VOLUME 37, NUMBER 2

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In this issue

VOLUME 37, NUMBER 2

How Vincent de Paul Celebrated Mass

JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M.

Louise de Marillac—Ingenuity, Mission, and Mystique

BETTY ANN MCNEIL, D.C.

From Lay Apostles to Missionary Disciples: Father Thomas A. Judge, C.M., and the Future of Catholic Laity

WILLIAM L. PORTIER, PH.D.

Vincentian Formation in Africa for Missionary Preaching in the Footsteps of Saint Vincent de Paul

LINUS UMOREN, C.M.

About Vincentian Heritage

How Vincent de Paul Celebrated Mass

John E. Rybolt, C.M.

BIO

REV. JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., Ph.D., completed his seminary studies at the Vincentian seminary in Perryville, Missouri, and at De Andreis Seminary in Lemont, Illinois. He received a doctorate in biblical studies from Saint Louis University. He has taught in Vincentian seminaries in Saint Louis, Lemont, and Denver. He worked for the provincial of the Midwest Province from 1979 to 1981. He joined the board of trustees of DePaul University in 1981 and is currently a life trustee. He also served as a delegate from the Midwest Province to the international general assemblies of the Congregation in 1980, 1986, and 1998, and managed the archives of the province from 1980 to 1989. Reverend Rybolt also served as the director of the International Formation Center, a program for ongoing Vincentian education and formation in Paris, France. Currently, he is serving as a Vincentian Scholar-in-Residence at DePaul University. Since 1979 he has been involved in the Vincentian Studies Institute, which he headed from 1982 to 1991. His many publications have covered fields of interest in language, biblical studies, and history, particularly Vincentian history, including his most recent work *The Vincentians. A General History of the Congregation of the Mission,* 6 vols. (New City Press, 2009-2015).

Next Article

Table of Contents

I. Introduction

Many elements concerning the celebration of Mass were specific to France, along with numerous diocesan liturgies. This reality may explain M. Vincent's unease at the church in Saint-Germain-en-Laye where he encountered several varieties simultaneously: "Once I was at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where I noticed seven or eight priests who all said Mass differently; one did it one way, the other another way; the diversity was worthy of tears. *Or sus,* God be blessed that His Divine Goodness has been pleased to gradually remedy this great disorder!"[1] While each priest may have been following the usage of his own diocese, some must have been lax in observing the rubrics for Mass.

This study examines the complex liturgical realities in which the founder lived. Since there is limited information about his celebration of public Masses, it mainly presents what is known or presumed about his way of celebrating his daily private Masses. An extraordinary series of engravings, published in *Le Tableau de la Croix* in 1651,[2] are also shared which offer an important window on the celebration of Mass during the founder's lifetime. Whether its depictions agree completely with his celebration is uncertain, but it offers valuable indications for modern readers.

A. Diocesan usages of the Roman rite

The original rules (the "Primitive Rules") of the Congregation said nothing about the manner of celebrating the Mass. The Order of Day in that early document, no. 5, simply prescribed: "to celebrate or hear Holy Mass in turn."[3] By the time of the Madagascar mission, 1648, he had firm ideas about the use of the Roman Ritual for the sacraments,[4] and in the Common Rules, published only in 1658, the same silence is there about the Mass. However, he did decide about "the Roman rite," but only in connection with the Divine Office (10:5): "We should take the greatest care to pray the Divine Office properly. We pray it in the Roman rite and in common, in a middle tone of voice, even when on missions."

The phrase "Roman rite" should be understood not in contrast with the rites of the Eastern church, but rather with the various diocesan usages of the Roman rite then existing in France. The "Roman rite," as M. Vincent used it, referred more precisely, in fact, to the usage of the Roman Curia, whose liturgical books were becoming standard. In the original

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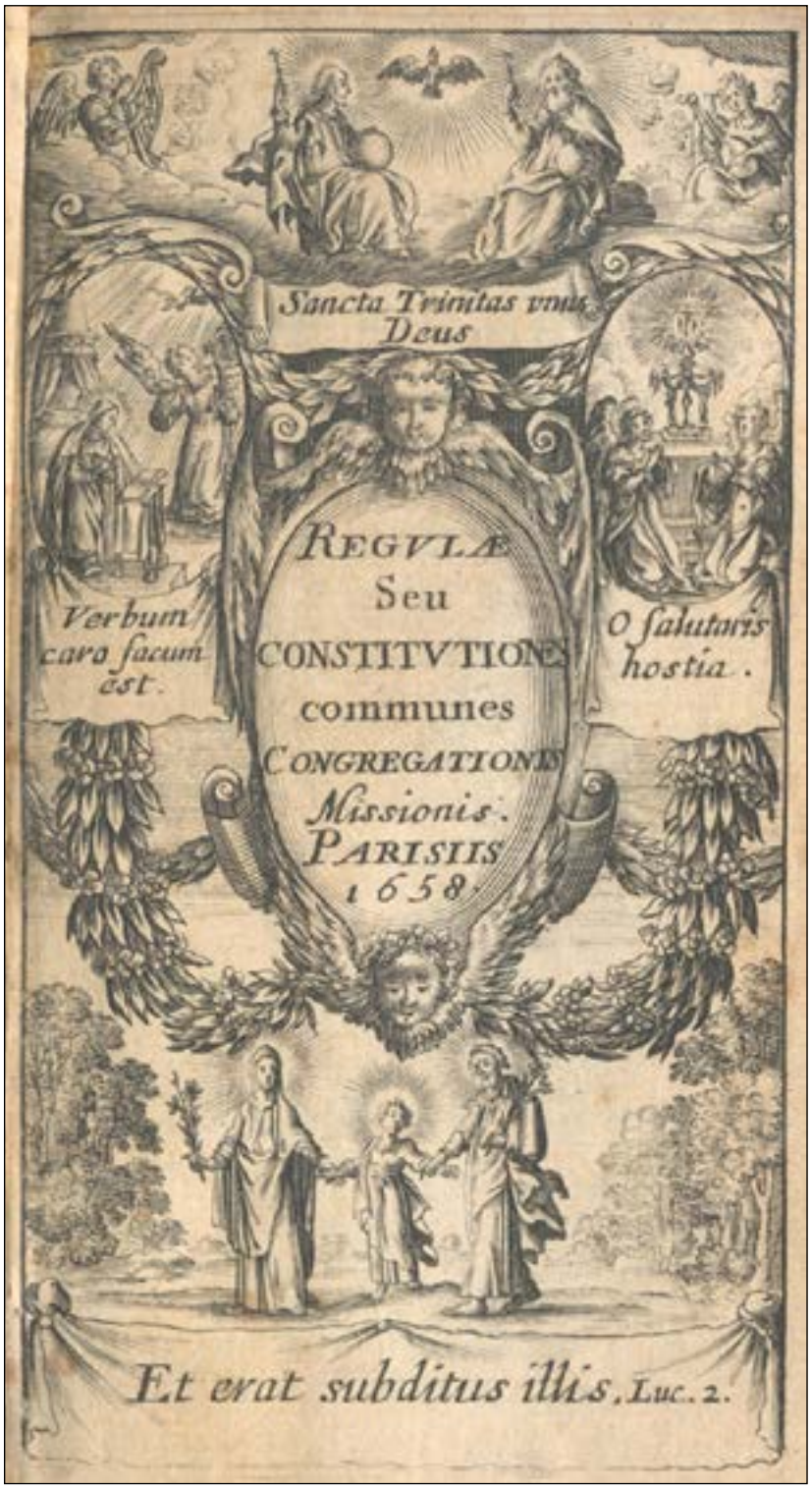
1 *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. Pierre Coste; trans. Jacqueline Kilar, et al. (New City Press: Brooklyn, NY, Hyde Park, NY, 1985–2014). Hereinafter referred to as *CCD*, available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/; conference 206, untitled, 23 May 1659, *CCD*, 12:212.

2 François Mazot, *Le Tableau de la croix representé dans les ceremonies de la Ste messe, ensemble le tresor de la devotion aux soufrances de Nte S[eigneur] J[ésus] C[rist le tout enrichi de belles figures* (Paris, 1651). André Dodin published an incomplete copy of the book, including only the engravings of the Mass: *Le Sacrifice de la Messe précédé du Mystère de Jésus par Pascal* (Paris, 1978). A second edition of Mazot's *Le Tableau,* published in 1653, includes the same materials but with significant variants in the engravings of the celebration of Mass.

3 See the author's "The Primitive Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission," *Vincentiana* 52:3 (May-June 2008): 228.

4 Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, trans. William Quinn, F.S.C. (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1993), bk. 2, chap. 1, sect. 9, part 1, 135. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/abelly_english/.



Title page of the Common Rules, 1658. Veneration of the Blessed Sacrament by angels, at top right, identified "O salutaris hostia" (O saving victim). One of the four devotional aspects of the Congregation of the Mission: Blessed Trinity, Incarnation, Eucharist, and the Holy Family.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

edition of the Common Rules in French, which he himself prepared, the text reads: *à l'usage de Rome* [according to Roman usage], but the Latin translation, done by another, has erroneously *ritu romano* [in the Roman rite].[5] Other Roman basilicas, such as the Lateran, continued to maintain their own texts. These celebrations of the Divine Office differed not in structure (psalms, hymns, readings, etc.), but in the details of the texts. Some had elegant hymns for the offices, while others had their own proper antiphons, responsorials, and Old Testament canticles.[6]

Despite the attention given by Saint-Lazare to the "Roman usage" or the "Roman

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5 *Regles ou Constitutiõs Communes de la Congregation de la Mission* (Paris, 1658): 84. Later French editions changed his text to "*rite de Rome.*" A contemporary work is Jean-Jacques Olier's *Explication des Ceremonies de la Grand' Messe de paroisse, selon l'usage romain* (Paris, 1687) (originally approved for publication in 1653).

6 In this regard, the copy of the Roman Breviary that belonged to the founder, and is now kept in the Musée vincentien in the Paris motherhouse, is Roman and not Parisian.

1. Approaching the altar: The priest approaches the altar. Jesus Christ goes to the garden of olives.

Note the large unadorned biretta, the short alb, the short trousers of the servers, and the angel lighting the altar candles.

Courtesy of the author

rite," this was confined to the Ritual of the sacraments, and the Divine Office, not to the Mass, as will be described below.

B. Rubrics in general

Brother Louis Robineau, a contemporary witness to how M. Vincent celebrated daily Mass, emphasized the founder's devotion and observance of rubrics. "Concerning Holy Mass, he said it very devoutly and pronounced it very distinctly, and he did all the other ceremonies so well and so respectfully that he inspired the devotion of everyone. He was neither too long or too short, rather longer than shorter; a good half hour sufficed for him."[7]

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7 Louis Robineau, *Remarques sur les actes et paroles de feu Monsieur Vincent de Paul notre très Honoré Père et Fondateur,* ed. André Dodin, C.M. (Paris, 1991); for English translation see John E. Rybolt, C.M., "Unpublished Documents, Part 1" of *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents* (2020), at https://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/3; A12, "Brother Louis Robineau, C.M., Notes concerning the Actions and Words of the late Monsieur Vincent de Paul, our Most Honored Father and Fonder," paragraphs 134, 218, pp. 1240, 1270–1271, referring to public liturgies in addition to his private Masses. This was repeated in Bossuet's testimony on Saint Vincent: "He knew the ceremonies of the Church very thoroughly and observed them perfectly," Amable Floquet, *Etudes sur la vie de Bossuet*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1855), 23; Floquet cited this testimony several times.

This comment has to be seen in the context of what he wrote to Urban VIII (1634) concerning the relationship between the former monks of Saint-Lazare and the Congregation of the Mission: "The priests of the Congregation … shall have the obligation … of celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass quietly so that they will not be delayed in their work of going to villages to instruct the people there."[8] This also reflects his conviction that the Mass was primarily the priest's prayer rather than that of a community, a common concern of the pre-Vatican II church. What is missing from the saint's reflections on the Eucharist is focus on the drama of the liturgy, celebrated almost on stage before an audience. As will be seen below, however, the 1651 engravings include these dramatic references on the upper level of each depiction. These were commonplace features in the baroque liturgy and said to be promoted by Pierre de Bérulle, the founder's one-time spiritual father.

Besides Vincent's attention to the ceremonies during his private Masses, his confreres noted that "the emotion and sighs that were very often heard are likewise signs of his zeal."[9] His ordinary daily celebration of Mass was also for him a time of private prayer for special intentions. This intense devotion led him, following the consecration, to genuflect and remain kneeling for at least brief moments in prayer,[10] as well as at the Memento of the living.

His attention to the Church's liturgy likewise brought him, as both Robineau and Abelly attested, to be vigilant about the details of the rubrics and correct his confreres: "Whenever there was a failure in this regard, he made his displeasure known.… He even corrected individuals, since he found it difficult to endure the mistakes that he saw being committed."[11] This same practice is evident in the rules for the internal seminary of 1652, concerning the master of ceremonies appointed from among the novices dealing with Mass and the divine office in particular.[12] He personally added a text to these rules instructing the seminary director to practice the ceremonies of Mass once a month with the priests who were making their novitiate, and every two weeks for the others on how to serve Mass.[13]

It is well known that M. Vincent admitted in later life that he had been ignorant in his

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8 Letter 178, "To Pope Urban VIII," [Between July and November 1634], *CCD,* 1:254.

9 Robineau, *Remarques,* see Rybolt, "Unpublished Documents, Part 1," A12, paragraphs 216, 218, pp. 127–128; see also paragraph 133, and the summary of a conference held in Toul, 21 November 1660, on M. Vincent's virtues, in Félix Contassot, "Les Lazaristes dans le Diocèse de Toul avant la Révolution (1635–1791)," typed text, Archives of the Mission (Paris 1970), 176.

