareness* and appreciation of the wealth contained in the Charism and Mission Statements and, most especially, in the Constitutions themselves so that we do not fall into a ‘routinisation’ of the charism. This will make us more aware of the international aspect of the Congregation and of our unity with others.
- Developing our consciousness of the personal and communal call to *Discipleship*, as followers of Christ, evangelising the Poor. It calls us to reflect on the nature and relevance of living the vows today. It challenges us to meet Christ in prayer and to respond to the call to conversion and commitment. It enables us to act and live with confidence in our own vocation.
- Preparing *Strategies for Mission* which, given the actual situation of the Province, will enable us to prepare for development, planning, withdrawal or cohesion in our works and our communities. It calls us also to work collaboratively with others and to invest in the preparation and formation of those who will carry the charism into the future in our works: with lay people, especially the young, and all those who live the vincentian charism. It is a challenge to consider the ‘indigenisation’ of our charism.
- Linked with the preceding is the call to develop and expand our understanding of the *vincentian charism*, our consciousness of all those who comprise the ‘vincentian family’ (religious and lay, male and female, Irish and other nationalities, those with and for whom we work etc.)
- Creating a culture of *Vocation* that recognises the uniqueness of our vocation within the reality of the vocation of all. It is a challenge that asks us to face difficult questions honestly and openly.
- Focussing on our understanding and living of the call to prophetic *Evangelization*; undertaking creative responses to the changing culture and emerging poverties while continuing our commitment to existing works. It challenges us to deepen our understanding and living of justice and to develop real points of contact with people and situations today.

We realise that these are very generalised (and wordy) areas for consideration but the intention is that the process of the Assembly will enable us to move ever closer to naming three more specific and focussed challenges that face us. These are offered to you for your reflection, prayer and discussion in the time before we meet in Assembly.

Please keep us and the Assembly in your prayers that it may be a time of blessing and meaningful interaction for us all.

Opening Address to the Assembly

Kevin O'Shea CM

In declaring this Assembly open, I would like to remind you that “*the task of all Assemblies of the Congregation of the Mission is to preserve and promote the spirituality and apostolic vitality of the Congregation.*” (C.135). It is my hope and prayer that during the coming days we will reflect and evaluate our lives and our Vincentian identity in the light of the Constitutions and then covenant ourselves to implementing the challenges we formulate for our future.

Seasons of Light and Darkness:

Some years ago on a similar occasion, Mark Noonan, the then Provincial, quoted the opening lines of Charles Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities*;

It was the worst of times, it was the best of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness.

Mark very eloquently pointed out to us the positive and negative phases of our vocation, the times of light, the times of darkness, the times of death and the times for new beginnings. And though some 15 years later we might have hoped to be on the other shore, we are not, we are still on the high seas, still on our journey and the future shore is not yet visible on the horizon. All we can say is that we are still in transition, and though uncertainties surround us and we have our moments of darkness, we are still people of faith, believing that Christ is with us and thankfully are prepared to journey on in hope.

I must confess that, on returning from Nigeria, I was somewhat dejected. I had witnessed there a Church in the spring-time of its existence, full of growth, vitality and opportunity. Back in Europe we experience ourselves as a Church in decline and where our past successes, securities and certainties have been eroded. Our weaknesses and frailties have become the stuff of TV documentaries, media and gossip. Our relevance is not only questioned from the outside but also from within.

In such places as these, we find it hard to see the Spirit at work. We ask, has the Spirit left us? No, I don't think that any of us would accept that. We are believers and Christ's promise is to be with us to the end of

time. We like to be in control, however, we like to be sure. We like to be secure. But sometimes life itself catches up on us and takes us to places we would not willingly go in this life. Death is as normal as birth. The Spirit, I believe, is involved in both.

Maybe we unconsciously associate God with winning, with success. We imagine God's graciousness to be determined entirely by our actions. We should never forget that we worship a very unsuccessful God, a God who was crucified. Yet it was at the moment of failure, at the moment of crucifixion that the veil of the Temple was rent in two and the heart of God was revealed. Our God seems to be a God who is more at home with powerlessness than with success, as we define it.

Judging by our greatly diminished numbers, status and influence, we may deem ourselves to be well past our sell-by-date and be tempted to fold up our tent and call it a day. Yet when I move around among you I see none of this, rather I see a group of men who are still there in the eye of the storm and who are generously giving of themselves for the mission, men who trust in a "*God whose weakness is stronger than human strength*" (1Cor 1:24).

We have been called anew:

Our Provincial Document, "*Vincentian Mission 2000*" is the fruit of our last Assembly, The key elements of this plan were summarised under four main headings.

- Emerging Poverities
- Evangelisation
- Formation for Mission
- Ministry to Young People.

In March 2000 in Dublin, Fr Maloney, in his address to the Vincentian Family, gave us four very similar challenges that he deemed to be important at the dawn of the new millennium:

- Stand at the side of the poorest of the poor and seek to foster their integral human promotion
- Offer Young People the fire that St Vincent ignited in the world
- Assist others, clergy and laity, in their formation, particularly in being formed in the Vincentian charism
- Finally "Be Holy"

It is not surprising that these challenges are very similar in that they both emanate from our Constitutions. I see them as beacons, pointing

us to that further shore. It is within the context of these four challenges that I present my thoughts on the Province.

Stand at the side of the poorest of the poor and seek to foster their integral human promotion:

At a recent seminar organised by the Vincentian Justice & Peace Desk, Mgr John Armitage (Brentwood Diocese) in his talk on “*Spirituality for Justice*” reminded us that the starting point of evangelisation must be the recognition and restoration of human dignity. He said, “*it is a wonderful truth to realise that God has called us into being and created us in God’s image and likeness. God does not make clones, each person is unique and wonderfully reflects the glory of God*”

This echoes St Vincent, who said “*I must love my neighbour as the image of God and the object of his love, and do all I can so that they in turn can love their Creator who knows them, who considers them as brothers, and has saved them*” (sv xii, 263)

Mgr Armitage went on to say that, “*Too often today people are defined by their problems. Is it not surprising then that so many of them have such low self-esteem.*” He said, “*the missing link in evangelisation is helping people to discover and reclaim a sense of who they are.*”

Too often today, society labels the poor. They are responsible for their own demise etc. This is far removed from our message – Christ’s message - where we recognise them as our brothers and sisters.

Our role is to empower people to take on responsibilities in their own lives, rather than create dependencies. A key question for us should be: “How can we work with people in such a way that they no longer need us? In the true missionary sense we “*go where we are needed but not wanted and leave when wanted but not needed.*” (Fr Walsh, founder of Maryknoll Fathers)

Evangelisation means:

- Firstly, accepting people; their uniqueness, their dignity
- Secondly, listening to people respectfully
- Thirdly, empowering people to take responsibility for life, to know that as a group they have within themselves the power to bring change about

The call to collaboration:

We may feel that we cannot do much on our own but, collaboratively, with the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the Daughters of Charity, Holy Faith Sisters, De Paul Trust and others we can surprise ourselves. It is in this context that I greatly welcome the initiatives taken by my predecessors in establishing the Vincentian Justice and Peace desk, the initiative for the homeless at Rendu Apartments and the Vincentian

Refugee Centre at St Peter's and, in England, the work at *The Passage*, and the Vincentian Millennium Partnership. I have no doubt but that these initiatives undertaken in the last 15 years foster the integral human promotion of the poor. I congratulate and thank those confreres who have supported these initiatives over the years and ask that others begin to take an active part in them.

The poor evangelise us:

St Vincent often spoke about the reverse side of evangelisation, that the poor in turn evangelise us. Vincent was well aware that it was the poor who made him respond to Our Lord's call. At a critical juncture in his life, the poor revealed Jesus Christ to him.

Fr Maloney in his talk reminded us "*The poor evangelise us and send us back to our own poverty*".

At this critical juncture of our Province, where we are experiencing insecurity, insignificance and vulnerability and are at a crossroads, are we convinced that our identity with the poor will lead us to Jesus Christ?

Offer young people the fire that St Vincent ignited in the world:

When speaking of our Ministry to Youth, many of us will regret very much the great demise of the presence of religious orders in education. Our own involvement has been greatly reduced, yet our commitment today as Trustees, Management and Chaplaincy is all the more important.

In discussing Youth Ministry many of us will give ready assent to Pope John Paul's statement "Young People are a new continent to be evangelised." We talk about how gifted John Paul is with young people but so many of us will excuse ourselves by declaring that we are beyond it or that we have little opportunity to be in contact with young people.

This, I think, is where the Vincentian Family comes in. The Daughters of Charity, The St Vincent De Paul Society, the staff of our own Schools and our Parishioners can bring us into contact with young people, if we have the heart and mind to do so. We will have to make the initial approach and be patient until we see how things progress. Young people want to work out their own agenda; all we can do is to be there for them, to waste time with them, and to make suggestions at the opportune moment.

Our starting point with the evangelisation of young people is no different from that with the poor, we must help them to recognise their unique identity as children of God.

Young people are spiritually-minded and this is one area where we, with the help of the Family, can make contact with them. Initially it

may just be meeting them to discuss the Sunday Scripture over a cup of tea. In time this may lead to the formation of a prayer group.

Young people are also anxious to be doing, to participate in some worthwhile project for others, especially the poor, and opportunities should be offered to them either in our own works or through the VDP, DCs or De Paul Trust or in similar projects in our parishes or schools.

- Serious thought should be given to supporting Michael McCullagh's work on behalf of MISEVI – the International Association of Lay Vincentian Missionaries.
- In our Parishes we should be working toward the appointment of lay-ministers and having young people as Readers, Eucharistic Ministers etc.
- I would encourage those in chaplaincy work to form groups or teams of staff members, pupils and others to share in their work and to help in generating Christian community within the school or institution.

No doubt we will be returning to the topic of Youth during the coming days. Note that Fr Maloney has asked us to offer Young People the fire that St Vincent ignited in the world. To start a fire, all one needs is a spark. Let us not be thinking of the size of the task before us but rather be zealous in providing a spark. *“Our vocation... is to inflame human hearts, to do what the Son of God has done, who came to light a fire in the world, to illuminate it with his love”* SV XII, p262,

Vocations:

Our Vocation document is calling us to create anew a culture of vocations and has put in place lines of action for each confrere, community and the Province. During the coming days I ask that you continue to search for ways by which we can generate new life in our Province. I particularly wish to thank the Formation Commission for their work over the last two years.

Assist others, clergy and laity, in their formation, particularly in being formed in the Vincentian Charism:

In the last six years “Forming and Promoting the Vincentian Family” is a theme that has appeared regularly on our Agenda and in correspondence from our General Curia. Although it may not have been as prominent in previous decades, it has its origin from the foundation days of our Congregation. *“Our small company has given itself to God for the bodily and spiritual service of the poor... in such a way that at the same time... it has sought means to alleviate the sick though the confraternities of Charity. The Ladies of Charity are another witness still*

of the grace of our vocation... The Daughters of Charity have entered into the plan of Providence as a means which God has given us to do through their hands that which we cannot do through our own. They dedicate themselves just as we do, to save and help their neighbour. And if I would say with us, I would not be saying anything contrary to the Gospel, but rather something in conformity with the practice of the Primitive Church.” SV vii

Other Groups such as the Association of the Miraculous Medal, The St Vincent DePaul Society, MISEVI, and De Paul Trust, not to mention our lay colleagues over the years, share this charism. Fr Maloney is constantly calling us to assist in their Spiritual Formation.

In our ministries today we must not be making people dependent upon us, rather we must help them to be self-directing and responsible. They have to become aware of their own capabilities. We have to learn to be present, and allow people to discover their own solutions – sometimes through mistakes. These may not always be to our liking, but it is the way forward.

Those who were present at the Irish AGM will recall Patricia McNamara, a lay woman from St John of God Services, who addressed us on the role of lay chaplains. We were most impressed by her understanding, ownership and love she had for the John of God ethos. When we asked her how this came to be, her response was simple and direct. *“We worked at it.”* I have been in touch with both Headmasters of our schools and they have set aside a day in the spring of 2004 for a combined staff day on the Vincentian ethos. Hopefully, this will be only the beginning of a dialogue. Fr Sam Clyne will be leading and co-ordinating this seminar. There is no reason why the programme should not be extended to lay staff in our other ministries.

As a Vincentian Family we are being called upon to deepen our common elements and to know and value the identity, history and processes of each branch.

The Justice and Peace Seminars, are very much focused on Vincentian Spirituality as were the Lenten series organised at All Hallows for the Vincentian Family in recent years. I urge all confreres to see it as part of their vocation to respond to such meetings. It is at such gatherings that we meet our fellow Vincentians.

Ongoing Formation

In our document *Creating a Culture of Vocation* we wrote. *“So to begin we have to deepen our own sense of vocation. People will only see what is visible. We hope that they will see in us prophetic men, men who have encountered the risen Christ in our lives, men of prayer who joyfully witness that Jesus is alive and present in our world”.*

This paragraph gives us the *raison d'être* of why we should accept responsibility for our own ongoing formation. Over the years the Province has provided us with many opportunities for ongoing formation.

- Organising Retreats.
- Encouraging us to avail of spiritual direction
- Enabling confreres to attend the Vincentian International Formation Programme.
- Granting us sabbatical breaks
- Organising the yearly meeting for Superiors

“Animating the local community” was the theme of the worldwide visitors meeting in Dublin in 2001. The General Curia is currently preparing a handbook for Superiors similar to the handbook for Visitors. This handbook is intended for all confreres, not as a document to wave at our Superior, but rather to give us a fuller understanding of the role of leadership and how we as members of community can support the Superior in animating our life together.

Formation, whether personal or family orientated, is the responsibility of each one of us. That is our challenge. It is our responsibility to ensure that the Vincentian charism continues to grow in each branch of the Family. It is our fidelity, participation and support that will ensure its continued growth. Am I taking responsibility or just letting the opportunity pass me by? Do I view formation as something for others, but fail to attend to my own ongoing formation?

“Be Holy”

St Vincent would call on all missionaries to combine their prayer with action and their action with prayer. *“Give me a man of prayer and he will be capable of everything”* (SVXI, 13) In his address in Dublin, Fr Maloney calls on us to be on fire with God’s love and reminds us that *“Holiness is not just being pious. It is not just being a prodigious worker. It is being “possessed by God”.*

What does this *“possessed by God”* mean for us as a Province? Psalm 36 reminds us, *“Commit your life to the Lord. Trust him and he will act.”* It is one thing to commit our life to God through our activity, our achievement... but to trust Him in our weakness, in our vulnerability in our infirmities? To have him act in our lives, and to lead us to places where we might not want to go. That is the challenge before us.

During the Easter Triduum, we have all reflected on *“Self-emptying of Christ”* and His readiness to hand over his life in trust to the Father. This *“kenosis of Christ”* is the template for our calling to day. It is a letting go of self that we may be totally possessed by God. For me per-

sonally there are three groups of confreres who currently exemplify this for me.

I thank God for the positive witness of our sick confreres; their prayer, good example and acceptance of their varied illnesses are a true testimony to the "Kenosis" to which we are all called. Loss of health has resulted in the letting go of their ministry and everything attached to it – recognition, independence, status, acclaim etc and in exchange, dependence, uncertainty and vulnerability. In my conversations with them I am always touched by their deep faith in God.

I thank God for that other great set of witnesses, our elderly confreres, who are still giving of themselves generously to mission. They are true sons of St Vincent: who said "*For myself, notwithstanding my age, I do not feel myself in any way excused before God from my bounden duty to work for the wellbeing of those poor people.*" St Vincent: 11-136. Despite the many changes that have occurred in their lives, they are still focused on the mission. These confreres received their initial formation in pre-Vatican II days, yet their readiness to implement the changes of the Council is in marked contrast to many of us who are tardy in this regard.

And my third group; as most of us look back on our life in the Congregation we note that the Province has withdrawn from works that we have personally cherished and championed. They were good works but they are no longer deemed to be part of the Province initiative. It is easy to be bitter and resentful but again, thank God, it is minimal and I praise God for the confreres who have gone through this trauma and are still giving of themselves generously for the mission.

A time of letting go:

Sadly the letting go must continue. During the next five years we will have to withdraw from some more of our works and houses. I cannot specify these works and houses. A priority in my present thinking is that we do have enough space in our present houses for all our confreres and that as many as possible are engaged in a meaningful ministry. All I can say in the matter of closure is that I have already been in dialogue with some Bishops in regard to withdrawal from certain areas and works. Any withdrawal has to be strategically planned and cannot occur overnight. Any appointment I make during my time as Visitor must be seen as possibly the last appointment in that particular area. I appreciate that people find this difficult, but it is part of our poverty, our dying, our letting go, and hopefully the Spirit will bring about the new life that God wants.

