

COLLOQUE

Journal of the Irish Province of the
Congregation of the Mission

PIETAS PARISIENSIS
OR A SHORT DESCRIPTION
OF THE PIETIE AND
CHARITIE COMONLY EXERCISED IN PARIS

Which represents in short the pious
practises of the whole Catholike
CHVRCH.

By THOMAS CARRE Confessor of Sion

*Every Good tree yealdeth good fruites.
And the euill tree yealdeth euill fruites.
Therfor by their fruites you shall know
thm.*



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Editorial

One of the most significant works on St Vincent to appear in recent years has been the two-volume *San Vicente de Paúl* published in Madrid in 1981. The first volume is a biography of more than 700 pages by José Mariá Román and the second, not quite so long, contains a study of St Vincent's spirituality (162 pages) by Antonino Orcajo and a selection of texts from St Vincent presented by Miguel Pérez Flores. Each of these volumes is reviewed in this issue, as well as the seminar conducted by José Mariá Román in Damascus House in November 1985.

1986 marks the completion of one hundred years of Vincentian ministry in Maynooth as Spiritual Fathers. Patrick Boyle, one of the two appointed in 1886, wrote an account of the early years (apparently in 1918) which does not appear to have been published before now. It is complemented by two other articles, one on the current (1985) scene in Maynooth and one on the Vincentian tradition in spiritual direction.

While compiling the Contents of issues 7-12 which is being distributed with this issue I made out some statistics. In the twelve issues of COLLOQUE which have appeared there have been 22 articles dealing directly with St Vincent, 21 on various other topics of Vincentian interest, 31 shorter contributions to the Forum section and 49 "miscellaneous" items of similar interest. The twelve issues total almost a thousand pages, and all written by members of the Irish Province.

Román: *San Vicente de Paúl I: Biografía*

Eamon Flanagan

Most of us over 35 in the Irish Province were nourished in our tender seminaire years on Bougaud's *History of St Vincent de Paul* (1889). It was for us the staple diet for Wednesday lecture and sharing (called repetition in those days). Many renowned "works and days" of our Founder are deposited indelibly in our memories as a result. It was a wise learning methodology: you read a text closely, made a few notes, then went to a session for discussion and further intaking of the material, and, hopefully, you took it all home with you to the heart.

How many lives of St Vincent have we read cover to cover, since those early enthusiastic days? I can only answer for myself that I have gone through certain extracts from Coste's 3 volumes and the Vincentian writings, and have looked here and there at shorter stories of the Congregation's Father. Also, since the new wave of international Vincentian studies, I have been able to sample some fine articles.

So, reading José Mariá Román *San Vicente de Paúl I: Biografía* was for me an opportunity to pasture again on the wider field of the Saint's career and labours. This has been a fascinating experience. I had thought at first of doing with a quick perusal, but the content and style of the Madrid Provincial's work compelled a meditative lingering, which I feel has sorely tried the patience of your Journal's editor, but which has been a real joy for the reviewer. Nearly 700 pages of biography are assembled to present the great story in a new way to our present generation. The approach is sensitive to today's mentality. It seeks authenticity in a human heart beating behind the writer, evangeliser, man of brilliant deeds, of simplicity, and humble service. One discovers in these pages a credible human being, toiling, advancing, touching disillusionment, but always open to hope, and based on no other foundation but Christ.

From poor beginnings to discovery of the poor

The early years are traced in sympathetic, but sober, terms. Vincent's year of birth is 1580 or 1581. Recent opinion inclines to the former (p. 31). Edifying hagiography of boyhood cedes to realism. The young Depaul's almsgiving to a beggar is seen as the deed of a wholesome

son of good Catholic parents. The hypothesis of a Spanish provenance of the forebears is not excluded by the author, given the flexible migration possible in the Pyrenean region in that era and an existing tradition (p. 37). Perhaps not unconnected with this is Román's acceptance of a sojourn in Spain by Vincent the student. Apart from the explicit testimony of Abelly and Collet (both French) in favour of the Saint's period of study at Zaragoza University, the present biographer produces evidence from St Vincent's own exact knowledge about Spanish university practice, and about the lifestyle of the reformed Carmelite nuns in Spain (the Zaragoza Discalced convent was founded in 1588). Vincent's university education covered seven years, nearly all spent at Toulouse where he graduated in theology in 1604. Less than a year (over 1597-8) would have been spent in Zaragoza (pp. 46-51).

The story of the young man's advance to priesthood is frankly treated. At 20 (or 19) he is ordained priest in Perigueux well under the canonical age, and outside his own territory. The mysterious world of holiness was yet a long way from Vincent de Paul. No one better disproves the myth of instant sanctity. The "lost years" (1605-7) of the Founder's story and his two letters about this period are examined critically by Román. His conclusion is that arguments against the Saint's captivity in Tunis are not convincing.

Subsequently the gradual process of sanctity takes firmer grip. Events like the false accusation and trial of faith (Román follows Abelly on the latter) in the 4th decade of Vincent's life help to forge and reveal the inner development. Providential encounters, as that with Bérulle, help to pave the way. The events at Folleville and Chatillon (both 1617) become sign and occasion for a destiny unfolding mysteriously before the eyes of the human protagonist. Experience of God and experience of the poor become more and more unified in the thought and spirituality of the maturing priest. Interior spiritual growth is steady and strong, newly flavoured and transformed by encounters with St Francis de Sales (1618-19), and Fr André Duval, Vincent's spiritual director from about 1618.

A congregation of men with vows

The Congregation of the Mission emerges only after painstaking discernment and clarification of the call. Delicate negotiations ensue at Rome where first Propaganda was consulted, but then for a more universal application, the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars. Here was something original, not a religious order. Rome was opposed to any new orders and Vincent did not want that anyhow. It is noteworthy

that Bérulle was not at all favourable to the new congregation. But despite this and other tribulations, the Pope himself, Urban VIII, issued *Salvatoris Nostris* (1633), a document giving his full approval to the new community of men founded to evangelise the neglected poor mostly of rural areas and townships. The Pope affirms: “Vincent whom God has inspired with this thought has undertaken to begin this congregation” (p. 221). A new entity was born in the Church, not just the “Mission” (approved by Propaganda in 1627), but a Congregation unbounded by time or country, and exempt from episcopal control.

For many years the question of vows was unresolved. Typically Vincent allowed practice to run its course. Some members took vows. It required all the charisma of the Founder to gain over the delegates to his view in favour of vows at the Congregation’s second assembly (1651). He saw the vows as a sign of commitment, and a safeguard, but on this occasion he left his confrères completely free to give full expression and vote to their own considered opinions (pp. 329-336). “The whole assembly was agreed on maintaining the practice of the vows”. This was part of the message to Rome seeking approval, which duly arrived in 1656. They were vows (as we still profess them) simple, perpetual, constituting not a religious order, but a congregation which belongs to the body of the secular priesthood (p. 339).

New servants of the poor

St Louise de Marillac and Marguerite Naseau with St Vincent were instrumental in starting the Daughters of Charity. They were, so to speak, Daughters of the Ladies of Charity. But Vincent loved to call them “Daughters of God, who is Charity”. It looks as if the woman was moving faster than the man towards their foundation at first, but then (from 1633) he rallied all his efforts and enthusiasm behind them. There was a healthy simplicity (still vigorous today) about these country girls who were the first Daughters. Perhaps Vincent romanticised a little the virtue of the good country girls, and who would blame him? He was after all an ordinary country man himself, and he should know! The solid qualities he advocates (I, 278) are perennially valid, Sanjuanist in their evocation of noble desires, and ultimately Gospel-founded.

As for his community of men, so for the Daughters, Vincent insisted on their non-religious character. “If one speaks of ‘religious’ one means ‘cloistered’, but the Daughters of Charity must go to all parts” (X, 638). Román depicts skilfully the talent and achievements of the co-foundress, and he is careful to follow the stages of her spiritual ascent. We see Louise in the 1620s as a woman in much turmoil, but under

Vincent's direction, she slowly comes to a condition of peace, the basis for a life of the Spirit. Finding her true vocation in a mysticism of prayer and activity, she became more assured, and by her mid-forties (about 1636), she is even capable of guiding others. Towards 1644 (she was 53) and perhaps for some years she went through a trial of abandonment (a passive night of the spirit), similar to, but deeper than, and of a different order from that experienced in the 1620s. Out of this she emerged purified and fully free for God and a more truly refined love of the neighbour (p. 468).

The young company of Servants of the Poor sent out members in all directions, to parishes, hospitals, and other areas wherever the poor were in need. New, unheard-of enterprises of charity were enacted for the suffering and oppressed. Vincent was quite satisfied with episcopal approval of the Daughters. Probably the utterly new-style community deterred him from hastening to Rome for approbation. It was as late as 1668 that pontifical sanction was granted. Meantime from 1642, the Sisters had been taking vows, but their final (and present) shape was concluded only after both Founders' deaths (pp. 472-3).

The biography covers in turn the great deeds of charity towards the marginalised of society. At first the Confraternities were the effective arm of Vincent to dispense material help, not forgetting the spiritual. Later these Confraternities and the Ladies of Charity associated with them worked closely with the Daughters, though both had their own autonomy and identity. Later still the Daughters launched out in new projects as, for example, to the war zones and the galley slaves. These were great and humble Daughters. Sr Barbe Angiboust was heroic in her patience with the galley men. Vincent enthused over her silent endurance at having the soup thrown back at her by one of these hardy sailors (X, 645). This is one illustration of the astounding qualities found in the members of the Company (p. 504).

Evangelisation and formation

We wonder today about ways of evangelising and bearing "fruit that will last". Vincent's genius answered the challenge in his day by his own style of mission, and by forming or renewing the diocesan priesthood. The evangelising of the poor (then most urgent outside the urban areas, as today it seems the opposite), *modo Vincentiano*, was not just a matter of preaching conversion, but a formation and catechesis as well. We recall that the missionaries would spend some 6 weeks in one place. "Everyone agrees that the fruit realised on the mission is due to catechesis" (I, 429). Román speaks of the Founder's joy at the missionary

work of others besides his own priests. There were others in the field but Vincent was the first to show the way (p. 346), and he himself was involved in active mission duty until well into the 1650s (p. 349). He devised and taught the simple “little method”, thus allowing no flourishes of human verbiage to block the word of life.

Work on behalf of the clergy went hand in hand with evangelisation of the people. Retreats, preparation for ordination, and the Tuesday Conferences rank among Vincent’s consistent and most devoted activities for the spiritual leaders of the faithful. St Lazare became for the clergy, as for the laity, a “Noah’s Ark” (the phrase is Vincent’s) in which all were welcome. Between 700 and 800 persons from 1635 to 1660 were renewed annually in the former leper-house (p. 363). In similar vein, seminary formation was a deep concern of the saint. While he complied faithfully with the wishes of Trent to take teenagers as “minor seminarians” he was not impressed by the results of this at the Bons Enfants (p. 376). But he was very happy to accept men in their twenties (II, 459). And his preference was for the intellectual formation of students outside the seminary at a college or university. The seminary would take care of spirituality, practical moral theology, and liturgy (pp. 378-80). This seems to me enlightened, very open, and calculated to lead to all-round maturing of candidates for Orders.

Fresh fields ripe for harvest

Vincent de Paul’s zeal was uncontained within the boundaries of France. Apart from expansion to Italy and Poland (Denmark, Sweden and Spain were also contemplated), his missionary vision looked much farther afield. Among the most sublime episodes in the Vincentian story are those about the missionary exploits in Ireland, Scotland, N. Africa and Madagascar. Román covers them all (pp. 391-449). Heroic man and heroic deeds adorn these pages. I select a few examples. Thady Lee was killed by the Cromwellians near Limerick in 1641, and so became the protomartyr of our Congregation. Another Irishman, Fr White (just returned from the Irish mission) accompanied other confrères to Scotland. There he got through indefatigable labours in the Highlands, travelling to France to be present at the death of his father and friend in 1660, only to go back to Scotland once more and pursue his mission till his death in 1679. Fr Guerin and the brothers Frs Jean and Philippe Le Vacher have left exceptional examples of zeal and unremitting toil in their delicate mission among the Christians of Algeria and Tunisia.

Further south in Madagascar, and en route to it, huge losses in personnel were suffered by the young Congregation from the initial

thrust in 1648. In that year Vincent wrote to Fr Nacquart: “Put out your nets with courage” (III, 553). The words were certainly pertinent. His companion died after a year on the island, and Fr Nacquart himself fell victim in 1650. The Madagascar mission was different from the rest, displaying in classic fashion a direct frontline preaching to pagans. Vincent de Paul was fired by this ideal, and here is explained his persistent determination in such adverse circumstances. The Congregation was now truly “of the Mission”, capable of adapting, not only to the French conditions, but to diverse locations in Europe and anywhere on earth.

Wars and affairs of state

Charitable involvement in war-torn Lorraine by Vincent and the double family from 1635 brought the humble priest more into the public eye. Much sought after in high places for his wise counsel, he became the confidant of political figures and even of the King. On the Council of Conscience where he served with Marzarin after Louis XIII’s death in 1643, the Founder of the Mission, despite the presence of high dignitaries, exerted major influence. Now spiritual director of the Queen, Anne of Austria, he bore wisdom with profound sanctity and good sense, which made his opinion highly respected in the matter of choosing good bishops, as in allied issues. Vincent’s role on the prestigious Council directed also his interest and activity towards promoting reforms in religious orders (pp. 544-555). However, he only reluctantly retained the direction of the Visitation. Though he esteemed and loved the Founders, he regarded his responsibility for the Daughters of St Mary as “the heaviest cross I have” (VII, 200) and tried more than once to be relieved of it.

In the War of the Fronde (1648-53) the man of “God’s party, the party of Charity” (XIII, 813) used his position in public life to help bring peace, though Mazarin will hardly have thanked him. Courage, not false humility, stamps the Saint on this occasion (pp. 569-576). More war was to follow, both internal and against Spain on the north-east. Vincent and his followers did marvels of charity. At St Lazare there were prayers and penance to beg for peace. Vincentian priests, brothers, and daughters were mobilised to join others in the battle zones of Picardy, Champagne and the Paris region. The field hospitals of the Daughters were a novel development. The Ladies of Charity were valiant and generous as ever. St Lazare itself became a centre for provisions and a sign of hope in the general misery.

Theology and true doctrine

In a different sphere Vincent de Paul played a prominent part in opposition to the Jansenist heresy. At its condemnation in 1653 he could rejoice that this pessimistic view of humankind and of man's salvation was not allowed free rein in the Church (pp. 620-5). In 1659, he again supported Alain de Solminihac, Bishop of Cahors, his great friend, who with other concerned people was seeking to resist the naïve laxism of the casuists. Though not a speculative theologian as such, Vincent with his sanctity and keen mind (in 1623 he took a Licentiate in Canon Law at Paris) saw sound doctrine as the true basis for pastoral zeal and formation of the people.

Shortly before his own death he witnessed the passing of close friends and associates, among them the bishop just mentioned, Louise de Marillac, and Antoine Portail. He followed them to the Lord of the Poor on 27th September 1660.

Conclusion

The biography by Román focuses on Vincent's works against the complete *Sitz im leben* of the time, the religious, social and political aspects. There is always found an inner link with the outer events in the life of the man, and thus his motivation is sought on a deeper plane. De Paul's spirit is evident right through, and the faith and love originally bestowed at the font in Pouy are nourished to such amazing sublimity as to sustain all the noble projects and stunning accomplishments. God's vision became incarnated in the first priest of the Mission who from modest beginnings grew to extraordinary canonisable heights of holiness. Even though the spiritual physiognomy and doctrine of St Vincent are specifically treated in volume II, one of the great merits of Román's work is to highlight the spiritual progress of the saint, with all his struggles, the necessary waiting, prayer and vigilance, thus demythologising some earlier stories about the "Saint of the Poor".

Abelly's work will always be an indispensable source for students of St Vincent. Calvet's biography (1948) sees its subject as a man of genius as well as a Saint of Charity with a spirituality of action enlivened by prayer. Calvet also shows Vincent's distinctness from Bérulle, something which Román emphasises. But the Spanish author particularly underlines the later, more lasting and richly fruitful influences of Francis de Sales and André Duval.

Coste's monumental *The Great Saint of the Great Century* (1932) brought Vincentian hagiography within the discipline of modern historical research. It is a definitive work of reference. But the most recent

biography (here under review) draws on some new material, like that on the early vows discovered by Fr Coppo in 1957. In Román we find a text that is exact, concise, well illustrated by original sources, and scholarly.

In this biography by José María Román I liked the comments on matters related, the conclusions drawn with economy of language and shrewd insight, the colourful Castilian turn of phrase, the touches of humour, and perhaps most of all the fresh inspiring quality of the Vincentian light which always shines through, alive today and giving life, though having its source in the past. For good measure, portraits, maps, a chronology, and helpful index serve to round off a very satisfying book.

Orcajo & Perez Flores:
San Vicente de Paúl II:
Espiritualidad y selección de escritos

Seamus O'Neill

The aim of this book is to trace the stages of conversion of Vincent from a “good priest” to an apostle of Jesus Christ the evangeliser of the poor. This task is accomplished by quotations from the writings of the saint. The Pauline counsel of “dying to the old man so as to raise up the new; of emptying oneself so as to be filled with God” will occupy his whole life. At the end he will say of himself: “O wretched old man, you are just like all the others, libertines, lovers of comfort, lazy and cowardly. Small things appear great and difficulties discourage you, even getting up in the morning seems insupportable and the least annoyances seem insuperable (XII 93; volume and page references are to the Coste edition in French).

In 1609, eight years after ordination, he dreams of “an honest retirement” so as to settle down near his family and relations. Sharing an apartment with a compatriot he is accused by him of stealing his money. This false rumour was made known to his friends and even reached the ears of the Bishop of Paris who ordered an admonition to be read in the parish church on three consecutive Sundays. Of this incident Vincent says in 1656:

A person in the Company was accused of robbing a companion. Having been treated as a thief, although it was not true, he did not however seek to justify himself. No, he said, raising his mind to God; it is necessary to suffer with patience. God wishes at times to prove persons, and for that reason he allows these things to happen (XI 337).