10 Letter 1614, "To The Duchesse D'Aiguillon," 14 March 1653, *CCD,* 4:4651 cites in note 1 a text from Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, bk. 3, chap. 24, 296: "In the Mass I have just said, I have offered to the Lord your doubts, pains, and tears. Immediately after the consecration I threw myself at his feet, asking him to inspire me." It is unclear whether he did this actually kneeling or simply genuflecting.

11 Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 3, bk. 3, chap. 8, sect. 1, 74.

12 "Règles du Séminaire Interne Qui remontent à 1652," Avis pour l'office des Cérémonies, 71–73; ms. in the Archives of the Mission, Paris. For English, see Rybolt, "Unpublished Documents, Part 2" of Correspondence, Conferences, Documents, at https://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/2; A107e, "Rules of the Internal Seminary, 1652," pp. 1034–1035.

13 "Règles du Séminaire Interne Qui remontent à 1652," Avis pour l'office des Cérémonies, [46–47] 18°.

18. At the memento for the living: The priest prays for the living. Jesus Christ carries his cross.

The server (not the angel) lights the wall candle at the Memento. The towel is not visible.

Courtesy of the author

early career of the Church's music and felt ashamed that his parishioners in Clichy sang better and more correctly than he did.[14] This recollection must have helped him since, in his role as superior general, he took the proper performance of Church music and chant very seriously, both for his own confreres and for the ordinands at Saint-Lazare. However, he also remarked more than once that the rule about the celebration of the divine office had been neglected, for which he blamed himself.[15] His remarks at the repetition of prayer held on 2 November 1656, reveal both his earlier experience and his current concerns:

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14 Conference 213, "Praying The Divine Office," 26 September 1659, *CCD,* 12:275–276. He may also have referred to his lack of skill in singing: "The causes and *occasions* of this sad envy are for example, if I were to see that a person was skillful at what I am not … if he sang well and did so in front of me, who can't sing" (Conference 80, "Envy," [n.d.], *CCD,* 11:87).

15 See also Conference 213, "Praying The Divine Office," *CCD,* 12:269.

> M. Vincent strongly recommended to all the seminarians and students that they learn how to chant, saying that it's one of the things a priest must know. "*Quoi,*" he added, "isn't it shameful to see that peasants know how to chant and do it very well, and we don't?" And having learned that the students were no longer learning chant and that this practice had been discontinued, he exclaimed and said, "O my God, what an account I'll have to give you for so many things that are not being done through my fault! Alas, how come we've stopped having this observed? M. Alméras and M. Berthe, please have a meeting for this purpose; ask M. Portail to join you in order to discuss the means of seeing that no one completes his seminary and his studies unless he knows how to chant."[16]

The founder's care about liturgical matters was well known outside the Congregation. It was reflected most importantly in *Salvatoris nostri,* the bull of establishment of the Congregation of the Mission (12 January 1633). Urban VII wrote:

> Places of worship are noticeably kept much more beautiful. Church ceremonies are performed more carefully. It is clear that the Divine Office is performed and attended with a sense of greater devotion, and that many other spiritual blessings have been realized.[17]

In addition, Bishop Juste Guérin († 1645), a successor of Saint Francis de Sales as bishop of Geneva, penned a memorandum concerning the Missioners during his planning to invite the Congregation to direct his seminary in Annecy:

> The Missioners teach them with great care the ceremonies according to the Roman ritual, which was almost entirely abolished in this country beyond the mountains, and, to facilitate their practice, every day they chant the Mass. All the services are performed with the Roman ceremonies. This produces great good and edification for the people who have occasion to admire the beauty and gravity of these ceremonies. In the seminary the plain-chant and the manner of administering the sacraments are still taught.[18]

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16 Conference 157, "Repetition of Prayer," 2 and 3 November 1656, *CCD*, 11:326.

17 Document 81 [English: 84a], "Salvatoris Nostrl, Bull of Erection of the Congregation of the Mission," (12 January 1633), *CCD*, 13a:301.

18 Félix Contassot, "Le Séminaire d'Annecy avant la Révolution (1640–1793). Étude documentaire," (Paris, 1970), typed, in archives of the Mission, Paris, 50.

C. Cleanliness and good order

In view of the above, it is not surprising that M. Vincent extended his liturgical concerns to simplicity, cleanliness, and good order. He called on the sacristan to: "honor our Lord in his zeal, he of whom it is said: *dilexi decorem domûs tuae,* [Ps 25 (26):8], striving with great vigilance to provide everything needed for the service of the Church in times and places and having a great affection for the cleanliness in all that must be used."[19] For the Daughters of Charity, he cited vestments and altar linens as symbols of charitable works done through obedience: "beautiful linen, gleaming white, carefully folded, with a pleasing scent. That's lovely." Though good in themselves, he noted, they are of much greater importance because of their use for Mass.[20] An attention in cleanliness is also represented in the *Rituale Parisiense* of 1646, which certainly shows the same concerns among his contemporaries.[21]

He wanted to be sure that the priests would wash their hands before celebrating Mass, as the rubrics prescribed, an act even more important since running water was not available in individual rooms. The same is true of personal appearance. In speaking during a council meeting of the Daughters of Charity concerning personal modesty, he applied to them "what the Church prescribes. The canons state that a priest may not be allowed to say Mass if his hair isn't trimmed properly, and the Church even insists that someone do it for him, in spite of him."[22]

In a circular letter concerning the late Jean Pillé († 1642), he commended him for similar concerns: "Among other things, he was a great lover of cleanliness in the church and could not bear any dirt in it.... He also took great care that the divine service be carried out with the requisite decorum."[23]

D. Simplicity in the vestments and liturgical objects

A certain contradiction exists between M. Vincent's care for vestments and liturgical objects and his intention to honor the Lord's poverty. On the one hand, Abelly reports that on Vincent's arrival in Clichy, he found the church in poor condition, "and the vestments and sacred

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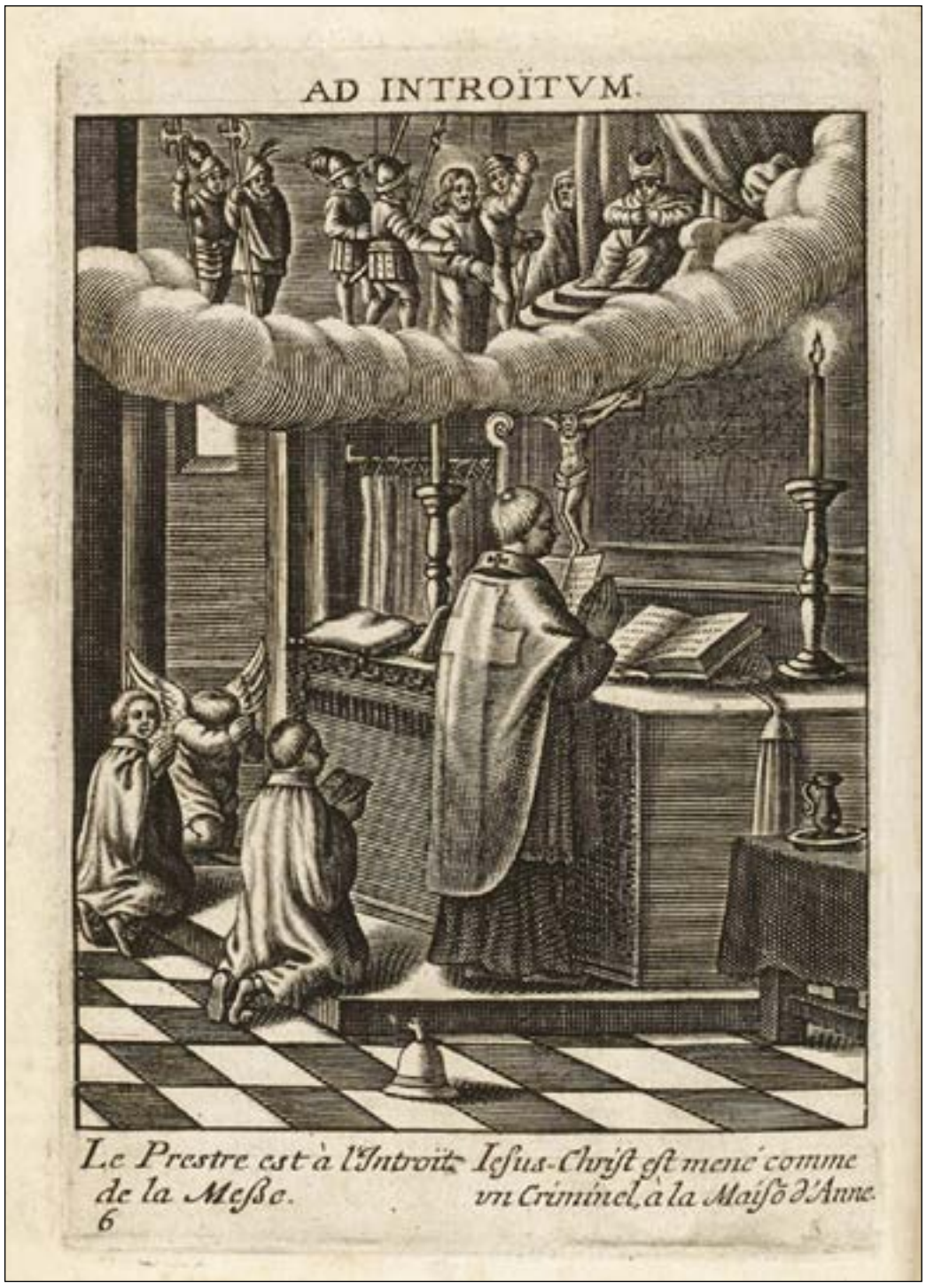
19 "Rules of the Internal Seminary, 1652," 123, concerning the sacristan. See also Document 25c, "Visitation Report of the Church in Clichy by the Archbishop of Paris," 9 October 1624, *CCD*, 13a:74, specifically "Sacred objects, altars, sacristy, vestments, and sacred vessels: clean, suitable, and kept in order."

20 Conference 44, "Obedience," *CCD*, 7 August 1650, 9:418.

21 *Rituale Parisiense ad Romani formam expressum* (Paris, 1646), 3: "He [the pastor] will also take care that the sacred furnishings, clothing, vestments, linens, and vessels of the ministry are whole, proper, and clean." This was done under Archbishop Jean François de Gondy. A similar exhortation is found on 106.

22 Document 157, "Council of 5 July 1646," *CCD*, 13b:253. The reference to hair (*poil*) may also include facial hair.

23 Letter 634, "To Pierre du Chesne, in Crecy," [n.d.], *CCD*, 2:366; letter 789, "To Antoine Portail, in Le Mans," 20 March 1646, *CCD*, 2:622.



6. At the Introit: The priest is at the Introit of the Mass. Jesus is led like a criminal to the house of Annas.

Note the large towel hanging at epistle side over the edge of the altar. It is not shown being used. The large bell seems to move around. There are also two cushions for the missal, one at each side, with no book stand. The little angel is in prayer, and the two altar servers follow the Mass, with one holding a book.

Courtesy of the author

ornaments unsuitable for divine service."[24] This brought him to establish a project to refurbish the parish church, a project aided by "some of his friends in Paris."[25] On the other hand, he instructed Bernard Codoing concerning the furnishing of the house in Rome: "You will do well to buy a silver chalice and honor the poverty of Our Lord in the vestments, as we do at Saint-Lazare."[26] His choice of silver is instructive, inasmuch as both gold and pewter chalices were in use, with gold being the most costly, and pewter the least.[27] His choice was for the mid-priced item. Perhaps it was also his simplicity and the poverty of the house that caused him at least once to borrow vestments for the chapel of the Bons Enfants; the exact reason is unknown.[28]

24 Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, bk. 1, chap. 6, 54.

25 Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, bk. 1, chap. 6, 54.

26 Letter 602, "To Bernard Coding, in Rome," 11 July 1642, *CCD*, 2:310.

27 See document 8a, "Saint Vincent Assumes the Lease of Saint-Leonard De Chaumes Abbey," (14 May 1610), *CCD*, 13a:9.

28 Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, bk. 3, chap. 11, sect. 7, 158. Fernand Combaluzier, C.M., found a brief document in the National Archives dated 8 August 1630. It deals with a pipe organ for Bons-Enfants. M. Vincent specified a small organ, without

12. At the uncovering of the chalice: The priest uncovers the chalice. Jesus Christ is stripped of his clothing.

The angel prepares a taper, to light the Sanctus candle. Since a low Mass is depicted, the servers are not shown holding torches during the consecration.

Courtesy of the author

At Saint-Lazare, his care was also noted even when it came to a gift from Anne of Austria, as Abelly reported:[29]

> He always used the humblest vestments for the sacred liturgy. Once the queen mother, with her usual piety, presented Saint Lazare with some silver vestments on the occasion of the birth of the king [Louis XIV]. Her Majesty sent them with the request to use them on the feast of Christmas, but when Monsieur Vincent saw the rich vestments ready for use he objected, and asked for the usual ones. No matter what was said his humility would not allow him to be the first to use these splendid vestments. The deacon and subdeacon, too, used the common ones, for the sake of uniformity.

An examination of several of the engravings from the remarkable series dated 1651 will reveal at least one perspective on these vestments.[30] The alb is short, reaching about knee length, and the chasuble is in a transitional style, between the ample or "Gothic" style and the square Roman style. The biretta (no. 1) is quite large. The acolytes, when standing (no. 1) are depicted in short trousers and an ample surplice.

II. Other liturgical usages in M. Vincent's experience

Local churches with a long history and importance had a certain claim on their own

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pedals. This inexpensive instrument could be an additional indication of his care for the correct celebration of the liturgy, while similarly indicating his tendency to simplicity. ("Saint Vincent et l'Orgue du Collège des Bons-Enfants," *Annales CM* 101 [1936] 702–04, 1000.)