We are gathered as a Province, as a community of faith in the Lord and our prime time at this Assembly *should be spent, not in adminis-*

trative details – necessary though they are – but in a common visioning and dreaming of how we can help call each other to make the Kingdom of God a reality now.

(T Lane: *The Cry of the Christian*)

It is natural for us to seek a safe and secure world, a world that guards us from risks, a world which shelters us from the challenges of the day and from an uncertain future. Nevertheless we must be people of hope. The great Easter hope is that pain, suffering even death does not have the last word – even on this side of the grave.

For our reflection at one of our Council meetings, Dan O' Connell presented us with Seamus Heaney's poem:

*History says don't hope
on this side of the grave.
But then, once in a lifetime
The longed-for tidal wave
of justice can rise up,
And hope and history rhyme.
So hope for a great sea-change
On the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore
Is reachable from here.*

Seamus Heaney *The cure of Troy*

Henri Nouwen would remind us that “A person without hope in the future cannot live creatively in the present.” The seeds of our future challenges are already in place;

- Stand at the side of the poorest of the poor and seek to foster their integral human promotion
- Offer Young People the fire that St Vincent ignited in the world
- Assist others, clergy and laity, in their formation, particularly in being formed in the Vincentian charism
- “Be Holy

but each day we have to make them our own by prayerfully reflecting on our Constitutions and by endeavouring to fully live a Vincentian way of life... “*It is not the loss of numbers that the Congregation must fear, it is not the loss of institutions, what we must fear is the loss of fire in our hearts.*” Fr Maloney

Come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of your faithful ones, with your Divine Love.

Provincial Assembly

April 28th – May 1st 2003 held in All Hallows' College

The Preparatory Commission (Eugene Curran, Maureen Treanor, Sean Farrell and Jay Shanahan) had chosen as the theme 'Finding Water in the Wilderness' which was based on the story of Hagar in Genesis.

Monday – 28th April

The Visitor, Fr. Kevin O'Shea CM, declared the Meeting open and then presented his welcoming talk, the text of which precedes this article.

He proceeded to direct the elections of a secretary and moderators:

- Eugene Curran was elected secretary on the first count.
- Aidan Galvin was elected First Moderator on the third count.
- Joseph McCann was elected Second Moderator on the second count.

Serafin Peralta CM, of the province of the Phillipines, was accepted as Facilitator by consent of the Assembly, which also gave its acceptance to Patrick Griffin CM, Eastern Province USA and former Econome General, as Animator. Pat had led a short retreat in Termonfeckin which was attended by almost thirty confreres and which proved both successful and rewarding.

The Steering Committee was formed, consisting of Eugene Curran, Kevin O'Shea, Aidan Galvin, Joseph McCann and Serafin Peralta.

Tuesday – 29th April

Jay Shanahan led Morning Prayer.

There followed some announcements;

- Joseph McCann spoke on the Vincentian Leadership Project from De Paul University, Chicago.
- Charles Gardiner spoke about the recent publication of the Provincial Directory of contact numbers.

Aidan Galvin, who introduced Serafin Peralta, moderated the morning session. Serafin gave a presentation on his reflections on the responses from the local communities on the evaluation of our living of the Constitutions over the past 20 years. He had formulated three possible evaluations (the text of which follows), which he offered to the confreres for their consideration.

There followed a short session at which confreres were free to seek clarification on Serafin's presentation and they then broke into small groups to discuss the issues raised.

The next session was a plenary session in which people gave feedback from the groups and individuals made their own contribution. At the end of this session it was agreed by the Assembly to mandate Serafin to formulate a draft of the evaluation to be submitted to the General Assembly. This session concluded with a prayer reflection, led by Pat Griffin.

In the afternoon, after an opening prayer and a welcome to Joseph Loftus, just landed from China, confreres were asked to discuss, in small groups, the challenges outlined by the Preparatory Commission in the document "Finding Water in the Wilderness".

In the plenary session, which followed, Serafin offered a first draft of the evaluation document to be sent to Rome. Confreres offered their reactions and responses and it was agreed that Serafin would re-work the draft to be voted on at the session on Thursday morning.

The session concluded with a brief presentation by Fr Jim Geen of the Company of Mission Priests, an Anglican branch of the Vincentian Family. This was followed by a prayer reflection by Pat Griffin.

Wednesday – April 30th 2003:

Jay Shanahan led Morning Prayer and a reflection was offered by Pat Griffin. The Moderator welcomed our guests for the morning, who were to pose the challenges which they see as facing the Congregation in the Irish Province. The leader of each group gave a short introduction and then confreres were invited to attend a workshop of their choice. The topics were:

- *The challenges posed by Poverty*, introduced by Jim Doherty, presenting with some colleagues from the East End of Glasgow
- *The challenges posed by the Parishes we Serve*, introduced by Maureen Treanor, Director of the Ember Mission Team, presenting with some parishioners from Cherry Orchard, Dublin
- *The challenges posed by a Changing Society*, introduced by Breege Keenan DC, Director of the Vincentian Refugee Centre, presenting with some of the service users
- *The challenges posed by Lay Ministry*, introduced by Margarita Synnott, co-ordinator of the Preparing for Ministry Course, All Hallows, presenting with other members of the PFM Committee
- *The challenges posed to a Priestly Community*, introduced by Jim Geen, Company of Mission Priests (there was no presentation on this topic)

- *The challenges posed by Youth*, introduced by Niamh O’Flaherty and PJ Randles, students at All Hallows College, presenting with some of their fellow students

After the workshops, there was a plenary session in which confreres gave their responses and reactions to the presentations. During this session, Sean Farrell and Paschal Scallon acted as Redactors, preparing a document to present to the Assembly in the following session.

The afternoon session began with a prayer reflection led by Pat Griffin. Greetings were sent to Tony Clune, Bill Clarke and Andy Spelman.

The Redactors presented a synopsis of the challenges heard that morning, to be read in conjunction with the document from the Preparatory Commission (reflected on the evening before). Confreres were asked to discuss these two documents in their groups and to decide on three challenges to be submitted by each group to the plenary session.

After the plenary session, the Redactors formulated an initial draft of the three challenges. This was presented to and discussed by the Provincial Assembly and, in the light of the discussions, the Redactors re-worked the draft.

The day’s work concluded with Evening Prayer and a meal to which confreres had nominated invitees.

Thursday – May 1st 2003:

The session began with Morning Prayer.

The Moderator introduced the vote on the Evaluation of our Living of the Constitutions:

The new Constitutions have helped us to be more aware that it is Christ whom we follow in the evangelisation of the poor.

This has given us the freedom to strive to be a renewed Vincentian Community, living for others more than for ourselves and seeking for more creative ways at responding to the challenges of poverty and its many forms.

Indeed, the many Vincentian-inspired groups and ventures in the Province, such as the different branches of the Vincentian Family, the Rendu Homes, the Travelling People, The Passage, the Refugee Centre, the Vincentian Millennium Partnership, the international and home missions etc, are expressions of this greater focus in our lives.

The new Constitutions have also enabled us to review and assess ourselves and our motives in our ministries. In our movement towards renewal we may have become too individualistic and

oblivious of some realities in our confreres' lives, those who are hurt and those whose needs and expectations are unmet.

We therefore need to keep going back to the Gospel values as expressed in the Constitutions to help us focus on the essentials, our charism and identity as Vincentians and our virtues.

From a voting body of 45 confreres, this was carried; 42 pro, 3 abstentions.

The Moderator then introduced the voting on the challenges to be submitted to the General Assembly. These were taken in reverse order:

Conscious of our call to create a culture of vocation, we are challenged to build community among ourselves, our brother priests and among and beyond people of faith.

An amendment to this was suggested and carried; 25 pro, 15 contra and 5 abstentions. The text now read:

Conscious of our call to create a culture of vocations, we are challenged to build community among ourselves, our brother priests and among and beyond people of faith.

This version was carried; 43 pro and 3 abstentions.

The next challenge was carried; 43 pro, 1 contra and 3 abstentions. It reads:

We are challenged to work with our associates in the Vincentian Family and others in preparing and implementing strategies for mission.

After some discussion, the first challenge was put to the vote. It was carried; 33 pro, 4 contra and 10 abstentions. It reads:

Following Christ evangelising the poor and in the tradition of St. Vincent de Paul, we face the challenge of listening and responding to the experience of those who are alienated; the urban poor, strangers in a strange land and young adults call us to be with them so that we all may be converted to life in Christ.

POSTULATUM FOR THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY:

That an addition be made to paragraph 125 of our Constitutions as follows: "...with the consent of his Council to invite a Daughter of Charity to serve as a Consultor on the Provincial Council."

This was defeated; 4 pro, 37 contra and 6 abstentions

NORMS PROPOSED FOR ADOPTION
BY THE 2003 PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY

- 1) Requirements for and Preparation for Admission to the Congregation
 - a. Requirements:

For admission to the Congregation the following are required:

 - i Age between 18 and 35
 - ii Recommendation as suited for the priesthood or religious life by (a) school authorities, (b) employers (if applicable), and (c) parish clergy
 - iii Academic qualifications at least sufficient for a diploma at Third Level
 - iv A full medical check
 - v A psychological assessment of the type usual in seminaries
 - vi An interview by a board appointed by the Provincial.
 - b. Accompaniment:
 - I The basis for receiving new members into the Irish Province of the Congregation is an ethos of welcome in houses
 - II The initial contact with a prospective candidate is made by any confrere
 - III Accompaniment means regular meeting with the contact confrere. He arranges visits to houses and apostolates, and prayer with communities
 - IV When the contact confrere feels the prospective candidate is ready to begin such visits he notifies the Vocation Director
 - V When the candidate is ready, he may seek to be admitted to Postulancy
 - c. Postulancy:
 - I. A Postulant lives in a house of the Congregation for six months to one year.
 - II. A Postulant has a confrere in the house who is his link-person. He also has a mentor, that is, a personal and spiritual guide, appointed by the Provincial.
 - III. A Postulant retains as much as possible of his normal way of life, and contributes to his upkeep.
 - IV. At the end of his Postulancy he may seek admission to the Congregation by the Provincial.

- V. If this is granted he becomes an Admitted Member of the Congregation.
- d. Formation of Admitted Members:
- I. A year after admission, a confrere makes his Good Purposes ('Bon Propos').
 - II. He follows programme of studies required by the Church for candidates for Holy Orders
 - III. He follows the programme of the Internal Seminary.
 - IV. On completion of his Internal Seminary, or at some appropriate time after it, he makes his Vows. (Reference N. 48).

This proposal was carried; 43 pro, 2 contra and 1 abstention

- 2) *That we should have chaplains in all the educational institutions for which we are responsible*
 This proposal was defeated; 23 pro, 5 contra and 18 abstentions
-

- 3) This proposal was in two parts:
- i) That the Assembly recommit the Province to the integral bond that exists between the ministerial Priesthood and the Vincentian mission in the Church
 - ii) That the Assembly recognise the necessity and value of collaboration with diocesan priests, lay people and religious in all its ministries, on the basis of parity of esteem and, where appropriate, equal access to positions of responsibility.

An Amendment was proposed:

Proposal to add after the phrase "with diocesan priests, lay people and religious" in section ii, the additional phrase "especially the Daughters of Charity and the St Vincent de Paul Society".
 The amendment was defeated; 14 pro, 11 contra and 22 abstentions.
 The original motion was defeated; 11 pro, 24 contra and 22 abstentions

- 4) This is an amendment to the Provincial Norms of 1991:
1. *All members of the Province, who have passive voice, shall be members of the Provincial Assembly, unless excused by the Provincial for a serious reason. Delegates shall be required to sign the register at the first session of the Assembly and shall remain for the duration of the Assembly, unless excused. by the Provincial.*

2. *The Provincial may at his discretion invite as observers, but without the right to vote:*
 - a) *Those who have been admitted to the Congregation but who do not have a passive voice.*
 - b) *Collaborators in the apostolates of the Province*

This motion was carried; 47 pro and 1 abstention

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- 5) This is an amendment to Provincial Norm 50:
The Provincial will appoint the confreres necessary to actively promote vocations to the Congregation.

This motion was carried; 48 pro.

-
- 6) This is an amendment to Provincial Norm 27 & 28:
The holiday and monthly allowances will be updated annually by the Finance Commission and presented to the Provincial and his Council for approval.
 - i) *At each Provincial Assembly the sums of money that the Provincial, with the consent of his council, may spend in extraordinary expenditure will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised.*
 - ii) *At each Provincial Assembly the sums of money that the local superior, with the consent of his community, may spend in extraordinary expenditure will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised.*

This motion was carried; 48 pro

There followed a series of votes on proposals for consideration by the Provincial:

No. 1

That, in collaboration with the other English-speaking Provinces, we compile a Latin/English edition of the Constitutions, Common Rules and Statutes.

This proposal was defeated; 12 pro, 15 contra and 21 abstentions

No. 2

That on the occasion of the General Assembly in Rome in 2004, the English-speaking Visitors give consideration to establishing a commission to produce a Lectionary for the liturgical feasts for the Vincentian Family, with a corresponding volume for the Divine Office, and when completed, they be presented for approval to the relevant Congregation in the Vatican

This proposal was carried; 47 pro and 1 abstention

No. 3

Taking account of the feedback on the Superior General's suggestion that provinces experiment with community prayer, an international committee of the Congregation of the Mission be appointed to produce a practical prayer book/manual reflective of our spirituality, which could be used by the diverse members of the Vincentian Family.

This proposal was withdrawn.

No. 4

In view of the fact that we use the word 'confrere' to describe our relationship with each other, I propose that the word 'retired' be eliminated from the CM Personnel as a translation of 'conquiescens' and that in our official documents it be used only for those who have left the Congregation.

This proposal was seen as a Directive to the Provincial and was carried by a majority vote

No. 5

That greater collaboration in evangelisation be actively promoted among the Provinces, particularly within the Conferences of the Congregation (e.g. European Conference – CEVIM, etc.)

This proposal was carried; 42 pro and 6 abstentions

Request that the Assembly remove the following norms, as they are not pertinent to the Province of 2003 due to changed circumstances

The Nigerian Region will hold a Regional Assembly, with the participation of all members having passive voice, which will treat the agenda of the Provincial Assembly, as well as, by way of advice to the Regional Superior, other matters pertaining to the region itself. Moreover:

- (i.) The Regional Superior in Nigeria will, ex officio, be a member of the Provincial Assembly.
- (ii.) The Regional Assembly will elect, by an absolute majority, two delegates to the Provincial Assembly.
- (iii.) The Regional Superior and the elected delegates will, at the assembly in Ireland, present a full report of the results of the Regional Assembly. (1991)

As far as possible each confrere should have the opportunity of some specialised training for the particular apostolate in which he is engaged. While recognising that some works of their nature demand a life dedication, nevertheless, the experience of individual confreres should not be so limited as to make adaptation to new works too difficult for them. In addition to their academic qualifications those engaged in education should receive some specialised training in modern teaching methods. It is very desirable that seminary professors should also have some practical experience in pastoral work (1970).

There shall be an equitable distribution of talent to the different works and houses of the Province (1970).

A properly constituted department of religious studies should be set up in our colleges under the direction of a confrere with specialist catechetical training (1970).

The House of Formation should make appropriate provision for the needs of late vocations (1983)

This proposal was carried; 47 pro, 1 abstention

In the elections for delegates to the General Assembly in Rome 2004, Aidan Galvin was elected by 24 votes on the third count and he accepted the nomination.

Daniel O'Connell was elected as substitute with 38 votes on the first count. He accepted the nomination.

The meeting concluded with addresses from Fr. Serafin Peralta and Fr. Kevin O'Shea and a vote of thanks, on behalf of the assembled confreres, was offered by Fr. Con Curtin, after which the confreres celebrated a closing Eucharist, at which the Acta of the Assembly and the Certificates of Nomination for the delegate and sub-delegate to the General Assembly were signed, as required.

Opening Talk

Irish Provincial Assembly

Seraphin Peralta CM

I come here as a brother from the same Congregation although from another part of the globe. I bring with me – not expertise on anything but a feeling of gratitude which I want to express to you. The Irish Province has been more than a big brother to us in the Philippines. Fr Tom Davitt has been to the Philippines in the 80's to facilitate our retreats. Fr Brian Nolan has been a great help in establishing our own school of theology and he has contributed more to it by his presence as a professor for several terms and bringing in other professors from England. Fr Kevin Scallon has been in our country several times in connection with his work, Intercession for Priests, and always making it a point to give talks to our seminarians and confreres. I don't know if I must say this, but I'm very grateful to Fr Dick McCullen for appointing me Provincial Visitor of my Province – one of his midnight appointments. I'm doubly grateful to him for having been so very patient with our Province and our confreres when we were going through a very difficult period in our history as a Province. I look with deep appreciation at the many confreres that this Province has been sharing with other Provinces notably Nigeria, China, Ukraine, Solomon Islands, Australia.