This experience taught him not to fear the judgements of men so much as the judgements of God who knows the truth. It was a lesson so engraved on his heart that he devotes a whole paragraph to it in the Common Rules (Ch 2, §13).

The next trial, it seems, was brought on by himself. Out of compassion for a priest friend who was tormented by temptations against the faith he offered to take the temptations on himself. During the next two years, 1610 to 1612, he passes through “the dark night of the soul”, experiencing fierce attacks against his faith. Of this trial he says in a Repetition of Prayer in 1645:

Temptations are a happy state. One day passed in such a situation has more merit than a month without temptations. Let the temptations come; welcome them. But, you say, they are against the faith. It does not matter. It is not necessary to ask God to free us from them; only ask that we may use them well and that we may not fall; they are a great boon (XI 148).

This temptation was the second call to sanctity. During this time he needed a mediator to intercede for his life and to light up his path:

According to the ordinary ways of Providence God wishes to save men by means of other men, and our Saviour was made man to save all men (VII 341).

From his spiritual director Pierre de Bérulle he receives the support necessary in the heart-rending moments of calumny and the much worse hours of temptations against the faith. In obedience to him he goes to the parish of Clichy where he spends a year. In a talk to the Daughters of Charity on 27 July 1653 he says:

I had people so good and so obedient to do all that I asked of them ... I think that the Pope is not as happy as a Parish Priest in the midst of a people who have such a good heart (XI 646).

At the end of the year Bérulle sends Vincent as tutor to the children of the de Gondi family and he becomes the spiritual director of Madame de Gondi. Evidently he did not care for his work as tutor and, worn out by the scruples of Madame de Gondi, he asks Bérulle's permission to leave secretly. He is appointed to the parish of Châtillon-les-Dombes. While vesting for Mass one Sunday morning a lady tells him of the plight of a family who were all ill and had no food:

This touched my heart. I spoke of it with great feeling in my homily. God touched the hearts of those who heard me so that they felt moved with compassion for those poor afflicted ones (IX 243)

The people went in procession to the house of the sick family and supplied them with a superabundance of food. As a result of this event Vincent set up the first Confraternity of Charity and gave the members as their first rule “to honour and serve Jesus Christ in the persons of the poor”. Later on, in the missions to the poor country people, it became normal practice to set up such confraternities in the parishes. Vincent was very happy amongst the parishioners of Châtillon and he remained there nine months. However, owing to the insistent pleas of Madame de Gondi, Bérulle recalls him and, much against his will, he obeys.

He is relieved of his office of tutor but acts as Madame’s director. He accompanies her on her visits to the villages on her estates, catechising, preaching and administering the sacraments to the poor country people. At Cannes in 1617 a dying man, who was highly regarded, reveals to Vincent, his confessor, sins that for many years he had been ashamed to tell. “I would have been condemned”, he tells Madame de Gondi, “if I had not made a general confession”. She was so astonished that she declared to Vincent: “What is this that we have just heard? Doubtless the same thing holds true of the greater part of these people. How many souls are being lost? What is the remedy for this frightful state?” (Abelly: Livre I, ch. VIII).

At Folleville, near Cannes, Vincent preaches a sermon on general confession. So impressed were these good people by his words that they flocked to his confessional. So great were the crowds that he had to call in the aid of the Jesuits from Amiens. In a Repetition of Prayer on 25 January 1655, the anniversary of the Folleville sermon, Vincent said:

That day was the first sermon of the Congregation of the Mission, and the success that God gave on that day, the feast of the Conversion of St Paul, was not without the designs of Divine Providence (XI 5, 169).

What he already knew was verified; the ignorance of the people was incredible. And what was worse, the priests suffered from the same evil, not knowing even the words of absolution. Both these evils afflicted the heart of Vincent. In 1658 he had this to say:

It is possible that all the disorders which we see in the world may be attributed to the priests. This will scandalise some, but the subject seems to point out the remedy for so great an evil. There have been many discussions about this matter to discover the sources of such misfortune. But the result has been that the Church has no greater enemies than the priests (XII 85-86).

Already in 1617 he was beginning to see in outline his future priestly ministry.

Another event, in 1618, was to have a profound effect on Vincent's progress towards sanctity. This was his friendship with Francis de Sales. At their first meeting he was captivated by the gentle manner of Francis. He contrasts it with his own which, he says, "was as dry as a whin bush". He sees Francis as a model of meekness, "the most gentle and lovable man I have ever met". The memory of Francis will help Vincent to correct his own "bilious and melancholy temperament". From then on he struggles to fill himself with the spirit of Jesus Christ who said: "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart":

I directed myself to God and besought him insistently to change this dry and repulsive disposition and that he grant me a sweet and benign spirit. By the grace of God, and with a little care which I paid to repressing these ardours of nature, I got rid to some extent of my black humour (Abelly: *Livre III*, ch. XII).

Although from different family backgrounds and with different spiritual and pastoral experiences these two men understood and loved each other. When Francis was dying he entrusted to Vincent the care and direction of the Visitation congregation, an office he carried out until his death in 1660. On the teaching of Francis he developed a spiritual direction with Louise de Marillac in the same affectionate terms as Madame de Chantal was accustomed to with her departed director. From the Salesian practices of the presence of God, meekness and prayer Vincent formed the source of Vincentian spirituality.

About this time also Vincent takes another decisive step; he changes his spiritual director. To Bérulle he will always be grateful for the work he accomplished in his life. His new director is André Duval, a professor of the Sorbonne: "He is so wise and so simple and humble that it is impossible to ask for more" (XI 128). Up to his death in 1638 Duval was his counsellor and director. He was present at all the principal decisions of the life of the infant Congregation of the Mission, and he directed it towards the service of love for the poor and to broader apostolic fields. His influence is seen in Vincent's loyalty to the Holy See and in his attitude to extraordinary phenomena in prayer.

Another problem now faces Vincent, namely the founding of a congregation dedicated to the evangelisation of the poor. To seek out the will of God he makes a retreat in Soissons; he distrusted the first impulses and was afraid of being precipitate. But the memory of the

heretic in Montmirail remained fresh in his mind. This man had said to him: "It is impossible that the Church of Rome is guided by the Holy Spirit while one sees the Catholics of the countryside abandoned to the hands of sinful and ignorant shepherds who do not know their obligations. We see the towns full of priests and friars who do nothing, while the poor people of the country find themselves in frightful ignorance" (XI 34). In 1642 he tells Bernard Codoing:

When I found myself on a certain occasion at the beginning of the Mission project in this continuous preoccupation of spirit I expressly made a retreat in Soissons so that God might rid me of the desire and emotion I felt in this affair (II 246-7).

Obviously he obtained confirmation of his desire, and much later while catechising the poor during a mission he had the satisfaction of hearing the same heretic say: "Now I know that the Church of Rome is guided by the Holy Spirit" (XI 36).

One final thread which impeded his freedom remained to be broken; this was his attachment to his family. The nightmare of the poverty of his family oppressed him for the first twenty-three years of his priesthood. The necessity of others affected his heart, made for universal love. Why not give preference to his poor relatives? These sentiments recur to him while giving a mission to the galley-slaves near his native place. His friends urge him to visit his family; his presence will console them and he can speak to them about God. He hesitantly agrees; he will speak to them about the way of salvation and detach them from the desire of possessing worldly goods, even to telling them to expect nothing from him because a priest who possesses anything owes it to God and to the poor. This is how he hoped to act, but at the hour of taking his leave, after a stay of eight or ten days, his heart is torn with sorrow. On the journey back to Paris he sheds abundant tears. To his tears he adds a desire to better their situation by sharing with them what he had and what he had not.

In a conference on mortification on 2 May 1659 he tells the confrères:

I was three months with this troublesome desire. It was a continuous weight on my poor spirit. In the midst of all this, when I was a little more free. I prayed God to free me from this temptation; so much did I pray that finally he had compassion on me. He freed me from these

affections for my relatives, and although they continued begging alms, and still do. the grace was granted me of confiding them to divine Providence and to regard them as more happy than if they were in comfortable circumstances (XII 219-220).

This was the final victory; Vincent has been truly converted. The subtle thread which prevented him from working with freedom had been broken. He has developed so much, spiritually, from 1609 to this date in 1623 that he scarcely recognises himself. The desire for benefices and “an honest retirement” has been replaced by the love and service of the poor, those treasures of the grace of God. From the confined area in which he feared to find himself enclosed he opens himself outward to the panorama of the universal Church. The way has been prepared for him to explain his faith and his experience. At forty-two years he is a mature person ready for the great enterprises which await him.

The José María Román Seminar, London, 4-8 November 1985

Jim McCormack

Experience has shown, as they say, that if there are three topics the onset of whose exposition is well-nigh certain to glaze the eye and embed the ear-muff they are: Constitutions (CM or other), Vocations (to the CM or elsewhere) and, let me admit it — (of course the wretch himself would be the first to agree) — the Life, Writings and attributed ruminations of Vincent de Paul. For almost thirty years I have been coaxed, cajoled and cautioned to accept the latter Vincentiana as crucial and of exceptional interest. “Crucial” I could believe, for every institution and movement needs its plausibility structures. “Of exceptional interest”? I have seldom found it to be so. I do not say the material itself, necessarily, was the problem; but somehow in its meditation the mind dulled and the heart was not uplifted; quite other than was the case, for instance, with one’s encountered experience of the Vincentian charism.

How pleasing it is, then, to acknowledge unreservedly, thanks to eight lectures given in Damascus House, that a fresh reconnaissance of this oft-trudged though ill-comprehended terrain can indeed grip the mind, even engage the emotions, at any rate when José Mariá Román CM is explorer and guide. The sheer quality of his presentations compelled me to return again and again, morning and afternoon, to hear him, though my intention, fearing as I did a new lease of apathy, had been to pass myself with a token appearance on the first night and thereafter plead the exigencies of convalescence to excuse my subsequent absences.

Wherein this quality? Outstanding in two respects. Firstly, in the scholarship, that absolutely necessary pre-condition for any worthwhile biographical study; a scholarship, rightly unobtrusive for it itself was not the point, which had comprehensively sifted and weighed the primary evidence of the Vincentian *corpus* (Lecture 1, *Sources*), as well as most illuminatingly extending itself to the complex socio-economic-political state of the France that had produced and formed Vincent; and in which his life’s work issued, took shape, and had operated (Lecture 3, *St Vincent and his historical circumstances*). As for secondary sources (Lecture 2, *A basic Vincentian bibliography*): with deft regard for

provenance, perspective and hermeneutics, an easily-negotiable path was cleared through the centuries-high grass of biographies, both major (Abelly 1664, Collet 1748, Maynard 1860, Coste 1931) and minor — in the latter's case with particular reference to those published in the last fifty years: from Redier, (evidently the most piquant: the DCs were forbidden to read it) to Mezzadri, 1985 (original in Italian, French translation) which concentrates on Vincent as a person.

The critique of the major biographers I especially liked — no, not that it was iconoclastic by any means; but there was a timely awareness of their weaknesses: Abelly — hagiographical and, indeed, written with a view to promoting the canonisation of its subject; Collet — erudite, but cerebral and not really catching the warm humanity of Vincent; Maynard — commissioned by Etienne to underpin, as it were, the new (era of the) Congregation in post-Napoleonic France, a romantic biography in the rhetorical style of the 19th century, lacking historical perspective; and finally Coste — a scientific biography in the positivistic sense, but with the shortcomings of that historical school, deficient in both spiritual and psychological insight, as well as in true perception of the profound and mutual conditioning of Vincent and his times.

The other tissue probed by the Román research-scalpel was *The vocation of St Vincent: its origin and development* (Lectures 4 & 5), *The spirituality of St Vincent* (Lecture 6), *The Congregation of the mission in Vincent's time and in our own* (Lecture 7), and *The Daughters of Charity in Vincent's time and in our own* (Lecture 8).

If, in the first place, the lectures' quality derived from the pervasive scholarship, then in the second it lay in what might be called the biographical dynamic chosen; and herein, surely, was their decisive originality. Instead of the positivistic mountain of ill-graded and psychologically poorly contextualised detail, we were offered an uncluttered developmental model which related the initiation and growth of Vincent's enterprises to his own growth and maturing as a human being. So simple, so obvious; yet it has been a tool all but unutilised by previous biographers. The framework of such a model, for anyone's life, could look something like this:

- 1 *Childhood*: 0-15 years — man more an object than a subject.
- 2 *Youth*: 15-30 years — apprenticeship: an age of search and discovery.
- 3 *Gestation*: 30-45 years — man enters into action and tries to change the world he has inherited.

- 4 *Accomplishment*: 45-60 years — man, in power, can impose the world view he has been struggling to bring to birth.
- 5 *Historical survival*: 60+ years — man offers his acquired experience to the next generation.

The dates, of course, are approximations and will vary with personal, historical and cultural circumstances. That said, the stages of Vincent's development can be delimited as follows: — though I sketch in merest skeletal outline what was a dense, substantial, well-argued proposal:

1. *1581-1600 (0-19)*:

Our information about the early years, unsurprisingly, is thin; maybe the anecdotes that survive through Abelly are more trustworthy than we tend to imagine, but are not to be taken as signs of precocious sanctity. The indications are that Vincent did not become a priest in response to an interior call, but rather as a means to advancement. Of particular developmental significance were the sheer geographical remoteness of his birthplace, his delayed education, and the peasant work-ethic bred in the bone; Vincent always remained the hard-working countryman who wanted his missionaries to be labourers, and for whom the archtypal DC, the simple country girl, was an idealisation of his mother and sister.

2. *1601-1617 (20-36)*:

Vincent, restlessly eager to discover his destiny in history, eventually finds his true self. From being a self-sufficient opportunist of small spiritual aspirations and merely human goals he is brought to a new point of departure: henceforth the will of God will be the basis of how he acts. Radical conversion has occurred, and with it there emerges in 1617 what prove to be the two crucial, inseparable and enduring elements of his life's work, namely *Mission* (Folleville) and *Charity* (Châtillon). Vincent has grown up and become a man.

3. *1618-1633 (37-52)*:

The vision is gradually but irresistibly actualised despite personal misgivings, mistakes, opposition (Bérulle, Paris clergy, *Propaganda fide*), and the attractions of alternative ways of understanding and reforming the Church, e.g. that of Saint-Cyran who chooses as his main thrust penitential purification, while Vincent opts for compassionate charity. By 1633 (or early 1634 with the establishment of the Ladies of Charity), all the instruments that he needs are at his disposal: the CM, the DCs, Confraternities of Charity, Missions, Retreats to Ordinands,

Tuesday Conferences, etc, etc. St Lazare has been acquired, thus giving financial security and social backing; and Rome has approved of the CM so that it becomes accepted as part of the religious establishment of the city of Paris despite numbering only twenty personnel.

4. 1634-1652(53-72):

The rise and rise of Vincent de Paul. His programme, established and accepted, flourishes and expands, while he himself becomes a man of national and even international consequence. Yet, importantly, there is the beginnings of the objectification of his enterprises, i.e. they develop an identity separate from him: cf., his offer to resign as Superior General at the first General Assembly of the CM, and opposition to him on major issues at the second. In September 1651 he loses his place on the Council of Conscience, for at 71 he belongs to another era.

5. 1653-1660 (73-79):

An old man, fully sure of the works he has initiated under Providence, he wants to ensure their historical continuation — evidenced in his concern about rules, vows and a successor. (The DCs still hadn't been approved by the Holy See before his death: he'd never been in any great hurry to have them officially approved, in contrast to his exertions for the CM). Now a saint, it is a time of final purification for him, marked by personal illness and the deaths of his closest friends and collaborators.

Glinting beguilingly throughout this ordering of Vincent's progression were any number of striking judgements and comments, of which I proffer a random handful:

Evangelizare pauperibus misit me: It's very doubtful if he has ever heard of the *anawim*; the poor whom the Gospel speaks of were for him the economically poor, namely the country people.

While he had the true insight that the poor must be helped to become self-sufficient, there is no hint — if anything, the contrary — that he ever favoured the changing of the political-social structure of a society which in his time was threatened by several uprisings of the peasantry.

Vincent's economic embroilments were of a sufficient scale and complexity as to now warrant research by a trained economist.

While he speaks about himself in his letters much more than was common, still he says little about his feelings.

The real study of the influences on Vincent's spirituality has still to be done; though the role of Francis de Sales seems to have been decisive,

reflected, e.g., in the secular character of both the CM and the DCs, the method of mental prayer, the priority of the virtue of gentleness.

His fight against Jansenism was a passionate defence of the deepest conviction of his life.

Vincent had a genius for getting people to propose as their own idea that which he had craftily sown in their minds: e.g., the bishop of Beauvais suggesting retreats for ordinands. and Marguerite Nasseau deciding to come to Paris to serve the poor. (She died some months before the first group of three or four girls came to live with Louise, the fledgling community of the DCs).

Before establishing a *seminaire* for the CM he dispatched the Director-designate to the SJ novitiate to get the hang of things.

The character of the CM was very coloured by the authoritarianism of the age in which it was born, e.g., the continual highlighting in the Common Rules of the role of the Superior.

The CM ministry to the clergy was, from the start, of the very essence of Vincent's vision and not simply a follow-up corollary to make parish missions effective.

While many Orders were involved in parish missions the originality of the CM lay in their objective of total parish renovation: conversion of people and clergy, with the establishment of the Confraternity of Charity as an integral element.

The work of the CM was highly diversified in Vincent's lifetime, embracing among other things responsibility for twelve to fifteen parishes, as well as retreats in St Lazare for lay people and truculent youths.

Currently, some DCs are in danger of becoming public functionaries, and of being involved in evangelisation instead of charity...

And so on. All was suffused with a warmth and modesty which were quite disarming; for here was an enthusiast who was no ideologue. I was heartened to learn that the DCs had flourished for three centuries before being afflicted with Canonical Constitutions, never having been convinced of the need of such things myself. The said Daughters, (predictably, one is inclined to add), drew, or rather were allotted, the short stick: the lecture on their origins and development falling on the last morning when people's thoughts, inevitably, were turning towards departure; and there wasn't time for the usual Question and Answer session — a great pity. My own preference would have been for the prioritisation of this latter — if necessary at the expense of what seems tiredly to have become statutory: the wrap-up liturgy which terminates such occasions — (there had already been three Community liturgies).