29 Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, bk. 3, chap. 13, sect. 1, 193.

30 [J. Collin,] *Le Tableau de la Croix representé dans les ceremonies de la Ste messe, …* (Paris, 1651); images from the original in the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

22. At the elevation of the chalice: The priest elevates the chalice. The blood of Jesus Christ drops from his wounds.

The artist added a series of windows and columns in the background. The servers lift the chasuble, and one rings the altar bell. The angel has changed position. The altar servers have the clerical tonsure.

Courtesy of the author

historic usages concerning the elements of the Roman liturgy, such as the order observed, the calendar, and the music. Out of these, Toulouse and Lyon are noteworthy for M. Vincent. He studied in Toulouse before and after his ordination in 1600 and must have used the missal proper for that ancient diocese. Of these, the one contemporary with his presence there was the *Missale ad usum ecclesie metropolitane sancti Stephani Tholose*. The 1524 version bore the subtitle: *non mediocri diligentia ac studio nuperrime per doctissimum capitulum dicte Cathedralis ecclesie Tholose revisum* [very recently revised with no little diligence and attention by the most instructed chapter of the said cathedral church of Toulouse]. A later version, dating from the period 1540 to 1555, must have been familiar to him.

The most important of all the special usages was that of Lyon, the primatial see of France. Its practices reflect an earlier version of Roman forms. M. Vincent certainly

observed this in Châtillon, since this town was located in the archdiocese of Lyon in his time. Although no documentary proof remains concerning his celebrations of the Eucharist there, the inventory of the chapel of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in the parish church of Châtillon is instructive. This was drawn up in 1617, just prior to Vincent's appointment as pastor, and among the items are three that seem characteristic of the usage of Lyon.[31]

The first is the strange expression "deux corporaux avec leurs pointes" [two corporals with their points]. This should be understood not as a modern corporal, the square white linen piece placed under the chalice and paten at Mass. Rather, the term "corporal" was used in Lyon to refer to what is occasionally called a *pavillon,* or a chalice cover or square pall, but with "points," that is an extension of the linen hanging at the corners an inch or two in length. These are typical of Lyon. The second distinctive element is the very large corporal placed under the chalice and paten but used also to cover the chalice from the rear.[32] The third deals with liturgical colors, as mentioned below, but here the inventory noted: "two chalice veils, one green and the other orange."

The existence of these various French usages (occasionally, and incorrectly, referred to as the Gallican rite) could cause troubles in practice. As mentioned above, M. Vincent was disturbed by the varieties of celebrations that he witnessed in the church of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. While he was possibly referring to the personal eccentricities of the celebrants, he may also have been referring to the rubrical varieties then in vogue throughout France which the priests of individual dioceses continued to observe even outside their home diocese.

In 1662, M. Alméras issued a circular to the Congregation dealing with uniformity in ceremonies. A major concern of his was to guarantee uniformity in the instruction given to priests and other clerics in the houses of the Congregation. He referred to the wishes of M. Vincent on this subject: "... with the permission of our late Most Honored Father, M. Vincent, during whose lifetime, four or five months before his death, and with his permission and agreement, we went to work here on this question."[33] He attached a memorandum, unpublished for some reason, that gave reasons for maintaining certain details: "insofar as possible, except for those which have been so universally received by local custom or absolutely ordered by the bishop which would be the cause of some sort of scandal or great murmuring" if they were not observed. He claimed, furthermore, that this was the pope's intention. He wanted the ceremonial to be observed everywhere, but he did not disapprove

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31 Bernard Koch, "Église Saint André. Chapelle de la Confrérie Notre-Dame du saint Rosaire. Inventaire des ornements devant notaire, en dépôt chez un drapier. Vendredi 26 mai 1617," typed study, last revision, 2010, unpublished; in Archives of the Mission, Paris.

32 "deux coffre [couvre] calice de toile blanche pour envelopper le calice."

33 *Recueil des principales circulaires des supérieurs généraux* (Paris, 1877), 1:52; the published version is dated 22 April 1662. Hereinafter cited as *Recueil*.

of local edifying customs.[34]

At the 1668 general assembly, during the generalate of M. Alméras, the members issued a resolution concerning the differences existing between diocesan breviaries and the Roman breviary. Their purpose was to clarity some pending issues: "We will recite the diocesan breviary in our seminaries, if the bishop orders it, or shows that he wants it; otherwise, no, since it is more proper to maintain uniformity in all our houses by reciting the Roman breviary. Nonetheless, the clerics in the seminary should be taught the rubrics of the diocesan breviary."[35]

Issues still arose, and in 1685 M. Jolly, superior general, sought to clarify competing diocesan rubrics. "Where parishes or seminaries oblige some of the Missioners to say the office and the mass according to the rubrics of the diocese, we may say a mass different from the office we recite, and we may use vestments of a different color than that prescribed by the Roman rite to agree with the diocesan usage."[36]

The sources for these various changes and additions are found in the missals and their rubrics; the Divine Office, and particularly in diocesan Rituals and Pontificals. More varied was the proliferation of diocesan calendars (a condition that continues in modern times), and the flourishing of *prosae* (sequences), for many feasts, seasons, and even for common feast days.[37] The canonization of saints for the universal Church calendar provided new texts for their feasts, often including *prosae*.

III. Elements of the standard French and/or Parisian style

Vestments:

Brother Louis Robineau, one of the saint's secretaries, drew up various observations about his life and virtues. On the subject of vestments, he wrote: (No. 86) "He always used the least, the most simple, priestly vestments for low masses, like albs, chasubles, and veils. He left the more beautiful ones for externs and for other priests of the Company." As regards the vestments he had worn and which are still maintained (as in the Vincentian Museum in the motherhouse in Paris, and in the old parish church of Villepreux), their shape and style are the same as what are referred to as Roman vestments, with square-backed chasubles. It

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34 "Mémoire touchant l'usage et la pratique des saintes cérémonies … touchant les coutumes locales," unpublished, copy in Archives of the Mission, Paris. This matter had not been discussed at the first general assembly, held in 1661, but it was evidently an issue in the Congregation. The book was finally published in 1662, anonymously, as *Manuel des ceremonies romaines, Tiré des Livres Romains les plus authentiques, & des Ecrivains les plus intelligens en cette matiere; par quelques uns des prestres de la Congrégation de la Mission* (Vannes, 1697), the edition cited in this study. It appeared at various dates and in various places. A second volume, long promised, came out in 1717 under the generalate of Jean Bonnet, the successor of Alméras.

35 *Recueil*, 1:90.

36 *Recueil*, 1:184–86, circular 25, 1 July 1685.

37 Many of these appear in the *Missale insignis ecclesiae parisiensis restitutum et emendatum* (Paris, 1602), 149–96; for others, see *Missale Parisiense* … (Paris, 1830), clvj–clxj. The 1602 missal, which reprints sections from 1584, is deficient in many respects, but it was certainly in use in Paris in the founder's time.

At left, Blessed Vincent de Paul, shown in the ample Parisian surplice. A whip and a "discipline" are placed among the thorns framing the figures. Hand-colored engraving in the Vincentian museum, Paris. Produced before 1737. At right, Vincent de Paul, wearing traditional pleated Parisian surplice. Marble statuette, DePaul University collection.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

was also common, as seen in the engravings from 1651, copied in this study, for the celebrant to be wearing a short alb, often reaching just below the knees. Vincent's alb in the Vincentian Museum, however, is of the standard length.

No documentation or physical examples exist, but M. Vincent must have adopted the style of surplice specific to Paris. It was ample in size and had two lengths of material, sometimes carefully pleated, hanging from the back of the shoulders.[38] He is shown wearing this style in several depictions. There was also a specifically Parisian biretta, but his own biretta, still in existence, shows it to be in the Roman style. The only difference here, that is, between the Parisian and the Roman head-covering, is that his biretta lacks either the pompom or long tassel traditional in the Roman style. This unadorned style, if nothing else, may reflect the founder's emphasis on simplicity.

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38 The *Manuel des ceremonies romaines* (part 1, art. 1) specifies that the celebrant should wear a surplice over his cassock under the Mass vestments, but only if this could be easily done. The complexity of the Paris surplice would rule out its use under the other vestments; it does not appear in the engravings shown in this study.

Liturgical colors:

The reforming missal of Pius V, promulgated in 1570, listed the same basic colors for vestments that are in use today (white, green, red, violet, and black) but with different times and occasions for their use. However, given the colors already available in many churches, later missals made exceptions. These were based on various considerations, such as permission to maintain older vestments of other hues, regarded as secondary colors. For example, blue could be used for violet; brown or gray for black; gold and silver for red or white; yellow or orange for gold; and various shades of rose and purple for violet.[39]

IV. Celebration of Mass

The elements mentioned below are the more common features of Masses on Sundays and feast days with the people.[40] For M. Vincent's private Mass, celebrated daily, only a few these would have been observed: perhaps the spoon and the Sanctus candle, and certainly the prayer for the king in the Roman Canon. Many other elements were part of local observances in his time, such as singing *O Salutaris hostia* to accompany the elevation of the host,[41] but no proof exists that M. Vincent mentioned this usage, nor is it mentioned in *Manuel des ceremonies romaines*.

Brother Robineau, however, referred to the saint's devotion to the Blessed Virgin: "the High Masses that he often celebrated especially on the great feasts of the year and of the Most Blessed Virgin" (parag. 132). In this connection, he was likely present at the use of a trope or "farced" Kyrie and Gloria, that is, the hymns with added elements referring to Mary. One example from each is: ***Kyrie virginitatis amator inclyte pater et creator Mariae,*** *eleison* (Lord, lover of virginity, illustrious father and creator of Mary, have mercy); *Quoniam tu solus sanctus*. ***Mariam sanctificans.*** *Tu solus Dominus*. ***Mariam gubernans.*** *Tu solus altissimus*. ***Mariam coronans*** (For you alone are the holy one, sanctifying Mary; you alone are the Lord, governing Mary; you alone are the most high, crowning Mary). These extra words were sung to the existing melodies which traditionally consisted only of a continued vowel. These medieval accretions were gradually eliminated from practice.[42]

On the subject of solemn celebrations, a rare liturgical reference occurs among

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39 John Wickham Legg, *Notes on the History of the Liturgical Colors*, … (London, 1882), passim; *Missale Parisiense, … Caroli Gaspar Guillelmi de Vintimille* (Paris, 1738), 9–10; *Missale Tolosanum… de Lomenie de Brienne* (Toulouse, 1774), 11–13; the *Missale Parisiense* of 1830 has a more restricted presentation (12).

40 These are found conveniently in Joseph A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, trans. Francis A. Brunner, 2 vols. (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1951).

41 Details on the celebration are found in *Manuel des ceremonies romaines,* part 4, art. 10, 473–79; see also Herbert Thurston, "Our English Benediction Service," *The Month* 106 (July–December 1905): 403–04.

42 *Missale insignis ecclesiae parisiensis* (Paris, 1602), partially unpaged; however, see 329 (Gloria), 135 (Kyrie).

Robineau's remarks. He shows how the saint treated poor men with honor and respect. "On Holy Thursday, he used to kiss with a marvelous affection the feet of the twelve poor men when he performed the ceremonies of the Last Supper (Maundy Thursday). He used to do this on both knees."[43] The testimony of Paul Masson, a diocesan priest, given for the canonization process, amplifies the narrative. In those times, the mandatum (the foot-washing) took place after the Holy Thursday Mass and the stripping of the altar. He concludes that: "after having washed the feet of each poor man, [he] embraced them and kissed them with as much tenderness and respect as if he had kissed relics."[44] It should be observed that, in this case, M. Vincent was simply observing the rubrics, but doing so with special reverence.

Prône. A distinctive action at a Sunday Mass in France, celebrated in the presence of a congregation, was the *prône*. Although not mentioned in the 1570 Missale Romanum, it appeared in later French missals.[45] This was a generalized instruction (*concio* in Latin), following the proclamation of the Gospel. The *prône* also included prayers of the faithful—such as those restored in the current *Novus ordo*—followed with various announcements, such as the coming feasts and fasts, the bans of marriage, concluding with common prayers to be said, in French, by all present. The standard prayers of the faithful included the intentions of religious and civil leaders and organizations, and concluded with prayers for the conversion of numerous types of sinners, such as for the following in the Paris Rituale: excommunicates, heretics, simoniacs, those who buy and sell benefices, schismatics, magicians, sorcerers, makers of spells, usurers, those who lay violent hands on the clergy, and those who go to games and shows instead of Mass.[46]

The announcements were often dictated by local civil authorities but could include those from the bishop or the king. In popular speech, which often reflected a real situation, the term *prône* came to mean a long and boring address. This differed from the lengthy sermon, required of pastors, which was generally given on Sunday afternoons, often in the context of vespers. If the *prône* was read out completely, it must have taken a good half-hour, as judging from the number of pages devoted to it in printed texts.[47]

The *prône* was not always held, as is reflected in the note in the general rubrics, for example, in the Missale Tolosanum: "The address, if it is to be held at Mass, is given after

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43 Robineau, parag. 45.

44 Document 48a, "Saint Vincent's Participation in Holy Thursday Liturgy," [n.d.], *CCD*, 173; its source was *Annales CM* 103 (1938): 476.

45 The *Rituale parisiense*, 1738, devotes a lengthy treatment to this, including sample texts, 452–76.

46 *Rituale parisiense,* 462, 467.

47 In the *Rituale parisiense* (1646), it covered 452 through 486.

11. At the Gospel: The priest reads the Gospel. Jesus Christ is sent from Herod to Pilate.

The angel holds a special candle to offer enough light for the celebrant to read the Gospel.