Fr Kevin O'Shea has invited me to join you at this Assembly as a facilitator. Since he made no requirements except that I be a Vincentian, I gladly accepted the invitation. And I thank you for accepting me in your midst with a unanimous vote last night.

Last year, Father General convoked the General Assembly 2004. As a first step he created the Preparatory Commission and appointed its members. The theme of the General Assembly 2004 is: *“Our Vincentian identity, today, having lived the new Constitutions for 20 years – an evaluation and 3 challenges for the future.”* Accordingly, the Provincial Visitors created their own Preparatory Commission to help their respective Provinces prepare for their domestic and provincial assemblies. You have one in this Province and it has guided you up to this point. It has also chosen for an inspiration the story of Hagar in the Book of Genesis and its lesson: *“finding water in the wilderness.”*

For purposes of survival, whether it is in the wilderness or in the cities, in deserts or forests, water is essential. I see two essentials in this Province for it to survive. It is in that which we pray for in the

Expectatio Israel: “send workers into your harvest” and “preserve those whom you have called.” Without these two essentials there’ll be no Irish Province to talk about or to plan for.

But these are not just the concerns and challenges for the Irish Province. These are for all the Provinces, Vice-Provinces, and regions of the Congregation of the Mission worldwide. The catalogue for 2003 tells us that in the year 2002 there were 69 who made their vows, 52 priestly ordinations and 85 confreres who have died. If all these confreres came from one Province, that Province would have been ‘de-listed’ from the catalogue. There are 52 Provinces, Vice-Provinces and region worldwide. In half a century, the CM would be no more.

At the retreat and at this Assembly I see many older confreres. Their presence and participation is very encouraging and this is hope at its best. They tell me that they are just as concerned about the Province and its future as all of us are.

The Preparatory Commission for this Provincial Assembly has already identified the challenges that you feel are most urgent for the Province to consider. I don’t want to add more words. From these challenges and from the challenges the different interest groups from outside will give you, you are supposed to agree on the three most urgent in the local and provincial level and you are going to send this to the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly 2004.

Let me now tell you the concerns that I heard you express during your community meetings (domestic assemblies):

- the future of the Province in terms of vocations, evangelization and apostolates
- the Vincentian charism and identity of the confreres, of the family and of the young people
- the need for community life and its implications on the lifestyle of the confreres who are engaged in different ministries
- the morale of the confreres and the clergy in general
- the kind of yardstick to have for spirituality and prayer
- the centrality of Christ in our lives as disciples
- the international character of the CM

I also hear you say that changes have been happening in the Province and that these changes call for more creative responses. What creative responses would you like or can you give to these changes:

- older confreres
- chaplaincies in schools/institutions
- justice issues
- parish experiences
- management of resources

- projects like housing, travelling people, the Passage, Vincentian Millennium Partnership

While I did not hear you say much on the strengths, weaknesses and other traits of each community, I heard you evaluate yourselves in the light of the new Constitutions and after having lived them these past 20 years.

1. There is a consistent move toward the evangelization of the poor as seen in the international mission, *Ad Gentes*, and the appearance of Vincentian inspired groups and ventures. The Province is upbeat in accepting new realities and positive about vocations. It is more courageous in making decisions as to where to put its resources.
2. There is a renewal of community life – Confreres are at ease and show great forbearance, mutual support, co-responsibility in community life and in the management of resources. There is more communication from top down, models and structures for spiritual development and for evaluation, i.e. community plan, budget preparation, are in place. Local community is a source of joy and support. There's a consciousness of modesty and restraint in provision. But we need to keep going back to our charism and mission statements.
3. We are actively seeking renewal, what we are called to be and to do. This helps us become more focused. We may not have taken sufficiently the Constitutions into our hearts and minds, but we are heartened that we are living them. We have a broader view of what it is to be Vincentians, to follow Christ in the work of proclaiming the good news to the poor. The vows are positively introduced and are reflective of the changes in society and the Church.

These are rather broad statements. I did hear you mention some concrete difficulties like the daily fatigue that you experience due to volume of work with less confreres available, the diminution in missions and retreats, a significant decrease in involvement with works with the clergy. You have expressed the general feeling that difficulties encountered are challenges and challenges also serve as difficulties.

From the evaluations mentioned and from any other evaluations that you may come up in your small group meetings you are going to come up with one evaluation which you are going to send together with the three challenges to the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly 2004.

Let me now say something on the process. This Assembly is specifically tasked to come up with one evaluation of the Constitutions after having lived them these past 20 years and three challenges for the

future. It will also propose norms/resolutions for the Province which later on the Provincial and his Council will study and send to the Superior General for approval by him and his Council. This Assembly will also send Postulates to the General Assembly. Each confrere, each house or group of confreres or houses may send their own postulate to the General Assembly if they so desire. Finally, this Assembly is going to vote on a delegate and a substitute to send to the General Assembly. You have very little time in which to do all these. Thus, it'll be of great help if you first discuss things informally in groups and when these have been crystallized, you can bring them up for discussion at the Plenary session and for final voting.

Here are some reminders. Avoid making unnecessary amendments, or amendments to amendments. These take too much of your time. Focus more on ideas rather than words. An Assembly can get bogged down discussing words or punctuation marks. Most of all and best of all, listen. Be attentive to what the confrere is saying and more importantly to what he is not saying. There is a treasure there to be mined. After this Assembly may you find new water.

Closing Talk; Irish Provincial Assembly

Seraphin Peralta CM

You have come full circle. After several days of spiritual retreat and this Provincial Assembly, the hope is that the spirituality and apostolic vitality of the Congregation of this Province and of each confrere is enhanced.

Let me review with you what has happened – specifically these past four days of the Provincial Assembly.

From the very start of the Assembly there has been no doubt at all that you would finish as scheduled. You went to work right away by evaluating yourselves in the light of the new Constitutions which you have lived these past 20 years. Ideas were freely exchanged. Words tried to articulate these ideas. You did the same thing with regards to the three challenges which the Preparatory Commission for the General Assembly 2004 has asked each Province to have. Challenges that the community on the local and Provincial levels will have to face in the coming years. In the process, many beautiful, encouraging and thought provoking ideas emerged. How to articulate these was a passing difficulty.

It is always a great temptation for the facilitator to jump into the discussion every time a difficulty is met, or every time that there is an impasse. But I put all my trust in the moderators believing that they understood better the nuances of words, ideas, examples and experiences. I would only whisper suggestions to the moderators and work closely with the steering committee. Basically the work of the facilitator should be behind the curtains. You can proudly say that what you have done is Irish made.

The works of these past 4 days have been preceded by your prayers, reflections, meetings. A planning reunion was also held at Los Angeles with Fr Pat, Fr Eugene and myself in November of last year. The Preparatory Commission for the Assembly has done a great job in putting together everything that has happened here these past 4 days including the presence of the interest groups and dinner last night.

What has been most noteworthy is the active and lively participation of the confreres both in the small group and the Plenary. Your deep love and concern for the Province and its future showed up a great deal. Let me say this again – this is hope at its best!

The atmosphere of the Assembly was one of freedom to listen and be listened to, to disagree at times but being agreeable all the time. The mood was reflective and peaceful, enhanced greatly by Fr Pat's

reflections on Gospel passages.

In trying to list down the challenges one is guided by questions like, is the challenge specific, concrete, doable, measurable? I believe they are.

It was great listening to your exchange of ideas wonderfully and intelligently expressed with deep conviction.

I don't think you do, but if you still doubt the worthiness of the document that you have come up with – evaluation and challenges, proposals and norms voted in or out – doubt no more. The Provincial Assembly was itself a great challenge and you handled it beautifully. Congratulations. I believe you have found new water.

The Challenges put before us by a multi-cultural society

Breege Keenan DC

Director, Vincentian Refugee Centre, Phibsboro'

Ireland is traditionally a country of strong emigration and this has changed in the very recent past, as the 'Celtic Tiger' economy took off and more and more immigrants came to work here. The benefits which immigrants have brought to us are many and they have added much to our social, cultural, spiritual and economic life.

International students, enrolled at our second and third level institutions, have offered fees and have extended to their fellow Irish scholars the opportunity to expand cultural horizons. Ethnic restaurants, now spread throughout the country and staffed by migrants from China, Vietnam, Italy and India, have influenced our eating habits and enhanced consumer choice. The immigrants and returning Irish emigrants and EU citizens have invested their skill in our expanding economy.

The immigrants pose many challenges for us and they can be classified under; government policy, legal and human rights issues, advocacy, lobbying, integration, work and visa permits, communication, employment and others.

For us, as followers of St Vincent de Paul, I am just going to name three challenges that I see as very important.

The first is the challenge to welcome the stranger

In the Bible, Abraham is presented as a great unifying figure "in whom all the nations of the earth shall be blessed". He provides us with a story showing how the hospitality he offered to complete strangers goes together with God's blessings. The respectful greeting and welcome is followed by lavish hospitality. The strangers are served under the shade of the trees, not just with the best bread but also with specially prepared meat, curds and milk. Before departing, they promise that Sarah will give birth to a son.

The strangers are messengers from God and, again in Hebrews, it says "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers".

Anyone who has experienced the overwhelming hospitality given to strangers by families in most parts of the Third World will recognise the story of Abraham's hospitality as authentic. Whatever their poverty, it is part of their cultural tradition to give the very best they have. Regrettably, we do not have the same tradition in the Western World.

At this time of Easter, we are all familiar with the Emmaus story.

Here, the stranger is welcomed and invited to a meal. Then the scenario changes and the guest becomes the host who is recognised as Jesus, while they are eating at table. It is as if we are being shown how we should understand "I was a stranger and you welcomed me". There is also the meaning that, for each of us, each time we celebrate the Eucharist, it is an act of sharing and hospitality where we meet Jesus the breadmaker. How can we celebrate the Eucharist and, at the same time, exclude the stranger?

The second challenge is the use of our buildings

Our church needs youthful vibrancy and youthful vibrant churches also need establishment and tradition. The most obvious support we can provide is the use of building space; whether it is churches, halls or schoolrooms or, indeed, our sitting rooms. Abbey Presbyterian Church in Parnell Square, here in Dublin, hosts two African congregations on a Sunday, one English-speaking and the other French-speaking. The congregations have decided upon basic arrangements in relation to building use and each contributes to the financial upkeep and maintenance of the building. There are occasions, such as sales of work, when the three congregations come together and develop mutual respect and understanding. In this way, exchange can take place periodically to sample worship in each different tradition and, therefore, changes can occur mutually according to each congregation's weakness. If one congregation falters, then at least the continuance of Christian worship can be maintained in the building. This prevents the situation such as the one in St Mary's Church of Ireland in Henry Street which is currently under reconstruction to become a nightclub.

The third challenge is that of language

When we speak to immigrants, do we speak too fast, use jargon words or expressions that they do not understand? Fr Maloney, our Superior General, has often asked that we learn a language other than our native tongue and for those of you with a second language; do you use it?

The Methodist Church in Clontarf has a very interesting way of including immigrants in their services. If they have a reading in Lingala (the language of the Congo) then they have copies of it in English for the Irish congregation and vice versa. Surely, this is one way that we can include immigrants in our Churches. However, they have lost some members because of this. Perhaps that is something we may have to be willing to face. If you have another language, have you considered offering Mass regularly in that language? Currently, in our Lady of Lourdes Church in Sean MacDermott Street, there is Mass each Sunday in Romanian celebrated by a Romanian priest, there is Mass once a

month in French in Meath Street, in Italian and Spanish at the Pro-Cathedral and there are other examples.

It is evident that already a lot is being done for immigrants in your Province but now you have an opportunity to raise awareness of the issues at a worldwide level by looking at the cause of immigration; in this you can show solidarity in what must be one of the most pressing issues of poverty today.

Perhaps there is now the opportunity to launch a campaign on immigrants for the Vincentian Family, similar to that on 'World Hunger' launched last year by Fr Maloney.

"When I was a stranger, did you make me feel welcome?"

The Challenges posed by Lay Ministry

Margarita Synnott,
*Co-ordinator, Preparing for Ministries Course,
All Hallows' College*

If I have to reduce everything to three important concepts which I think are a challenge to you in the coming years, they are;

- The challenges of hospitality
- The challenges of prayer life
- The challenges of collaboration

Hospitality

One of the things which our participants constantly comment upon is the fact that they feel welcome here in All Hallows and we work hard to give them that sense of welcome. For many people, parish life is anonymous; they may know their near neighbours but, as members of a parish, they are unknown, some do not even feel worthy of being known as they may not be directly involved in a parish activity. I think hospitality is a challenge for everyone today, especially now that we are aware of the issue of abuse, both physical and spiritual, ordained or not. In my own home, I have been constantly challenged to be hospitable to the friends and acquaintances of my children; and, believe me, in their teens, they brought home many challenging people! However, it was a friend of my husband and I who abused the hospitality we offered – not in the physical sense but in a way which undermined us and which was deeply hurtful. Afterwards, we had to make a conscious effort to remain open and hospitable to others, In making your community and way of life open to people, you run the same risks, but there is such loneliness out there, such need for belonging that I think we have to run with the risk. People love to feel welcomed, to be remembered, to be offered a cup of tea. One of our PFM participants, who later trained as a prayer guide, told me that, originally, she had only come in to All Hallows to walk the dog; she met someone from the staff as she strolled around, she was offered a cup of tea in the Coffee Dock and so felt able to return. Eventually, she signed up for Preparing for Ministries, stayed the two years and is now a regular prayer guide to our new participants. And it all started with a ‘Hello!’

Prayer

The next challenge I give you is prayer; the sharing of your knowledge of prayer and your prayer life. People are hungry for prayer and want to

learn how to do it! Many of them have had a very narrow model of spirituality and prayer given to them and, when that model does not nourish them, they feel it is their fault. In PFM, we try to give people different experiences of ways to pray and they lap it up! Of course, some of them want the old ways; as one of them put it “less of the candles and silky scarves!” but many want and need people to show them ways of being with God. Can you respond to them? Can your charism of hospitality draw people in so that they feel welcome and at ease and open to possibilities of praying with you. I was in one of your smaller houses recently and I nearly collapsed when I saw the prayer room these three men had; do you know how lucky you are? So few people have private space or quiet space in their houses. In a small suburban house such as that one, I would make an offer to the neighbours to come in for 45 minutes, one night a week for six weeks, and pray with them. They are out there, I promise you.

Collaboration

Lastly, collaboration; yes, I know that you have discussed it over and over but many religious are still not getting it. Even if you have lots of men with vocations, collaboration is the only way; people are now used to working in a collaborative way in their workplaces and more and more management courses are teaching and training people in the ways of collaborations. Industry has recognised that people are no longer willing to be told how to or when to; industry can see that collaboration is that way forward and collaboration brings in profits, which is the bottom line. So too in the Church, and may I say that collaboration doesn't begin after the priest has met the other priests and decided what they will collaborate about with the people – collaboration begins when you include people at the very beginning, not after you've decided what information you will, or will not, share with them. It means equal participation between ordained and non-ordained, even as each brings their own gifts. Collaboration means that you brainstorm with people, that you all decide to move forward and that you all share the risks; the buck doesn't have to stop with you. It will, if you fly solo. If you risk real collaboration, you will have successes and failures but failure is so much easier to take if you have company. Of course, in company, you'll be vulnerable; you won't be 'Father-who-knows-everything', you'll be seen as the human person you are but, then, the rest of us are human too.

Directions for Planning

Ember; The Vincentian Mission Team

Certain minor changes have been made by the editor, merely for the purposes of clarity; this was originally presented as a report, not as an article.

Introduction

Vincentian mission teams have been engaged in the work of parish missions in Ireland and Britain for almost two hundred years, longer if one goes back to the seventeenth century. In the late 1970s, another mission team was formed to continue the work as Vincentians in Ireland, that is members of the Congregation of the Mission and lay colleagues, sought to evangelize in the light of the Second Vatican Council.

Since the early 1990s, the team has styled itself the *Ember Mission Team*, taking its inspiration from the image of rekindling embers and the injunction of St Paul to Timothy; “That is why I am reminding you now to fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you.” (2 Timothy 1:6).