Deliciously, it was a DC, snatching a few hours from her laundry duties, who achieved the *coup de théâtre* of the seminar by producing (humbly, *per alium*, of course) a copy of the first memoir of Vincent de Paul in English (1666), a volume hitherto unknown to any of the assembled *periti*.*

Attempts at organised socialising, half-hearted in intent, were in consequence ineffectual; why not let women do such things? They do it so much better.

Fr Román, whose declared diffidence at the prospect of such a heavy schedule in English had capitulated only in the face of F. Mullan/T. Lane persuasiveness, left us with the thought that an invocation worthy of inclusion in a litany of *Beati* would be 'Blessed are those who make us work', a sentiment than which nothing could have been more typical of the Founding Father as he had presented him. Let's hope that his study of Vincent, which has all the signs of joining Abelly, Collet, Maynard and Coste in the pantheon of major biographies, will soon be available in English.

* See page 74

The Establishment of Spiritual Fathers at Maynooth College

Patrick Boyle

In 1885 the Bishops of Ireland were invited by the Holy See to send representatives to Rome to treat of matters relative to the welfare of the Church in Ireland, and to prepare the points to be discussed at a Plenary Synod to be held at an early date. Sixteen Irish Prelates representing the four ecclesiastical Provinces of Ireland arrived in Rome in April, and in the month of May on the Monday Tuesday and Friday of each week from 1st to the 16th they met and carried on their deliberations under the presidency of a Committee of Cardinals, namely Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of Propaganda, Cardinal Franzelin and Cardinal Jacobini.

Amongst the matters considered were the studies and the system of spiritual direction existing at Maynooth College. Certain modifications of the system of studies, as well as the introduction of Spiritual Fathers into the College were decided on. It was recommended that four Spiritual Fathers, that is, one for each of the then existing divisions of students, viz St Mary's, St Joseph's, St Patrick's and St Brigid's, should be introduced (and that they should give conferences to the students *practice* rather than *oratorice*).

The result of the deliberations of the prelates was printed and distributed to the hierarchy. On the return to Ireland of the episcopal delegates the recommendations of the Holy See were considered at a general meeting. At that time the introduction of a Bill conferring Home Rule on Ireland was expected and it was thought that under a system of Home Rule new questions regarding education and the like might arise. It was therefore judged prudent to defer for some time the meeting of a Plenary Synod, and in fact it did not meet until the year 1900. The recommendations however regarding the organisation of classes and the system of spiritual direction in Maynooth College were carried out in 1886.

After due deliberation the Bishops decided to appoint two resident Spiritual Fathers at Maynooth. When this resolution was adopted the next point to be studied was the selection of the persons who should hold that office.

Amongst the staff of the College there was one priest Rev. Richard

Owens, subsequently Bishop of Clogher, who was much esteemed as a spiritual director. Father John Myers CM had given a retreat to the students in 1884 and had won all hearts. According to rumours current at the time the first project was that Father Owens should be appointed Spiritual Father and that the Superiors of the Vincentians should be asked to allow Father Myers to reside in the College as his colleague. Father Owens does not seem to have desired the post and this project was abandoned. The next project was to ask the Superior General of the Vincentians to allow Father Myers and any other priest of the Irish Province to act as Spiritual Fathers at least temporarily. This project was embodied in the following resolution of the Trustees:

Resolved — That the Superior General of the Vincentian Fathers be requested in the name of the Bishops of Ireland to allow Father Myers CM and any other priest of the Irish Province whom the Superior may approve to take up their residence in the College and discharge the duties of *Patres Spirituales* for at least one year.

The Superior General decided to accept the proposal of the Bishops and to allow Father John Myers CM and Father Patrick Boyle CM to reside in Maynooth College as *Patres Spirituales*. The persons to fill the office having been chosen the next point to be settled was their status and salary in the College. This was considered at a meeting of the Bishops held on the 11th & 12th October 1886 and the following resolutions were adopted:

- 1 That arrangements be now made for the introduction of the *Patres Spirituales* into the College irrespective of the particular persons by whom the duties of the office may be discharged.
- 2 That the present duties of the President, Vice-President and of the Deans remain unaltered.
- 3 That the *Patres Spirituales* have charge of the pious sodalities of the College, and of the Retreats of the students, subject to the arrangements to be made by the Administrative Council regarding the Retreat at the opening of each academic year. It is understood that some of the Deans might, if they wish, take up the Order Retreat occasionally.
- 4 That the students of each Division of the College have free access to the *Patres Spirituales* on fixed days and at stated hours to be determined by the Administrative Council.

- 5 That the students of each of the three Divisions be afforded an opportunity of visiting the *Patres Spirituales* on two days of each week.
- 6 That the Collegiate status of the *Patres Spirituales* be the same as that of the Deans — precedence to be regulated by seniority of appointment.
- 7 That the salary of the *Patres Spirituales* be the same as that of the Deans.
- 8 That suitable rooms be prepared on the top corridor of the Dunboyne House for the *Patres Spirituales*, and that a new stair be erected at the western end of the Dunboyne corridor for the use of the Dunboyne students.
- 9 That the *Patres Spirituales* hear confessions in St Mary's Division on every Saturday evening, and in St Joseph's on Tuesday evening, and if deemed advisable on some other evening in the Junior House.
- 10 That the students of St Mary's Division have access to the *Patres Spirituales* on Thursdays and Saturdays during the mid-day and evening study hours in one of the rooms over the President's apartments, the students of St Joseph's Division on Mondays and Tuesdays during the same hours in the rooms of the *Patres Spirituales*, and the students of the Junior House on Fridays and Sundays during the afternoon and evening study hours in the rooms of the *Patres Spirituales*.
- 11 That on Friday evenings the time usually devoted to Spiritual Lecture or a little longer, according to the discretion of the Superiors, be henceforth devoted to Spiritual Exercises in connection with the Sodalities under the direction of the *Patres Spirituales* in the Senior House, and on some other evening in the Junior House.
- 12 That in future three Lectures be delivered by the *Patres Spirituales* in connection with each of the Retreats occurring within the year — one lecture at night prayer on the evening preceding the day of Retreat, one at morning prayer, and one at 2 o'clock on the day of Retreat.
If the outline of the morning's meditation be given at night prayer it is for the superiors to arrange the most suitable hours at which the lectures may be delivered on the day of Retreat.
- 13 That Rev. Father Myers CM and Rev. Father Boyle CM be appointed *Patres Spirituales*.

- 14 That the agreement between the Bishops and the Vincentian Fathers be terminable at any June Board on three months notice being given by either side.

+ Thomas J. Carr
Secretary.

In his report for the year 1886-87, dated 15th June 1887, the President gives the purport of the foregoing resolutions as follows:

It will be seen from these Resolutions that the College status of the Spiritual Fathers is the same as that of the Deans, and the salary the same — £158 each per annum. Their special and chief duty is to present themselves at the specified times in the Divisions, in order to give the students an opportunity of conferring privately with them on matters pertaining to their spiritual condition. The students are of course free to avail themselves of this opportunity: some take advantage of it others do not. In addition the Spiritual Fathers are confessors like all the other priests of the College and give the Retreats which were given by the Deans up to this and may be occasionally given by them still. They have also charge of the Sodalties.

On 11th October 1886 Fr Myers and Fr Boyle were appointed to the office of Spiritual Fathers at Maynooth College.

Rev John Myers, the senior of the two, was born in Clonmel in the diocese of Waterford in 1830. He began his studies for the priesthood in the Diocesan College in Waterford and concluded them in Maynooth. At the close of his studies he entered the Congregation of the Mission and was ordained priest in 1854. After his novitiate he was appointed to St Mary's, Lanark. In August 1860 he was transferred to the Irish College in Paris where he filled the office of Procurator until 10 February 1861. From that date until his appointment to Maynooth, with the exception of a short time in St Peter's, Phibsboro, his time was spent in St Vincent's, Sheffield, where he took a large share in the work of the parish, in looking after the Catholic soldiers and in works for the Catholic children. In 1882 he was sent to give the diocesan retreat in Kilkenny and he acquitted himself with so much success that afterwards he was employed in conducting ecclesiastical retreats. A retreat which he gave to the students in Maynooth was the occasion of his being selected as Spiritual Father.

Father Patrick Boyle was a native of the diocese of Derry born in 1849. After his classical studies he entered (in 1867) the Grand Seminaire of

Cambrai as student for the secular mission in his native diocese. On 1st February 1871 while the Seminary was still closed on account of the Franco-Prussian war he entered the Novitiate of the Congregation of the Mission at St Vincent's, Castleknock, and was ordained priest on 17 March 1873. He was then sent to St Mary's, Lanark, where he remained until the following January. At the request of Fr Michael Mullen CM he was then transferred to St Patrick's College, Armagh, where he arrived on 6th January 1874. In August 1875 he was sent to Castleknock where he spent one year. At its close the Visitor proposed to have him appointed Superior of the Seminary at Armagh. Some delay arose and the appointment was only made on 9th August 1877. From 1877 to 1886 he occupied the post of superior of the Seminary at Armagh, a post which he resigned in 1886 and was appointed professor of Dogmatic Theology in the Irish College in the place of Rev. Daniel Brosnahan who had been appointed superior of the College in Armagh. Fr Brosnahan however declined to accept the position and returned to Paris. Fr M. Carrigy was then appointed. It was in contemplation that Fr Boyle should take up Fr Carrigy's classes in Paris. Meantime he had gone to Paris where he arrived on 3rd September 1886. But his residence was not of long duration. He was selected by his superiors to be Spiritual Father along with Fr Myers; and accordingly he left Paris on 21st September while the students were still on vacation and thus did not occupy any chair at that date in the Irish College.

The official appointment took place on 11th October and on 27th of the same month they took up residence at Maynooth. They were received with the greatest cordiality by the superiors and staff of the College and took their place after the Deans already in office. The custom existing in the College in regard to association during recreation was that the Superiors and Professors were divided into batches according to their Province of origin. That the Spiritual Fathers might not be thrown altogether on themselves, the Superiors arranged that Fr Myers who was a native of the diocese of Waterford should belong to the Munster or Cashel batch, and that Father Boyle being a native of Derry should belong to one of the two then existing Northern or Armagh batches.

During the year 1886-87 the Spiritual Fathers occupied rooms on the upper floor of the front house as you enter from the gate. The next year rooms were prepared for them (in the Dunboyne House) in St Joseph's division.

The duties of the Spiritual Fathers were as follows:

- 1 To conduct the retreat at the beginning of the year for the students of the Junior House.
- 2 To hear confessions in each of the three divisions of the College, and to receive the students for spiritual advice.
- 3 To give an instruction or conference in each division every week.
- 4 To conduct the retreats of one day before the festivals of All Saints, Christmas, the Purification and St Patrick's Day.
- 5 To give the retreat for orders to the whole house at the close of the year.

Father Myers and Father Boyle inaugurated their work by giving the retreat (one in the Senior and one in the Junior House) in preparation for the Feast of All Saints. At that retreat Father Myers took charge of the Senior House and Father Boyle of the Junior House. At the retreat which followed the following order was observed. Father Myers gave the morning and evening instruction in the Senior House and Fr Boyle in the Junior. At the two discourses during the day viz at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. the reverse order was followed, Fr Myers addressed the Juniors and Fr Boyle the Seniors. The same order was observed in the retreat at the close of the year. During the Orders retreat Fr Myers left to Fr Boyle the explanation of the Pontifical; he himself dwelt on the details of missionary life.

The introduction of Spiritual Fathers was very acceptable to the students of the College. That all might have access to them for confession or direction, it was arranged that the Fathers should devote two days each week to each of the three divisions of the students viz in St Mary's Thursday and Saturday, in St Joseph's Monday and Tuesday, and in the Junior House Sunday and Friday. The students were at liberty to go to them during the day in the intervals between the classes and during the evening. The weekly instruction or Conference in St Mary's and St Joseph's was given on Tuesday evening during the time set apart for spiritual reading and lasted about twenty minutes. In giving these conferences Fr Myers took charge of St Mary's and Fr Boyle of St Joseph's one week and Fr Myers of St Joseph's and Fr Boyle of St Mary's the next week. The instruction in the Junior House took place on Thursday and at this they also alternated. Sometimes, as during the month of May, when there were public evening devotions in the Church these conferences were given during the time of morning prayer.

The retreats of one day, one for the Seniors and one for the Juniors,

began in the evening with a short discourse at night prayer. Four lectures were given the next day: at morning prayer, at 10 a.m., at 1 p.m., at 6 p.m.; a short summary of the day's work at night prayer and a lecture during prayer on the morning on which the retreat closed.

In order to systematise the spiritual communication which the students were recommended to make Fr Myers printed a card containing the several heads on which they were advised to examine themselves. This card was an adaptation to a student's life of the *Ratio Mensis* in use in the Apostolic Union of secular priests. The students came in great numbers to get copies of the *Ratio Mensis*. At the time what was known as the "Plan of Campaign" was prominent in Irish politics. The students called Father Myers' *Ratio Mensis* "The Plan of Campaign", meaning thereby that it contained the plan of their spiritual campaign. He also drew up another card containing an outline of the method of meditation and distributed it in like manner. When vacation approached he printed another card called *Ratio Vacationis* containing the points to which students should attend during vacation, and the dangers they should avoid. All these cards were entirely composed by him and he set them up in type and printed them himself. To the students leaving the College after ordination he recommended the rule of life of the Apostolic Union of secular priests and advised them to become members of that association. He corresponded with Abbe Lebeurier, President of the Union, and later on a branch of the Union was founded in the College for the young priests going out on the mission. For a year or two they belonged to the College branch and corresponded with one of the Spiritual Fathers as Director before joining the Union in their own diocese.

According to the Resolutions adopted by the Bishops on 12 October 1886 the status of the Spiritual Fathers was to be the same as that of the Deans and their salary the same, viz £158 per annum. In the course of their first year at Maynooth a modification of this arrangement was made. A representation was made to the Archbishop of Dublin (by — it was believed — the President of the College) that considering the fact that the Vincentians accepted a much smaller salary in the Irish College in Paris and elsewhere, it seemed strange they should accept a much larger salary at Maynooth. The Archbishop of Dublin mentioned the representation to Dr Gillooly bishop of Elphin and he communicated it to Father Duff, the Provincial of the Congregation in Ireland. Father Duff consulted several persons on the point and amongst them the two Spiritual Fathers on the occasion of a visit they paid to Blackrock. Fr Myers was of opinion that to lower the salary would be a lowering of the status of the Spiritual Fathers, and to admit that their

services were of lesser importance. He held most tenaciously that the salary should not be lowered. Fr Boyle did not think that the esteem in which the Spiritual Fathers would be held would be measured by the amount of their salary; and though he did not approve of the reduction, he was less emphatic in his opposition to it than was Fr Myers. Father Duff then mentioned that he had consulted Fr Morrissey, the Superior of the house in Cork and whom he considered capable of giving a good opinion, and that Fr Morrissey would be disposed to advise the acceptance of a salary of about £120 each. In order not to displease the archbishop Fr Duff proposed that the full salary should continue to be paid to the Spiritual Fathers; and that £40 per annum from each of them should be returned by the Provincial Procurator to the Bursar of Maynooth College. Fr Myers accepted this compromise first because it maintained the right to the full salary £158, and secondly because he hoped that one day the reasons for returning the difference between £118 and £158 would cease. Father Boyle looked upon the system of receiving the full salary and then returning a part of it as hardly dignified and he would have preferred to accept a fixed sum. In order not to give umbrage and perhaps create an obstacle to the permanence of the work of the Spiritual Fathers the plan proposed by Father Duff was therefore adopted: and for as long as Fr Myers lived, the full salary was paid to the Spiritual Fathers by the Bursar at Maynooth and the sum of £40 for each was returned to him from Blackrock. The proceeding was somewhat abnormal; but the practical reduction of the salary was irregular since the amount of salary fixed by the Episcopal Board ought not to have been changed except by a resolution of the Board.

Very cordial relations existed during the year between the Superiors and staff of the College and the Spiritual Fathers. No doubt there may have been some amongst them to whom the introduction of Spiritual Fathers seemed a needless innovation. But in the end all came to see the utility of it. The appointment of Spiritual Fathers was made in 1886 provisionally for one year. After one year's experience of the system their appointment was made permanent by a resolution of the Trustees dated 21 June 1887.

During the year 1887-88 the work of the Spiritual Fathers continued the same as in the previous year. In the autumn of 1887 they took up their quarters in the rooms prepared for them in St Joseph's division. They were supplied with the same furniture as the other members of the College staff, viz a plain bedstead, table and chairs. As with the other Professors any extra article of furniture was to be at their own expense. However Fr Myers insisted that the cost of carpeting the rooms and

providing book cases should be paid for this first time from the amount that it had been agreed to return to the Bursar.

An alteration was made in 1887 in the horarium of the College which rendered the work of the Spiritual Fathers more difficult. The dinner hour for the staff, which had previously been 4 p.m., was changed to 5 p.m. As much of the work of the Spiritual Fathers was done in the evening they were obliged to go from the dinner table without an interval for recreation to hear confessions or receive the students for direction. The position of the Spiritual Fathers was now firmly established. Each week they had a large number of confessions and on the retreat days their work was almost without interruption. At one of the Visitations of the College either in 1887 or in 1888 Father Myers was sent for by the Visitors and asked whether the Spiritual Fathers would be prepared to take charge of the class of preaching or Sacred Eloquence. He was rather in favour of the project, but could not of his own authority give a definite answer. The project however fell through and nothing further was heard of it.

In the course of 1888-89 the same order continued. About the month of May 1889 Fr Myers had an attack of illness. On rising in the morning he fainted. In his fall he came in contact with some hard object and his thigh was severely torn. When he came to himself he came to Fr Boyle's room. When the latter arrived he found Fr Myers in bed. Fr Myers explained what had happened and uncovering his wound he asked Fr Boyle to get a needle and thread and stitch it. The latter had no desire for such an operation, and he lost no time in sending for the doctor and having the patient attended to. Dr Kenny, the consulting physician of the College, was sent for and he agreed with Dr Kelly the resident doctor that the fainting was due to the hardening of some of the vessels of the heart. However the wound soon healed and Fr Myers was at work again in a short time.