Courtesy of the author

the gospel."[48] Otherwise, it was mentioned only briefly in the text of the Ordinary of the Mass: "If during the solemnities of Masses a Prône is held for the people…"[49]

M. Vincent mentioned the *prône* several times in his letters, when he referred to various announcements to be made.[50] The most noteworthy of these was the occasion when he was informed about the poor man who was in a bad condition, and M. Vincent was "just about to give the *prône*." A painting of the event, displayed in the city hall of Châtillon-les-Dombes, shows him removing his chasuble at the altar, as he was required to do before giving the *prône*,

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48 *Missale Tolosanum*, 8: [Concio], si ad Missam habenda sit, habetur post Evangelium.

49 *Missale Parisiense*, 1738, 248.

50 Letter 76, "To the Pastor of Bergeres," [n.d.], *CCD*, 1:117–18; letter 83, "To Saint Louise, in Le Mesnil," 15 September 1631, *CCD*, 1:124–25; letter 537, "To Saint Louise," [6 or 7 September 1641], *CCD*, 2:210–11; letter 1234, "To Bernard Codoing, Superior, in Rlchelieu," 17 July 1650, *CCD*, 4:44–46; letter 2675, "To Pierre Cabel, Superior, in Sedan," 2 October 1658, *CCD*, 7:296–298; and letter 2812, "To Antoine Caignet," 13 April 1659, *CCD*, 7:509–10; and conference 24, "Love of Vocation and Assistance to the Poor," 13 February 1646, *CCD*, 9:190–201 (another narration of the incident in conference 20), and conference 108, "Order of the Day (Arts. 17–23)," 16 March 1659, *CCD*, 10:501–23.

Women mention to Monsieur Vincent the plight of a poor person or a poor family living outside of Châtillon. He is removing his maniple and will remove his chasuble to begin the prône. One of the few illustrations of M. Vincent at Mass. Unsigned original, oil on canvas, in the city hall, Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne, undated.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

and the anxious women telling him of the needy person.[51]

He clearly distinguished the *prône* from the sermon or preaching, as is evident in a review of his letters and conferences.[52]

Offerings. The presentation of leavened bread to be blessed and distributed to the faithful after Mass was a relic of the ancient offerings made by the faithful.[53] These consisted also in the presentation of wine and candles, whose modern equivalent is a collection of money.[54] In the seventeenth century, the acolytes would bring the bread forward and the priest would bless it either before the beginning of the Mass or before the reading of the epistle. The formula of blessing varied, but a typical version recalled the blessing of the five loaves by Jesus in the desert: *Benedic, Domine, creaturam istam panis, sicut benedixisti quinque panes in deserto*,[55] and this quotation from the New Testament: *Centuplum accipietis, et vitam aeternam possidebitis* (You will receive a hundredfold and possess life eternal).[56] Where it was a local custom, the *Pax* was also given to the laity making the offerings and as part of their presentation.[57]

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51 Conference 20, "Observance of the Rule," 22 January 1645, *CCD*, 9:165, where *prône* is mistakenly translated as "sermon."

52 The *prône* is mentioned only in passing in *Manuel des ceremonies romaines*, part 2, art. 7, 250.

53 *Missale Parisiense* 1830, 41–42.

54 Josef F. Van der Stappen, *Sacra liturgia,* Mechelen, n. d., 2:128, (Q. 149, note 1).

55 Nicolas Collin, *Traité du pain béni, ou l'Eglise catholique justifiée sur l'usage du pain-béni* (Paris: 1777), 105; King, *Roman Church*, 172–73; *Missale Parisiense*, 19; *Manuel des ceremonies romaines*, part 2, arts. 8, 11; vol. 2, part 1, arts. 1, 3, 5.

56 *Missale insignis ... parisiensis*, partly unpaged, in the Ordinarium Missae, "Ad oblationem populi."

57 *Manual des ceremonies romaines*, part 1, art. 7.

Spoon. A small spoon was often used to measure out water to add to the wine in the chalice. Although not in the rubrics, its use was simply tolerated. In English it is also called the "scruple spoon" for obvious reasons. This does not appear in M. Vincent's writings, but he might have used one.

Sanctus candle. Engravings 17, 18, and 31 illustrate the ancient custom of the Sanctus candle. In earlier times, an acolyte would often hold a candle aloft to light up the elevation of the host in dark churches so that the worshippers could see it clearly. This act was formalized into a separate candlestick usually on the priest's right (the Epistle side), or on a wall sconce. A rubric in the Roman Missal prescribed that in Low Mass a third candle be lit at the Sanctus and remain lit until after Communion. It was sometimes referred to as the "elevation candle."[58]

Canon. The Eucharistic prayer, beginning Te igitur, in the Missale Romanum of 1570 commemorated the pope and the bishop by name (*una cum famulo tuo Papa nostro N, et antistite nostro N.*) However, in M. Vincent's time, the name of the king was added after that of the bishop: *et Rege nostro N.* (and our king N.) Variants in European countries included prayers for an emperor, duke, or other authorities. These gradually disappeared along with those offices.

Pax. Exchanging a sign or kiss of peace developed from a simple gesture to more complicated ones. By the time of M. Vincent, the celebrant at a Mass with the people, for feasts and some Sundays, would pass around an *osculatorium* (or *deosculatorium*). This was a custom in many places in Europe. In form it was originally a small crucifix, or more generally a plaque. Originally of marble, and later wood or metal, it was decorated with various religious symbols. The celebrant kissed the altar, kissed this *Pax,* or "instrument of peace," and then offered to others to kiss, mostly to those closest to the altar, such as clergy and altar servers. This took place before communion, after the Agnus Dei and the first preparatory prayer. The spoken formula varied, but it was generally: Peace be with you and with your spirit.[59] It gradually dropped from usage, likely for reasons of time, the order of presentation, and hygiene.[60] Nonetheless, it continued in some village churches into the twentieth century.[61]

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58 As in *Manuel des ceremonies romaines*, part 1, art. 13, which specifies use of torches for the same purpose, and for aid in reading the Gospel (part 1, continuation, art. 1). On this, see Adrian Fortescue, *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (London: 1918), 79, n. 2, "the third candle," and 81.

59 A longer formula also in use was: "Pax tibi frater, et Ecclesiae sanctae Dei" (Peace be to you brother, and to the holy Church of God). No response was prescribed, perhaps through oversight. *Missale insignis … parisiensis*, partly unpaged, but after 341.

60 See Archdale A. King, *Liturgy of the Roman Church* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Pub. Co., 1957), 362; Pierre-Constant Barraud, *Notice sur les instruments de paix* (Paris: 1865); *Missale Parisiense* 1830, 50.

61 This ritual received a detailed description in *Manuel des ceremonies romaines*, part 4, art. 7. For the major ministers at a solemn Mass, however, the embrace mentioned in the rubrics was observed among them. It continued to be mentioned as an option until the revisions of the liturgy in the *Novus Ordo*. See in the *Missale Romanum*, "Ritus servandus in celebratione Missae," title X, n. 3, 72*.

17. At the Preface: The priest says the preface. Jesus Christ is condemned.

The angels prepare to light the Sanctus candle, placed on a wall sconce. One server holds the bell, and the other is holding a rosary.

Courtesy of the author

Reception of Communion. For the communion of the faithful, a long cloth was either permanently affixed to the altar rail or brought by the server for the communicants. They used it to cover their hands in case the host was dropped. Its usage was gradually replaced by a server holding a communion paten or a pall, a card covered with linen. During the administration, a server with a torch could accompany the celebrant, presumably to offer light in a dark church.[62]

Ablution of the mouth. Local custom dictated that when the laity received the host in communion, the "ablution of the mouth" was performed. In one version, an acolyte would follow the celebrant and present a cup or glass with unconsecrated wine and some water for the communicant to sip. Then, the acolyte would offer a small cloth for the communicant to wipe his or her lips. This custom is not mentioned in M. Vincent's extant texts, but it was a

62 *Manuel des ceremonies romaines,* part 4, art. 8.

25. At the Our Father: The priest recites the Our Father. Jesus Christ crucified recommends his mother to Saint John.

The host and paten are not visible.

Courtesy of the author

practice in France.[63] However, it is mentioned in the catechism of the Mission, dated 1640, prepared under the saint's guidance. One of the questions was: "That which is sometimes given to lay people to drink after communion: is that the blood of Our Lord?" The response: "No, it is only wine to swallow the host more easily." In fact, sometimes water was also given to the sick for the same purpose, presumably when they received viaticum. Gradually, the custom fell into disuse, remaining a practice only at the Mass of priesthood ordination.[64] In addition, in 1662 M. Alméras presented a "list of certain places in the Ceremonial of Bishops which have been decided not to be observed throughout the Company."[65] Paragraph 9 states the fact and the reason for not doing this ablution at Saint-Lazare: "we do not give the ablution to communicants, both because it hardly seems necessary, and because this is rarely in use in France, contrary to the Ceremonial and the Missal."[66]

Blessed Bread. The unconsecrated bread blessed at the Offertory was distributed either during Mass, often to those who did not communicate, or afterwards. The faithful often brought it with them to those who were absent, thereby honoring them as parents, relatives, or friends.

Exaudiat: In French churches, a special prayer for the king (and his family) was

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63 Archdale A. King, *Liturgies of the Primatial Sees* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1957), 105–06; *Liturgy of the Roman Church,* 377–378.

64 Bartolomeo Gavanti, *Thesaurus sacrorum rituum,* ed. Cajetano-Maria Merati (Venice: 1749), 252; and 118 of the 1685 edition.

65 Unpublished circular, in Archives of the Mission, Paris.

66 The *Rituale Parisiense* shows a certain ambivalence about the practice: "In the places where the ablution is customarily offered to the laity …" (107). The 1830 *Missale Parisiense* does not mention this at all. One reason for its disuse was the rare frequency of the reception of communion in M. Vincent's time. However, Alméras and his colleagues described this ablution in several places in *Manuel des ceremonies romaines*, for example part 1, arts. 6, 10.

31. At the Postcommunion: the priest prays, after communion; Jesus Christ resurrected.

One server extinguishes the Sanctus candle. The chalice has not been veiled.

Courtesy of the author

commonly said or sung at Mass on Sundays and feast days. It was Psalm 20 (19) with a versicle and response (*V*: *Domine, salvum fac regem;* [O Lord save the king;] R: and hear us in the day that we call upon thee), concluded by a collect. It was done either following the Our Father or more usually at the conclusion of the Mass after the postcommunion. It could also include prayers for public needs.[67] The Exaudiat could also be celebrated at the conclusion of Benediction following the Sunday afternoon sermon.[68]

IV. Eucharistic devotion

The upper register of the engravings in *Tableau de la Croix* were included to show some spiritual connections between the Passion of Jesus and the celebration of the Eucharist. It is possible that M. Vincent had such concepts in mind when he addressed his confreres in conference 141 concerning the clerical state. "I also recommend the ceremonies, and I ask the Company to avoid the faults that may be committed in them. To tell the truth, ceremonies are only the shadow, but the shadow of greater things, requiring us to observe them with all possible attention, religious silence, great reserve, and gravity." Quite likely his reference to ceremonies as shadows can apply to this same spiritual appreciation of the ceremonies observed in the celebration of daily Mass. However, this is far from certain in his extant texts, and the relationship between the moments of the Passion and the Mass is difficult to fathom.

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67 *Manuel des ceremonies romaines,* part. 1, art. 11. See, for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, bk. 2, chap. 1, sect. 7, part 7, 108, where its usage was reported for the congregation's chapels in Algiers. Several musical settings of this prayer exist, attesting to its importance at least in royal circles.

68 *Office de la Divine Providence a l'usage de la maison royale de S. Louis a S. Cyr, et de tous les fide'les* (Paris, 1757), 38–40.

Much else could be said about the saint's devotion to the Eucharist (10:3), but the following points are listed simply as indicative of the larger portrait of his spiritual life. They were his regular practice of celebrating Mass for particular intentions;[69] visits to the Blessed Sacrament, as specified in the Common Rules (10:20); kneeling in the street when he saw that the Blessed Sacrament was being carried for a sick person (Robineau, parag. 143); proper genuflections to the Blessed Sacrament (Conf. CM 126). In his shock at the profanation of the Blessed Sacrament in places near Paris, he decided to visit the profaned churches and offer prayers of repentance for those who committed these sacrileges (Robineau, parag. 211). His exhortation to a dying brother (Conf. CM 102, p. 131) is well known for its phrase "since love is inventive to infinity," explained as divine inventiveness to have Jesus present in the Blessed Sacrament just as he is in heaven. Finally, M. Vincent has been credited with being the first, or at least among the first, to develop the celebration for First Communion (or Solemn Communion) in France. In his lifetime, the first communion was to be given to children at least eleven or twelve years old, and only in their parish. The ceremonies accompanying this were not specified.[70] By 1700, it had become quite widespread. It was done, of course, out of love and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.[71] This devotion is especially evident in the illustrated title page of the Common Rules.

Conclusion

For Vincent de Paul, the celebration of Mass should be done "with as much devotion as possible, conforming ourselves as much as we can to Jesus Christ, when he offered himself on earth as a sacrifice to his Eternal Father, and strove to present this sacrifice to God in the same spirit that he offered his."[72]

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69 Letter 514a, "To Saint Louise," 11 February 1641, *CCD*, 2:182.

70 *Rituale parisiense*, 108.

71 Joseph Guichard, "Saint Vincent de Paul et les rites de la Communion solennelle," *Cahiers Catéchétiques* (May 1939), 185–94. He cites Letter 897, "To a Priest of the Mission," 27 November [1646], *CCD*, 3:129–31.