Following the Jubilee Year of 2000, the mission team has entered a new phase, which requires some evaluation of our position and proposals for the future. This document is, therefore, a preview of what we feel will be required to strengthen the evangelical vocation that is at the heart of the Vincentian character.

Some basic elements of our preview required that we know the ground on which we stand. To this end we reiterated our sense of mission by honing our mission statement and redefining our aims. This also saw us conduct a survey of parishes, which brought in a response of 50%. We publish the survey as well as some comments, which highlight various conclusions and contradictions.

Our environmental scan also includes our own evaluations of the working in this field at present as well as a list of other groups who are working with parishes in various ways.

As part of an outline of how the mission team might operate in the future, we also indicate models of mission from long term to serial involvement. An operational plan outlining the overall process of working with a parish is also shown. This will include mission evaluation.

The management of the mission team raises opportunities and challenges for us as we seek ways to be effective into the future. Clear lines

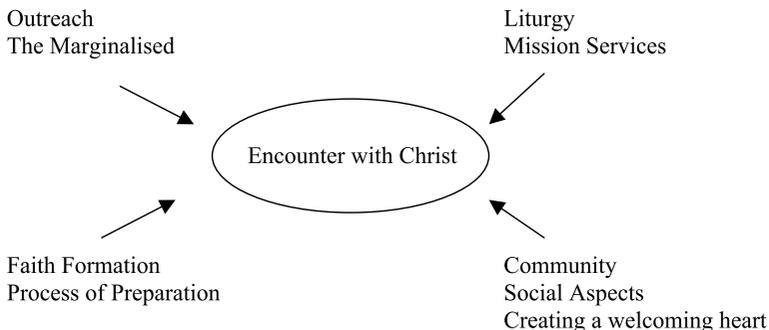
of communication and accountability will be required as we contemplate new ways of working and new people doing the work. There will also be financial implications for which we will have to prepare.

This document reflects an important part of the work of the mission team over the last eighteen months. It has provided us with a privileged opportunity to examine and clarify our work and our sense of commitment to this vocation. We commend it as our best effort to develop the Vincentian charism in the Irish Church and we thank God that we have been so blessed in each other and in those with whom we have tried to share the Gospel.

1. *Mission Statement & Aims*

The Ember Mission Team is sent out in the spirit of St Vincent de Paul to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all people and to work with them as individuals, parishes and communities as they fan into a flame the faith gifts that God has given them.

The Ember Mission Team seeks to rekindle the flame in the following ways:



- To engage in evangelisation for all
- To foster the faith of individuals and the community
- To inspire conversion in the hearts of individuals and the community

- To foster reconciliation and healing in individuals and community
- To provide and encourage outreach to those on the margins of the community
- To engage with people in faith and parish renewal
- To release the gifts of individuals for the building up of the community
- To provide opportunities for training and growth
- To promote true collaboration in the running of the parish
- To heighten awareness of the presence of God in peoples' lives
- To celebrate sacramental moments in the community
- To deepen peoples' understanding and experience of the Sacraments
- To form people in the understanding of the Church as the body of Christ
- To offer opportunities for prayer

2. *Environmental Scan*

The environmental scan is a survey of the current situation and it comprises three elements:

2.A. Research Data – Some Conclusions and Contradictions

2.B Team View

2.C Other Services

2.A. *Research Data – Some Conclusions and Contradictions*

Note; the data itself is included as an appendix to this article

The consultation elicited a 50% response, which is significantly higher than the norm. However, it must be borne in mind that certain limitations prevail. The majority of respondents are parish priests who may or may not have consulted with lay people in responding to the survey, so we cannot say how much input from lay people there has been. There is one other important consideration; the survey does not reflect at all the opinions of people who are not practising.

In general, where a range of possible answers were put forward respondents tended to go for what they knew best and what corresponded with the tradition of missions known to them. Thus, for example, when asked about the length of time best devoted to a mission experience, 75% opted for a week-long engagement with only 2% in favour of a long term contract of involvement. However, when pursued

separately, the possibility of a more long- term involvement is favoured by 56% of respondents with a further 16% neutral.

Some interesting findings of the survey include the following:

- A high level of support for the involvement of lay people in a mission team (61%) with good support for a team made up mostly of laity (48%).
- A high level of willingness on the part of people in the parishes to engage in mission preparation (79%) though it is notable that the emphasis was placed heavily on the planning of the event as opposed to its execution.
- Good support in favour of mission events taking place in venues outside the church building, though the trend is towards venues used for parish activities, e.g. schools, halls and clubs (46%). There is less support for more unlikely venues such as hotels (12%) and pubs (8%).

As regards the target audience for mission, a large majority of respondents favours seeking out the 15-45 age group (75%). 40% of this majority of respondents placed a particular emphasis on the 25-35 age group.

There was minimal support for mission involvement with the very young, i.e. the 5-15 age group (7%) and the elderly, those over 65 years of age (3%).

These views are reinforced when we consider the answers to the question, “*Who would you like a mission to be aimed at?*” Without suggesting age groups, 20% favoured those who don’t practise regularly while a further 22% favoured young married people and 24% preferred seeking out families.

When asked about the elements of a mission most suited to their parish, respondents supported faith formation, 15%; preaching, 13%; special prayer / liturgies, 11%. In the light of responses to questions about target audience, these suggestions highlight a major contradiction in the findings since none of the elements suggested involve the direct outreach necessary to contact and engage the specified target audiences, i.e. young people and those who don’t practise.

2.B Team View

As Vincentians, we have a particular experience and appreciation of the gift to the Church entailed in parish missions. The Vincentian history and tradition in Ireland is especially rich and this is borne out insofar as parishes are clear about Vincentian mission identity. There are not enough people engaged in this work in the country at the moment. This

possibly reflects the lack of emphasis on effective evangelisation in the Church in Ireland today.

We feel that there is a real need to reach those who don't know (about) Christ or the community of the Church. There is a new paganism that goes beyond alternative choices in faith and becomes hostile to faith in Christ. We wish to challenge this.

We believe that we live in a moment of opportunity for a new evangelism. We are struck by the extent to which the Church is experienced as irrelevant to many people under the age of 25. They seem to have no hunger at all. We think that in the current climate there is a need to listen to what people are saying and to acknowledge the validity of their views. In this it will also be important to support priests in their ministries.

In trying to create a constructive conversation among people of faith and with those who profess no faith, we are aware of how poor knowledge and understanding of the faith really is. The institutions of the Church itself have become obstacles to faith. Church systems, its hierarchy, its moral code and experience of its liturgies strike many in very negative ways. We are struck ourselves by the similarities with St Vincent's day. In addition there are conflicting voices that have perfected their communications methods and this makes perfecting our own communications skills all the more urgent.

The mission team, in reflecting on the present environment in which we seek to exercise our ministry, discern that there is a thirst in people for something to enhance their experience of parish life.

People are looking for something that will renew their faith, energise their communities and give them hope. They seek encouragement. Moreover, people of faith seek opportunities to put questions and express uncertainties. Our mission statement and aims seek to address the need for renewal of faith that comes through evangelisation and conversion. We stress, however, that the fruits of effective evangelisation and sincere conversion are evident when a community begins to collaborate in its own renewal. Therefore, we promote various forms of outreach, formation and participation in ministry from within a community and seek to provide the opportunities that can realise this.

2.C Other Services (Not necessarily organized on a full time basis)

- Redemptorists
- Sacred Heart Missionaries
- Jesuits
- Passionists
- Parish Renewal & Development (PDR)

- Diocesan groups and individuals
- Emmanuel Community
- Ecumenical Retreat Group (Cork)
- Individuals engaged in mission and retreat work.

3. *Operational Plan*

In proposing a new model for mission, the Team looked first at a possible process.

3.1 *Overall Process.*

The following is an outline of the overall Process of Mission from receipt of request to completion of Mission Event in Parish.

- 1) The request from the parish is received in the Ember Office. This request will be considered by the Co-ordinator who will be supported by a secretary.
- 2) Co-ordinator will make a preliminary visit to the parish and meet with the parish team to discuss the needs of the parish and clarify the request.
- 3) Co-ordinator to report back to the Core Group which will be made up of CM's and others who will form the core Mission Team. The Core group makes a Proposal of Mission (to be outlined in next section)to the parish.
- 4) A member of the Core group is assigned as Liaison person to the parish and together with the Co-ordinator makes a visit to the parish to discuss the Proposal with parish.
- 5) The Co-ordinator and the Liaison person meet with the Core Group to review request. On acceptance of mission request, confirmation of acceptance is sent to parish and timeframe or date is suggested. It is the responsibility of the Co-ordinator to communicate this to the parish.
- 6) The Liaison person, in consultation with the Co-ordinator, will form a team to meet the needs of the parish. The Liaison person shall be the contact with the parish and shall report progress to the Co-ordinator and the Core Group at regular intervals.
- 7) The process of preparing for the mission event continues in the parish following the particular needs of the individual situation.
- 8) On completion of the Mission event, an evaluation of quality assurance and outcomes will be undertaken by both the mission team and the parish. A report will be given at the Core group meeting.

3.2. *Proposal of Mission.*

The needs of a parish in terms of mission differ from place to place. Many factors influence the type of mission request received from a parish. In the light of our experience to date and considering the results of our Environmental Scan we offer the following as Proposals of Mission that we consider will meet the needs of Mission in the Irish Church at this time of transition.

- *Take over Parish for 3-5 years*
A team of people would take over the running of a parish for a specific length of time. The Team would work alongside the existing Parish Team. Modelling of best practice in all aspects of Liturgy / Ministry would be central to this proposal. Working collaboratively with the Parish Team and the community to develop and implement a strategic plan to meet the needs of the parish / community.
- *One week Retreat*
This follows a church based retreat style program. Mass and evening services of mission would be the main focus of this proposal.
- *Novenas or Tridua*
Various novenas and Seasonal Tridua.
- *One Week of Visitation*
A team would spend one week visiting homes in the parish. This would be done with members of the parish team and visitation teams from the parish.
- *One week Mission*
This would be similar in style to the retreat model encompassing many of the elements of the Retreat. In addition, workshops on a variety of themes would be included in the week. The topics and format of the workshops would be decided by the planning group as part of the preparation stage.
- *Consultancy*
This would take place over an agreed time period. It might involve working with specific groups in the parish e.g. Parish Team, Pastoral Council, Liturgy Group, Readers. This model would not necessarily involve Liturgical Celebration with the parish.
- *Skills Training*
This might be offered in conjunction with the Consultancy model. Training in a variety of skills can be delivered by the Team. The following areas are suggestions: Lay Formation,

Visitation team training, Liturgy, Bereavement, Group Work, Pastoral Councils, Prayer Guidance, Communications. The format of the training will be decided in consultation with the Parish team.

- *Series of Encounters / Engagements*
These could be weekend events, mid-week events held regularly over a period of time or one off speaking engagements.

3.3 *The Need for Evaluation processes.*

In order to maintain good standards of practice in all areas of mission a formal process of evaluation and quality assurance will be put in place. This is to be included in the Overall Process and service users will be informed of this in the initial stages of the planning process. They will be encouraged to undertake this evaluation when the mission event has been completed. A report will be forwarded to the co-ordinator for discussion at Core Team Meeting. The Mission team responsible for the individual project will undertake a separate evaluation and report to the Core Group meeting.

3.4 *Development of Brochure.*

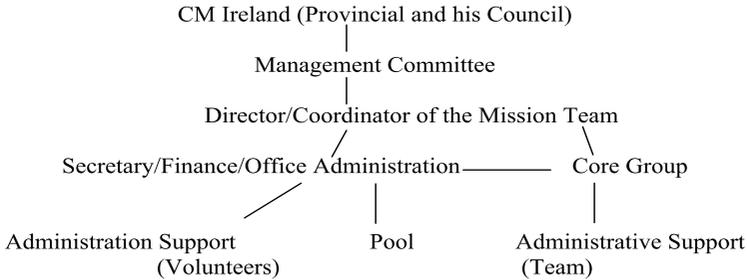
A Brochure briefly describing the work of the Ember Team and outlining the process of Mission and the various Proposals is to be developed. The Ember logo will be included in the cover of brochure. A brief history of Vincentian Mission will also be included. This will then be available to send to parishes on receipt of inquiries. The final format of brochure will be decided at the conclusion of this process. *(This brochure, along with a shorter flier, was subsequently produced and sent in a mail-shot to all the bishops of Ireland for distribution to the parishes)*

4 *Management of the Proposed Mission Team*

This section is subdivided as follows

- 4.1 A flow chart of the line-management and accountability structures
- 4.2 A description of the various elements of the management structures
- 4.3 An examination of some financial matters

4.1 Line Management and Accountability Structures



4.2 The elements of the Management Structure

4.2.1 CM Ireland (Provincial Council)

The Mission Team, its director, members and administration, as a mission and ministry of the Vincentians, will be ultimately responsible to the Irish Province, as embodied in the Provincial and his Council.

4.2.2. Management Committee

It is envisaged that there would be a management committee (like a board of Trustees in a school) which would guard the vincentian ethos and charism and deal with certain other areas. The Committee would be nominated by the Provincial and could include Vincentians and others. Terms of office and of reference would have to be worked out.

Among the tasks of the committee would be;

- To ensure quality control and best practice in the ministry
- To monitor and evaluate the progress and growth of the work
- To supervise fund-raising, decide on financial viability and examine accounts
- To receive the Director's reports and hold the core group accountable

4.2.3. Director/Co-ordinator

(although the document refers to the 'Director/Co-ordinator', it should be noted that it was decided that the official title of Maureen Treanor, who was appointed to the post, is 'Director'; ed.)

The post of Director/Coordinator would be a full-time, salaried position with other remuneration (mileage, telephone, car etc.) to be worked out.

The person appointed might be either a member of the CM or some other suitable person. The task would be to liaise with parishes and other clients, to convene and interact with the core group, to administer the office and related matters, to publicise the ministry and to take final responsibility for each mission. It would involve working from the office and also travelling to clients in the initial stages of enquiry. In any case, the person appointed would need to be;

- a) Skilled in;
 - An embracing of the Vincentian Spirit
 - Net-working
 - Understanding and experience of Mission
 - Facilitation
 - Knowledge of Parish life and Structures
 - Evangelisation
 - Organisation
 - Education and Formation

- b) Their job would require;
 - Accountability; to the Council, Management Committee, Team and those served in the Mission
 - Formation; for self, the Core Group and the Pool
 - Being aware of current theory and best practice in the exercise of the ministry
 - The ability to identify skills and resources in local areas
 - The ability to identify and select possible team members
 - The ability to seek out, form and encourage volunteers
 - A basic understanding of administration and fund-raising

- c) Such a person would need to have the required;
 - Knowledge
 - Experience
 - Skills and abilities
 - Disposition

4.2.4 Core Group

The Core Group would consist of a number of people who would be directly responsible for the actual missions. While they would be remunerated for missions in which

they were directly engaged, membership of the Core Group would be voluntary and unremunerated, although it would probably be necessary to offer some stipend or expenses for attendance at meetings.

Their task would be;

- a) To support the director/co-ordinator in the work itself
- b) To make judgements about proposed missions and to nominate the person who would liaise with each parish or client
- c) To discuss and work on the on-going development of the work
- d) Take leadership on specific missions by;
 - selecting teams
 - formulating structures
 - evaluating the process
- e) Work with the director/co-ordinator in formulating reports to the Management Committee or to the Provincial Council

4.2.5 Pool (Team)

The Pool would be a group of people interested in being involved in giving Missions. While they would be remunerated for participation in Missions, membership itself would be voluntary. Membership could be either full- or part-time and involvement in missions would be on a similar basis. The Pool could consist of Vincentians, Daughters of Charity, members of other communities and lay-people (perhaps even from other Communions). Each person would let the Director know what commitment they were willing to make and what involvement they wished to have with regard to;

- Time commitment
- Regularity of commitment
- Area of involvement – topics to be covered
- Areas of responsibility

Thus, for example, a particular Vincentian might agree to be full-time on one mission per year, focussing on administering the sacraments. A lay-person might agree to attend any number of missions but only for one night, focussing on some particular topic. While the Team would seek to include a variety of skills, it is anticipated that each member would have;

- Qualifications (academic or experiential) in their own area of expertise
- A good understanding of Church, Parish, Evangelisation, Culture etc.
- The freedom and willingness to travel and be available to be called upon
- A vincentian perspective
- A willingness to work as a member of a team
- A willingness to be involved in processes of self- and team-formation

It is recognised that All Hallows may well be a major source for membership of such a pool, especially as many students there seek such pastoral activity, both from the degree and other courses (Preparing for Ministry or Renewal for Ministry). It also provides certain resources and facilities (office and meeting space) and is strongly identified with the Vincentian Charism. Nonetheless, it should be remembered that there are other sources from which volunteers might come; e.g. past pupils of our schools or colleges, parishoners or staff from our parishes, former members of the CM or colleagues from other places etc.