The success of the work of the Spiritual Fathers at Maynooth was due to Fr Myers. He gained the hearts of the students, and had great skill in encouraging the timid and the scrupulous. He had strong common sense, and a good grasp of the principles of Moral Theology. He read but little, and the little which he read served only to set his own mind at work. His discourses were far from rhetorical, but they were simple, practical, earnest and original, the fruit of his own thoughts. He was fond of little books and his favourite meditation book was that called *Meditationes Brevissimae* by Fr Cuvellhier SJ. He left his colleague completely free in the choice of subjects for the weekly conference as well as for the retreats. The latter preferred to follow a plan or series of

instructions dealing in order with the duties of the spiritual life and with the principal virtues of the ecclesiastical state. Though the office of Spiritual Father is not precisely that of professor of ascetic theology, his view was that the instructions should be so arranged that the students would have in fact, in the instructions given, a full course of ascetic theology so that they should not only know the principles of the spiritual life for themselves, but be able to guide others according to those principles. The change in the method of making the spiritual reading was the work of the Superiors of the College and not of the Spiritual Fathers. The original custom had been to read aloud a spiritual book for all. In 1886 the practice was introduced that each student should bring his own book to the hall where the reading was made. If the students had a good selection of books, and read according to the guidance of their spiritual director, there would be much to say in favour of this plan. But, as far as Fr Boyle's observation went, the supply or choice of spiritual books left much to be desired.

Fr Myers and Fr Boyle worked most harmoniously together until June 1889 when the latter ceased to belong to Maynooth and was in October of the same year appointed Superior of the Irish College in Paris.

(After this PB continued with the names of subsequent Spiritual Fathers up to 1918, giving brief biographical details on each but not adding anything about how they viewed their work. A full list of Vincentian Spiritual Fathers in Maynooth was printed in COLLOQUE No. 5).

The Current Scene (1985) of the Spiritual Directors in Maynooth

James Tuohy

“On 11 October 1886 Fr Myers and Fr Boyle were appointed to the office of Spiritual Fathers at Maynooth College”. So, as we celebrate the centenary of our presence as Spiritual Fathers (as we are called here) in Maynooth I write neither to bury these men nor to engage in premature canonisations. I want to do three things. I want to go back, first, to the early years to see what it was like to be a Spiritual Father then. Second, I will return to today, to what being a Spiritual Father is like now. And third, I will reflect on that movement from then to now to see what it says to us about the nature of our work.

Perhaps I should begin by trying to unravel a little of the complexity that is Maynooth. St Patrick’s College, Maynooth, was founded by an Act of the Irish Parliament (35 Geo. III, cap. 21) in 1795. For a century and a half of its existence it was exclusively concerned with the training and education of priests for the Catholic Church in Ireland. The government of the College is vested in a Board of seventeen Trustees, established as an incorporated body by Act of the British Parliament (8 and 9 Vie., cap. 25) in 1845. The Board consists at present of the four Catholic archbishops and thirteen bishops appointed by the hierarchy from among its members.

On the completion of its first century in 1895 the Holy See granted to the College the Charter of a Pontifical University entitling it to confer degrees up to doctorate level in theology, canon law and philosophy.

On the foundation of the National University of Ireland in 1908 Maynooth became the first Recognised College of the new university, with courses leading to degrees in arts and science. It remained the only Recognised College of the NUI until 1976.

In June 1966 the Trustees of the College decided to “develop Maynooth as an open centre of Higher Studies and to extend its facilities and courses to meet the requirements not merely of priests, diocesan and regular, but also of brothers, nuns and the laity”. The present total student population is 2,387, and of these 310 are diocesan students resident in the College.

1886 and the early years

There were undoubtedly watersheds in the social and political life of Ireland during the past century. The one that left the greatest impact must surely be the Famine in the 1840s when the country lost a quarter of its people in just one decade. John Whyte suggests in his book *Church and State in Modern Ireland 1923-1970* (Gill & Macmillan, Dublin, 1971, p 361) that ever since the Famine Ireland has experienced a series of sudden transformations at intervals of roughly a generation: the struggle for the land in the 1880s, political freedom in the 1910s and 1920s, experience of industrial revolution in the 1950s, “going into Europe” in the 1970s.

The Catholic Church played a major role in all these social changes over the past century. However, because Ireland as a nation was outside the mainstream of modern life and modern politics these changes did not, as Peadar Kirby notes, “lead to a social revolution, but rather a political and social conservatism” (*Is Irish Catholicism Dying?*)

In the course of her history the Church sometimes appears to be very confident of herself and of the value of her message, telling everyone exactly what they ought to be doing; sometimes she seems rather confused and unsure of herself, groping in the darkness. The mood of the Church during the first half of the century was the former. Seminaries were crowded and new religious congregations were being born. The 19th century was the great age of church building in Ireland. By the 1860s there were two thousand new churches built since the beginning of the century. The authority of the Pope, bishops and priests was relatively unquestioned. Catholics possessed a sense of God and a sense of sin; they knew when they had sinned, and whether their sin was mortal or venial, and they went to confession. And, of course, “the Mass mattered”.

When Fr Myers and Fr Boyle came to Maynooth in 1886 they joined a resident staff of about twenty and a student population of around six hundred. The playing fields of Maynooth College echoed to the polite sounds of cricket and croquet. Football and hurling were not allowed lest, in the words of Walter McDonald, “an inter-diocesan and inter-provincial faction should be raised, and we should kill one another”. Gaelic games were eventually permitted in 1901 and came to be organised around inter-class competition. Frs Walsh and Rossiter were in residence when King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra visited the College on 24 June 1903.

While Ireland as a nation may have been a closed introspective society the Catholic Church was the only institution offering an ideal

to the young. It was looking out at the world and calling on young men and women to do something about the paganism and poverty in which most of humanity lived. For instance, from Maynooth sprang the Irish Vincentians, Columbans, Kiltegan Fathers, All Hallows and a Mission to India.

The formation programme at Maynooth would not have differed much from what was common throughout the Catholic world. The Council of Trent, attempting to weed out unsuitable candidates, established seminaries where students were given a uniform and thorough course in Catholic theology. Theology textbooks were standard and in Latin. It was a Church of “law and order”, and piety was tidied up into well-marked stages, with certain well-mapped spiritual exercises like spiritual reading, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, mental prayer with its orderly succession of acts, meticulous self-examination, and so on. Fr Myers’ invention of the *ratio mensis*, on which the prepared list of daily spiritual exercises were ticked off, was suited to his time.

Discipline in the College was strict, expulsion being the severest penalty. The following were the chief offences warranting expulsion according to the College Statutes of 1820:

- (i) If anyone shall perversely and publicly refuse to obey the orders of the President;
- (ii) If anyone shall pass the bounds of the College without lawful permission;
- (iii) If anyone shall indulge in banquets, or revelling, privately in the College, or bring in wine or other intoxicating drink, or be privy to the same;
- (iv) If anyone shall have drunk so as manifestly to exhibit the turpitude of intoxication;
- (v) If anyone shall strike another severely, and for the purpose of injuring him;
- (vi) If anyone shall bring into the College books or writings tending to calumniate the Catholic religion, or to relax morals, or stir up sedition; and, likewise, if anyone shall use books forbidden to the entire community by the President or Dean;
- (vii) If anyone shall designedly withdraw himself from the body of the students on the public walk, or from the eyes of the person to whose charge he may have been committed. (Healy, *Maynooth College: Its Centenary History, 1895*, p 215)

However, students don’t change that much, in spite of the rigid rules. Walter McDonald confesses: “During my first year at Maynooth (1870)

I remained the idle, careless boy I had been at Kilkenny; doing little or no study, and caring little for the college rule. Not, indeed, that I was guilty of any great irregularity, such as drinking; I never saw any drink in the College during my course as a student. Apart from this, however, I did, practically, whatever I cared to do.” And, of course, institution food is a perennial source of complaint: “During all my time in the Senior House — four years — there was frequent disturbance in the students’ Refectory, over the food supply and kindred matters” (*Reminiscences of a Maynooth Professor*, pp 56 and 81).

As the Church was very confident of herself and of the value of her message, so the seminarian coming to Maynooth was secure in his culture and his values. When “everyone” in Ireland is a believer there is no need for most people to ground their faith on their own “religious experience”. Prior to Vatican II the ordinary Christian life was the fulfilling of a moral precept. This was especially true of Sunday observance, rather than the attraction of the religious activity in itself. This life-style tended to obscure the personal character of the Christian life and fostered the illusion of the “well-moulded” student, equating formation to maturity, with discipline and consequent conformity.

In the past, spiritual direction tended to be problem rather than person oriented, based on the confession model. Neil Kevin remembers his Maynooth days thus: “I recall sitting in line there on the long seat, waiting my turn to be the next man in, making a final prayer on the prie-dieu just outside the door ... But if it does not come too near the heavy and melodramatic, I would say that the Church in Ireland is greatly fashioned from this corridor with its two prie-dieus. Students in doubt concerning their vocation ‘fixed things up’ with the Spiritual Fathers. Instruction on spiritual matters in private and in public was their work.”

How does Neil Kevin remember the men themselves? “They were intensely private men living a remarkably public life.” Were they friendly, approachable? “If in some wild and fantastic dream I, a Junior student at Maynooth College, had found myself with all preparation carefully made for the burning down of the whole edifice I would have straightaway abandoned my project and fled from the scene if one of the three Deans appeared in my dream; but if, instead, one of the Spiritual Fathers had come there, I believe I should have seen myself asking him for a match” (*I Remember Maynooth*, pp 140, 144).

The current scene

I have had twenty-one years of seminary experience since 1960, seven in Glenart teaching theology, four as Director in Blackrock and ten as Spiritual Father in Maynooth. They have been turbulent years. Change has cut the Church to its marrow, from liturgical change to contraceptive legislation. Seminaries and convents have closed their doors; those that remain open seem to some all too open. The quiet social revolution now taking place in Ireland appears to be eroding the position which the Church held in Irish life, and also eroding the faith of the people. In ten years (1967-76) ten thousand American priests left the priesthood. "One would have to go back well over a hundred years" writes Peadar Kirby "to find a twenty year period during which the life experience of the Irish people changed so dramatically and fundamentally as it did from the early 1960s to the early 1980s" (*Is Irish Catholicism Dying?* p15).

At this moment of her history the Church appears rather confused and unsure of herself, groping in the darkness. However, it is not always in her "best" moments, when she is most confident and clear, that the Church is most true to herself. There is an inbuilt unsatisfactoriness in the Church put there by the Master himself. A time of confusion like our own, when people become disillusioned with the Church and with Christianity, may, in fact, be a "good" time.

The student coming to Maynooth today out of such an environment is likewise confused and unsure and groping in the dark. He is open to so many contradictory influences that he lacks the faith security of the past; instead of being an object of admiration to his peers he is an object of surprise, a maverick, since many of them do not practise and they are taken aback to see one of their own take religion seriously. His own religious formation has often been confused, so that he does not understand Christianity, or he has a distorted view of it from the media.

Both the student and the Spiritual Fathers are in a new situation. The student has a greater need for personal development. More men are needed to train fewer students than in the past. This point is illustrated by what I said above. Frs Myers and Boyle came into a resident staff of about twenty and a student population of about six hundred. Today three Spiritual Fathers join a resident staff twice that number and we serve a student population half that of 1886.

To respond to the changing needs of the students we have found it necessary to take all kinds of in-service training courses, e. g., a one year Training Programme for Spiritual Directors given by the Jesuits at Manresa; shorter courses, such as the Myers-Briggs Personality Types

Indicator, Psychosocial Theory of Priestly Vocation given by Rulla and Riddick, Enneagram Workshop, Fundamentals of Psychosynthesis, Teresa of Avila and Prayer given by Margaret Dorgan. Each of us belongs to a separate circle of spiritual directors, where we meet regularly to discuss general procedures and our own performance.

St Vincent read *The Rule of Perfection* of Benet of Canfield OFM Cap. He took what suited him from Fr Benet, as he did from Bérulle and Duval, Ignatius of Loyola, Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales and others. He refused, nevertheless to be immersed in a theory or shut up in a particular school. In other words, he was eclectic. We trust that we, his sons, have learned this lesson from Vincent.

What do we do all day? While not constituting a formal community — we are attached to Celbridge — we work together as a team. Twice a week we have prayer in common and concelebrated Mass. Each day after dinner we say Prayer During the Day together. We have regular meetings to plan our work. Each of us gives a talk each week to one of the Divisions. Since Fr McCullen's time we no longer give Retreats or Days of Recollection to the students; they are now given by outside speakers chosen by the Deans. Most of our time is given over to spiritual direction.

At present, about 70% of the students come to see us on a regular basis, i.e., every three to four weeks. Many of the remainder will go to members of the Staff. But it seems to be true that a minority will go through the seminary with little or no spiritual direction. Between 50% and 60% of the students who enter Maynooth will leave.

The shape and pattern of spiritual direction has changed in recent years:

(i) Students come to the Spiritual Fathers from 9.30 in the morning to 10.00 at night. Rather than having them "sitting in line on the long seat" outside our rooms we normally arrange meetings by appointment, and students will phone us on the internal phone system to make such appointments.

(ii) The usual length of a meeting will vary from a half-hour to an hour.

(iii) The indications from surveys, and from my own personal experience, are that students are full of good will, openness and idealism. But they lack internal cohesion and deeply-felt religious values. They themselves want help from the Spiritual Fathers. However, it is generally accepted today that for a clerical student to be adequately served there should be a ratio of one Spiritual Father to every 40 to 50 students. At present any one of us may have twice that figure coming to us. In

fact the desirable ratio for First Years, who need a lot more attention, is put at 20 to 30 students to each director. Perhaps the situation regarding First Years (Chubbs, as they are popularly called here) will be resolved when the Hierarchy introduces a Spiritual Year.

What does this movement from then to now say to us about a Spiritual Father and about our presence in Maynooth for the immediate future?

The movement from then to now does not tell us which is better, the Spiritual Father of the 1880s or the one of the 1980s. It does tell us that being a Vincentian priest and a Spiritual Father is not a frozen entity, a changeless state. The Church's ministry from first-century Jerusalem to twentieth-century Maynooth is a story of change: different models, varying emphases, new ways of serving.

If the Spiritual Father of 1986 is not the Spiritual Father of 1936 or 1886 it is because the Ireland of 1986 is not the Ireland of 1936 or 1886. The underlying principle that seems beyond challenge is this: *New needs require fresh responses*. These hundred years give us reason to celebrate; our confrères have been faithful, they have done their best to respond vigorously to the needs of their time with fresh responses.

What lessons can we learn for the immediate future? There is an apt saying: "Take off your cap to the past and take off your coat to the future". I think we are seen by the rest of the Staff as men who are conscientious, unobtrusive, who maintain a quiet, low-key presence, and keep out of the politics of the College. There is a danger here of isolationism. We could become so isolated that we withdraw into a totally uninvolved scene vis-a-vis the rest of the College, having little influence on the real life of the College and of the students.

Another lesson is compartmentalisation. We need to develop a spirituality that bridges the gap between Theology and real life. We need to be plugged in to the theology and pastoral formation taught in the College, otherwise we may be giving the students ideas and ideals that are competing with those they have heard in the lecture hall. We could, for instance, be heard proposing a type of spirituality for diocesan priests that separates prayer-life from pastoral-life, when in fact they ought to be *file fuaite* as we say in Irish.

Finally, the array of qualities and qualifications that are often proposed as necessary for a spiritual director today might make even the Lord himself hesitate to undertake the task! If these requirements are Utopian at least they show that spiritual direction is trying to answer the demands of a new generation. There is need for a whole Department

or Institute of Spirituality in the College providing a course in Spiritual and Mystical Theology, as well as providing a counselling service and an expanded panel of spiritual directors, which would include diocesan priests.

By way of conclusion we may take to heart the advice Vincent gave to Fr Antoine Durand in 1656 when appointing him superior of the seminary in Agde, which had been entrusted to the Congregation two years previously:

How great a work is that to which God has called you, the government of souls. What a life, think you, is that of the Priests of the Mission who are obliged to treat souls properly and guide them aright, a work fully understood by God alone. *Ars artium regimen animarum*. This was the occupation of the Son of God on earth; it was for this that he came down from heaven, was born of a virgin, lived his life here below and died a most painful death. You should therefore have the highest conception of the work you are about to undertake. It is not the work of a man; it is the work of God. *Grande opus*. It is the continuation of what Jesus Christ was given to do, and consequently human industry can but spoil everything if God does not mingle himself with man's labour. Neither philosophy nor theology nor preaching is effective with souls; it is necessary that Jesus Christ associate himself with us; that we work in him and he in us; that we speak like him and in his Spirit as he himself was in his Father and preached the doctrine his Father had taught him; this is the language of Holy Writ. You must therefore empty out self in order to be clothed in Jesus Christ (XI 342).

St Vincent de Paul and Spiritual Direction — Some Personal Reflections

Francis Murphy

*(Revised version of paper read to Vincentian Study Group
22 November 1984)*

The Vincentian Study Group is now in its third year. For me it has been an enormous source of challenge and encouragement, particularly in the area of spiritual direction where I have been working for the past six years. I had studied spirituality with the Jesuits and the Carmelites and at times wondered if I was outside the Vincentian tradition. This was reinforced by the disquiet of many confrères about the way spiritual direction had developed over the past seven years or so within the Province. As I listened to the papers read over a period, particularly those in the area of prayer, I found that my own training and experience were what Vincent had taught. He was, as Cardinal Lercaro has written, “that incomparable master of prayer”¹ and, I would add, of spiritual direction too. I found it a great affirmation that what I was doing and the method I was using were those of Vincent. What is happening in the apostolate of spiritual direction in the Province is our own heritage.

In this article I want to reflect on some key concepts and practices in Vincent’s approach to prayer and spiritual direction. I believe that Vincent had a particular style of direction that is very similar to what the Jesuits have developed today. In underlining what Vincent said and did I won’t be saying anything new, but I hope that the angle from which I am seeing it will bring a greater, clarity and freshness to some of the traditional practices within the community. I want to show that my experience of spiritual direction is confirmed and validated by the practice of Vincent.