72 Abelly, *La Vie du venerable serviteur de Dieu Vincent de Paul*, 2nd ed., (Paris, 1668), chap. 7, 41. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/abelly_1667/.

Louise de Marillac—Ingenuity, Mission, and Mystique

Betty Ann McNeil, D.C.

BIO

SR. BETTY ANN MCNEIL, D.C., entered the Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Emmitsburg Province, in 1964 and earned a bachelor's degree in social welfare from Saint Joseph College, Emmitsburg, Maryland (1969), and a master's degree in social work from Virginia Commonwealth University (1975). She has worked in social ministry roles in institutional, parish, and community-based settings serving pregnant and parenting adolescents, abused and neglected children, and Central American refugees. Sr. Betty Ann has been a member of the Vincentian Studies Institute of the United States since 1988, and currently serves on its board. Her publications include: *The Vincentian Family Tree*, a survey of all communities bearing some relationship to Saint Vincent de Paul, Saint Louise de Marillac, and the Vincentian Family (VSI, 1996); *Friendship of My Soul. Letters by Elizabeth Ann Seton, 1803-1809* (2010); *A Civil War Trilogy: Charity Afire. Virginia 1861-1865; Charity Afire. Maryland 1862-1865; Charity Afire. Pennsylvania 1862-1865* (Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's, 2011); and *Dear Masters. Daughters of Charity Civil War Nurses* (Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's, 2011). She also served as editor of *Balm of Hope: Charity Afire Impels Daughters of Charity to Civil War Nursing* (Vincentian Studies Continued Institute, 2015),

Previous Article

Next Article

Table of Contents

and a revised edition of the classic *Praying with Elizabeth Ann Seton* (VSI, 2017). Having recently completed ten years as a Vincentian Scholar-in-Residence at DePaul University, Sr. Betty Ann is now serving as Vincentian Researcher, Writer, and Presenter for the Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise, in Emmitsburg.

This article considers Saint Louise de Marillac (1591–1660) as a prototypical social worker whose social service interventions highlight how twenty-first-century social issues echo those of the seventeenth century, and how her approach to serving people in need remains relevant for social work practitioners today.[1] Then and now, people suffer because of housing and food insecurity, children of immature parents become emotional orphans of the living, the elderly feel isolated, and persons flee the violence of war only to encounter rejection elsewhere. Between 1629 and 1660, Louise played a key role in directing the Confraternities of Charity, the Ladies of the Company of the Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu (1634), and the Servants of the Poor of the Charity (1633) at the parish level. Her leadership significantly impacted social services in France during that time.[2]

Background

Seventeenth-century France was beset by war and its impact, rising poverty, and neglect of the Church. This led to the role of beneficence in distinct faith traditions, the emergence of social services, and ultimately, the intervention of Divine Providence in the life of Saint Vincent de Paul (1581–1660).

War and its Impact

By the dawn of the seventeenth century, France was recovering from the ravages of the Thirty Years' War, which had been rooted in politics and religion. A religious perspective would say that Catholic nations (many ruled by the House of Austria) attempted to overcome the Protestant nations of northern Europe. From a political perspective, the Habsburg Dynasty attempted to retain control while other countries sought to gain domination. Ethnically and linguistically partly French and partly German, Lorraine enjoyed a strategic location. The bellicose conflicts killed soldiers and civilians directly, caused famines, and plagues destroyed livelihoods, disrupted commerce, and postponed marriages and childbirth, particularly in the north and east of France. The people of Lorraine had suffered dreadfully from the Thirty Years' War, thus prompting Vincent de Paul to send aid.[3]

Rising Poverty

Large numbers of people relocated. Thousands of peasants fled to Paris as refugees.

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1 The author presented a previous version of this article at the annual conference of the Catholic Social Workers National Association, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio, in October 2019.

2 Pierre Coste, C.M., *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al., vols. 1–14 (New City Press: New York, 1985–2014), document188a, "Will of Madame Goussault," 16 February 1639, 13b:390–95; Document 145, "Regulations of the Daughters of Charity," (1645), ibid., 123–27. Available at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/38/. Hereinafter cited as *CCD*.

3 José M. Roman, C.M., *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography* (London: Melisende, 1999), 509–24. Hereinafter cited as *SVDP*.

La Pendaison (The Hanging), plate 11 of an 18-plate series of etchings on the 30 Years' War titled Les Grandes Misères de la guerre (The Great Miseries of War) published in 1633. The artist, Jacques Callot (1592–1635), was a native of Lorraine, and the works are considered one of the first anti-war statements in European art.

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Amid increasing human suffering, civil war (the Fronde) erupted forcing the royal family to flee Paris and causing misery for peasants. Poverty in towns and villages increased among ordinary people who lived in uncertainty for tomorrow. Sick persons received inadequate care. Those ruined by wars, mutilated soldiers, abandoned children, vagabonds, beggars, and galley convicts subsisted amid insecurity.

Ecclesial Issues

The Council of Trent (1545–1563) had decreed various reforms intended to eliminate abuses.[4] Yet France had not yet implemented the Tridentine decrees because of opposition by the monarchy, which opposed limiting the king's authority over ecclesiastical affairs. French Catholics and Calvinists held intractably to their irreconcilable differences. Hierarchy, clergy, and religious reeked of inadequate formation, laxity, and abuse.[5] Peasants in the countryside suffered spiritual neglect.

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4 Cf. Thomas I. Crimando, "Two French Views of the Council of Trent," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 19:2 (1988): 169–86. Available online at https://doi.org/10.2307/2540405.

5 French clergy remained subject to the monarchy until 1789.

Châtillon, Vincent de Paul helping a prisoner. It is believed the Gondis are pictured at the right, alongside a Daughter of Charity.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

Vincentian Era Dawns

At a time when European adventurers set sail to explore and colonize North America, at Jamestown, Virginia (1607), and Québec, Canada (1608), Vincent de Paul was pursuing the comfortable life of a French clergyman. Quite unexpectedly, Divine Providence made him aware of people suffering from spiritual and material poverty, initially in the countryside, then in towns and villages. Two experiences in 1617 caused him to refocus his energy.[6]

- In January, Vincent heard the confession of a dying peasant on the Gondi estates at Gannes near Folleville in Picardy. The egocentric, aspiring priest recognized the abject spiritual poverty of rural dwellers and was deeply moved.[7]
- In August, Vincent discovered the material poverty of parishioners after visiting a family besieged with illness in the parish at Châtillon-les-Dombes in Lyons.[8]

In his midthirties, Vincent, converted from a life of ambition to one of altruism. Madame de Gondi sparked the dawn of the Vincentian era, by her genuine concern for the peasants on the Gondi estates. She inquired: "How can this be remedied?"[9] Vincent's response resulted in a mission corps for evangelization and service that expanded to include ordained priesthood, consecrated life, and the lay apostolate. Even though the Congregation officially began in 1625, Vincent de Paul backdated the first sermon of the Congregation of the Mission to 25 January 1617 at Folleville. Also in 1625, he agreed to be the spiritual director of Louise de Marillac, who had become the Widow Le Gras.[10]

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6 Bernard Pujo, *Vincent de Paul: The Trailblazer*, trans. Gertrud Graubart Champe (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 58–67.

7 Roman, *SVDP*, 114–16.

8 Now Châtillon-sur-Chalaronne. Ibid., 123–6.

9 Document 2, "The Mission Preached in Folleville in 1617," *CCD*, 11:2. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/37/ Françoise Marguérite de Silly (1584–1625) married (1664) Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi (1580–1662).

10 Louise de Marillac married Antoine Le Gras in February 1613; he died 21 December 1625.

Vincent de Paul initiated strategies to reform the clergy, improve the preparation of candidates for the priesthood, minister to the peasantry in rural areas, and involve the laity in apostolic activity. Vincent "realized early in his missionary life that confraternities offered a means to organize female religious expression."[11] In partnership with Louise de Marillac, these organizations collaborated to address the unmet needs of persons suffering at the margins of society in Paris and its environs.[12] Those in the provinces of France who suffered from the aftermath of war received aid from the generosity of noble ladies of wealth, including the Duchess d'Aiguillon.[13]

Ingenuity

The life and legacy of Louise de Marillac remains particularly relevant for social work practitioners, especially people of faith, who relate to and serve the most vulnerable at the margins of society.

Mademoiselle Le Gras

Louise had wished to become a Capuchin nun but the provincial, Reverend Father Honoré de Champigny, O.F.M. Cap. (1566–1624), rejected her admission because of her "delicate health" which he believed would be an impediment to her living their harsh life. The priest assured Louise that "God has other plans for you."[14]

Between the two marriages of her father, Louis de Marillac, an unidentified mother bore Louise in or near Paris on 12 August 1591. The Marillacs were of the upper middle class (the parliamentary bourgeoisie).[15] As a result of her birth status, the Marillacs placed her at the Dominican Convent at Poissy for her early schooling. They also arranged her marriage to Antoine Le Gras (1581–1625), a secretary to the Queen, Marie de Medici. The couple wed in the Church of Saint-Gervais on 5 February 1613. Thereafter, Louise went by Mademoiselle Le Gras until her widowhood.

The couple had one child, a son, Michel Antoine Le Gras (1613–1696). Louise was an active parishioner, wife, and mother who visited the sick poor of the parish, gave them broths and remedies, made their beds, and instructed them. Whenever Louise visited the

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11 Alison Forrestal, *Vincent de Paul, the Lazarist Mission, and French Catholic Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 177. Hereinafter cited as *VDP, Lazarist Mission*.

12 For a comprehensive treatment of the Confraternities of Charity and the role of the laity in the charitable works of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, see Forrestal, *VDP, Lazarist Mission,* 117–219.

13 Bronwen McShea, *La Duchesse: The Life of Marie de Vignerot* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2023), 290–91. Forrestal, *VDP, Lazarist Mission*, 209.

14 Kathryn B. LaFleur, S.P., *Louise de Marillac: A Light in the Darkness, A Woman of Yesteryear, A Saint and Model for Today* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 1996), 32. Hereinafter cited as *LDM, Light in Darkness*.

15 The Marillacs were a highly respected family of the *noblesse de robe*, the lesser nobility, and the judicial class.

Etching of Louise de Marillac. The caption reads, "Madame the widow Le Gras, demoiselle de Marillac, called the mother of the poor, after a painting that she painted at age 52." The claim about the painting is undoubtedly a legend and not factual.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

hospitals, in addition to the basic care for the patients, she brought some treats to comfort them. For example, "a servant woman of her household … testified that Louise brought them sweets, washed their sores, and cleaned them of their vermin."[16] She consoled the sick, encouraged them to receive the sacraments, and helped prepare those who died for burial. Louise's personal praxis of charity informed her later service and leadership roles.

The Widow Le Gras

While deeply disturbed by doubts, indecision, and burnout because of her husband's irritability during his terminal illness, she had a transformative experience during Pentecost 1623. In her memorandum, she recorded that she wanted to be "in a place where I could help my neighbor."[17] Widowed in 1625, the next year she began to participate in the charitable endeavors of Vincent de Paul and helped establish a Confraternity of Charity in her parish. This model of effective parish-based benevolence had spread from Châtillon-les-Dombes (1617) to the parish of Saint-Sauveur (1629) in Paris, then throughout France.[18]

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16 LaFleur, *LDM: Light in Darkness,* 34.

17 Document A.2, "Light," *Spiritual Writings of Louise de Marillac*, ed. and trans. Louise Sullivan, D.C. (New York, New City Press, 1991), 1. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/ldm/. Hereinafter cited as *SW*. See also Élisabeth Charpy, D.C., *Louise de Marillac: Come Winds or High Waters* (Chicago: DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, 2018). Available online at http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/43. Hereinafter cited as *LDM: Come Winds or High Waters*.

18 Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, *The Streets as a Cloister. History of the Daughters of Charity* (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2020), 55–63. Hereinafter cited as *The Streets as a Cloister.* Cf. Louise Sullivan, D.C. "The Hands of Providence: Vincent de Paul, Louise de Marillac, and Feminine Charitable Activity in France, 1617–1660," *Vincentian Heritage* 14:1 (1993). Available at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol14/iss1/4.

Louise collaborated with volunteers and mentored them to serve persons in need effectively and affectively. She knew that God's mercy has a predilection for orphans, widows, and immigrants.[19] She transmitted the spirit of Vincent de Paul through her kindness: "Affective love proceeds from the heart … Love is effective when we act for God without experiencing its warmth."[20] Persons engaged in providing social services share a common bond with Louise because of their shared concern to alleviate human suffering. Whether for religious or humanitarian reasons, deeds of charity, mercy, and justice improve society.

Vincent's Collaborator

Impressed with Louise's ability to assess situations, her meticulous manner, and her organizational skills, Vincent asked Louise de Marillac to visit the Confraternity of Charity at Montmirail in May 1629 to evaluate its functioning.[21] Established eight years previously in this town of the Brie region, Vincent was interested in knowing Louise's observations about its operations.[22] She prepared a plentiful supply of linen and medications to take with her. Upon arrival, Louise gathered the members together to stimulate their zeal, interview them, probe the results, and recruit new members. She also visited the sick, distributed alms, and gathered the children for catechetical instruction. Louise offered practical advice if there was a schoolteacher in the region. If there was none, she recruited and trained a teacher. The visit to Montmirail was the first of Louise's many apostolic journeys over the next thirty years.

Her memoranda of visits proved that Louise had a keen eye for observation.[23] The Ladies of the Charity at Sannois "let their zeal cool a bit. Often, they do not visit the sick on the days for which they are responsible."[24] At Franconville, she noted that many of the Ladies "spend money on their appointed day according to their own whims and pay little attention to the Rule … the Treasurer does not keep records;" Louise also discovered that "no Procurator was ever elected for the Charity" at Conflans.[25]

Louise promoted female leadership to benefit the common good. She noted, "that Divine Providence willed to make use of women … to aid afflicted peoples and to bring

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19 Cf. Deuteronomy 27:19 (NABRE).