4.2.6 Secretary/Finance

The post of secretary would be either full- or part-time and would be remunerated. The task of the secretary would be to administer the office, to keep the books, maintain the database, act as a point of initial contact and liaise with the director/co-ordinator. Such a secretary would also take responsibility for mail-shots and maintaining equipment etc.

4.2.7 Volunteers

It would be one of the tasks of the director/co-ordinator to seek out, form and encourage volunteers. These would offer back-up support particularly in terms of administration support and, perhaps, in areas of expertise not directly associated with the mission; e.g. fund-raising, publications, technology etc.

5. *FINANCE*

This is dealt with under three headings;

- 5.1 Income
- 5.2 Expenditure
- 5.3 Some considerations

5.1 Sources of Income

Income for the Mission will be raised in the following ways;

- Fees from parishes (updated according to CORI guidelines)
- Grants and Trusts (particularly for administration, evangelisation)
- Gifts in kind (equipment, services, talent/skills, etc)
- Appeals
- Individual/Group donors

5.2 Expenditure

The major areas of anticipated regular expenditure are;

- Salary and expenses for full-time director/co-ordinator
- Salary for part-time secretary
- Fees and expenses for Core Group
- Some expenses for members of the Pool
- Maintenance of office, equipment etc.
- Publishing and publicity
- Vehicles
- Formation for members of Team

5.3 Some implications

It is obvious from the above that, in all likelihood, expenditure will far outstrip income, if income is understood to refer only to fees raised from the missions.

On the other hand, a coordinator who has good management skills should know something of fund-raising and should be able to tap into various sources of funding (for example, at the moment, we are exploring the possibility of appealing to an international Foundation which funds endeavours in Evangelisation). One task of the Director would be to seek out other such sources or, at least, to seek out someone who would be willing to provide that service. Similarly, the director could explore the possibility of finding staff among some of the training courses etc and might be able to explore the possibilities offered by gifts in kind.

It might require the setting up of a Trust Fund which would generate a certain amount of interest which could provide the working capital for the project (e.g. sufficient to cover the salary of the Director). It would then be one aspect of the task of the Director, in consultation with the Management Committee and the Core Group, to seek ways to raise the other necessary funds.

Mission Team Survey

Results and some conclusions

The survey was commissioned by the Ember Mission Team
and compiled and collated by Joe Greenan

Contents

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Assumptions/ Comments
- 3) Graphs Showing 1st Preference Responses and Average of Top 4 Preferences
- 4) Comments from Participants
- 5) Appendices

Introduction

In February 2002, 237 questionnaires were sent out to parishes throughout Ireland. Recipients were asked to complete the questionnaire and return them by 1st March 2002. A total of 118 replies were received. This accounts for a response rate of 49%. The information contained in the replies may be used as the basis for further study but, by itself, it offers valid information on which to make decisions.

The appendices are listed as follows and can be found at the end of this report: -

- Appendix 1 Sample Questionnaire
- Appendix 2 Excel chart, listing the responses from 118 participants

Assumptions made in compiling the information and comments are listed as follows.

- 1) Not all respondents filled out their forms as requested. Where this occurred, their replies were ranked equally. This happened in 42 questions out of a total of 1508 questions. It amounts to 2.8% of the total questions and does not effect the overall trend. Ranking replies equally accounts for the fact that the cumulative number of responses to a question exceeds the number of replies to the overall questionnaire (e.g. if you total the number of responses to question 1, they come to 157 but only 118 questionnaire replies were received).

- 2) Most of the replies seem to echo their experience. Very few recipients of the questionnaire are looking for something different.

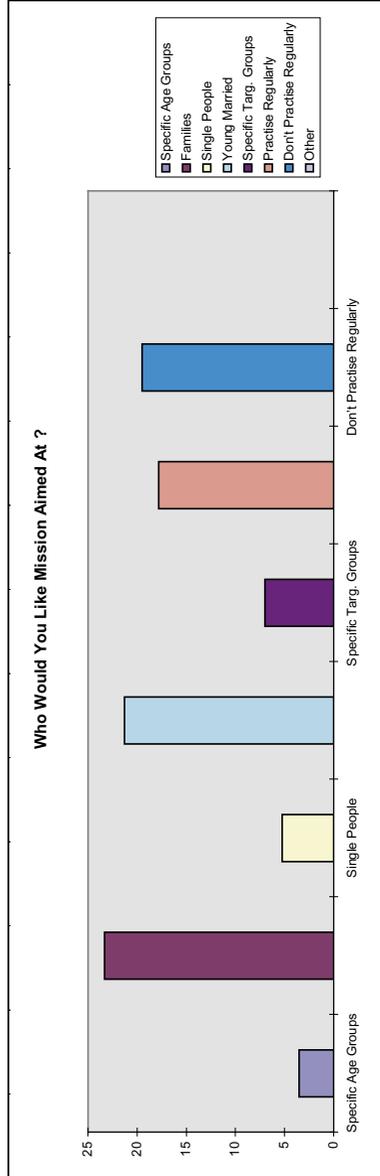
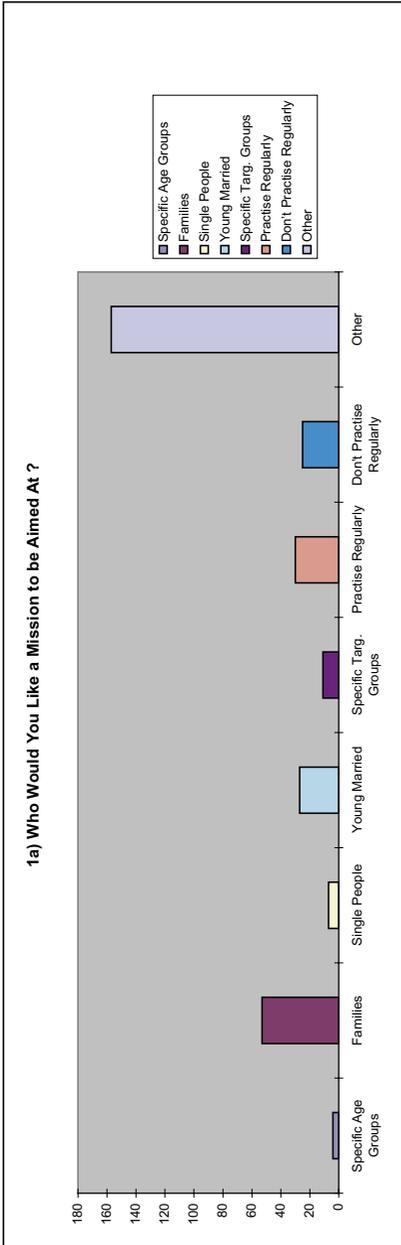
Out of 237 questionnaires sent out, only 14 participants offered additional information.

- 3) The following graphs show the number of 1st preference responses and an average of the top 4 preferences to questions asked respectively.
- 4) The details of the graphs are listed (in chart form) following the graph.

The following lists the number of questionnaires

| Diocese | Number of Replies | | Diocese | Number of Replies | | Diocese | Number of Replies | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|-------------------|-------|---------------------|-------------------|-------|
| | Sent | Recd. | | Sent | Recd. | | Sent | Recd. |
| Achonry | 2 | 1 | Down & Connor | 7 | 3 | Killaloe | 6 | 4 |
| Ardagh & Clonmacnoise | 15 | 6 | Dromore | 3 | 1 | Kilmore | 12 | 6 |
| Armagh | 15 | 8 | Dublin | 43 | 20 | Limerick | 8 | - |
| Cashel & Emly | 3 | 3 | Elphin | 8 | 4 | Meath | 9 | 4 |
| Clogher | 6 | 3 | Ferns | 6 | 4 | Ossory | 3 | 3 |
| Clonfert | 3 | - | Galway | 3 | - | Raphoe | 8 | 2 |
| Cloyne | 4 | 2 | Kerry | 18 | 8 | Tuam | 3 | 2 |
| Cork & Ross | 10 | 8 | Kildare & Leighlin | 16 | 11 | Waterford & Lismore | 5 | 4 |
| Derry | 16 | 7 | Killala | 6 | 4 | | | |

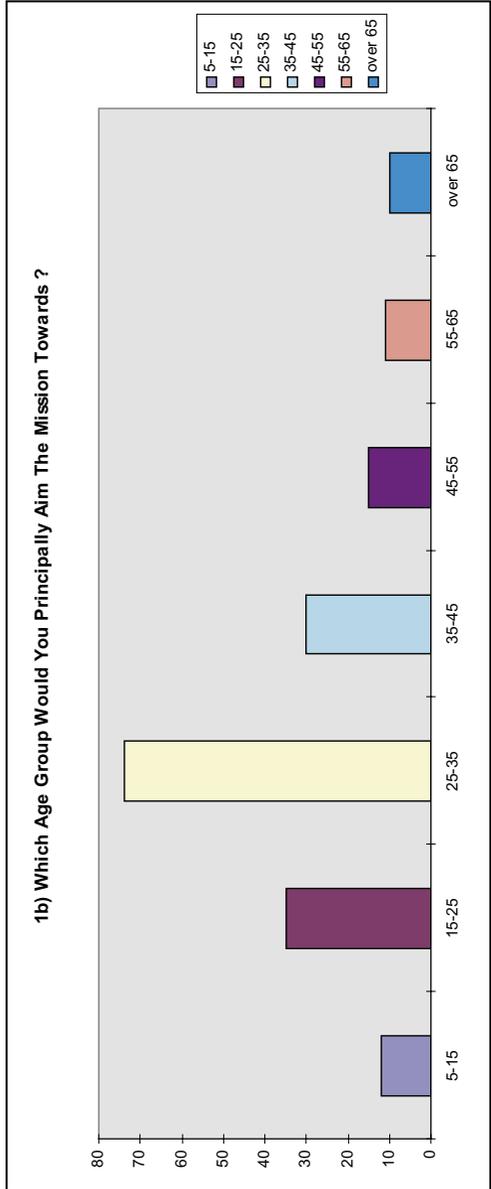
First Preference/ Average of First 4 Preferences Respectively

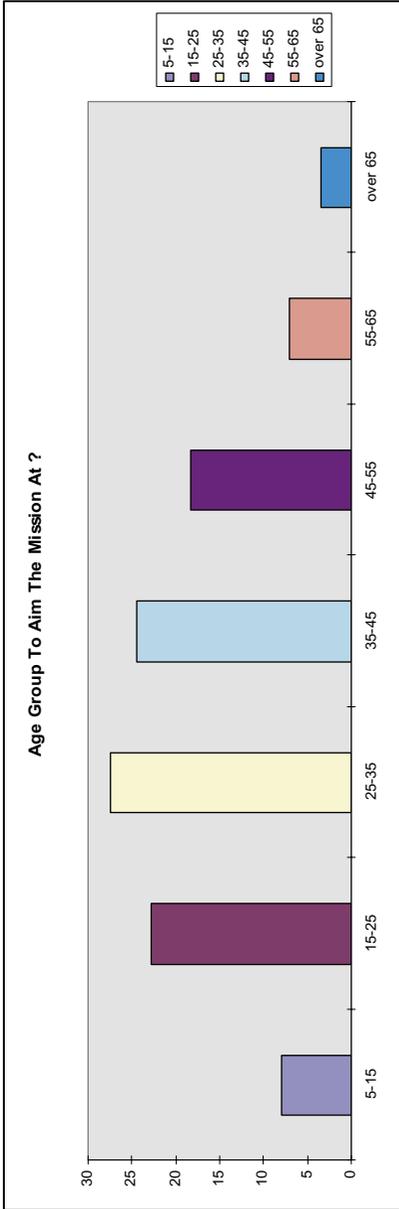


Families score highest with 34% and 24% respectively as the main group that Mission should be aimed at.
 The next three groups are Young Married, Those Who Practise Regularly and Those Who Don't Practise Regularly. There is a shift from the 1st preference vote to the average of the first four preference votes.
 Families decreased from 34% to 24%, while Young Married increased from 17% to 22%, Those Who Don't Practise Regularly increased from 16% to 20%.

| | Who Would You Like A Mission To Be Aimed At ? | | |
|------------------------------------|---|------------|---|
| | First Preference | % of Total | Average of 1 st Four Preferences |
| Specific Groups | | | |
| Families | 4 | 3% | 3.5 |
| Young Married | 53 | 34% | 23.3 |
| Single Parent | 7 | 4% | 5.3 |
| Those Who Don't Practise Regularly | 27 | 17% | 21.3 |
| Those Who Practise Regularly | 11 | 7% | 7 |
| Practise Regularly | 30 | 19% | 17.8 |
| Don't Practise Regularly | 25 | 16% | 19.5 |
| | | | % of Total |
| | | | 4% |
| | | | 24% |
| | | | 5% |
| | | | 22% |
| | | | 7% |
| | | | 18% |
| | | | 20% |

First Preference/ Average of First 4 Preferences Respectively



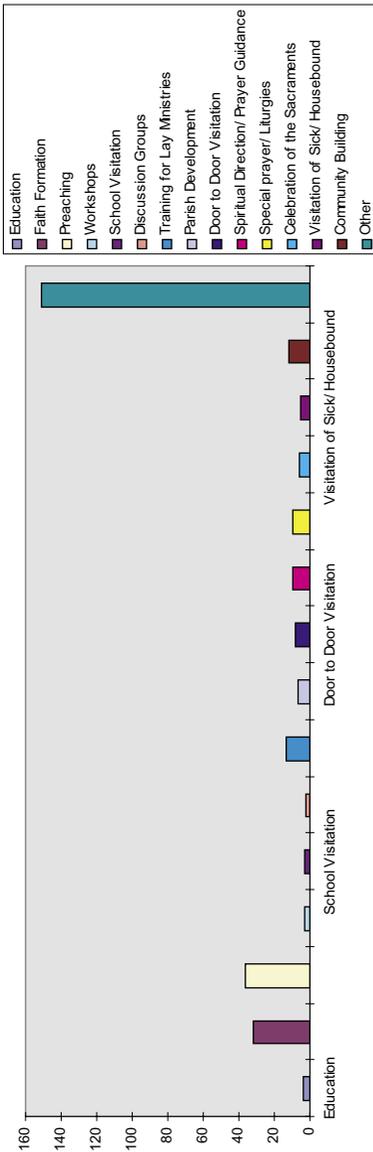


| | First Preference | % of Total | Average of 1 st Four Preferences | % of Total |
|---------|------------------|------------|---|------------|
| 5-15 | 12 | 6% | 8 | 7% |
| 15-25 | 35 | 19% | 22.8 | 21% |
| 25-35 | 74 | 40% | 27.5 | 25% |
| 35-45 | 30 | 16% | 24.5 | 22% |
| 45-55 | 15 | 8% | 18.3 | 16% |
| 55-65 | 11 | 6% | 7 | 6% |
| Over 65 | 10 | 5% | 3.5 | 3% |

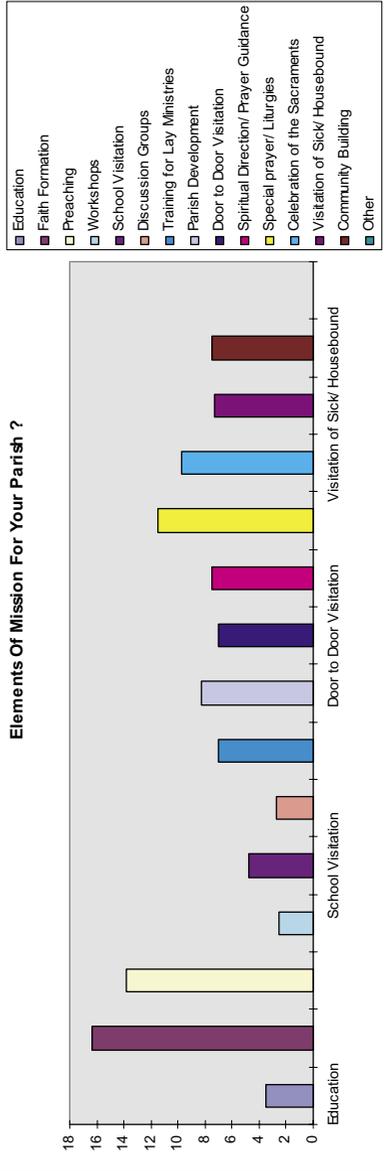
The age group 25-35 is the predominant group to aim the Mission at.
 This is shown in both charts but more predominantly in the first preference votes.
 When an average of the first four preference votes are looked at, the predominant age group changes to 15-25
 It is useful to see the narrow group of 25-35 as a main focus and to consider the group of 25-55 as in a wider context of Mission.