1. Vincent’s stress on the importance of and necessity for daily meditation

In my short experience of direction I have noticed that people do not grow unless they give time each day to personal meditation. Vincent saw the importance of this daily exercise and said that “it is not right to

take rest at the expense of the most important action of the day” (VIII 368).² For him prayer is the *most important* action of the day. Prayer is for him the centre and source of the life of the spirit; he said: “Prayer is the soul of your souls, which means that what the soul is to the body prayer is to the soul” (IX 416).³ For him prayer is a daily bread and “the soul which does not nourish itself with prayer, or does so only rarely, will become tepid and sickly, without either courage or virtue, a nuisance to others and unbearable to itself” (IX 416).⁴ He also sees it as a stream that refreshes, a mirror in which we look to examine ourselves to grow in self-knowledge.

Vincent realised that it is only if we give time to personal prayer that we will grow; growth does take place, but it will not happen if we have *only* other liturgical functions. Abbot Marmion noticed the same thing and said: “One may recite the divine office, assist at Holy Mass and receive the sacraments, but if the soul does not give itself faithfully to prayer its progress will often be mediocre”.⁵ Vincent too saw that prayer was the way we grew in relationship with Christ and that without this fire of love that came from direct communication with the Lord the sacraments would not be as effective a means as they should be. This has been my experience too, and it has been particularly striking that people do not seem to grow unless they are faithful to their time of daily meditation. Vincent also stressed that you did not have to be educated to be able to meditate. Cardinal Lercaro said that “no one perhaps has insisted quite so emphatically as St Vincent de Paul on the accessibility of mental prayer to all souls, and in particular to simple and uneducated people”.⁶

2. *Vincent’s style of direction*

Did Vincent have a particular style of directing people? I believe he had, and that the key to it was the way that he got people to talk about what happened in their prayer and through that lead them gradually to be ready to choose and do the will of God in all things. Prayer was not the main focus, but the person’s life and the fruits of prayer in it. I will describe the account of one priest who went to Vincent for direction. It is from Abelly and he had earlier mentioned that Vincent welcomed to St Lazare persons of every age and background, from town and country, rich and poor, students and professors, priests of all types and ranks, members of the nobility, lawyers of all sorts, merchants and labourers, soldiers, right down to pages and lackeys. Abelly describes a typical visit as recounted by one priest:

First, and before everything else, he raised his mind to God to seek his help, usually asking those who had come to consult him to do the same. By a short fervent prayer which he said with them he asked for light and grace to know the will of God in the things to be discussed. Secondly, he listened very carefully to what was being put forward, taking his time in reflecting on it and turning it over. If he considered it necessary he asked for further clarification, to get everything into perspective.⁷ Thirdly, he took his time about giving his opinion, and if the matter warranted it he requested even more time to consider it, asking however that it be recommended to God. Fourthly, he was quite willing to have the advice of others sought, and he himself was always ready to seek it, and he always deferred to it as far as justice and charity allowed. He more readily followed others' opinions than his own. Fifthly and lastly, when he put forward his own opinion he did so in a very prudent yet humble way, pointing out what he thought should be done but letting the person make up his own mind, saying, for example, "there is such and such a reason which seems to indicate that such and such a resolution should be taken". If he was absolutely pressed to give a decision and reveal his own mind he would do so in the same sort of way, saying "it seems to me that it would be good, or the proper thing, to do so and so, or to act in such and such a way".⁸

In my own approach to spiritual direction I am interested in finding out how a person experiences God. In particular I explore what God is like for the person as he or she experiences him in prayer, and how the person responds to that experience and what effect it has in their life. In getting the person to articulate the experience they understand it more clearly, own it and learn from it. I have used this in group direction too and in that way experienced how it becomes a school of prayer. I have suspected that Vincent had much the same idea in mind with his repetition of prayer. In a very good article in *COLLOQUE* No. 10 Anthony Njoku outlines how Vincent used this method to build community and as a way to teach newcomers to pray.

Vincent said that repetition of prayer was original to himself:

The repetition of prayer was formerly a thing unheard of in the Church of God ... (XII 9). We have reason to thank God for having given this grace to the Company and we can say that this practice had never been in use in any community, if not in ours" (XII 288).

He encouraged the Daughters of Charity to take up the practice:

Take care to give an account of your prayer to one another as soon as possible after making it. You cannot imagine how useful this will be. Tell one another quite simply the thoughts which God has given you and, above all, carefully remember the resolution you made at prayer ... Blessed Sister Mary of the Incarnation made use of this means to advance very far in perfection. She gave a careful account of her prayer to her maidservant.⁹ Oh yes, my daughters, you cannot imagine how greatly this practice will profit you and the pleasure you will give God by acting in this way (IX 4).

He told people travelling on a journey with others to share their prayer and even encouraged the ladies who worked with him to do the same. Vincent clearly saw the importance of talking about and explicating one's experience in prayer, and how it was more likely to flow over into our life as a result. The following are two accounts of people who described their prayer to Vincent in the course of his directing them. He describes the Count de Rougemont's prayer experience:

He mentioned this in particular, and I have always remembered it, that one day as he was going on a journey, occupying himself with God as usual as he went along the road, he examined himself to see if from the time he had renounced all things any attachment remained or survived. He went through all his business affairs, his alliances, his reputation, the big and little vanities of the human heart; he turned them over and over in his mind and at last his eyes fell on his sword. "Why do you wear it?" he said to himself. "What, abandon this dear sword which has helped you many and many a time, which, after God, has rescued you from thousands and thousands of dangers! If attacked now you would be lost without it; but, on the other hand, you might get into a riot and not have the strength, if you carried your sword, not to make use of it, and so offend God. What shall I do now, O my God, what shall I do? Is this instrument of sin and shame still able to hold my heart? I see now that it is only my sword that keeps me back". And at that very moment, finding himself opposite a large rock, he dismounted from his horse, took his sword and smashed it into bits against the stone; he then remounted his horse and rode away. He told me that this act of detachment, this breaking of a steel sword that held him captive, gave him such freedom that, although it went to his heart, which loved the sword, he never

afterwards had an affection for any perishable thing and held fast only to God (XII 232).¹⁰

Similarly, he describes a repetition of Jane Frances de Chantal's prayer:

Do you know how Madame de Chantal, our blessed mother, learned how to pray? In the same way that I have just told those to meditate who don't know how to read — that is, by the use of pictures. What did she do? She took a picture of the Blessed Virgin, and looking at the eyes she said: "O amiable eyes!" And when she felt her heart inflamed with love by these considerations, she asked God to give her the grace of never offending him by looks. "Lord, give me the modesty of your holy Mother". Then she took a resolution to guard her eyes and not allow them to wander about on useless things (X 575)."

Those are two excellent descriptions of mental prayer in its early stages as taught by Vincent. When I read those again it seemed exactly what I was doing with people in the early stages of meditation. I describe the following experience of one student, with his permission, to show the similarity to what Vincent said above. This student, coming to me for direction, told me that he was the cause of great disruption and division at home. He had been hurt by the strictness of his parents and was now very jealous of the freedom his younger brother was being given; he was full of resentment and bitterness. So, I asked him to go off and pray on the first chapter of 1 Samuel where it describes the prayer of Hannah. When he came back some weeks later he said:

I did as you told me and prayed that passage from 1 Samuel where Hannah cried out to God from the depth of her resentment. I cried out like her and told Christ of each of the painful memories. I talked to him about what happened. I felt I was able to leave the pain quite fast because I saw Christ come as a kind of doctor bringing a healing ointment which he rubbed in my wounds. But they were not healed from outside as if the skin was pulled over them, but from within, from the roots, from inside out. It felt wonderfully comfortable and I was able to receive the Lord's love in a deeper way and to respond to that love. When I went home on my next visit I was able to trust in his power more and was not so afraid or tense because I knew he was with me and I was not

depending on my strength, but on his. It was amazing how different things worked out. I did not react with my former jealousy and anger, and everything was so much happier and enjoyable. My parents even remarked that I had changed.

I believe that Vincent had the basic insight of this approach in his repetition of prayer. It has been further refined and developed today by the Jesuits, with the help of the insights of modern psychology. We have a vital means of helping people grow in prayer, within our own tradition. We don't have to go over the seas to find it; it is already within us. It gave me great encouragement to find that what I was doing Vincent had been doing three hundred years ago!

3. The relationship between prayer and life

I have found that people can talk beautifully about their experiences in prayer but it may have no connection with the sort of life they live. There is no evident fruit of their prayer in life. Many more seem to come to trust in their spiritual exercises, making them "spiritual riches" that they have accumulated, and substituting these for real trust in God. I found that Vincent was very sensible and down to earth in this matter. His teaching on the relationship between prayer and life can be looked at under three headings.

(a) The making of resolutions

The making of resolutions was an essential part of Vincent's teaching on prayer for beginners. But they had no part in the later growth of prayer which he envisaged would develop, and which I treat of in part 4. Vincent considered that if prayer did not change one's life then it was a "flattering production of the mind". He even says occasionally that the essential point in mental prayer and one that, of itself, suffices is the taking of such good resolutions. In a repetition of prayer of 25 August 1655 we read:

M. Vincent praised a priest and two novices for having, in their prayer, come down to the consideration of particular faults, and he asked Father de Lespigny, the master of novices, to encourage them to do so always, because, he said, prayer should be made in this way, and to act otherwise is not really to pray (XI 301).

Vincent emphasised resolutions because he was wanting to hammer

home time after time that for prayer to be real it had to have an effect on one's life. I had been puzzled by his emphasis and noticed I did not use the word *resolution* myself. In fact, it is noticeably absent from current writing on prayer. The reason is, I believe, that from the psychological insights of our age we have found that we are much more likely to do something to change if we talk in terms of *could* and *will* rather than *should* and *ought*. So, instead of asking what resolutions did you come to I would tend to ask something like "Where did your prayer lead to?" or "Did it have any effect on your life?" I believe that this brings about what Vincent desired when he stressed resolutions, namely "Is your prayer bringing about a change in your life?"

(b) Seeking only the will of God

Doing the will of God is the most important key idea in Vincent's spirituality; in this he was very influenced by Benet of Canfield. In a conference on the will of God he says:

... the exercise of doing the will of God surpasses all these practices; for it includes indifference, purity of intention, and all other acts of piety performed or recommended; and, if there be any other exercise of piety leading to perfection, it will be found in an eminent degree in this. Who is more indifferent than he who does the will of God in all things? Is there anyone more indifferent than he who seeks the will of God in every single thing, who does not seek himself in anything, and who does not wish even for those which he could wish for except in so far as God wished them (XII 152)¹²

Further on in the same conference he has a very frightening passage when he says to his priests:

I am sure there is not a priest here who has not said Mass, or a person who has not done other actions, holy in themselves, with the sole view of honouring the Majesty of God; and yet it may be that God has rejected the actions for having done our own will; is not this what the prophet declared when he said on the part of God: "You think to honour me and you do the reverse, because when you fast you do your own will; and by that means you spoil your fasts. The same may be said of all your works; you do your own will; thus you spoil your devotion, your labours, your penance, etc." "Many shall say to me" said Jesus Christ

“Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied, cast out devils and wrought many wonders in thy name?” “I have never known you” he will answer “I have never known you; begone from me, you that work iniquity”. “But, Lord, do you call the prophecies and miracles we have performed in your name ‘works of iniquity’?” “Begone from me, you cursed” he will say, “I have never known you”. Who are they who will enter into the kingdom of heaven? Those who shall do the will of God ... O Saviour! Grant us the grace to be filled with this affection, that we may bear no wild fruit, but that all our productions may be for thee and by thee, to the end that they may be pleasing to the eyes of thy Father (XII 156-7).¹³

That is a radical spirituality that ensures that the spiritual exercises, prayer and life are related.

(c) The blockage of looking for self-satisfaction
and experiences in prayer

I have noticed that one of the great blocks to growth in our relationship with Christ is the self-satisfaction that can set in. We can end up seeking ourselves, looking for an echo of ourself in the exercises we do, and so stop short of seeking God alone. We build up an impenetrable security blanket in the many religious practices we carry out. These make us feel good, safe, secure. Vincent is very clear that in choosing self-satisfaction we are settling for less than God, as he says to the Daughters of Charity:

All vain satisfaction should be set aside and you should say: “I desire none, because they are in conformity with the maxims of the world”. O Sisters, note that carefully, because it is on this point that most spiritual persons suffer shipwreck. They seek their own pleasure and satisfaction in their devotions, in confession, in holy communion, in prayer, in spiritual reading and conferences, in short they seek themselves in everything (X 141).¹⁴

To Antoine Durand he spoke in a similar manner:

What a dangerous poison to good works is vain complacency! It is a pest that corrupts the most holy actions and so causes God to be forgotten. In the name of God, be on your guard against this fault; it is one of the most dangerous I know to progress in the spiritual life and to perfection (XI 346).

Seeking experiences in prayer is another great blockage to growth. We end up seeking the experience of God rather than the God of experience, as Teresa of Avila says. We again end up trusting in something less than God. Our justification can be only our total trust in God from the depths of our poverty and littleness. This is our greatest and most secure safeguard and the guarantee of real growth in our relationship with him who asks from us for trust more than anything else. Vincent again turns out to have been a very sound guide in this matter. "Perfection" he says "does not consist in ecstasies, but in doing God's will" (XI 317).¹⁵ To the Daughters of Charity he urges: "You must not pray to have lofty thoughts, ecstasies and raptures, that are more hurtful than useful, but pray only to become perfect and to be really good Daughters of Charity" (IX 30).¹⁶ We should be indifferent to what God sends, whether we are consoled or in dryness:

We should not be surprised at seeing changes in ourselves; but what we should do is to thank God equally for whichever of these states he may wish us to be in, whether it be one of joy and consolation, or sadness and affliction, and we should love all these states, no matter what they may be, in which it may please God to place us ... (XI 366-7).¹⁷

With so much stress on feelings and imagination in prayer today Vincent is a good balance with his insistence on flexibility, not forcing oneself, and seeking only God's will. He again tells the community in St Lazare;

... now in all this there is no need, nor is it often expedient for us, to have excited feelings about the virtue we wish to embrace, or even to desire such feelings; for a desire to feel virtues, which are purely spiritual qualities, may sometimes worry and injure the mind, and too much mental application heats the brain and brings on headaches; so, too, acts of the will, repeated too often or too violently, exhaust and weaken the heart (XI 407).¹⁸

4. Vincent's teaching on growth in prayer

As I have listened to the descriptions of prayer by many priests and sisters over the last six years I began to discover that for those who really sought God with all their heart and were generous in their lives

great growth in prayer took place. Many have been drawn in to a greater simplicity in their prayer, into contemplative prayer as described by Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross. In affirming this growth I have often wondered if this was introducing an element that was outside our tradition. So, I was really excited when I heard talks from Tom Davitt and Aidan McGing describing Vincent's teaching on prayer and then went on to read again Joseph Leonard's wonderful treatment of it in *St Vincent de Paul & Mental Prayer*. Vincent had found that this growth happened, not only that he expected it to happen, and was even more optimistic than John of the Cross about the number of people who would grow in this way. What I particularly liked about Vincent's approach was the very ordinary and matter of fact way that he took this growth for granted, and did nothing to overemphasise it for fear he might build up a spirit of pride or complacency in the individual.

Vincent's teaching on prayer is very ordinary. For him it started with meditation in one form or another. This led to an affective prayer and prayer of greater simplicity. He is relentless in his teaching that we have to get out of our minds, out of thoughts about God, and into our hearts and express our affections through acts of the will, which need not have any feeling content. He saw that for growth in the early stages of prayer we had to come to know Christ as a person, as someone who loves us and to whom we can relate in love. Prayer is a relationship. To illustrate how we must move from the thinking process into the heart Vincent used the example of lighting a flame from a flint:

When we want to have a fire we use a flint and steel; we strike it, and as soon as the spark has kindled the material we light a candle, and a man would make himself ridiculous if, after he had lit his candle, he still kept on striking sparks; so, when a soul is sufficiently enlightened by considerations of what use is it to look for more, and to fatigue our mind by multiplying reasons and thoughts? Do you not see that this is wasting time, and that we should then strive to inflame the will and stir up the affections? (XI 406).¹⁹

Another beautiful image of Vincent's that I often use in helping people understand the movement from the head to the heart that must happen in the growth of our relationship with Christ is that of the oars and the sails:

Just as there are two ways by which a boat moves, by sails and by oars, there are also two ways of going to God, by oars and by

sails. “By oars” means when we have a lot of difficulty with our spiritual exercises, when prayer bores us and gives no joy, when everything goes against the grain. “By sails” means when we float through our spiritual exercises, everything smiles on us and the breezes of consolation blow.²⁰

Vincent assumed that priests and Daughters would quite unconsciously slip into contemplative prayer. His description of contemplative prayer in a conference to the Daughters is a particularly simple and beautiful one. It is that of a man who must have known this prayer from his own experience:

The other kind of prayer is called contemplation. In this prayer the soul, present to God, does nothing else but receive what he gives it. The soul is inactive and, without its taking any pains, God himself inspires it with all it could seek for, and a great deal more. Have you not, my dear Daughters, experienced this kind of prayer? I am sure that it has been quite often so in your retreats, and that during them you have been yourselves astonished because, without any contribution on your part, God himself has filled your heart and given such insights as you have never had ... How do you know, my dear Daughters, but that God wants to make St Teresas of you? (IX 420-1, 424) .²¹

I have found that Vincent has confirmed what I have experienced through listening to priests, sisters and lay people talk about their prayer. His approach is very matter of fact and down to earth. He says to follow the ordinary way until God himself calls us to another. That is the safest way. If we understand his teaching we will help free others in their relationship with God. Otherwise we run the danger of condemning them to live like birds in a cage when they should be free to go where God is leading them.

5. Some general points

(a) Remote preparation and subject matter

Vincent believed that we should have a definite subject in mind to meditate on. It should be chosen in advance and read over the night before. He believed that the director should often suggest to people what the topic of prayer should be. I have found these points to be very sound. Otherwise people can become very vague and have a kind of

“lucky dip” approach. Remote preparation plays an important part in doing our part to open our minds and be sensitive to the things of God. Otherwise we come to prayer too casually, taking God for granted.