20 Conference 41, "The Love of God," 19 September 1649, *CCD*, 9:373. Available at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/37/.

21 Letter 39, "To Saint Louise," 6 May 1629, *CCD*, 1:64–65. Available at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/25/. See also Letter 4, "To Monsieur Vincent," 4 September (c.1634), *SW*, 9–11.

22 A Confraternity of Charity was also known as The Charity.

23 Document A.51, "(Visits to the Confraternities of Sannois, Franconville, Herblay and Conflans)," n.d., *SW*, 705.

24 Ibid. Brejon, *The Streets as a Cloister,* 63–66.

25 Ibid.

them powerful helps for their salvation."[26] For example, she founded the Confraternity of Charity in her parish of Saint Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, Paris, in 1630. Vincent wrote her, as its president: "I beg God to bless your labor, and to perpetuate this holy work.... Experience has shown that it is absolutely necessary for the women not to depend on the men in this situation, especially for the money."[27] Twenty years later, Vincent confirmed his initial insight, saying, "I can give this testimony in favor of women, that there is no fault to be found in their administration because they are so careful and trustworthy."[28]

Historian Alison Forrestal distinguishes between the propriety of political functions of men in the seventeenth century and female engagement in benevolence: "If it is considered as a work of charity, the women can undertake it in the manner that they have undertaken the other great works and difficult exercises of charity."[29] Louise engaged in charitable service as a practical means to express her love of God, convinced that "the person who does not love does not know God, for God is charity."[30]

Louise's Intuition

Marguerite Naseau (1594–1633), a rustic woman from the countryside of Suresnes, was the first to offer her services to Vincent to assist the Confraternities of Charity in Paris.[31] Other volunteers followed Marguerite's example. Vincent sent them to Louise to assess their character, clarify their motivations, and determine if they could shoulder the demands of the service. Louise recognized their goodwill but also their need to acquire knowledge and skills for the care of the sick including how to read and write.

Louise thought these volunteers should live together to be formed for service. She persisted in persuading Vincent to endorse her proposal. They invited the women interested in serving the sick poor to live with her in her home on 29 November 1633. In that way, Louise could observe their attitudes and guide them in developing core values, mentoring them to be effective servants of the sick poor.

Assessing, teaching, forming, organizing, supervising, and leading this nascent company of charity became Louise's personal mission until her death almost thirty years later. She firmly fashioned her intuition into the praxis of "charity...toward God or toward

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26 Document A.56, "Notes on the Meetings of the Ladies of Charity," n.d. [between 1647 and 1660], *SW*, 789.

27 Letter 42, "To Saint Louise," [1630], *CCD*, 1:70. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/25/.

28 Letter 1254, "To Étienne Blatiron," 2 September 1650, ibid., 4:76. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/29/.

29 Forrestal, *VDP, Lazarist Mission*, 215.

30 Document A.29, "(On Charity)," n.d., *SW*, 710.

31 Brejon, *The Streets as a Cloister*, 141–46.

Belgian holy card depicting an anachronistic view of Marguerite Naseau, in the early attire of the Daughters of Charity, carrying a soup pot and ladle. DePaul University collection.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

the neighbor."[32] Louise's leadership deftly guided charitable initiatives through the murky currents of ecclesiastical clericalism and patriarchy in society at a time when some ordained clergy displayed wanton duplicity, disregard for celibacy, and excessive indulgence in French wine.[33]

Status Quo Challenged

Clericalism permeated the Catholic Church. Women were in the shadows, lacking voice and agency. Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303) imposed the rule of a strict active and

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32 Document A.29, "(On Charity)," n.d., *SW*, 710.

33 McShea, *La Duchesse*, 198.

passive cloister on all monasteries of nuns by *Periculoso* (1298), that prohibited not only exit but also the entrance of unauthorized persons into the monastic enclosure. The enclosure of religious women was a universal decree, to which the Council of Trent (1563) added strict penalties for violations. Its purpose was to protect women from the violence of the outside world. The decree not only reflected the theological dichotomies of Christian perfection of that period: contemplation versus active apostolate and sacred versus secular, but also stifled the creativity of additional initiatives of, for, and by women.

Patriarchy had prevailed in Europe for centuries although "women faced severe (and worsening) institutional restrictions in most aspects of seventeenth-century French life."[34] The economic role of single, married, or widowed women varied from province to province. Women seem to have had "virtually sole responsibility" for "nurturing tasks, such as caring for the sick and preparing meals."[35] Yet, "more women-headed households; legal documents—such as leases—increasingly came to involve women; and the state took a sudden interest in the number of women heads of households."[36] As a result, the state began to restrict women's legal rights to assure "continued male dominance of public society."[37]

Novel and Bold

Yet some women acted to pursue their vision. Their agency forged ways to bypass the patriarchal structures.[38] Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul cleverly developed a lexicon, identity, and way of life for the service of poor persons to ensure the durability of the mission they envisioned. They wanted their daughters to be available to serve wherever their mission required. Their organization and lifestyle evolved from the obligations of a mission, which demanded flexibility and mobility. The people of Paris called these servants of the poor Daughters of Charity because of their dedication and compassion. Organizationally, they would become a society of apostolic life, not a cloistered congregation of women religious subject to a bishop. The Vincentian way was novel and bold but robust.

This model could be considered as proto-feminism, which is to say, a philosophical concept about the role of women prior to the eighteenth century when the feminist concept was yet unknown. The Vincentian model provided space for female agency driven by faith, a religious purpose, and humanitarian need in contrast to the prevailing ecclesial culture

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34 James B. Collins, "The Economic Role of Women in Seventeenth-Century France," *French Historical Studies* 16:2 (Autumn 1989), 439. Available at https://doi.org/10.2307/286618.

35 Ibid., 442.

36 Ibid., 452.

37 Ibid., 470.

38 Cf. Martha Howell, *Women and Gender in the Early Modern Low Countries, 1500–1750* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 22–31. Available online at https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004391352_003.

to protect women.[39] Guided by a mission and gospel values distinct from feminist core principles, Vincentian ministry was innovative.[40]

Louise reiterated her intent whenever a misunderstanding arose. The Daughters of Charity were to be available to serve when and where needed. They would not be a community structured by regulations for the sake of piety.[41] Instead, the Daughters of Charity were hard-working women who rendered basic home nursing to people in their homes, hospitals, or wherever needed. Louise adamantly explained to Vincent that she had explained to the Vicar General several times that the Daughters of Charity "were just a secular family … bound together by the Confraternity of Charity" and directed by Vincent de Paul.[42] Vincent and Louise gradually introduced appropriate structures as the community expanded its ministries beyond Paris.

Mission

The early Daughters of Charity served in ministries that focused on unmet needs by providing solutions that were mission-driven, practical, and replicable. During the seventeenth century, Louise provided support to sisters who were sent to alleviate suffering in various situations. Issues they confronted included:

- Crop failures that caused hunger and starvation.
- War and plunder which stirred the internal dislocation of citizens.
- Women who had abandoned unwanted infants on the streets.
- Aging that resulted in the disregard of elderly persons.

Louise supervised feeding programs for refugees, organized infant care for foundlings, established homes for orphans, and housing where elderly artisans could continue their craft. Gradually, in response to emerging needs, the sisters engaged in healthcare, education, prison ministry, and the care of individuals with mental illness. Louise exhorted the sisters: "Oh, how true it is that souls who seek God will find Him everywhere but especially in the poor!"[43]

Hospitals

Seventeenth-century hospitals were more a shelter of last resort for the dying than

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39 Cf. Elizabeth Rapley, *A Social History of the Cloister: Daily Life in the Teaching Monasteries of the Old Regime* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 118–24.

40 See Anthony J. LaVopa, "Women, Gender, and the Enlightenment: A Historical Turn," *The Journal of Modern History* 80:2 (2008): 348. Available online at https://doi.org/10.1086/588854.

41 Letter 481, "To Monsieur Vincent," *SW*, 292–94.

42 Ibid.

43 Letter 292, "To Sister Jeanne Delacroix," 5 November [1653], *SW*, 431.

Vincent and Louise with foundlings. Original in Daughters of Charity provincial house, St. Jakob, Ljubljana, Slovenia. Work of D. Birsa, 1991.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

for recovery of health. Louise and the women who volunteered as "Servants of the Sick Poor" responded to abandoned sick persons, first with in-home nursing (1633), then in the pastoral care of poor patients of the Hôtel-Dieu (1634).[44]

Foundlings

In response to the abuse and abandonment of unwanted infants Vincent inspired The Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu, a group of wealthy women, to financially support the care of foundlings.[45] These unwanted infants touched Louise's heart to the core. Could the pangs of her lonely childhood have haunted her in these fragile castaways? Their helplessness inspired Louise and her Daughters of Charity to launch one of their first pro-life ministries in 1638. Louise engaged lactating women as wet nurses in the absence of their birth mothers to feed the infants naturally. Either she or the Daughters of Charity supervised the care the infants received by making home visits.[46] Louise reported to the sisters at Angers in 1644 that "our two sisters, Barbe [Angiboust] and Marie Daras, have returned in good health, thank God, from their six-week visit to all the foundlings, placed with wet nurses."[47]

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44 Margaret Flinton, D.C., *Louise de Marillac: The Social Aspect of her Work* (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1992), 44, 48–49. Hereinafter cited as *LDM: Social Aspect of her Work.*

45 Ibid., 53–84.

46 Wet nurses were lactating women unrelated to the infants they nursed.

47 Letter104b, "To the Sisters [at Angers]," 26 July [1644], *SW*, 114.

Education for Girls

Louise grasped the sacred and social dimensions of impoverished persons. She was particularly appalled by the ignorance of little girls and by 1640 insisted that the parish-based Confraternities of Charity engage a schoolmistress to educate young children.[48] In a letter to a sister at Chantilly, Louise advised: "Instruct your little schoolgirls with great gentleness; however, do not allow them to make mistakes without correcting them."[49] Louise made literacy a priority, also, for the Daughters of Charity, many of whom were young women from the countryside who had not had the opportunity for basic education.

Galley Convicts

For Louise, having a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good meant solidarity with those who suffer; therefore, she responded to the misery of galley convicts and sent sisters to undertake this challenging ministry in 1640.[50] She wrote Vincent that a "sister serving the galley … [convicts] came to me in tears yesterday because she cannot get any more bread for her poor men since she owes so much to the baker and bread is so expensive. She borrows and begs for them everywhere with great difficulty."[51]

Elderly Artisans

Louise saw the abject isolation and inactivity of elderly artisans.52 These former clothmakers, bootmakers, shoemakers, button makers, glovemakers, seamstresses, lace makers, etc., lacked meaningful tasks. Therefore, Louise sent sisters to establish the Hospice of the Holy Name of Jesus (1653) to fill their days with productive activity and train others in their craft.53 As she said, "It seemed to me that we should hope that the first persons chosen would be of great integrity … to help them to understand the importance of the decision which they have made.… [If] they are skilled in a trade, they shall be allowed to stay only for six months to teach their craft to others."[54]

Persons with Mental Illness

Desirous to humanize the care of persons suffering from mental illness, Louise and Vincent created *Les Petites Maisons* in 1655, a facility where those individuals could

48 Flinton, *LDM: Social Aspect of her Work*, 85–99. Brejon, *The Streets as a Cloister*, 146–48.

49 Letter 352, "To Sister Claude Brigide," n.d., *SW*, 303.

50 Flinton, *LDM: Social Aspect of her Work*, 100–17.

51 Letter 408, "To Monsieur Vincent," 11 July [1652], *SW*, 399–400.

52 Flinton, *LDM: Social Aspect of her Work*, 118–32.

53 Cf. Document A. 99, "[Notes on the Organization of the Hospice of Saint-Nom-de-Jesus]," [c. 1653], *SW*, 794–95.

54 Ibid., 794.

be treated with respect and receive compassionate care.[55] Recognizing how important consistency of relationships is for patient care, Louise tried to facilitate a smooth transition when personnel changes were made. She urged a sister to accept those newly assigned to this challenging ministry with "gentleness, submission, and cordiality."[56]

Displaced Persons

Due to intense battles and warfare, there was a significant increase in internally displaced individuals from rural regions who sought refuge in Paris. Louise's moral formula of the greatest good for all moved her to feed those exiled. The need was great. Louise reported that "there are parishes here in which there are 5,000 poor to whom we give soup. In our parish 2,000 are given soup—not counting the sick."[57] Not stymied by politics or ethnicity, Louise responded to human suffering and sent sisters to areas devastated by war to care for wounded and ill soldiers at Châlons-sur-Marne (1653), La Fère (1656), and Calais (1658).[58]

When writing to reassure a sister sent to Brienne to aid war victims, Louise shared the wisdom of her experience: "In fact, you will see a great amount of misery that you cannot relieve. God sees it as well and does not want to give those who suffer greater abundance. Share their trials with them; do all you can to provide them with a little assistance and remain at peace."[59]

Lessons from Louise

Like Louise de Marillac, modern day social service personnel and social workers not only grapple with clients trapped in poverty but are also affected by their wounds from disease, violence, racism, war, trauma, addiction, and nefarious technology. Sympathetic to the needs of vulnerable persons, Louise recommended that the sisters cultivate humility, simplicity, and charity as characteristic values to inform their service.[60]

Louise upheld the dignity and worth of each person. Every client or patient deserved competent and compassionate assistance. Louise knew Vincent de Paul's teaching and counseled her associates accordingly. It was important "not only to do good but to do it well."[61]

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55 Flinton, *LDM: Social Aspect of her Work*, 133–43.