First Preference/ Average of First 4 Preferences Respectively

2) What Are The Elements Of A Mission Most Suited To Your Parish ?



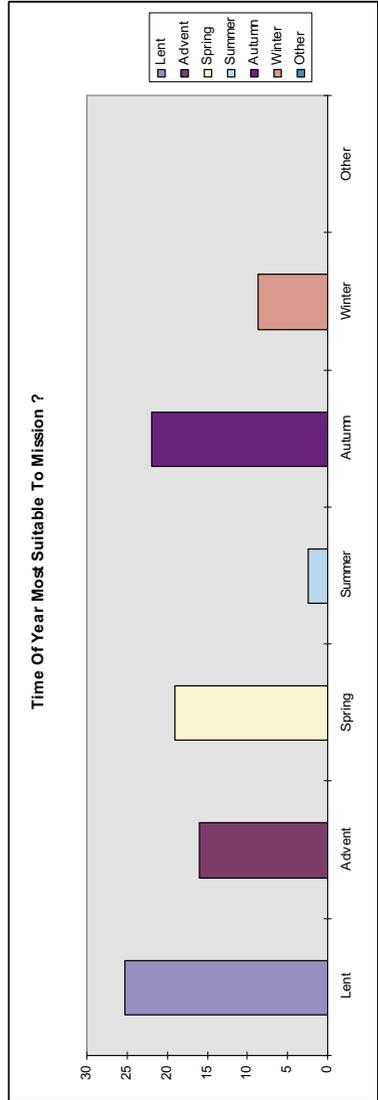
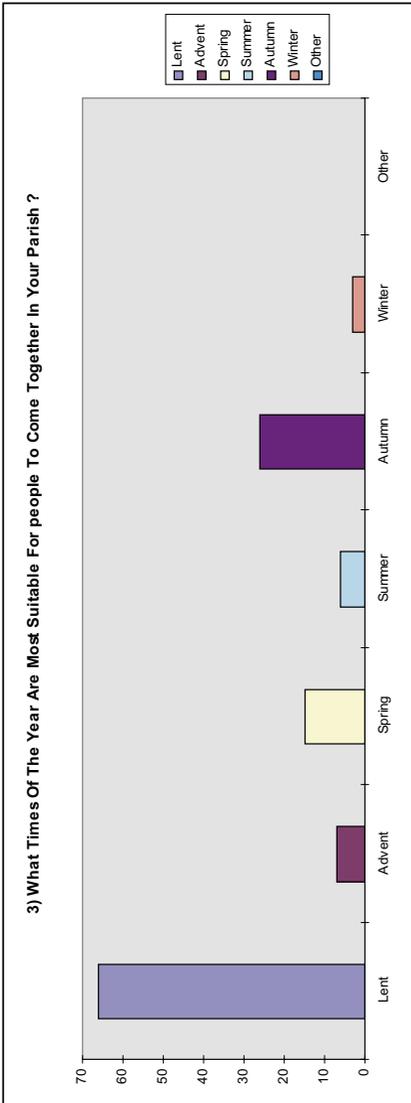
Elements Of Mission For Your Parish ?



Preaching and Faith Formation are the two elements of Mission most suited to parishes. While Preaching is strongest with participant's first preference, Faith Formation is most predominant when the average of the first four preferences is looked at. Training for Lay Ministries and Community Building are next.

| | First Preference | % of Total | Average of 1st Four Preferences | % of Total |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| Education | 4 | 3% | 3.5 | 3% |
| Faith Formation | 32 | 21% | 16.3 | 15% |
| Preaching | 36 | 24% | 13.8 | 13% |
| Workshops | 3 | 2% | 2.5 | 2% |
| School Visitation | 3 | 2% | 4.8 | 4% |
| Discussion Groups | 2 | 1% | 2.8 | 3% |
| Training For Lay Ministries | 13 | 9% | 7 | 6% |
| Parish Development | 7 | 5% | 8.3 | 8% |
| Door to Door Visitation | 8 | 5% | 7 | 6% |
| Spiritual Direction/ Prayer Guidance | 10 | 7% | 7.5 | 7% |
| Special prayer/ Liturgies | 10 | 7% | 11.5 | 11% |
| Celebration of Sacraments | 6 | 4% | 9.8 | 9% |
| Visitation of Sick/ Housebound | 5 | 3% | 7.3 | 6% |
| Community Building | 12 | 8% | 7.5 | 7% |
| Other | - | 0% | 0 | 0% |

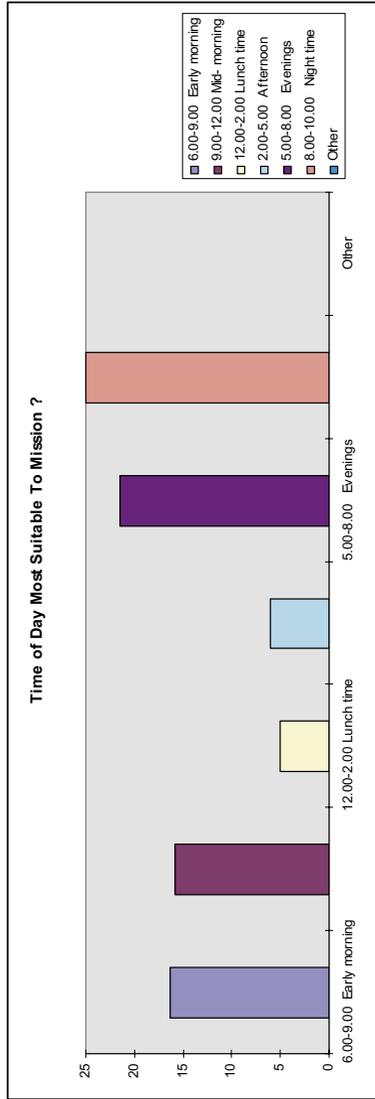
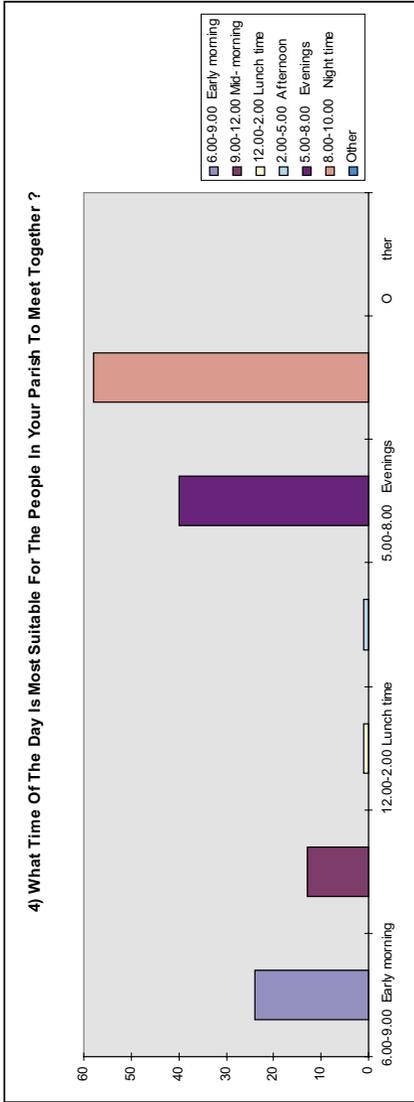
First Preference/ Average of First 4 Preferences Respectively



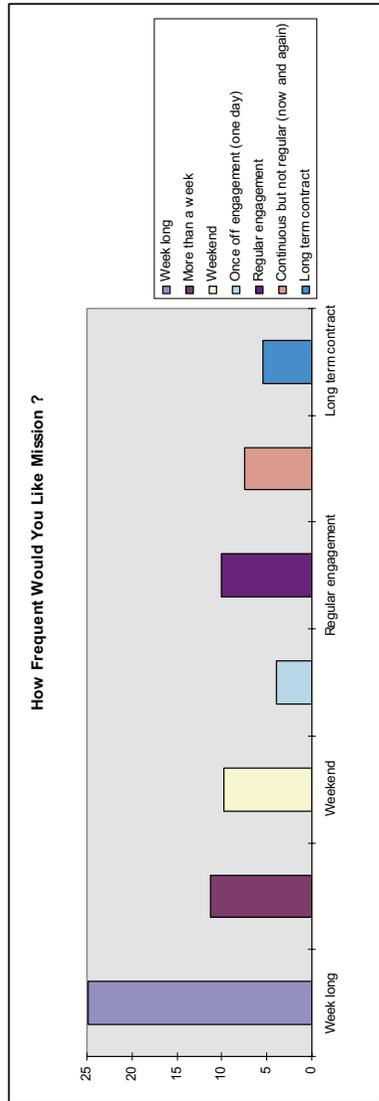
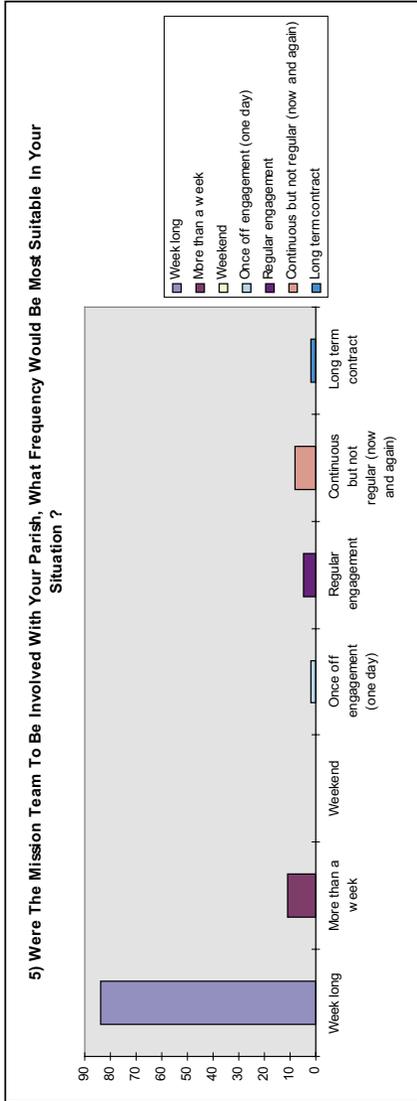
| What Times Of The Year Are Most Suitable For People To Come Together In Your Parish ? | | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| | First Preference | % of Total | Average of 1st Four Preferences | % of Total |
| Lent | 66 | 54% | 25.3 | 27% |
| Advent | 7 | 6% | 16 | 17% |
| Spring | 15 | 12% | 19 | 20% |
| Summer | 6 | 5% | 2.5 | 3% |
| Winter | 26 | 21% | 22 | 24% |
| Other | 3 | 2% | 8.8 | 9% |

Lent is the most preferred time for Mission in both graphs with Autumn, Spring and Advent increasing when we average the first four preferences. The survey was carried out in Lent and this may account for it being so dominant, especially in participant's first preference.

First Preference/ Average of First 4 Preferences Respectively



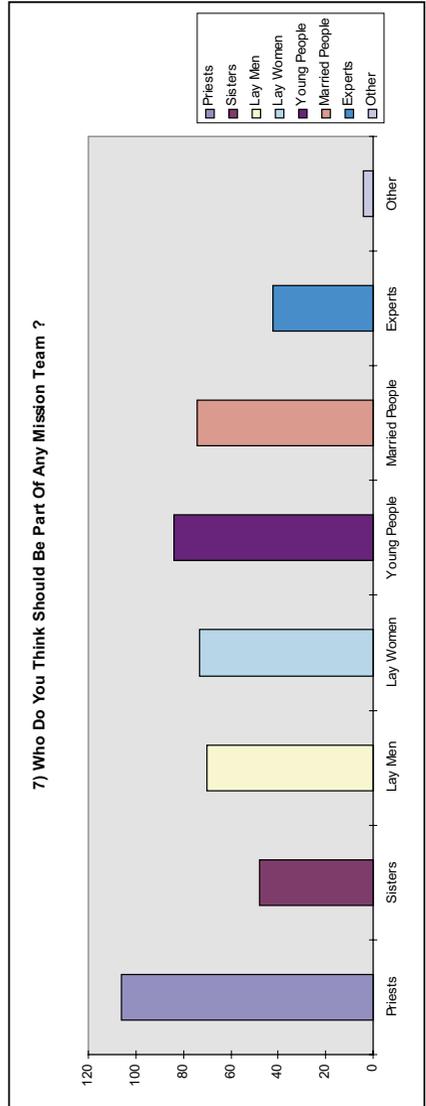
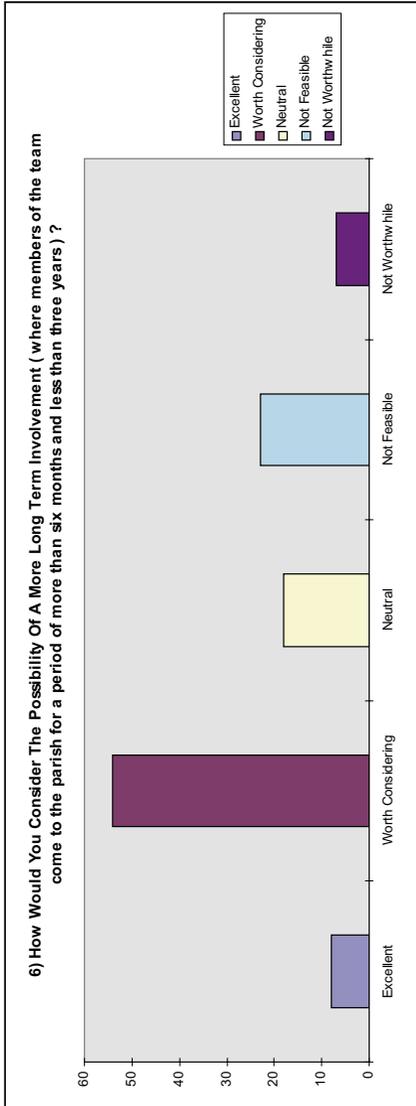
First Preference/Average of First 4 Preferences Respectively



| Were The Mission Team To Be Involved With Your Parish, What Frequency Would Be Most Suitable In Your Situation ? | | | | |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------|---|-------------------|
| | First Preference | % of Total | Average of 1st Four Preferences | % of Total |
| Week Long Engagement | 84 | 75% | 24.8 | 34% |
| More Than A Week | 11 | 10% | 11.3 | 16% |
| Weekend | 0 | 0% | 9.8 | 13% |
| Once Off Engagement | 2 | 2% | 4 | 5% |
| Regular Engagement | 5 | 4% | 10 | 14% |
| Continuous But Not Regular Engagement | 8 | 7% | 7.5 | 10% |
| Long Term Contract Of Involvement | 2 | 2% | 5.5 | 8% |

In both charts, the preference is for a week-long engagement. In the second graph, more than a week, a weekend and a regular engagement increase to 16%, 13% and 14% respectively.