(b) Flexibility about how and where people could pray

Vincent recommends meditating but realised that methods should not be over stressed. He says that some can't practise meditation according to a method and he is happy if instead they pray the rosary very slowly, or read a book, again slowly and quietly, with pauses at the end of each sentence, with a gentle effort to make appropriate affective acts of the will. He suggests for others the use of looking at some picture or object. He is also flexible in regard to the place of prayer and sees no difficulty in praying while walking, even through the streets. Finally, if charity demands it, then we should sometimes leave prayer aside and respond to what God is asking. He puts it beautifully when he says:

In such a case it is to leave God for God. God calls you to prayer and at the same time he calls you to some poor sick person. That is called leaving God for God (X 595; cf 554).

He does say that the prayer should be made up at some other time and mentions that if necessary this could be done during the time of Mass!

6. *Conclusion*

On Holy Thursday, 1979, Pope John Paul II issued his first letter to all the priests of the Church. He said, quoting Gregory the Great, that the “supreme art is the direction of souls”²² and went on to say to “strive to be ‘artists’ of pastoral work. There have been many such in the history of the Church”. He listed them and put Vincent de Paul first, and then said of them: “Each of them was different from the others, was himself, was the son of his own time and was ‘up to date’ with respect to his own time”.²³ I believe that if we are to serve the Church today then it means being “up to date” in the area of direction of souls and being very familiar with the methods of spiritual and group direction available to us at the present time and which fit in most with our tradition. Vincent was very eclectic in his spirituality and drew on what helped him from any source available, and in particular the Salesian, Ignatian and Carmelite traditions. He adapted what he drew to fit his own needs and his own approach. Today we have been doing the same and have drawn particularly on the Jesuits and Carmelites who have been doing

most of the work in the area of spiritual direction and growth in prayer. What I have learnt from them has brought me back to see the wisdom and foresight in Vincent when he gave to us and the Church the repetition of prayer. What is the basis of a large body of writing on spiritual direction today is what Vincent had discovered and which, he said, “was formerly a thing unheard of in the Church of God” (XII 9). On a later occasion he also said of it:

We have reason to thank God for having given this grace to the Company, and we can say that this practice had never been in use in any community if not in ours (XII 288).

NOTES

1. Lercaro: *Methods of Mental Prayer*, Burns and Gates, London, 1957, p. 17.
2. Quoted in Leonard: *St Vincent de Paul & Mental Prayer*, Burns and Gates, London, 1925, p. 268.
3. Conference to the Daughters, 31 May 1648.
4. *Ibid*.
5. Quoted in Lercaro, *op. cit.*, p. 13.
6. *Ibid*, p. 230.
7. Here, I would expect, he would have got people to talk a bit about their experience of prayer, as with the Count de Rougemont.
8. Abelly, livre III, ch. 16, section unique.
9. Sister Mary of the Incarnation was the name taken by Madame Acarie when she became a Carmelite after her husband's death. As she was not beatified until 1791 Vincent is not using “blessed” in the technical sense.
10. Quoted in Leonard, *op. cit.*, p.49.
11. Conference to the Daughters, 13 October 1658.
12. Conference to St Lazare community, 7 March 1659. Browne & Nolan edition, 1881.p. 73.
13. *Ibid*, p. 76.
14. Conference to Daughters, 2 November 1655.
15. Leonard, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
16. *Ibid*, p. 100.
17. *Ibid*, p. 203.
18. *Ibid*, p. 280.
19. *Ibid*, p. 279.
20. Dodin: 5am; *Vincent de Paul: Entretiens Spirituels aux Missionnaires*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1960, p. 1028. This passage, from Abelly, is not in the Coste edition.
21. Conference to the Daughters, 31 May 1648.
22. In his talk with Antoine Durand, referred to earlier in this article, Vincent quoted this phrase of Gregory the Great. See page 42.
23. Edition of Dominican Publications, Dublin, p. 5.

Locating St Vincent on the Enneagram

Stanislaus Brindley

(Approximately one third of this article was omitted from the issue of Spring 1985. This omission was not adverted to in time for inclusion in the following issue. Because of the nature of the article, with the need for reference to the diagram, the article is printed here in its entirety.)

Introduction

If Vincent de Paul was in North Africa it is a great pity his Moslem masters didn't teach him about the Enneagram. It would have proved a lot more useful than the talking skull. He could have included it in his Common Rules as a basic tool for the discernment of spirits. Chapter XII would have become far more comprehensive.

Edmund Spenser, it has been argued, had already written about it in *The Faerie Queen*:

The frame thereof seemed partly circulare
And part triangulare: O worke divine!

(cf Nott: *Further Teaching of Gurdjieff*, London 1969, p 216).

But not all Moslems knew about the Enneagram, only some of the Sufis. And it is only in very recent years that it has come to Europe via Chile and the US of A.

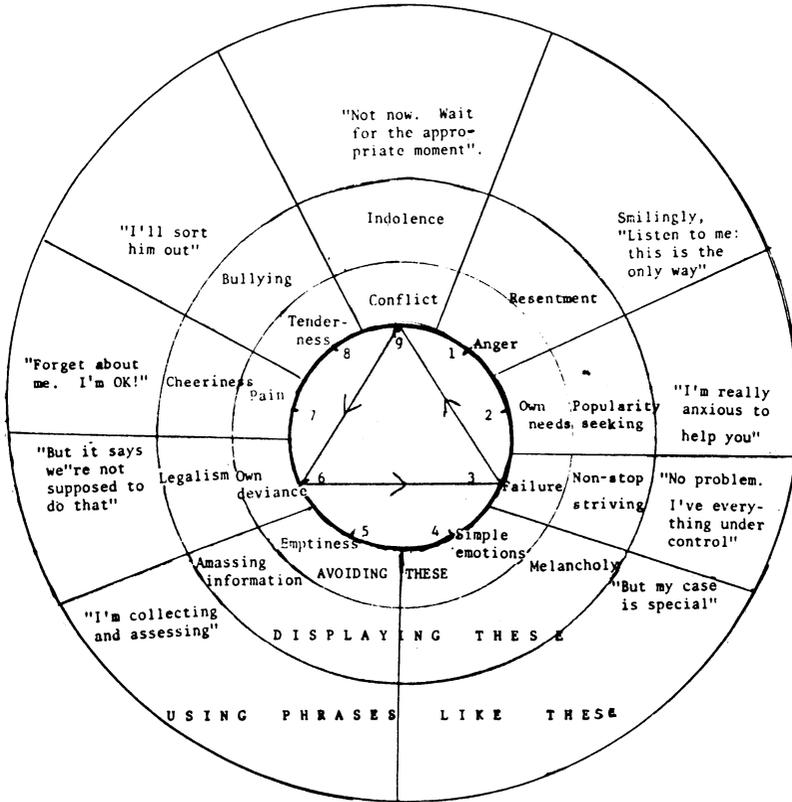
It was 1983 before I heard of it from a friend who recommended it. So in 1984 during July I participated in a 10-day course/ workshop/ retreat on the Enneagram in Milltown Park. I found it very helpful in understanding myself and others and in generating more compassion for all of us. Another effect was to relativise saints or outstanding people who tend to be idolised. God alone transcends.

Imperfection is the hallmark of all of us. We quickly came to admit this to ourselves and to each other. Like chatty patients in an accident ward we were soon ready to allow others see our woundedness, which we had previously been hiding from ourselves. The spirit of compassion was as much in evidence as, or perhaps more than, in a charismatic retreat. And no one was scoring points over anyone else. Let me share a few thoughts with you.

I am writing this article with three aims in mind: to whet other people's appetites for doing this kind of course; to carry out some helpful reflexions on the inner dynamics of the mind of St Vincent; to promote better mutual understanding and respect of individuals in the Vincentian families.

One of the dangers of delving into the Enneagram, or its relatives the Myers Briggs or the Kiersey Temperament Sorter, is that enthusiasts can cause a lot of annoyance by classifying others under sets of letters or numbers. Some of the nuns at the Enneagram course had been told prior to coming "You'll find you are a Six". So other members of the community may have felt there was an in-group in their midst, sitting in judgement on them, summing them up, belittling the unique individual

A helpful energy map



My illustration of The Enneagram.

mystery of their God-given being. Let's be careful, then, when we look at the following diagram, not to go jumping to conclusions about anyone other than perhaps ourselves.

The word Enneagram means in Greek "Nine Points". A more helpful phrase would be "Energy Map". The (inner) circle represents the free flow of energy from God into the activity of our lives. Around the circumference are plotted nine points where resistance to energy-flow tends to take place. Perhaps they are like jumps in a steeplechase: for each jockey there is one particular jump which worries him more than the other jumps, although all the jumps are hazards. Each of us participating in the course faced the task of discovering "Which is my really difficult jump?" Or, in the language we soon found ourselves using, "Which is my fix, my fixation?" It might not be the one I think at first sight, because a lot of repression and suppression tends to obscure the real problem. (Here, of course, the jockey analogy limps; horsemen have a conscious knowledge of their toughest jump).

Jesus's principle of "The truth will make you free" is of particular relevance here. One participant confided: "I spent two hours resisting and saying I wasn't a Two; but when I began to admit the truth I felt freer". Many of us experienced the same. We prayed for enlightenment and acceptance and when this was gifted to us we detected a sense of relief and trust.

The diagram is much simpler than it appears at first sight. In the outermost band are phrases which are typical of the jump, or number, or fix with which they are aligned. For example, a person who constantly finds himself saying "Forget about me, I'm OK" would be advised to ask himself if he is a Seven. His outward cheeriness (middle band) hides the fact that, deep down, he is avoiding pain (inner band). The inner band indicates the basic reality which is being unconsciously avoided. This avoidance is covered up by what is charted in the middle band.

Seeking to locate Monsieur Vincent

Where would Vincent de Paul have located himself on the Enneagram?

But first, a word on the legitimacy of such an enquiry. In no way am I challenging the centrality of faith and prayer in the saint's life. But neither are we to lose sight of the fundamental principle that grace builds on nature. Even when my life is speaking God's language, my basic native accent, which is personal to myself, will still be detectable. Monsieur Vincent's life spoke God's language but beneath this we can still, so to speak, pick out his own personal speech-pattern. We do this

when we are trying to identify the inner dynamics of his psyche which was co-operating with grace.

Another metaphor is helpful here. When a person tries to locate himself on the Enneagram it is a bit like going into a shop and trying on ready-made suits. A suit in this case will consist of trousers and jacket. Often a waistcoat will be included. And sometimes also co-ordinates like a shirt and matching tie and handkerchief. In other words, each fix may comprise several aspects. One or two of these may fit the particular individual but others may not. He then has to ask himself: "Is this really *me*? Do these garments match my personality? Or should I try some others?"

So, let Vincent try on the Eight. When he recalled the fiery way in which he had pursued the miscreant who had absconded with his legacy Vincent might have seen something of the Eight in the young Fr de Paul muttering "I'll get that guy" and doing a Clint Eastwood after him. The Gascon's frequent references to his own grumpy, irritable ways which cost him so much effort to correct would also have been evidence suggesting his being an Eight. Yes, some of the Eight ensemble would have fitted Vincent. But not the complete suit. Let him try on another.

Would he perhaps have seen himself as a Five? All those letters he wrote to his mother in the early days of his priesthood show him grasping at, striving to lay hold on, a benefice which would bring security to himself and his mother; leading to honourable retirement. Yes, but later in life he was anything but a money-grasper. Rather did he let it flow through his hands freely. So his earlier efforts may simply display a somewhat normal, culturally determined amount of ambition in a young priest.

Vincent the achiever

Vincent's sustained endeavours to lay hold on a benefice clue us in to noticing the pursuit of success which ran through all the rest of his life. Grace did not play a large part in his benefice-hunting or his thieft-hunting! Later, however, the basic drive continued in a more and more graced way. Our founder displayed an unswerving determination to have the CM and the DC set up in the precise way he wanted. Francis de Sales had been unsuccessful in getting the Visitation nuns to be allowed to do visitation. Vincent de Paul was mightily resolved to succeed in putting the Daughters out on to the streets and into the homes and hospitals where the poor could be served. And succeed he did.

Yes, Fr de Paul was an achiever. So, if suits Eight and Five do not fit him too well, he should try on the One, the Two and the Three. All

of these could be called executive suits: they are achiever's suits. At an Enneagram course Vincent would certainly have found himself saying: "I'm sure I must be a One, Two or a Three. Let me try on a One".

The One is an over-perfectionist. He looks out on the world, experiences unacknowledged anger at the imperfection of the world and, with feelings of resentment tries to set it all right according to his own very high standards. Does that apply to Vincent? Well, if it does, why did he not accept the offer of the St Lazare property without such prolonged misgivings? A perfectionist would surely have seen the vast demesne as clearly fitting the needs of his growing community. Ones tend to go for the best without much hesitation. Then later Vincent was to keep urging the Visitation nuns not to purchase the too grandiose building in Paris which they subsequently bought: not really a One's approach. Without being dogmatic in our denial, let's suggest his trying another garment.

That Vincent is not a Two is easier to see than that he is not a One. The Two is always striving to win favour by rendering services. True, Vincent did, as Twos tend to do, burn himself out working for others. But it would be hard to argue that he was motivated unconsciously by an effort to win approval. That just doesn't fit. When he humbled himself before the community the Founder wasn't doing it so as to manipulate others into affirming him: "Oh, Monsieur Vincent, you're not miserable; you're fantastic!"

Vincent's efficiency

A Three, then, is that what he is? The great striving of the Three is easily confused with that of the One. But the root cause of the striving is different. Avoidance of his own anger, in the case of the One. Avoidance of failure, in the case of the Three. Over-efficiency is a compulsion of the Three. How does Fr de Paul score on this?

As an organiser Vincent was extremely efficient. A striking fact about Buzet is that it is far more than commuter distance from Toulouse, yet the young de Paul kept his little school thriving there while he studied theology at Toulouse. Quite a remarkable achievement. A sort of *actio in distans!* No wonder M. de Comet had been so impressed. Vincent was coming across as an enthusiastic, clear-headed teacher, business-like about curriculum and schemes of work, about overall organisation and attention to practical details. Even without his considerable personal charm (Vincent's dash of the Seven) this would have made him a most successful head teacher.

The thief-catching in Marseilles was an off-the-cuff operation which was also stamped with efficiency.

Efficiency of a more tactful kind would have been essential for the special diplomatic mission which Abelly says was entrusted to the young priest by the French Ambassador to the Holy See: a secret mission to Henri IV. Even if there is not enough evidence to prove the historicity of this enterprise, Abelly clearly sees Vincent as a person capable of carrying it out efficiently.

All this was early in St Vincent's life. No need to go into the other endeavours throughout his life to prove that his efficiency didn't decline. Vincent, I suspect, became almost aghast at his own efficiency. All that breast-beating, which I used find so hard to interpret, my intuition now tells me that maybe it was a sort of defence mechanism for someone who was scared of his own over-efficiency.

My interpretation

Here's how I see it. In his early days Vincent displayed great efficiency. God then tried to teach him, through various set-backs, that he is Lord and Master of every part of the life of even the most successful achiever. A lesson we don't readily learn, but Vincent did. Perhaps his greatest achievement was that he did learn this lesson so successfully. His whole life now became an effort to clear the system of mere self-energy and allow God-energy to flow through his being and his activity. As Fr Jozef Kapusciak demonstrates in his (unpublished) 1982 doctoral thesis, Vincent looked on prayer as a means of discovering the will of God and acquiring the energy to carry it out. The result was that the saint was no longer operating out of a compulsive adherence to his fix, i.e., over-efficiency rather than face the spectre of failure. He was like someone who has switched over from a faulty mini-generator and hooked up on a reliable national grid. Or, using another image, he had now moved into over-drive, less costly in effort, more powerful in effect.

The surge of power which he experienced became frightening. So much divine drive was coursing through his life that Vincent could see success springing out of almost everything he did. Yes, even without planning it, he was successful; neither M. Portail nor himself could believe their eyes! Off-the-cuff undertakings, also, like when he broke his journey at Macon and resolved the problem of beggars which had checkmated all others. Vincent, I would argue, must at times have been so conscious of this power flowing through him that he found it almost sweeping him off his feet. Rather like a camper whose tent is being sucked up into the air by a whirlwind will grasp frantically for something solidly earthed, Vincent grabbed the humus of humility in an

endeavour to anchor his Gascon peasant self to the element which was always his proper domain.

They were listening with the greatest of attention when he suddenly stopped and said: "Always talking about myself, what a shame! Pray forgive me; I am nothing but a wretched man, full of pride and haughtiness". At the end of the journey he knelt before his confrères who were edified by his wonderful humility (Coste-Leonard: *Life and Labours*, III, p. 294).

That's but one example; it and all similar examples make sense to me only when I interpret Vincent's life in the way I have done above. "We're only earthenware jars that hold this treasure, to make it clear that such overwhelming power comes from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7; cf. also ff.). Like Paul, Vincent was existentially experiencing this truth. God gave Paul a sting in the flesh to keep him humble. Vincent applied many a sting to his own flesh to keep himself grounded in humility, bonded to the reality principle. Instinct told him he had to.

There's always a price to be paid for success. Name your favourite breath-taking performer, Olympic or otherwise, and then check out the counter-balancing mental and physical discipline which is the flip-side of such achievement. Our saint's success had to have humility on its reverse side. An artist would call it the negative dimension of his painting. In Enneagram language, the Three was no longer afraid of failure; he almost sought it to counterbalance his success.

Neither mathematics nor strict logic can have the final word in deciding a person's position on the Enneagram any more than they can determine what clothes suit me best. Intuition or feeling has to play the decisive role. But in any case I see no great urgency in being definitive. There is considerable danger of violating the mystery of an incommunicable, undefinable self if we seek to pin him down like a butterfly. Sufficient benefit derives from the activity involved in the investigation itself. People can come away from an Enneagram course having derived immense benefit while still not being able to know for sure their exact location(s) on the circle.

Concluding points

However, it does seem clear to me that St Vincent's main base is Three. We have touched on his possible links (not too important) with the Eight and the Five, and (even less important) with the One. More significant are his links with the Nine and the Six.