56 Letter 550, "To Barbe Angiboust," 2 November 1657, *SW*, 576.

57 Letter 353, "To Barbe Angiboust," 11 June 1652, *SW*, 396–97: 396–97.

58 Roman, *SVDP*, 473–74, 573–80.

59 Ibid., 396.

60 Document A.78, "[On the Naming of Sister Servants]," [n.d., but between 1647 and 1660], *SW*, 793.

61 Conference 177, "Repetition of Prayer," 25 November 1657, *CCD*, 11:389. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/37/

French engraving, the text of which reads, "The Sisters of Charity go out to do good works."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

Education and skill development were priorities for Louise. She encouraged the sisters to support their companions as they learned to read and write. Sometimes there were startling discrepancies in skillsets. She once observed that "we have no one suitable who knows how to read and write. The sister who remained in Varize knows only how to let blood."[62]

Integral to Louise's moral vision for the common good was the sacredness of human life. A detailed organizer and good manager, Louise arranged for tiny bracelets to identify every foundling brought into care. Each infant was named, baptized, and recorded in a register which made it possible to track the infants placed with wet nurses. Louise stressed that monitoring the infants and their condition was obligatory.

Centuries later advocacy for systemic change and work for social justice surfaced on the horizon. However, one could surmise that Vincentian initiatives contributed to shaping a more just society in the seventeenth century. For example, Louise participated in launching creative strategies to combat homelessness and hunger. She and her volunteers focused on assisting poor people by meeting their basic needs for survival and making a livelihood. The Vincentian model served all persons without discrimination, despite regional, ethnic, and language differences. The sisters understood that they were "bound to be always ready to practice charity, without exception of persons or places."[63]

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62 Letter 380, "To Monsieur Vincent," Eve of All Saints [1653], *SW*, 431.

63 Conference 70, "Explanation of the Common Rules," 29 September 1655, *CCD,* 10:92. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/35/

Louise listened to the voices of others. For example, an aristocratic benefactor, Madame Goussault, implored Vincent to consider the Daughters of Charity assuming responsibility for the management and nursing services of the Hôpital Saint-Jean at Angers in 1639.[64] Vincent sent Louise there to assess the situation. She engaged the key stakeholders in decision-making processes that would impact them and their locale. After meeting with the various parties, Louise recorded details of those meetings, negotiations, and her travel, then composed the prototype management contract, which Vincent directed her to sign.[65] That was an extraordinary act for a woman of the seventeenth century.

Concerned for the best interests of patients, Louise addressed the importance of quality nursing care and required the best practices of her time. She demonstrated her innate skills to advocate for persons in need and to successfully negotiate with powerful men. Like modern social workers, Louise promoted ethical standards for her collaborators and their ministries. The sociopolitical situation in seventeenth-century France was different from today, but the needs of underserved populations resonate with contemporary social issues in North America.[66]

Mystique

Putting her faith into action, Louise de Marillac exercised her unique talent for her neighbors in need. Divine grace shaped her mystique and fueled her esoteric skillset essential to her vocation as a servant, mentor, organizer, and leader. Oriented toward mission—service to persons oppressed by poverty—Louise's unique charism or gift flowed from her deep desire to fulfill "the designs of God" in her life.[67] An accomplished woman and a contemplative, the Holy Spirit formed Louise for charity—her spirituality and natural charm complemented her relationships with others. Her writings reveal that the Holy Spirit was pivotal for her, according to the prominent French Catholic historian and her biographer, Jean Calvet.[68] Louise wrote, "We must turn to the Spirit of Love, the Holy Spirit … and beg Him to come into our hearts … thereby giving us the capacity to live in Him as He lives in us."[69]

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64 Born Genevieve Fayet (1631–1639) and was the widow of Antoine Goussault, advisor to the king and president of the Administration of Finances.

65 Document 143a, "Contract with Saint-Jean Hospital in Angers," 1 February 1640, *CCD,* 13b:114–16. Available online at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/38/.

66 Frederic G. Reamer, *A Review of the NASW Code of Ethics* (NASW Press: 2009). Ch. 1. Ethical Standards in Social Work: An Introduction. https://naswpress.org/FileCache/2021/03_March/Ethical_Standards_in_Social_Work.pdf.

67 Document A.4, "Oblation to the Blessed Virgin," (c.1626), *SW,* 695.

68 Jean Calvet, *Louise de Marillac: A Portrait*, trans. G. F. Pullen (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1959), 181. Herinafter cited as *LDM: A Portrait*. Louise Sullivan, D.C., "The Spirituality of Louise de Marillac: Formed by the Spirit for Charity," *Vincentian Heritage* 12:2 (1991). Available at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol12/iss2/4. See also Robert P. Maloney, C.M., "Five Faces of St. Louise," 21 April 2023, video, https://famvin.org/en/2023/04/21/five-faces-of-st-louise-de-marillac/.

69 Document M.72, "(On Holy Communion)," [n.d. but between 1647 and 1660], *SW*, 822–23.

French holy card quoting Louise de Marillac, "When we have great difficulty in being able to do all that we would like for our poor, we should confide them to the care of the Father of the Poor, Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

Louise was intuitive and intellectual by nature but able to bridge social distinctions cordially and gently. As a wife and mother, even before she knew the bishop of Geneva, Francis de Sales (1567–1622), and Vincent de Paul, Louise reached out to assist her neighbors. Gradually, she came to understand that poor persons were her "lords and masters."[70] As a widow, Louise attuned herself to listen to persons in need and saw them as her teachers. This focus became central as a mystique regarding the needs of poor persons encircled her being.[71]

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70 Charpy, *LDM: Come Winds or High Waters*, 153–56.

71 Calvet, *LDM: A Portrait*, 195.

Foundational Values

Louise believed that each person is sacred. Everyone is equal in the eyes of God. The love of Jesus Christ crucified impelled Louise to live her vocation characterized by the virtues of "humility, simplicity, and charity," and to impart that spirit to the women who joined her as Daughters of Charity.[72]

Louise met Francis de Sales in 1619 and avidly read his books, including *Introduction to a Devout Life*, which must have resonated with her, particularly in her widowhood.

> A devout widow should chiefly seek to … be diligent in ministering to the poor and sick, comforting the afflicted, leading the young to a life of devotion, studying herself to be a perfect model of virtue to younger women … Simplicity should be the adornment of her garb, humility and charity of her actions, simplicity and kindliness of her words, modesty and purity of her eyes,—Jesus Christ Crucified the only Love of her heart.[73]

Could this be the source of the characteristic virtues and the seal with its imprint, *The charity of Jesus crucified impels us,* of the Company of Charity?[74] As Louise could be impatient and sometimes inordinately zealous, Vincent had to remind her that "God … asks first for the heart and, after that, for the work."[75]

Trust

Louise recognized that healthy human relationships create rapport and interpersonal bonds. Therefore, she advised her collaborators to project a welcoming attitude of cordiality and acceptance to build a foundation of trust. Her example taught others to respect the human dignity of each person. Everyone is worthy of respect simply by being human. Each person is created in the image and likeness of God. Louise reminded herself and others that they were "destined to represent the Goodness of God to those poor people."[76]

Louise had a keen instinct for assessing persons, their situations, and their needs. Her perceptions were usually validated by experience. In her instructions to the confraternities, and later to the Daughters of Charity, Louise reminded them that "Their chief concern … [was]

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72 Document A.78, "[On the Naming of Sister Servants]," [n.d. but between 1647 and 1660], *SW*, 793.

73 Francis de Sales, Chapter 39, "Instructions for Widows," *Introduction to Devout Life* (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1885), 216–17.

74 Brejon, *The Streets as a Cloister*, 341–44. Louise Sullivan, D.C., "The Spirituality of Louise de Marillac: Moved by the Spirit to Charity," *Vincentian Heritage* 12:2 (1991). Available at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol12/iss2/5. The characteristic virtues are humility, simplicity, and charity.

75 Conference 71, "On the End of the Company," 18 October 1655, *CCD*, 10:108. Cf. Louise Sullivan, D.C., "'God Wants First The Heart And Then The Work': Louise de Marillac and Leadership In the Vincentian Tradition," *Vincentian Heritage* 19:1 (1998). Available at https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol19/iss1/11.

76 Conference 85, "Service of the Sick and Care of One's Own Health," 11 November 1657, *CCD*, 10:268.

to serve the sick poor."[77] Firsthand experience had taught Louise how to face unpredictable circumstances and envision possibilities to improve the lives of suffering people. Although begun in seventeenth-century France, with its deep divisions between rich and poor, the powerful and the powerless, the legacy of Louise de Marillac today reminds us that God stands firmly on the side of the most marginalized members of society. Yet, how often do executives consider how the lives of the most vulnerable people are impacted or enhanced by their decisions?

Louise integrated her spirituality and service into a way of living and serving because, through her eyes of faith, she saw the face of Christ in persons who were poor. Mission-driven factors molded Louise's path to holiness, organizational management, and praxis of Vincentian professionalism and Vincentian personalism.

As more candidates joined the Daughters of Charity, Louise took care to instruct them in the foundational values of Vincentian services. Like Louise, social service workers must approach those they serve with humility. To honor those seeking aid for their fundamental necessities, social service professionals must be persons of integrity who respect clients and are honest. To truly embody charity, one must approach it with benevolence, compassion, kindness, and genuine respect. Social work as a credentialed profession emerged in North America centuries after Louise de Marillac's pioneering work in Vincentian social service projects in France. Although the two are not directly linked, there is a notable similarity of methods.

Mary Ellen Richmond (1861–1928) transformed charity into the profession of social work and is respected as its principal founder. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW[78]), founded in 1955, defines social work as applying values, principles, and techniques to provide services, counseling, improve communities, and participate in legislation. Jane Addams (1860–1935) and Ellen Gates Starr (1859–1940) visited Toynbee Hall, on London's East End, and replicated it as Hull House in a densely populated immigrant neighborhood of Chicago in 1889. Intentionally or not, Richmond, Addams, and Starr established their enterprises in cities where the Daughters of Charity were renowned for their kindness, compassion, and generosity toward their neighbor. Louise's approach to serving people in need remains relevant for social work practitioners today.

Legacy

Louise de Marillac is a prime example of a Catholic woman who believed that she was serving Jesus Christ when she cared for persons who were impoverished. Her social service

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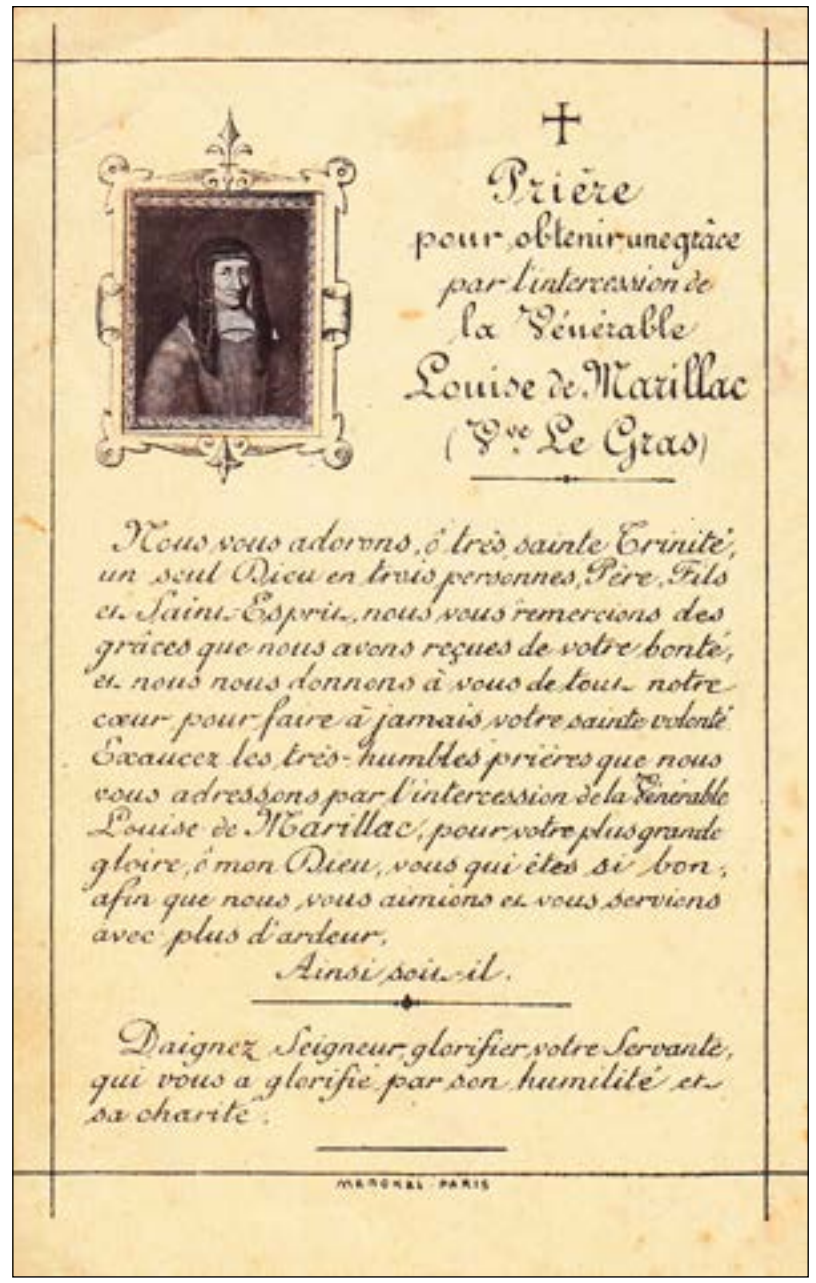
77 Ibid., 267.