First Preference



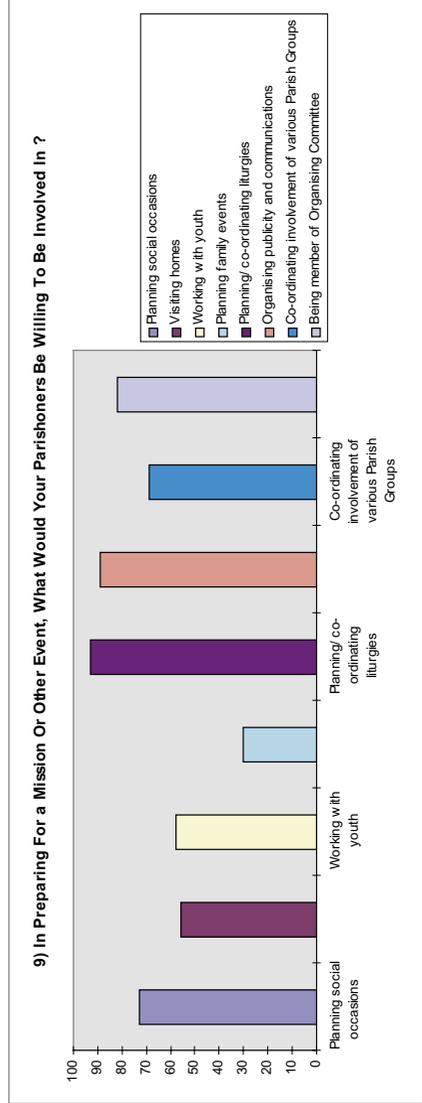
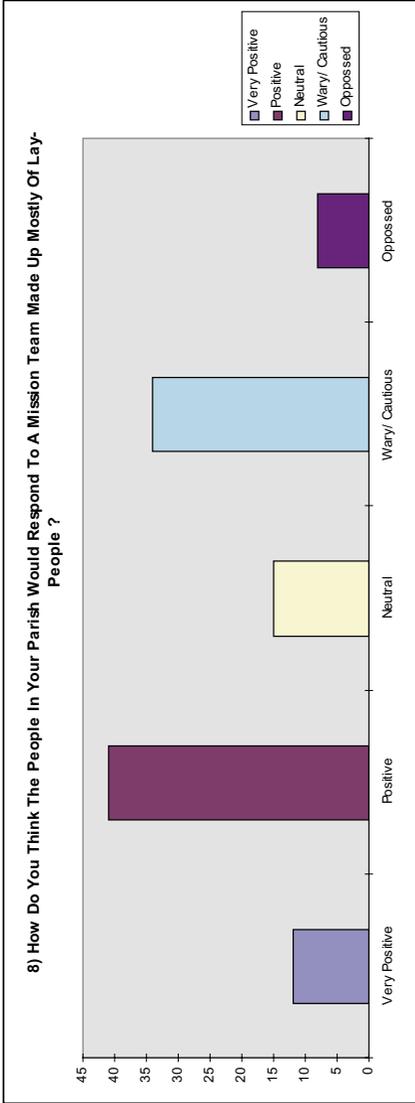
| Possibility of More Long Term Involvement ? | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Preference | % of Total |
| Excellent | 8 | 7% |
| Worth Considering | 54 | 49% |
| Neutral | 18 | 16% |
| Not Feasible | 23 | 21% |
| Not Worthwhile | 7 | 7% |

This demonstrates that participants are strongly in favour of considering a more than long term involvement. However, 28% believe it to be either not feasible or not worthwhile.

| Who Should Be Part Of The Mission Team ? | | |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Preference | % of Total |
| Priests | 106 | 21% |
| Sisters | 48 | 9% |
| Lay Men | 70 | 14% |
| Lay Women | 73 | 15% |
| Young People | 84 | 17% |
| Married People | 74 | 15% |
| Experts | 42 | 8% |
| Other | 4 | 1% |

The people who should be part of the Mission Team were :
Priests, Young People, Lay Women, Married People and Lay Men (in this order)

First Preference



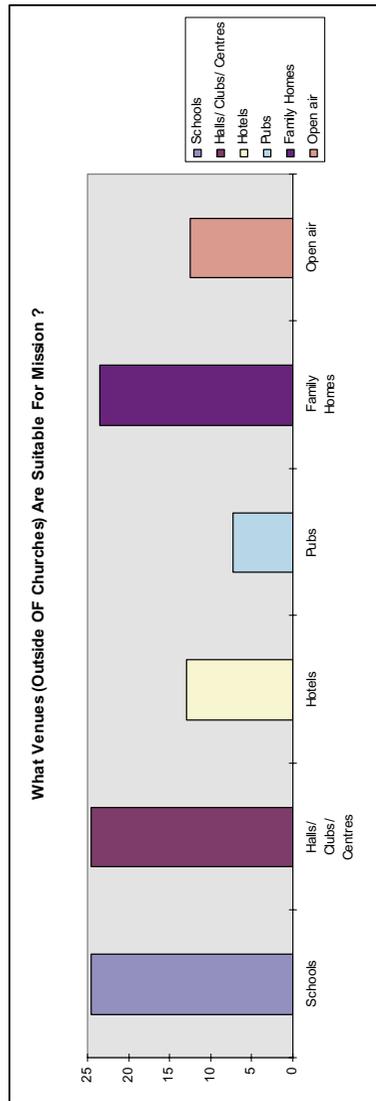
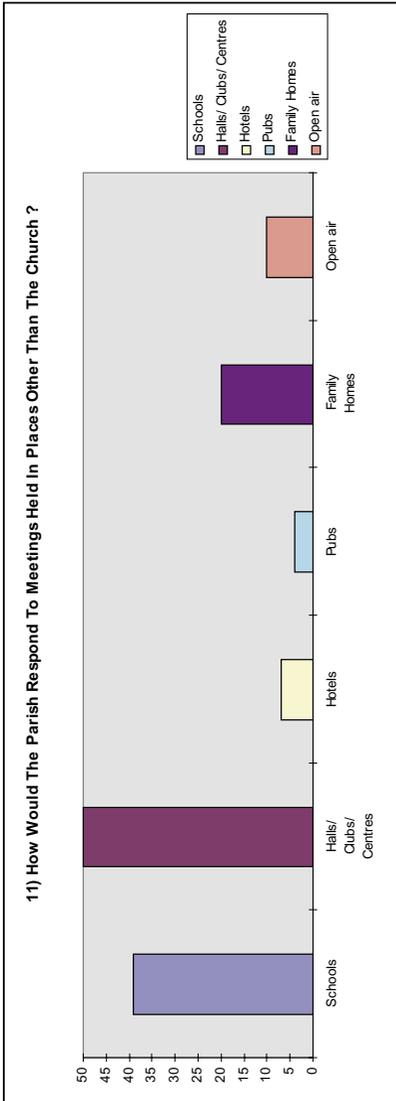
| How Would People Respond To A Mission With Mostly Lay People | | |
|--|------------|------------|
| | Preference | % of Total |
| Very Positive | 12 | 11% |
| Positive | 41 | 37% |
| Neutral | 15 | 14% |
| Wary/ Cautious | 34 | 31% |
| Opposed | 8 | 7% |

48% of participants are either very positive or positive to a Mission Team made up mostly of Lay People. 31% are wary or cautious to the idea. 7% are opposed to it and 14% are neutral.

| What would your parishioners be willing to be in involved in (as preparation for mission/ other event) | Preference | % of Total |
|--|------------|------------|
| Planning Social Occasions | 73 | 13% |
| Visiting Homes | 56 | 10% |
| Working With Youth | 58 | 11% |
| Planning Family Events | 30 | 5% |
| Planning Co-ordinating Liturgies | 93 | 17% |
| Organising Publicity and Communications | 89 | 16% |
| Co-ordinating involvement of various Parish Groups | 69 | 13% |
| Being a member of an overall organising committee | 82 | 15% |

Planning/ Co-ordinating Liturgies, followed by Organising Publicity and Communications and Being a Member of an organising Committee were chosen as the main events that parishioners would be willing to be involved in.

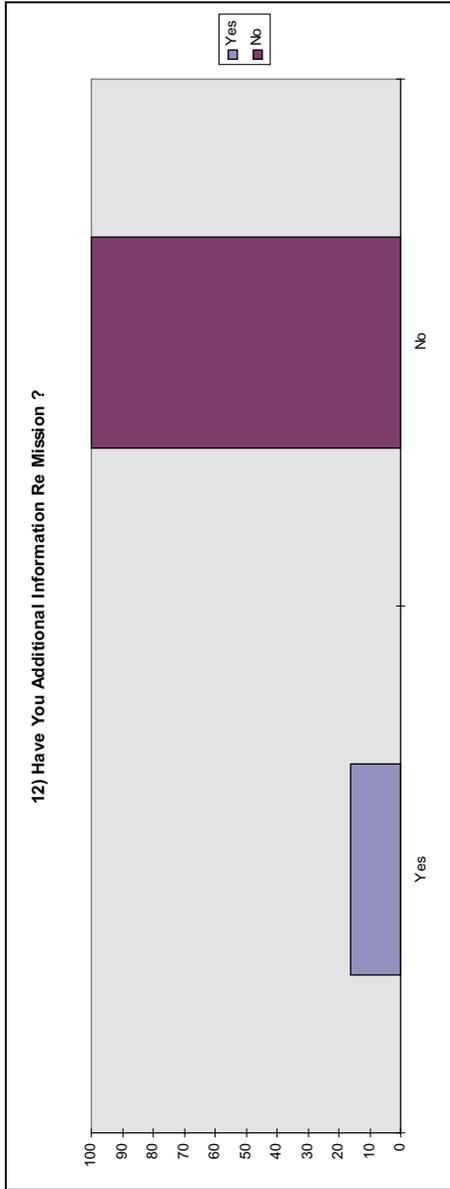
First Preference/ Average of First 4 Preferences Respectively



| How Would The Parish Respond To Meetings Held In Places Other Than The Church | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------|---|
| | First Preference | % of Total | Average of 1st Four Preferences |
| | | | % of Total |
| Schools | 39 | 30% | 24.5 |
| Halls/ Clubs | 50 | 39% | 24.5 |
| Hotels | 7 | 5% | 13 |
| Pubs | 4 | 3% | 7.3 |
| Family Homes | 20 | 15% | 23.5 |
| Open Air | 10 | 8% | 12.5 |
| | | | 23% |
| | | | 23% |
| | | | 12% |
| | | | 8% |
| | | | 22% |
| | | | 12% |

Halls/ Clubs and Centres scored highest with 39% in participant's first preference vote. However, Schools and Family Homes increase when the average of the first four preference votes are taken into consideration.

First Preference



Most participants did not offer any additional information.
The following pages list comments made, either on the questionnaire or on a separate sheet:

Who Would You Like Mission Aimed At ?

- The parish community in its diversity should be considered in a Mission
- Non-Nationals, Travellers, Separated/ Divorced, New Age People, Second Level Students, Teenagers, Foreign Workers, Those With special Needs should be aimed at when considering Mission
- Those who practise should be encouraged to reach out to non-practising people
- Support to Family Life should be considered

What Elements of Mission Would Be Suited To Your Parish ?

- Advertise (outside of the Church) events that attract those who don't practise regularly
- Understanding Scripture
- While addressing particular elements of Mission, have a Public daily religious experience of the elements.

Time of Year Most Suitable For Mission ?

- Feast Days, Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, Easter time, Christmas time
- Avoid GAA fixtures, high season and busy farming times (e.g. lambing season)
- Aim for particular months e.g. Feb, May, October

Time Of Day Most Suitable To Mission ?

- Depends on the group e.g. workers, mothers at home etc.

Who Do You Think Should Be Part Of A Mission Team ?

- Mixed team with locals involved
- Aim to have a parish experience rather than theory – so have people with experience rather than intellectuals

What Would Parishioners Be Willing To Get Involved In ?

- Its hard to get people involved

In a Mission team, what roles would you see Lay People Involved In ?

- Working with Youth

What Other Comments Would You Consider Important ?

- Priest or Lay People should pray with the people and some witness/ preaching from a lay person is important
- 12 months planning with a parish group should precede any mission
- The idea of parachuting into a parish for a once off week is no longer a good idea
- Formation and Training of Lay People on site is essential
- Aim to get secondary schools in closer contact with the parish
- Parish and local radio should be an essential element of evoking interest
- Emotion has more appeal than rational
- Parents are more interested in physical health of children rather than spiritual health of children
- Mission should be aimed at the basic family irrespective of the legality of the relationship
- There would be more time for involvement if parishioners did house visitation
- Previous preparation with Parish and Youth Mass was very beneficial
- Retreat would be good, combining experiential, mysterious and reverential elements
- Emphasis on music, call of baptism and faith formation is important
- Mission of festivity, large group celebration and moral booster is important
- Previous mission – one excellent, one disastrous (yours was the excellent one)
- Preparation is crucial, Preaching and Conversion is essential
- Evening visitation to non-practising and those co-habiting would be good
- Address the relevance of the Mass

On Being Superior in a Seminary

Vincent de Paul

Thomas Davitt CM, *translator*

In 1656 Vincent appointed Antoine Durand superior of the seminary in Agde; Durand was twenty-seven years old. According to Louis Abelly, Vincent briefed him as follows.

Well, Father, now that God has called you to this work of guiding men in their relationship with him, what are your views on it and how important do you think it is? How do you rate this ministry of the Priests of the Mission, who are entrusted with influencing and guiding men's minds, when only God knows what is going on there? *Ars artium, regimen animarum* [The guiding of souls is the supreme art]. This is what the Son of God did on earth; this is why he came down from heaven, why he was born of a virgin, and why every moment of his life was a dedication, ending in a very painful death. That's why you must have a great appreciation of what you are getting into.

So, how are we to carry out this assignment of guiding men towards God, of setting ourselves in opposition to the flood of contemporary vice, or to slackness in a seminary? How are we to ignite a feeling for Christian and clerical virtue in the men whom Providence will give you, so that you can help them towards their salvation, or in their relationship with God? Well, Father, you can take it as certain that there is nothing merely human in all this. We're not dealing with a man's work, but God's. *Grande opus*. (a sublime work). This is to continue Jesus Christ's ministry, so that a man can do nothing but spoil it if God doesn't take a hand. You know, Father, philosophy, theology, lecturing, don't have any effect on men's relationship with God. Jesus must involve himself with us, or we with him. We have to work in him and he in us. We have to speak like him and with his way of thinking, just as he was in his Father and preached the doctrine which the Father had taught him; that's what sacred scripture says.

So, Father, that's the way it is; you've got to empty yourself of yourself so that you can put on Jesus Christ. You'll know, of course, that ordinary causes produce effects according to their nature; a sheep produces a sheep, etc., and a human being another one. In the same way, if someone who is guiding others, moulding them, speaking to

them, has a merely human approach, that is what will be picked up by those who see him, listen to him and try to model themselves on him; they will become men with a merely human outlook. No matter what he says, no matter what he does, all that he will pass on to them will be the appearance of virtue, not the reality. He will pass on to them what he himself has. We know that teachers instil their principles, their own kind of behaviour, into the minds of their pupils.

But, then, look at this the other way round. If a superior is filled with God, if he is full of the principles of Jesus Christ, everything he says will have its effect, a power to build up; and everything he does will be like a series of helpful instructions, of benefit to anyone who comes in contact with them.

Now if you are to get to that stage, Father, our Lord himself must put his mark on you, his brand. We see how a wild bush, which has a cultivated shoot grafted on to it, will produce the fruit of the graft. In the same way we ourselves, poor creatures, are nothing but flesh, hay, thorns. However, if our Lord puts his mark on us and, so to speak, gives us the sap of his spirit and his grace, and unites us to him like the branches to the vine, we will do what he did on earth; I mean we'll perform divine actions. St Paul was full of this spirit and, like him, we will bring forth children for our Lord.

There's one important matter of which you must never lose sight: close contact with our Lord in prayer. That's the source from which you'll draw all the help you'll need to cope with the assignment you're beginning. When you run into some problem, turn to God and say: "Lord, you're the Father of Lights, so enlighten me as to what I'm to do in this situation".

I'm telling you this not just for the more difficult problems, but also to learn directly from God what you have to teach. Be like Moses; he used to tell the people of Israel what God had inspired him to say: "*Haec dicit Dominus*". (The Lord says this).

More than that, though, you have to turn to God in prayer if you are to retain your sense of awe towards him, and experience his love. Unfortunately, Father, I've got to tell you, and you've got to realise it, that a man can go astray himself while guiding others towards salvation. That's certainly what happens in the case of an individual who neglects himself because he's too busy with others. Saul was thought to be a suitable man to be king, because he was well behaved in his father's house. However, after he had ascended the throne the wretch lost God's favour. St Paul kept control of himself, because he was afraid that, even though he had preached to others, and shown them the way of salvation, he himself might be rejected.

Now, if you're to avoid the fate of Saul, or Judas, you've got to stay

close to our Lord. Focussing your mind and heart on him, say: “Don’t let it happen, Lord, that I should make a mess of my own case while trying to help others. Be my shepherd yourself, and don’t let me miss out on the graces which you channel to others through me, and through the way I carry out my ministry.”

And there’s another thing: you must pray to our Lord for the needs of those men who will be entrusted to you. You can be absolutely certain that you’ll do more good that way than by any other means. Jesus Christ must be your model as a leader. He was not someone who just preached, worked, fasted, and who even shed his blood and died. In addition to all that, he prayed. He didn’t need to, so that it was for us that he prayed so many times, to teach us to do the same. He wants us to pray for what concerns ourselves, but also for those whose salvation we are working for along with him.

And there’s even something more. I want to recommend to you, our Lord’s humility. Keep saying to him: “Lord, what have I done to be given such an appointment? What have I done already to fit me for the load now being placed on my shoulders? My God, I’ll ruin everything if you yourself don’t monitor each thing I say and each thing I do”. Let’s always keep an eye on what’s human and imperfect, so that we can see plenty of reasons for being humble. That will keep us humble in the sight of God, but also in the eyes of others, and when we are with those who have been placed in our care.