Notice on the diagram that the triangle within the circle links 3, 6 and 9. The arrows on the straight lines indicate the wrong direction which compulsions tend to drive a person. On the other hand, someone who is freeing himself from the compulsions will be travelling contrary to the arrows. This happened with Vincent de Paul. A quick word about this.

If Vincent early on had secured a good benefice and gone into honorable retirement with his mother, then he would have been acting like Nine. Probably there was some Nine-compulsion there at the start; he did seem to want to “slacken off”. But a Nine which moves towards the Three, against the arrow, is going in the right direction and is likely to gather a lot of momentum. Which was true of Vincent.

The Three who runs counter to the arrow and towards the Six is going to show real, true loyalty and not just legalism. Vincent’s loyalty to the teachings of Christ (e.g. his fight against Jansenism, his ceaseless endeavours to see the Church reformed) was outstanding. He respected Church laws but was not mesmerised by them into legalism. He even struggled to have laws bent to accommodate the two congregations he founded.

This marvellously unique human being, Vincent de Paul, could then be related to the Enneagram as a Three who is moving away from the Nine and towards the Six under the influence of divine grace.

Forum

THE FIRST YEAR OF PRIESTHOOD — A REVIEW

On 28th February 1985, at about a quarter to eight, I stood in front of a congregation and gave my first Mission Sermon. I was petrified. I had worked for hours writing out my text, rewriting it and finally typing the final draft. It could have been given by heart were it not for the fact that I needed the support of pages before me in order to speak at all! I began, and as word followed word, I started to relax. Suddenly the realisation dawned that there was not enough material, I would be finished almost as soon as I started. From somewhere inside butterflies started a flight of ever-increasing frenzy. Just at that moment when I felt that it was all going to be too much they settled down again and I finished my few words without difficulty. Afterwards the kind words of my confrères, as well as their comments, helped me to look at my sermon again, modify it and present it the next time with more confidence.

That incident is typical of my first year of priesthood. Every day there were new things to do about which I had doubts and fears. The presence of a supportive community made it possible for me to face those fears, to make mistakes and to grow in confidence through the experience. For that support I remain truly grateful.

The first year of priesthood is very important. As the newly-ordained priest leaves the seminary behind he has hopes and ideals about the type of priest he would like to be. These aspirations are usually exaggerated and when faced with reality there is always the possibility of becoming disillusioned. Usually he is working very hard and, as each of the ideals about prayers and personal lifestyle are abandoned one by one, there is not time to do anything more than wring his hands and say "What has gone wrong?" One then begins to re-negotiate those ideals in the light of experience. This process is painful but must be done, not with a cold pragmatism but with faith in God whose love is prior to even the poorest efforts.

Perhaps the most difficult adjustment I found was to the differing perceptions which people had of me as a priest. In theology I had encountered a model of priestly ministry which was largely de-clerical-

ised. As a priest I found that although many people profess to dislike the old clericalism, by their expectations and attitudes they endorse it quite strongly. I was amazed at the unacknowledged, but perceptible, shift in attitude towards me among some friends and acquaintances. I was suddenly an ear to all sorts of intimacies which the day before would never have been shared. Problems were brought to me and words of wisdom expected in ways which were not demanded before. As a priest I was assumed to profess certain attitudes which I had never stated. Almost immediately people began to relate to a piece of white plastic, when I was hardly used to it myself. The temptation to respond in kind I found very difficult. It's nice to solve peoples' problems for them, even if it would be better to help them solve their difficulties themselves. It's easier to have an answer to every question than to admit that one just does not know. It's nice to be nice and for every one person that does not like being patronised, there are two who do. It is like being carried to a pedestal and told to stand on it, whether you like it or not. I found that refusing to do so can leave one's life dominated by that pedestal, just as much as if one were standing on it. Once in a school retreat I experienced something which gave me hope. One girl at the opening of the retreat said she had no faith. At the closing she confided that she was surprised at how much faith she had and decided to go to Mass again. None of the retreat team had mentioned Mass attendance. It was her response to a newly-discovered belief in God. As a priest I had a role to play in that discovery, but it was not dominant, it was supportive but not intrusive. Would that all encounters had been the same. This year has been a time of coming to terms with Joseph Loftus — priest. On the one hand, trying to avoid being lost behind a clerical collar, and on the other trying to avoid asserting myself, to the detriment of my priestly ministry.

A very positive part of my first year of ministry has been the way in which people have allowed me into their lives. They allowed me access to painful memories with a confidence born of faith. It would be impossible to count the number of times in the last year when I have been humbled by the courage of different people. Behind the closed doors of young and old there were stories of faith, of courage and of sanctity. They came to me, not because a priest was a better person than they were and could solve everything, or because Joseph Loftus was such a wonderful person, but because they saw one with whom, by the grace of God, it was appropriate to share their sins and receive the good news of forgiveness. At first I found it difficult to accept what many of them had to say. They were often talking about subjects which had been only

text-book cases to me. At first I was rather frightened at this, lest I give them wrong advice, but slowly I began to realise that it was reconciliation they were looking for, advice could be had elsewhere. Their faith in the sacrament of reconciliation enriched my faith in my ministry of reconciler and gave me confidence to act in Christ's name for them. I discovered, in the sacrament of reconciliation, that sinner meets sinner and both are renewed in the process.

An important aspect of my first year of priesthood was that of being a missionary. In that work I found St Vincent came alive for me as a brother and a guide, not just as our founder. His directions to the missionaries have more urgency when read on the eve of a mission than in the quietness of a seminary. His concern for the poor country people has a new immediacy when one is going to a small parish in Donegal. I found St Vincent came alive for me in the confrères with whom I worked. My year's apprenticeship was one of learning the Vincentian Charism of gentleness. I studied under masters. Their preaching, the way they were with people and in the way they confronted any absence of that gentleness in me was proof that St Vincent's spirit is alive today. I consider it a great honour to have been a missionary even for a short time, and I am grateful for having been given the opportunity.

Our mission statement reminds us that we live in community to more effectively follow Christ. I discovered such a community in All Hallows. In the first year of priesthood there are many moments of uncertainty. I found in All Hallows a community which encouraged and supported me always. As one starts out every mistake can seem catastrophic, every undertaking vital. By their encouragement I learnt the error of the former and by their gentle humour the self-centredness of the latter. One's first experiences of community after ordination are special; at All Hallows mine were happy as well.

My first year of the priesthood is full of treasured memories. They are memories of Christ discovered in new ways. In the mass, in the sacrament of reconciliation, in the community and in the lives of many different people. Those memories are very important to me as they are foundations and first course of my life as a priest. It is on them that I must build if I am to be another unprofitable servant bringing the good news to the poor.

Joseph Loftus

YOUTH EVANGELISATION

Dear Mum and Dad,

Do you think we could break down the barrier we have erected between us over the dark years? My short stay at Damascus House has enlightened me in the fact that there is a wall between us. Together we can knock it down. My writing to you may sound a bit forward but I think that a positive attitude is the only way. I am doing this because I love you and I truly want to love you more, and our relationship to come alive.

Your son, X

This letter was written by a seventeen year old young man on a residential retreat here at Damascus House. It is one of many. Some very moving, loving, and some heart-rending. All these letters are read out to the group, with names withheld. The effect is a sharing of what is very important in the young people's lives, their relationships.

The days when a school retreat meant a few talks and prayers are long gone. Even beginning with the word "God" is almost a guarantee of a huge switch-off among young people. Our programmes for teenagers and young adults involve a whole range of communication. They make use of role-play, anonymous sharing through writing, collage-building, games, videos and films, as well as structured group discussions. It is usually hard work, not just for the team but for the participants as well. The aim is "to scratch the young people where they itch". This means making them aware of their identity and their relationships, and then on to their relationship with Jesus and their Church. Most of the young people leave having had a good experience, and some even visit afterwards with their parents. Young people often feel that they are preached at, about a God who tells them how they should behave themselves but whom they have never met. By focusing on what is important to them, and relating that to Jesus and his Church, they may have a religious experience, i.e. a feeling of the subtle presence of God in their lives. Even if it is only a good experience in a religious setting it has the effect of making what is preached somewhat more relevant to them.

One cannot work with young people without feeling a grave sadness for them. Christmas Day 1985 was the first anniversary of the death of Caroline, aged seventeen. Two weeks before her death she was here for a day retreat. On Christmas Day 1984 she died from an overdose of sleeping tablets. No one suspected how she felt, at home or at school. In a discussion with twelve fifteen-year old very modern and very trendy

young people I discovered that three of them had attempted suicide. Many of the young people I have met in Britain and Ireland suffer from (1) living in a context of family erosion and survival, (2) a breakdown of authority, and moral ambiguity, (3) career confusion, i.e. Will I get a job? (4) widespread abuse of drugs and alcohol, (5) future gloom because of the nuclear threat, and (6) the cheapening of life and loss of human dignity.

A lot of the young people who come here to Damascus House have undiscovered faith, or no faith at all. Many have divorced parents and little Church practice at home. In Ireland I have found more faith, generally, among young people, but also a growing indifference to organised religion. Whereas in England young people would identify with the name of their parish (since Catholics are a minority), I find little identification with the parish in Ireland, especially in Dublin.

Another sadness I feel is that we send young people from here, having had a good experience of Church, back to their school communities or parish communities, which are communities in name only. A retreat is part of a process of evangelisation; it assumes a caring community which is nurturing and enabling young people to grow. The reality often is that young people are slotted into parish activities with the occasional "Catholic" disco. Schools may be over-crowded and under pressure to achieve results; many do not have even a school counsellor. The school retreat is often a handy way of salving the conscience of the Headmaster. An isolated school retreat, or "Catholic" discos, do little for the process of evangelisation.

In the summer of 1985 I studied youth evangelisation in Chicago. The fundamentalist Baptist churches have worked out a total plan of evangelisation of young people. They have a club to which young people are invited and welcomed by their peers whom they meet at school and work. There are five stages in the process.

Stage 1 is the fun-seeker who enjoys the activities. Among these are peer ministers who have had an experience of conversion themselves. They seek out the curious and the spiritually sensitive and bring them together, which is then Stage 2. They lead the young people to accept Jesus as their saviour by allowing them to express their fears, hurts and aspirations, and preach Jesus as the one who answers all their needs. The sense of belonging and community is very impressive. This is the point of conversion and many young people do have a powerful religious experience at this time. Stage 3 is when they then attend bible study, through which they are led to discipleship, Stage 4. Here they are committed to growing in the faith through regular attendance, small group

sharing, and developing an attitude of service in the community. They are then commissioned as workers, Stage 5, to expand Christ's work by contacting, leading and sponsoring other young people. Movement through the stages is at the speed of the individual. Some drop out but many do not. A danger is that some young people who do drop out feel that they have tried religion, and do not want to hear about it again. It is significant that almost half the young "converts" in one church were baptised Catholics.

Eight parishes in Chicago have embarked since September 1985 on a joint programme of youth evangelisation, based loosely on the RCIA. Great emphasis is laid on youth contacting youth, i.e. peer ministry. In one parish where a similar programme is already being used over a thousand young people are involved. The programme has an organic structure: small cells which sub-divide as the group grows larger and more committed. In truly American fashion each young person receives a phone-call from "the caring community" once a month.

Programmes may look better on paper than in practice. However, if we are to bring the Good News to young people some programme which involves them and caters for their need for identity and relationship in an insecure world must be attempted. To assume that they will absorb the Faith in the traditional way (the family, backed up by the school) will be to ignore the changes in our society which affect young people and to ignore their needs.

I do enjoy working with young people. They are much criticised. I have found that when they open up they are very generous, warm-hearted and forgiving. I have found that they may be less prejudiced than their supposedly more enlightened elders. An MP recently criticised pop stars for leading young people astray through drink, drugs and sexy music. I wonder why did not see the irony in the fact that while his government does a brisk trade in arms exports to the third world these same pop stars are selling records to feed the third world.

Reggie Deaton

THE “BEATHA AOIBHINN” OF A SCHOLAR IN PARIS

The Irish College

My room in the Irish College looks out on a court-yard with trees and a small fountain. I often think of Fr Pat Travers, whom a local lady remembers as having supplied chickens and tomatoes from this yard to the hungry ration-carded Parisians during his lonely occupancy of the College in the war years. I haven't checked the accuracy of the memory with Fr Pat but, accurate or otherwise, it symbolises the affection for him of ageing residents of the rue des Irlandais and the rue Lhomond. I think of all the Irish students who walked around the ambulatory which still bears the names of the dioceses of Ireland. I think of Patrick Boyle, John Oakey, Kevin Cronin, James C. Sheil, James Cahalan, Tommy Fagan. The College is now a seminary for Polich students but it remains very much the College des Irlandais, and I gather that in coming years it will become increasingly a cultural centre for Irish students, and for Irish residents in Paris of whom there are, in the estimation of the Irish Embassy, and astonishing six thousand.

The College is in the centre of the Latin Quarter, five minutes walk from the Sorbonne, ten from Notre Dame and twenty from the Institut Catholique where I am studying. St Vincent and St Louise live on hereabouts — in the church of St Etienne on the Mont Sainte Genevieve, in the rue Saint Jacques where Vincent lived for some time, in the site of the College des Bons Enfants now occupied by a Post Office on the rue Monge, and in the church of Saint Nicolas du Chardonnet where the early Daughters of Charity attended Mass; there is something very sad about the fact that the Daughters today are discouraged from visiting the church lest their presence be seen as a sign of approval for the Lefebvre movement. The present Irish College, dating from 1763, is the successor of an earlier establishment on the rue des Cannes, a few streets away, of which only the chapel now remains. Last year, as well as the Polish fathers and students, there were six Irish students resident in the College. This coming year, 1985-86, Fr Liam Swords takes over from Fr Kevin Kennedy as representative of the Irish bishops in the College, and with the new responsibility of chaplain to the Irish in Paris.

The Institut Catholique

I am studying for a Maitrise en Theologie. This is a two-year post-graduate course. My first year consisted of a two-hour weekly seminar in theological methodology, and six courses (each of one semester) in Christology, Theology of non-Christian Religions, Fundamental Moral

Philosophy, the Psychology of Lapsation from the Church, the Wisdom Literature of the Old Testament, and the Greek Milieu of the New Testament. This year I hope to concentrate on Christology and Mission for my thesis. All told there are some sixty students doing the Maitrise, most of them priests, and all, with a very few exceptions, French or from French-speaking countries. The approach to theology I found very “French”: very systematic and very analytical, everything done in sections and sub-sections. The only pastoral work I got involved in last year was a weekly stint in a night-shelter for *clochards*, and with the rising unemployment and the severe winter they had higher numbers than at any time since the post-war period. One of the very sad sights was the number of young men already on the way downwards towards a life on the streets of Paris — no work, no lodgings, no prospects, and rapidly becoming virtually unemployable. I had some contact with the Emmaus communities of the Abbe Pierre, who is still a legendary figure because of his imaginative approach to the problems of poverty and homelessness. This year the French bishops made the headlines on the Press and TV with their pastoral letter on “The New Poor” — an analysis of the social and economic structures which doom thousands of people to a life of misery that gets inexorably worse because of the inadequacy of the existing social services to cope with the current situation. All of this created something of a backdrop to my own studies and reflection, but in general I stuck to the books! Perhaps the most uncomfortable and disturbing part of all this was the fact that every evening as I went home to my warm room I passed, in the space of a mile, anything up to ten people, including one woman, sleeping out on the street over Metro air vents where they could get some warmth.

Why Paris?

Many people have asked me why I chose Paris. My choice was influenced by three main considerations: I thought that in Paris there would be a lot of thinking on questions of evangelisation and mission; secondly, I discovered that the Fondations Irlandaises would give me a scholarship of about £1,400 sterling; finally, it is the city of St Vincent, and also a pretty nice place in which to suffer! Costs for a student are surprisingly cheap, and I trust that the Provincial Bursar is funding a holiday for me in the Bahamas out of all the money I’m saving the Province! I have to admit that I have found my first year pretty tough in several ways, but in particular I have found the French approach to theology somehow disconcerting. An extraordinary amount of thinking seems to be done against the background of the Enlightenment, Nietzsche, Freud and

the *Monde Ouvrier* — the Marxist proletariat. While at first sight this could seem fairly relevant, I personally find it un-connected with the life of the Church. When I discussed this problem with my director of studies he acknowledged that the *mode française* is highly intellectual, almost abstract. He told me always to remember that the French, since Descartes, are radical in thought and conservative in action.

In reality the Church, as far as I can see, exists in a sort of vacuum. There are some very good things happening, and nowhere that I've been in England or Ireland have I experienced liturgies like those of St Severin, St Merry or St Gervais. But in spite of the good things my impression is that the radical-in-thought/conservative-in-action French Church is very confused and divided, and given the French tendency to aloofness and a certain cultural intransigence, the future does not look bright. One is reminded of St Vincent's warnings about the Church shifting away from Europe unless churchmen faced the problems with faith and energy.

Perhaps, though, there is a certain *via negativa* element in all this. What *started* in France at the time of the Enlightenment and the Revolution *started* in Great Britain more particularly after World War I, and *started* in Ireland in the 1960s, namely a popular rejection of the Church as an influence in society. As an Irishman I find the position of the Church in France depressing. But by that very fact I am challenged to look more anxiously at what the Church is, or is not, doing in the UK and Ireland; I am struck by the increasing gap between Church talk and ordinary life, and I find myself asking more acutely than ever before: "What are we supposed to be doing, and how are we supposed to do it? Are we going to be increasingly a religious minority, and will our stock-in-trade be what has somewhat cynically been described as Christian Entertainment?" I am sharply conscious that although I myself have lived for six years in the UK and been a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I have never given any serious thought to what is, or would be, involved in making Christ present as the Seed of the Kingdom in areas of high Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or West Indian population, areas of poverty and high unemployment, or among those who reject God and religion. It seems to me that unless we ask these questions now, and try to answer them, then it is all too likely that before very long we will have lost whatever little credibility we have and retire to the status of shrine-keepers and maintainers of a bygone age. St Vincent gave a warning which is being realised in France three hundred years later. I believe that there are enormous unanswered, and even unasked, questions facing our Province. I hope that the Mission Statement of our 1985

Provincial Assembly may be the beginning of a new quest to seek and serve Jesus Christ and his Kingdom in these islands.

Hopes

When people ask where I expect my studies to lead me I say that I hope to be in a better position than I have been heretofore to ask and answer, or at least think through with others, the kinds of question I've been asking above. For years now I have felt, with many others, a frustration with the models of parish mission we have been working with. There is a great sense of preaching to the converted, and above all of not even touching non-Catholics, be they Anglican, Methodist or non-Christian. It seems to me that the problems are not just to do with pastoral strategy, but with much more fundamental questions of Ecclesiology, Christology and what exactly is our message; (because, no matter what I've ever heard said, it is still by no means clear to me after four years teaching and ten years in retreat and mission work, what exactly we want people to hear, and what we want them to do. St Vincent was clear on *his* message: "do penance!"). Whether in Britain, with its multi-racial society and its religious tiredness, or in Ireland with its very young, very vulnerable population and its religious embarrassment, or in Nigeria with its growing cultural and religious problems, I believe we Vincentians ought to have a very clear and cogent statement of the Gospel that will communicate the power of the Holy Spirit. If, as a result of my two years in Paris, I can contribute some personal insight to the spiritual and theological ferment in the Province then I and, I hope, the Province will see my two years as a worthwhile investment. It struck me during the recent Provincial Assembly what an extraordinary abundance of talent, flair and sheer goodness we have in this little Vincentian Flock. It also struck me that we are beginning to get old and tired. I feel a stirring of fire in my belly (is it the re-kindling of what was burnt out, or an initial flame?) as I begin Year II of my study. I have a great sense of responsibility to all my confrères to use the time as best I can. I ask their prayers that I, and all of us, may *hear* and may *see* what the Spirit of God is saying to us and showing us, and that we may be *doers* of his word.

Paddy McCrohan

Miscellanea

AN ACCOUNT OF ST VINCENT'S WORK WRITTEN IN ENGLISH IN 1666

Pietas Parisiensis, the title-page of which is reproduced as the frontispiece of this issue, was written by Fr Miles Pinkney, using the nom-de-plume of "Thomas Carre". He was a convert, from Durham, who had studied in the English College in Douai and was ordained in 1625 at the age of 26. He was procurator in Douai until 1633 or 1634 when he went to live in Paris. He lived there until the publication of the book (and presumably afterwards as well) and died there in 1674. The book is 12mo size (approx. 7cm x 13cm) and has 252 pages. There is a seven-page dedicatory letter to "His much hon" friend W. D. Esquire" in the course of which he says: "You say in particular that you hav mett with so many loose and beastly cases among Catholike authours that you have much adoe to beleeve that holinesse is practised where so much licentiousnesse is taught". In the opening paragraph of his first article he indicates that the purpose of the book is to disprove this: "and to afford you full satisfaction I will make Paris appeare the short mappe of the vaste Catholike world, and by that small parte give the idea of the whole". Almost half the book deals with the work of St Vincent, up to page 123; the rest deals with other charitable activities in Paris, in the course of which there are two passing references to Vincent, one being the acknowledgement of the author that he has read Abelly's life of Vincent, which had been published two years previously, in 1664.

The first reference to Vincent comes, without any lead-up, on page 15 in a section on "the pietie of the priests":

So many holy conferences, a blessed and common practice among the primitive fathers of the wilderness (*ut in collationibus* PP.) renewd in Paris among the clergie-men by good Mr Vincents Zeal, which they use as well in way of preservative against the badd ayre of the world, to which they are still exposed by the necessitie of their function, as a most effectuall meanes to perfect them in their holy profession.

Pinkney gives no indication as to whether he himself had ever attended these Tuesday Conferences, nor does he ever say whether he

met Vincent. Most of what he writes is based on Abelly's book. On the other hand, some of his comments are clearly based on personal experience. Having referred to the Sunday sermons in the churches of the various religious orders in Paris he continues:

But the Pastours zeale for the instruction, and inflammation of the peoples hartes stayes not here, but further, by himselfe or his order, there are most eloquent sermons made all the dayes of Advent and lent, save saterday, by the same preachers, who are followed with a wonderous concourse of Auditours, and a noe lesse admirably quiet attention of so great a multitude, without the least hemming or spitting, save onely when the preacher makes his pawses to give way to necessitie in that kind.

His remarks on preaching lead him on to the ordination retreats:

To this effect, a poore secular priest, but a great servant of God, (whose admirable workes of charitie have made him famous all the world over, as here belowe we shall see) suggested an effectuall meanes to the most illustrious and most Reverend Archebishope of Paris, then being (to witt above 30. yeares agoe) who highly approved and confirmed it; and ordered it to be observed by all that should pretend for holy orders at his hands: and it is still continued by like approbation, by his commande, who doth now illustrate the said sea.

That all that should take holy orders, should be obliged to make a spiritual retreat at S. Lazares, where he governed, for the space of 10. days: that none should rashly intrude themselves into so dreadful a ministrie, nor take the honour to himselfe, unlesse called as Aaron.

He then gives the subjects of the morning and evening "intertaynements", giving a slightly abridged translation from Abelly.

Here is his account of the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission:

In the yeare of our Lord 1624, March the first, begun the happie establishment of the companie of the Congregation of the priests of the Mission, in the Colledge of *Bons enfans* conferred upon M. Vincent Paule, by the most illustrious Iohn Francis de Gondy Archbishope of Paris, to that purpose. To witt, his brother the

Generall of the Galeeres, and his most vertuous lady, being well acquainted what great thinges Mr Vincent had performed in divers of their owne Lordships, in that kind, for the good of their poore vassalls, and Gods glorie, they had longe conceived a pious desire to concurre ioyntly to be Founders of the said Mission, which they imparted to their brother the Archbishops, to make use of his power over Mr Vincents spirit (whom they knew to be as slowe in undertaking, as diligent and faithfull in performing what he once undertooke) to induce him to accept the charge. Which was done accordingly, and he wholie acquiesced to the Archbishops pleasure. Here upon was 40000. livres tournois, or 4000 pistolls putt downe by the most noble and pious founders in Mr Vincents hands, in readie money.

He touches on all the works which Vincent was involved in, sometimes giving a short account (from Abelly), sometimes just a passing reference with, perhaps, a brief comment; in connection with the foundlings he mentions “the unnaturall crueltie of naughtie women”.

Article XIV, “The institution of the sisters of the Charitie”, starts this way:

Mrs le Gras, sometyme wife to Mons. le Gras secretarie to Queene Margarite, now widdowe; Whose mayden name was Marillac of the familie of the most vertuous and famous Chance lour of that name. Who as she was of an extraction which promised much, so she was bredd in a schoole which taught more: to witt, in that of the most famous, eloquent and pious Camus Bishope of Bellay, who was knowne to have bene a great lover, and practiser of povertie, and might easily theach her what himselfe practised, he being her spiritual directour, till he delivered her up into Mr Vincents hands, where she was like to loose nothinge in point of her propension to serve the poore. This vertuous lady, was the person pitched upon by her present Directour as the prime instrument for the designed settlement. And certainly divine providence was as much in this choyce, as her undertakings were blessed with admirable successe. For she beinge wholly addicted to the service of the sicke, he trayned her up in that way, to fitt her for some greater worke for the future and made her make her first essayes in the villages of diverse Dioceses, where there were otherwise noe hospitalls to succour the poore and sicke.

Twenty-one years after the publication of the original in Paris an abridged version appeared in 1687 in Oxford, without the name of the editor, publisher or printer. It was combined with the abridgement of another work under the title of *Pietas Romana et Parisiensis*. The abridgement of Pinkney's work takes up 66 pages of the Oxford book and the remaining 113 are an abridgement of a work by Theodoras Amydenus; the pages are slightly larger than those of the original Paris edition. The re-bound copy in the library of Trinity College, Dublin, does not have the title on the spine; instead it has: POPERY, Pro. & Con. Vol XXXVIII.

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**A LETTER OF MALACHY O'CALLAGHAN,
7 NOVEMBER 1885**

Malachy O'Callaghan and Anthony Boyle disembarked from the *Liguria* in Sydney on 4 November 1885. They had made the journey from Europe in the company of Patrick Moran, archbishop of Sydney, now returning to Australia as a cardinal, at whose request they were beginning a Vincentian foundation in Sydney. In Malachy O'Callaghan's photograph album in the archives in St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, there are some photos which appear to have been taken on this voyage. Three days after landing in Sydney he wrote the following letter to the cardinal:

At Mrs Casey's, Wynyard Square
Nov 7 85

My dear Lord Cardinal,

Feeling to intrude on yr. Eminence's valuable time at this moment particularly, I am writing as to funds. I have only 8/- remaining tho' since our arrival we have in consequence refrained from extra expense and have not seen anything except Petersham. Your Emi.ce is aware that our Superior Gen. permitted us to come provided Yr. Emce. would defray the consequent expenses. Fr. Duff expected yr. Emce. would have handed us something for outfit and extra travelling to London etc. I had then to borrow £30

from my sister & £60 besides. A friend gave me £10 & another £5 for personal expenses.

The £105 is all expended except a few remaining shillings and then we have to pay our way here at the end of this week. I should not like to be too great a burthen on Yr. Emce.

Of what is past perhaps yr. Emce. may not think £60 or £70 too much to refund.

With profound respect
Yr. Eminence's
very humble sevt.
M. O'Callaghan

This letter is re-printed from the November 1985 issue of *The Vincentian*, the monthly bulletin of the Australian Province.

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CONFÈRES BORN IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

In the last two issues were printed lists of men born in Ireland who joined the Congregation before it was established in Ireland in 1839 and of men who joined outside Ireland after that date. Below is given a list of men born in England and Scotland. Some of these joined before 1839. Of those who joined after this date some were never members of the Irish Province. Of those who joined the Irish Province many, although born outside Ireland, were considered, and considered themselves, as Irish. Those still alive are excluded from the list.

NB: *Each entry is in the following order — Year of entry; Place of entry; Name; Diocese of origin; Remarks. The symbol *** indicates that they are documented in the archives of the Irish Province.*

(a) England

1744, Paris, SAVAGE, John (Brother), (Fletching, Sussex).
Died in St Lazare in 1785 aged 73.

1870, Blackrock, OWENS, William (Brother), Liverpool.
Left in 1875. He is not the Brother William Owens who died in Phibsboro in 1910.

1878, Philadelphia, NUGENT, James (Brother),
Hexham & Newcastle.
He died in Philadelphia in 1886.

1885, Paris, WATSON, Charles Edward, Westminster.
Born in 1857. Converted to Catholicism by Cardinal Manning.
Ordained for Westminster in 1880. Entered Congregation in Paris in
1885 and went to China soon afterwards. Took his vows in Peking in
1887. He later left the Congregation and entered the Dominicans. I have
heard it said, but not seen it documented, that he subsequently entered
the Carthusians.

1890, Blackrock, MULHOLLAND, Thomas, Liverpool. Left.

1897, Paris KELLY, John, Nottingham.
Ordained 1905. In Isleworth 1905-27. Then to Elsinore, Denmark,
where he died in 1947 aged 69.

1899, Paris, FLYNN, Francis, Leeds.
Ordained in 1906 and from that date until his death in 1952, aged 71, he
was in Elsinore, Denmark.

1901, Blackrock, BAGNALL, Charles, Shrewsbury.***

1901. Blackrock, RYAN, Richard, Liverpool. In 1920, in Australia,
he was considered for appointment as superior in Peking but pleaded
he was too old for it. The following year he was considered as a can-
didate for Provincial in succession to Joseph Walshe. In 1925 was
appointed Vice-Provincial of Australia but before taking up that office
was appointed bishop of Geraldton; died in 1956 as bishop of Sale.

1902. Blackrock, WHELAN, John (Brother), Liverpool.***

1915, Blackrock, DELANY, Henry, Liverpool.***

1918, Blackrock, HENNIN, Francis, Liverpool. Left.

1918. Blackrock, MEEHAN, William, Liverpool.***

1919. Blackrock, BURKE, Richard, Plymouth, Left.

1922, Blackrock, RODGERS, James, Liverpool.***

1924. Blackrock, DONOVAN, James, Leeds.***

1925. Blackrock, DEVLIN, Michael, Liverpool.***

1926. Blackrock, MILNER, James, Leeds.***

1927. Blackrock, JOHNSON, Cyril (Brother), Leeds. Left.

1930, Blackrock, JOHNSON, Harold (Brother), Leeds. Left.

1930, Paris, HORWOOD, John, Hexham & Newcastle.

Spent his life in Syria and Lebanon. Died in Fanar, Lebanon, in 1970 aged 62.

1930, Blackrock, McKAY, John, Leeds. Left.

1931, Blackrock, O'DEA, Vincent, Leeds.***

1939, Blackrock, PERKINS, Robert Towers, Westminster.

Ordained in 1946; later incardinated into diocese of Menevia, where he died in 1982.

(At present there are, as far as I can ascertain, six confrères of English birth in the Congregation).

(b) Scotland

1645, Paris, LUMSDEN, Thomas, Aberdeen.

He went to Scotland in 1653 and worked in the Lowlands and Highlands, and also in Orkney. He returned to Paris in 1663, to the Scots College, where he died in 1672.

1657, Paris, GORDON, Thomas (Brother), Aberdeen.

Apart from the record of his entry to the Congregation nothing is known of him.

1861, USA, BURNS, George (Brother), Edinburgh. Left in 1872.

1876, Paris, McVEIGH, John, Dunkeld.

Ordained in 1881 and went to China same year. Though never a member of the Irish Province he was in Lanark and Phibsboro in 1896-97. He went to USA and left the Congregation. He died in Chicago in 1906.

1882, Blackrock, McFARLANE, Michael (Brother), Glasgow.***

1902. Blackrock, DONNELLY, Michael (Brother), Edinburgh.***

1903. Blackrock, TAYLOR, James Bede, Glasgow.***

1903, Blackrock,McGLYNN, William, Glasgow.***

1914, Blackrock, SLAVEN, Thomas, Glasgow.***

1920, Blackrock, SHANNON, Gerard, Glasgow.***

1924, Blackrock, CARR, Cornelius. Left.

1926, Blackrock, McKAY, Patrick, Glasgow. Left.

1928, Blackrock, RICE, Thomas, Edinburgh.***

(There are no Scottish-born confrères in the Congregation at present, as far as I know).

(c) Jersey

1642, Paris, PATRIARCH, Solomon (Brother). Member of the 1646 mission to Ireland; brought back to France because of onset of mental illness.

(d) Three deceased members of the Irish Province were born outside the territory of the Province: Michael Brosnahan and Brother Frederick Peart were born in India and Joseph Lowe was born in Albany, New York.

TD

OBITUARY

Fr Michael O'Callaghan, C.M.

Fr Michael was ordained to the priesthood in the basilica of St John Lateran in Rome on 17 December 1927; he was then a student at the Angelicum University. There he pursued a course of study which culminated in the conferring of a doctorate in dogmatic theology. Having sat at the feet of Gamaliel — Père Garigou Lagrange OP — he returned to Ireland in 1929 and began his teaching career in St Joseph's, Blackrock. After three years he went to the Irish College, Paris, and continued his teaching there until the outbreak of war in 1939. After one year in pastoral work in St Vincent's, Sunday's Well, Cork, he resumed his teaching in St Joseph's, Blackrock, until 1949, and in St Kevin's, Glenart, in 1949-50. In that year he was appointed to All Hallows where he taught for sixteen years. Thus he had a long academic career. For about thirty-six years he assisted in the preparation of students for the priesthood. It was a work which he enjoyed. His cheerful manner and clear statement of the teaching of the Church and the opinions of various theologians were notable characteristics. His students, too, appreciated the soundness of his doctrine, his kindness and patience in class. Over the years they showed their esteem and affection by inviting him to their presbyteries in Ireland, England and the USA.

During his time in Paris he became interested in French theological and liturgical periodicals. In that way he became familiar with the theological and liturgical thinking on the continent before and after Vatican II. He kept up this interest till the end of his life, and used to look forward eagerly to the regular arrival of those periodicals to which he subscribed, especially the *Osservatore Romano*.

In parochial work in England in St Cedd's, Goodmayes, from 1967 to 1971 he was most attentive to the visitation of the sick and elderly. This was true also of his time as director of the Women's Sodality in Phibsboro, a post he held for fourteen years, 1971-85. During that time he made regular weekly visits to the Morning Star hostel of the Legion of Mary. Appreciation of his work in the Sodality was evident in the well-attended monthly meetings. When the time came for him to retire the members presented him with a colour television set.

In St Joseph's, Blackrock, he was active in the theatre and produced a number of plays. He regarded the ability to appear on stage and carry off a part as an extension of, and help towards, the work of preaching. In

doing this he perhaps remembered the exhortation of St Vincent, who encouraged the confrères to follow in the pulpit the simple but persuasive methods of acting then practised on the Paris stage. In all this Fr Michael brought the same energy and meticulous devotion to detail that characterised his methods in theology and sacred scripture. To ensure a more perfect final product he enlisted the services of the late Brian O'Higgins and Jack MacGowran with whom, as with many other professional actors and broadcasters, he was very friendly.

In January 1985 Fr Michael was invited by one of his former students to Miami, Florida. His stay there was short, as some of the symptoms of his fatal illness began to appear. His last days were spent in the Sacred Heart Home, Raheny, in the care of the Little Sisters of the Poor. He greatly appreciated their kindness and attention. He bore his illness with resignation and, perhaps, a little impatience "to be dissolved and be with Christ".

Pie Jesu Domine, dona ei requiem sempiternam.

Patrick J. Brady, C.M.

MICHAEL O'CALLAGHAN, C.M.

Born: Cork, 11 January 1904.

Entered the Congregation: 14 September 1921.

Final vows: 15 September 1923.

Ordained a priest in St John Lateran, Rome, by Archbishop Palica,
17 December 1927.

APPOINTMENTS

1927-1929 Casa Internazionale, Rome; theology studies.

1929-1932 St Joseph's, Blackrock.

1932-1939 Irish College, Paris.

1939-1940 St Vincent's, Cork.

1940-1949 St Joseph's, Blackrock.

1949-1950 St Kevin's, Glenart.

1950-1967 All Hallows. 1967-1971 St Cedd's, Goodmayes.

1971-1985 St Peter's, Phibsboro.

Died 2 October 1985.