Above all, don’t have the constant urge to let it be seen that you are the superior, or the master. I don’t agree with a man who told me a few days ago that to be able to manage things well, and maintain your authority, you have to make sure that people see that you are the superior. My God, our Lord Jesus Christ didn’t speak that way. By word and example he taught the exact opposite. He said that he hadn’t come to be served, but to be of service to others. He also said that anyone who wants to be master should be everyone’s servant.

Get into that frame of mind, then, and behave towards those with whom you’re going to live as *unus ex illis*, (one of themselves), telling them right from the start that you haven’t come to lord it over them, but to be of great service to them. Do this at home and away from home, and you’ll get on splendidly.

There’s something else. We should give God the credit for any good which comes about through our efforts. On the other hand, when anything goes wrong in the community we accept the blame. Yes, bear in mind that the superior is mainly responsible for all disorders. These happen because by his carelessness, his bad example, he disturbs the smooth running of the community. It’s like the way the whole body is upset if a person has a bad headache.

Humility should also prevent complacency. That's always a danger when our work is the sort that catches the attention of others. Preening oneself that way, Father, is a poison, a danger for good work. It is a disease which ruins the holiest work, and quickly drives God out. In God's name be on your guard against this. To my mind, it is the greatest danger for us in the growth of our relationship with God.

Give yourself to God, then, so that you'll be able to speak with the humble mind of Jesus Christ. Admit that your teaching is not your own, not from yourself but from the gospel. Take as your model the ordinary words and homely comparisons which the sacred scriptures show our Lord using when he spoke to people. It's extraordinary, isn't it, that he could have taught marvellous things, so many secrets that he had from the Divinity and from his own supreme gifts, since he was the eternal wisdom of the Father! But you see that he spoke so that he could be understood, using comparisons that would be recognised. He spoke of farm workers, of men who worked in vineyards. He'd mention a field, a vine, a mustard seed. That's what you've got to do if you want to get through to the people to whom you are explaining God's word.

Then there's another thing to which you must pay special attention. You must be absolutely open to the promptings of the Son of God. What I mean is, that when there is something that you have to do you should ask yourself: "Is this in line with the teaching of the Son of God?" If your answer is "yes", you should say: "Right, let's get on with it". If your answer is the opposite, say: "I'll have nothing to do with it".

In addition to that, when there is question of doing some good work, say to the Son of God: "If you were in my place, how would you react to this situation? How would you get through to these people? How would you comfort this patient, who is suffering in body or mind?"

This sort of reliance must include giving in to those who are our Lord's representatives as far as you are concerned, being your superiors. Take my word for it that their experience, and the grace of office which our Lord in his goodness gives them, have taught them a lot about how to be in charge. I'm telling you this so that you won't do anything important, nor take on anything out of the ordinary, without letting us know. However, if the matter is so very urgent that you can't wait for our opinion, go to the nearest person in authority and say: "What would you do, Father, in an affair like this?" We know from experience that God blesses the administration of people who act like that. On the other hand, we also know that those who take a different line get themselves entangled in situations which not only cause trouble to themselves but even make problems for us.

There's another warning I'd like to give you: Don't try to draw attention to yourself as superior. Don't do anything out of the ordinary, but

always take the *viam regiam* (the royal road), which is the main road, along which you can travel safely and without blame. What I mean to say is that you keep to the rules and the holy customs of the congregation. Don't start anything new, but keep to the guidelines which have been drawn up for those who have the responsibility for the houses of the company, and also don't deviate from what is done in the this company.

As well as being faithful in keeping the rules, you are also to be firm in seeing that they are kept, otherwise everything will go wrong. You are there in our Lord's place, so, like him, you must be a lamp which throws out light and warmth. St Paul says "Jesus is the splendour of the Father", and St John says that Jesus is the light which enlightens everyone who comes into the world.

Experience shows us that primary causes affect secondary ones. For example, angels who are on a superior level, clarify, illuminate and bring to perfection intelligences which are on a lower level. In the same way a superior, pastor or director has to purify, clarify and bring into union with God the persons who have been given to him on behalf of God himself.

The sky sends what is helpful down to earth, and those who are put in charge of others must pass on to them the most important principles which are to energeise them. To do that, you need a full complement of grace, enlightenment and good works. We see how the sun passes on to the other stars the fullness of its own light.

Finally, you've got to be like salt: *Vos estis sal terrae* (You are the salt of the earth. Mt 5:13), preventing infection gaining a hold in the flock of which you are the shepherd.

When Fr Vincent had finished saying all the above, which he did with such zeal and charity the like of which I cannot describe, a laybrother of the community arrived to talk to him about some household matters in St Lazare. When the brother had left Fr Vincent took the opportunity to pass on this advice to me.

You see how it is, Father, that we have been speaking about the things of God just now, and then I have to deal with practical affairs. You can see from that that a superior has to deal with both spiritual and temporal affairs. That's because those over whom he has been put in charge have both bodies and souls, and he has to take care of both. This is following the example of God. From all eternity he was generating his Son, and the Father and Son were producing the Holy Spirit. I'm saying that in addition to these divine operations *ad intra* he created the world *ad extra*, and all the time he is actively maintaining it, and everything in

it. Each year he sees to the new seeds in the ground, new fruit on the trees, etc. And the care of his adorable Providence extends even to the fact that no leaf falls from a tree unless he tells it to. He counts all the hairs on our heads, and provides food for even the smallest worm, even for the smallest bug. This seems to me to be a very strong argument to convince you that you must not confine yourself to dealing merely with what crops up under the heading of spiritual. As well as that, a superior, who in a certain way is an extension of God's power, must deal conscientiously with the smallest temporal matters, and not think that he is above things like that. So, give yourself to God so that the temporal welfare of the house where you're going is taken care of.

When the Son of God sent his apostles out the first time he told them not to take any money with them. Later on, though, when more disciples came along he chose one of the group *qui loculos haberet* (who would have the purses). This man had to see to helping the poor with food and also seeing to the needs of the group. As well as that, the Son of God also allowed some women to accompany the group for the same reason, *quae ministrabant ei* (who ministered to him. Lk 8:3). Now, when he laid down in the gospel that we are not to worry about tomorrow, that is to be taken as meaning not to have too much concern for, nor worry too much about, earthly affairs. It does not mean total neglect of the necessities of life, including clothing. If that is what he meant, then why bother sowing seed.

I'll stop there, as that's enough for today. But I'll repeat once again that what you are about to do is a very important work, *grande opus* (a sublime work). I ask our Lord to bless your ministry as superior. For your part, ask him along with me, to forgive all the faults which I myself have committed in the ministry in which I am engaged.

[*In the Coste edition the above text is Conference 153, and is in Volume XI, pages 342-351. Vincent did not give French translations of the Latin tags*]

Two Letters of George Kelly CM (1841-75)

Tom Davitt CM

In March 1999 I had a phone-call from someone in the Irish Jesuit Archives telling me that there were two letters written by George Kelly CM there, and asking if I would like to have them. In response to my affirmative reply they were sent to me.

George Kelly was born in Dunleer, Co. Louth, on 24 April 1841. His parents were John Patrick Kelly and Margaret Mary Russell. He entered the Vincentians in Paris on 4 September 1858, took his vows on 24 June 1864 in Armagh, and was ordained on 31 July 1864. He died in Lanark on 26 August 1875. The *Castleknock Centenary Record* lists a George Kelly from Dublin as a pupil in the college from 1853 to 1858; the dates would suggest that this is probably the same person.

The earlier of the two letters was written from Castleknock on 11 September 1862, two years before his ordination. At that time St Joseph's, Blackrock, had not been acquired and the students did their philosophy and theology in Castleknock. The later one was written from Phibsboro on 16 April 1870, to his mother.

The earlier one is addressed to "My dearest Mary", and the content of the letter would indicate that she was obviously a relative. It contains many references to other relatives and friends, as well as to many of the early confreres of the Irish Province. It is interesting because of the information given about the holiday arrangements for the priests and students at the time. They had taken a house in Howth, and also another one in Wicklow, for the holidays. The renting of such seaside houses for the holidays was queried by the Superior General, Antoine Fiat, when he made a visitation of the Irish Province in 1883. The superior of Castleknock, the house in question in George Kelly's letter, replied to Fiat that this practice was necessary, and was far better than going to other CM houses. He said they had been doing it for fifty years. The interesting thing about that last point is that fifty years before 1883 was 1833, the date of the opening of St Vincent's Seminary, Usher's Quay, and therefore several years before the Irish Vincentians joined up with the Congregation of the Mission. The Provincial Assembly of 1884 decided that holiday houses were to be rented "as heretofore". (See my article in *Colloque* 35, Spring 1997, pages 378-84).

In each of the two letters I have, for the sake of clarity, improved the punctuation and introduced paragraphs, but have not corrected spellings or expanded abbreviations.

My dearest Mary,

Many thanks for your kind letter. I was very glad to get the good news about John. I hope too, that please God, Wilde may be of use to his eyes & then all will be right. I was very glad to hear that poor Eddie is settled at last. I am sure he will work hard & get on well. I hope Miss Kelly's cold is better & that she is taking care of herself. I hope too my Mother's head is well. From your saying nothing of yourself I conclude you are as usual. I hope you and Annie do not find the lessons tiresome; after all the vacation the young ladies should be very good. Martie, I am sure, is glad to be at work again. How do you manage about the walks? I hope John is able to go out regularly. I hope you have a good stock of apples this year. I suppose you have begun to use them already. We have not got many here. There are a number of old trees which do not bear at all. I think it likely they will be cut down this year. How did you like Dr Thorne & the two other books? I suppose they are finished by this time. I hope the reading in the evg. is kept up. Did Miss Jennings bring the termination of The Black Band with her? Or is it finished at all? Is she looking as well as the last time? I suppose she had great work getting away from her Aunt. I suppose Mathew told you of seeing me at Howth. I did not consider him changed in manner but I think he is in appearance. The evg. we went on Retreat Fr Duff handed me a card with "Mathew Russell, Goodbye" written on it. I do not know how he got it. I never asked him since.

The last day I wrote we were going to Malahide. We had a very pleasant excursion. As the wind was against us we had to row part of the way but to that we had no objection. We landed on the shore above the town & Mr O'Callaghan, Mr Potter & I bathed, while the others walked on towards the Castle, where we joined them after our dip. We were only able to run through the rooms as another party was waiting. Some of the pictures are fine. The walls of the dining room are covered with portraits of different members of the family; there are two or three bishops among the number. We saw the suit of armour worn by the husband of Maud Plunkett, the Bride of Malahide; her portrait is in the dining room. The oak room is a great curiosity. It is wainscotted all round in carved oak & in some of the panels several scenes from sacred history are carved in relief. Behind the wainscoting is concealed in a recess an altar used in the times of persecution. The place however is locked & Lord Talbot never permits it to be opened. The rooms are not so large or

richly furnished as in Slane Castle but there is an air of antiquity about them which amply compensates. We saw in the cemetery Maud Plunkett's tomb. The grounds appear to be very extensive but we did not go through them. We left Malahide at 3¾ of. [sic]. The wind was fair so we had a very pleasant sail home. We found Frs Duff & Kavanagh just after finishing their dinner. Fr Kavanagh looks poorly enough, pale & thin. He returned that evg. with Fr O'Callaghan. Fr Duff remained for the following week. Fr Cooney & Mr Potter came out the next day & Fr Gowan & Mr Beirne returned home. On Tuesday Messrs Byrne & Mullen came up & two others made place for them. We went over to Ireland's Eye nearly every day and bathed there; we had fishing lines with us several days but only succeeded in getting four or five fish. Some of the herring boats got several mazes of mackerel in their nets but they prefer the herrings as they bring a better price. I took a farewell dip before breakfast on Saturday morning but it was the worst I had the whole time. The water was quite muddy or rather sandy & very shallow. We would have been very glad to have some time longer to remain.

We found all very well when we got home. We entered on Retreat that evg. & remained on till Monday morning. Fortunately the weather though somewhat broken was good & we were able to be out every day. Fr Kavanagh left us on Wednesday & went to Wicklow where he, Fr Dixon, Fr Beggan, Fr McNally & others are stopping for some time.

The school of course opened on Monday but very few of the boys have returned as yet. We had our first class today & will now please God go on regularly. I am getting on first rate. I have a little plate of stirabout in the morning & plenty of brown bread as at home. You will be glad to hear too perhaps that I take something in the evg. now. Mr O'Grady has recommenced work like myself so we are pretty strong again. Would you send Mr Hanly by the first opportunity the little Testament which Miss Jennings covered for me. It is I think in the drawer with my other things. He could give it to me the first time he sees me, or leave it at Flanagan's if he were down in that direction. Have you heard of Mr Cahill since he went home? I hope he is getting on well. How is the Living Rosary getting on? I hope Mrs Branagan continues good.

Fondest loves to all at home in Dundalk

Everyourloving [sic]

G R Kelly icCM

A puzzling question is: How did these two letters end up in the Jesuit Archives? The Jesuits were unable to throw any light on this. Perhaps the mention in the letter of Mathew Russell is a clue. (In the letter the first name is spelt with one t). A Matthew Russell, of Newry, whose brother Charles was later Lord Russell of Killowen, was in Castleknock 1848-50, and joined the Jesuits in 1857 and was ordained in 1864. He founded *The Irish Monthly* and was its editor for about forty years. George Kelly's mother was a Russell. It is possible therefore that Matthew Russell and George Kelly were cousins, and that these two letters were kept by George's mother and on her death passed into Russell hands and ended up in the Jesuit Archives. Perhaps the addressee of the 1862 letter. "My dearest Mary", was also a Russell. In the letter to his mother there is mention of "Lillie", and the Jesuit archivist told me that a Lily Kelly is the only Kelly listed as a correspondent of Matthew Russell.

The reference to Wilde and the hope that he might do something for John's eyes would indicate that Sir William Wilde, Oscar's father, is meant.

Maud Plunket was the wife of Lord Galtrim, who was killed in battle on their wedding day; she later married the owner of Malahide Castle; this was in the 15th century. She is *The Bride of Malahide* in a ballad by Gerald Griffin.

James Murphy CM has clarified other literary references in the letter. *Dr Thorne*, published in 1858, is the third of Anthony Trollope's Barchester novels; *The Black Band* or *The Mysteries of Midnight* is by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (1835-1915) and was serialised in a magazine in 1861-62.

The second letter is from Phibsboro, dated April 16 1870.

My dearest Mother,

I need not say what comfort it would be for me if I could have the happiness of saying Mass for you tomorrow, but I would not like to ask as I am only two days back from Cork and there are generally a good many for confession this evening. I will be with you in spirit & will offer up the H Sacrifice please God on Easter Sunday morg for your intention.

It was very good of Lillie to think of writing to me and letting me know how you were. I hope, please God your back is easier now, and that your head is not aching. I enclose poor Eddie's last letter. It was written just before he got sick & was posted in Dublin by one of the students coming home. It shows how happy his death must have been, dying in such sentiments. I

wrote next day in reply but likely he was not well enough to get my letter. How glad I was reading Lillie's letter & that I had already written to Fr McNamara. It was my first thought when I considered all his kindness & attention not merely now but ever since poor Eddie entered. I had no idea till I got Lillie's letter that Charles was so poorly. I fear the long ceremonies this week will fatigue him. I wish he could remain in Dundalk for a little time and rest himself. While he is at the college it is not easy to keep quiet. I will call at Belvidere Place next week, please God and I think I will also see Mrs Ennis and Rosa. Now the Missions have commenced and even while at home we will not have much free time. Will you all join in a Novena for Fr Gowan to commence on tomorrow. He got some of the water from Lourdes, and we all commence the Novena on tomorrow for him. Perhaps it may please God in reward of his faith to restore his sight. His holy will be done! He will arrange all for the best. Please God I will write soon again.

Fondest love & blessing to all.

Ever your loving

G R Kelly

Both letters mention "poor Eddie", and the second one refers to Fr McNamara's kindness to Eddie "ever since he entered". The reference is almost certainly to Thomas McNamara CM, but who was Eddie, and what did he enter? He did not enter the Vincentians, as no one with that first name entered around that time. There was an Edward Russell from Dublin in Castleknock 1849-53, and a Charles Russell from Dublin 1851-56. They could be brothers, and the Charles mentioned in the second letter could be this man. Probably Eddie "entered" some religious community or a seminary for the secular priesthood.

The Fr Gowan mentioned is obviously Fr John Gowan CM, though there does not seem to be anything on record about his eye trouble.