78 For more on social work practice and the National Association of Social Workers, see: https://www.socialworkers.org/Practice



At left, French holy card. The text reads, "O, Jesus, who are my God, my king, my father, my savior, and my judge, grant me obedience, meekness, and humility." Collection of DePaul University. At right, French prayer card meant to obtain a favor through the intercession of the Venerable Louise de Marillac (Widow Le Gras). The prayer includes the sentence: "O Lord, deign to glorify your servant who glorified you by her humility and charity."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

interventions resonate with modern solutions for similar social issues. As demonstrated in their work corporally and spiritually assisting the sick poor, convicts, and foundlings, the mission of the apostolic society she organized as Daughters of Charity crosses the boundaries of time:

> By assisting corporally and spiritually the sick poor in parishes and hospitals, convicts, and foundlings: corporally, by giving them food and medicine; and spiritually, by seeing that the sick poor who are near death may leave this world in a good state … that the foundlings may be instructed in the things necessary for salvation.[79]

79 Document 146, "Erection of the Company of the Daughters of Charity as a Confraternity," 20 November 1646, *CCD*, 13b:133.

Pope Pius XI canonized Saint Louise de Marillac on 11 March 1934, and Pope John XXIII declared her the patron of Christian Social Workers in 1960 because:

- She was a trailblazer in the field of social services and collaborated with all the charitable endeavors of Saint Vincent de Paul.
- She oversaw the training of social services and public health staff by visiting charity centers in rural areas and towns. She also provided guidance and direction to the Daughters of Charity to serve the impoverished and sick.
- The spirit of Christian charity lives on through numerous private and public institutions that offer social services and public health services across five continents, particularly by those associated with the International Association of Charity, the Daughters of Charity, and nurses who were educated by the Daughters of Charity.[80]

Conclusion

The global Vincentian Family honors Saint Louise de Marillac as a woman of heroic virtue whose model of charity continues to this day in reaching out to impoverished persons at the peripheries of society. Finding ways to seamlessly integrate faith, values, and service into our daily lives can be quite a challenge. Saints themselves are models for believers and intercessors with God. In considering her legacy, social workers have a patron in Saint Louise, a woman whose life of service is a compelling model for engaging others in their human struggles by treating them with "compassion, meekness, cordiality, respect, and devotion."[81]

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80 "His Holiness, Pope John XXIII Proclaimed Saint Louise de Marillac Patron of All Christian Social Workers," *Echo of the Motherhouse* (Paris: Filles de la Charité, 1960), 172–80.

81 Conference 85, "Service of the Sick," 11 November 1657, *CCD*, 10:267. The feast of Saint Louise is 9th of May.

From Lay Apostles to Missionary Disciples: Father Thomas A. Judge, C.M., and the Future of Catholic Laity

William L. Portier, Ph.D.

BIO

WILLIAM L. PORTIER, Ph.D., is Professor Emeritus at the University of Dayton, where from 2004 to 2021, he served as Mary Ann Spearin Chair of Catholic Theology and, from 2011 to 2021, as Ph.D. Program Director. He lives in Emmitsburg, MD, and is presently Theologian in Residence at Mount St. Mary's University, MD, where he taught from 1979 to 2003 and served as Henry J. Knott Professor and Theology Department Chair. He specializes in nineteenth and twentieth-century U.S. Catholic life and thought, especially the Americanist and modernist crises, and the modernist crisis and *Ressourcement* in European Catholic theology. His books include *Every Catholic An Apostle: A Life of Thomas A. Judge, C.M, 1868-1933* (Catholic University of America Press, 2017), also translated into Spanish in 2017; *Divided Friends: Portraits of the Roman Catholic Modernist Crisis in the United States* (Catholic University of America Press, 2013), Catholic Press Association second place in the category of Biography for 2014; *Tradition and Incarnation, Foundations of Christian Theology* (Paulist Press, 1994), a widely used theology textbook; and *Isaac Hecker and the First Vatican Council* (Edwin Mellen Press, 1985). He received the American Catholic Historical Association's Distinguished Scholar Award for 2015 and the College Theology Society's Best Article Award in 1989, 2005, and 2023. In 2016 students and friends published a *Festschrift* in his honor entitled *Weaving the American Catholic Tapestry* (Pickwick).

Previous Article

Next Article

Table of Contents

Elected superior general in 1918, François Verdier, C.M., made a canonical visitation to the United States in 1922. He visited the Eastern Province and the Daughters of Charity and then traveled to Chicago. When Father Verdier arrived at the Port of New York on 1 October, the group that greeted him included the fifty-four-year-old Thomas A. Judge, C.M. (1868–1933). Ordained in 1899, Judge spent twelve years on the mission band in the East before being sent to the Alabama mission at Opelika in 1915. From his experience on the mission band and in the South grew his innovative work with the laity. When he failed to find the support he hoped for his work from the provincial council, he decided to appeal to the general council to whom he had been reporting directly since 1920. Patrick McHale, C.M. (1853–1937), Verdier's third assistant in Paris who had accompanied him to New York, became a staunch supporter of Judge's work with the laity.

Father Judge prepared a fourteen-page set of enclosures that presented to Father Verdier and the council his mature vision for the lay apostolate. He showed them to Verdier in New York and then mailed them to him while the general was still in the U.S. By early 1923, Judge had received a response from Paris that far exceeded his hopes. Three years earlier, the council had freed him to work exclusively with the Cenacle, the name for the lay movement from which eventually grew two religious communities.[1] The council was particularly impressed with the list of thirty-eight episcopal endorsements Judge included. Now, as he explained to Bishop Edward Allen of Mobile, Judge had been "freed from all provincial superiors and subject to himself [the general] alone. I have been told not only to devote myself entirely to the Cenacle's interests but that this is my life's work."[2]

In explaining the Cenacle to the general and his council, Judge described lay apostles as "trained to be alert to the interests of the Church, in fact, in the circumstances of their everyday life, to be the Church … Every Catholic should be an apostle."[3] The remainder of this essay offers a basic account of this central claim of Father Judge. The essay has three parts.[4] The first touches briefly on his phrase "lay apostles" and sketches its origins. The

1 "The Council has decided to leave you free to direct the 'Missionary Sisters,' and in consequence to leave you free from the office of Superior. The Visitor will make you a formal announcement to that effect. You will, of course, be under his jurisdiction, and consult him concerning their affairs. No doubt you will arrange with him about your residence, which had best be apart from the Sisters. Your reports are very interesting and encouraging. I hope that Opelika will soon profit by the Sisters' Apostolate." McHale to Judge, Dublin, 10 December 1920, Archives of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity (hereinafter AST), microfilm 628, as cited in William L. Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle: A Life of Thomas A. Judge, C.M., 1868–1933* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 164. Significantly, Father McHale raised the recurring issue of Father Judge's residence.

2 Judge to Bishop Edward P. Allen, Cottonton, AL, 3 January 1923, Allen Papers, Archives Archdiocese of Mobile, as cited in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle,* 206–207.

3 Judge to Most Reverend Father [Verdier], Cottonton, AL, Feast of Blessed John Gabriel Perboyre, 1922 [7 November], Archives of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, Silver Spring, MD, microfilm 689–90, as cited in ibid., 201; on Verdier's election and visitation, see ibid., 161–62; 198–207.

4 This essay began as a lecture at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago on 24 October 2021 to celebrate the upcoming 100th Anniversary of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, the men's religious community which grew from Father Judge's Missionary Cenacle movement. The women's community, the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity celebrated their centennial in 2018. I am grateful to John Edmunds, S.T., for his invitation to deliver this lecture and for his hospitality to my wife, Bonnie, and me while we were in Chicago.

second part introduces Father Judge as an early twentieth-century Vincentian pioneer of the lay apostolate. The third part brings us up to the "synodal journey" to which Pope Francis is calling the church at this time. This synodal journey began on 16 October 2021 with a twenty-two-page document entitled "For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission." It was initially to culminate with a general synod in Rome, 4–29 October 2023. On 16 October 2022, Pope Francis announced that the synod's culmination would be two-fold, a journey within a journey, the already planned 2023 synod and another 2024 synod.

1. Lay Apostles

Where does this phrase "lay apostle" come from? "For a Synodal Church" (2021) takes for granted the church's mission to "proclaim the Gospel" and that, "by virtue of our Baptism and Confirmation," we all participate in this mission of "evangelization."[5] "For a Synodal Church" calls the church's mission to preach the gospel *evangelization*, a term Catholics never used in the days of Father Judge. Even the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, published in 1967, had no entry on "evangelization." As we have seen, Vatican II refers instead to the laity's "apostolate." This represents a development when it claims that this "apostolate" arises "from their Christian vocation.[6] Pope Paul VI's apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, made *evangelization* common in Catholic discourse and greatly expanded the scope of its meaning. Pope Francis has called it "the greatest pastoral document ever written."[7] But it did not appear until 1975.

Before Vatican II, U.S. Catholics did not have a very well-developed sense of a universal call to preach the gospel. Apostolic work, especially preaching, belonged primarily to bishops and clergy. In the twentieth century's second decade, when Father Judge used the phrase "lay apostle," for example, many heard it as infringing on the proper role of the clergy. In 1914, most likely because of such complaints from his clergy, Boston's Cardinal William O'Connell banned the Cenacle from his archdiocese.[8]

"Lay apostle" and "lay apostolate" find their context in the hard distinction, characteristic of modern Catholicism, between clergy and laity. In terms of this distinction,

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5 Pope Francis, "For a Synodal Church," paragraph 2. See also The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), paragraph 33 in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Norman P. Tanner, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: Sheed & Ward and Georgetown University Press, 1990), 2:876:

> The apostolate of the laity is a sharing the church's mission of salvation, and everyone is commissioned to this apostolate by the Lord himself through baptism and confirmation. By the sacraments, especially by the sacred eucharist, there is communicated and nourished that love for God and for people which is the soul of the entire apostolate. The laity, however, have the specific vocation to make the church present and active in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth. In this way every lay person, because of the gifts received, is at the same time a witness and a living instrument of the church's mission 'according to the measure of Christ's gift' (Eph 4,7).

6 The Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*), paragraph 1 in ibid., 2:981.

7 As cited in Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer, Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014), 122. On the "Argentine hands" involved in drafting *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* see also 122.

8 Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 89–95. For more on Cardinal William O'Connell, see Douglas J. Slawson's study titled, *Ambition and Arrogance: Cardinal William O'Connell of Boston and the American Catholic Church* (Cobalt Productions, 2007), 232 pp.

The official logo of the synodal path. Symbolically "a large, majestic tree, full of wisdom and light, reaches for the sky. A sign of deep vitality and hope which expresses the cross of Christ. It carries the Eucharist, which shines like the sun. The horizontal branches, opened like hands or wings, suggest, at the same time, the Holy Spirit."

Courtesy www.synod.va

only clergy are called by their vocations to preach and do apostolic work. "Lay apostle" and "lay apostolate" begin to push back on this hard distinction but are still cast in its terms.

How did the senses of these phrases come to be expanded and applied to all Christians? The short answer is modern politics, that is, popular sovereignty, individual rights and autonomy, and the secularity of the state. These developments represent the end of the post-Westphalian confessional state system in Europe, the effective end of Christendom's ideal of the union of throne and altar.[9]

Vatican II's Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity begins with "modern conditions" as "requiring an even more vigorous and widespread apostolate" for the laity (paragraph 1). Its account of "modern conditions," however, doesn't mention modern politics or the fact that, beginning with the French Revolution, modern politics included secular states that exiled the church from what was becoming a secular public sphere. States banished religious congregations, closed Catholic schools and other institutions, and confiscated their property.

In this post-Christendom world, a church could either be a voluntary association of citizens or some sort of branch of the state, but it couldn't be a social body, a social fact, existing before individual subjects arrived on the scene, in what was becoming secular public space. This, for example, is the dilemma posed to the French bishops in 1790 by the

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9 See Yves M.J. Congar, O.P.'s authoritative analysis of the history and theology of these developments in *Lay People in the Church: A Study for a Theology of Laity*, trans. Donald Attwater, rev. ed. (Westminster, MD: Newman Press, 1965). See also Donna L. Orsuto and Robert S. White, eds., *Full, Conscious, and Active: Lay Participation in the Church's Dialogue with the World* (Vatican City: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 2020).

Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The postrevolutionary Catholic Church faced a tremendous crisis of imagination. If the church was not part of the state, how could it continue as a "social fact" and avoid simply becoming an interiorized pursuit in what was fast becoming, both legally and ontologically, a secular landscape? Part of the response, beginning in the early twentieth century was the laity and the "lay apostolate."[10]

As with Saint Vincent de Paul's Confraternities of Charity, first established among the women of his parish at Châtillon-les-Dombes in 1617, early modern lay people had begun to become deeply involved in the work of the church.[11] In medieval Christendom, they were more often royalty or aristocrats. Now they would more likely be ordinary citizens, the voluntary religious subjects created by modern politics. They would make the church present in a legally secular, often anticlerical, public sphere.

How this might work was not entirely clear. One of the early names given to this new approach was "Catholic Action."[12] Tortured abstract attempts to define Catholic Action struggled to do justice to both lay initiative and clerical authority. Pope Pius XI famously defined it as "lay participation in the hierarchy's apostolate."[13] Such a definition might strongly suggest that lay people do not have a proper share in the church's mission to spread the gospel.

Addressed to the assumption that apostolic work is proper to bishops and clergy, the terms *lay apostolate* or *lay apostle* complicate a hard distinction between clergy and laity, but they do not resolve the theological tension. Hence, Father Judge's need for the declarative "Every Catholic an apostle" with the emphasis on *every*. At the beginning of the twentieth century, such a claim was difficult to justify in theological terms. The sticking point, finally addressed by Vatican II, was the proper sense in which the word *apostle* might be attributed to lay people or Catholics who are not deacons or priests.

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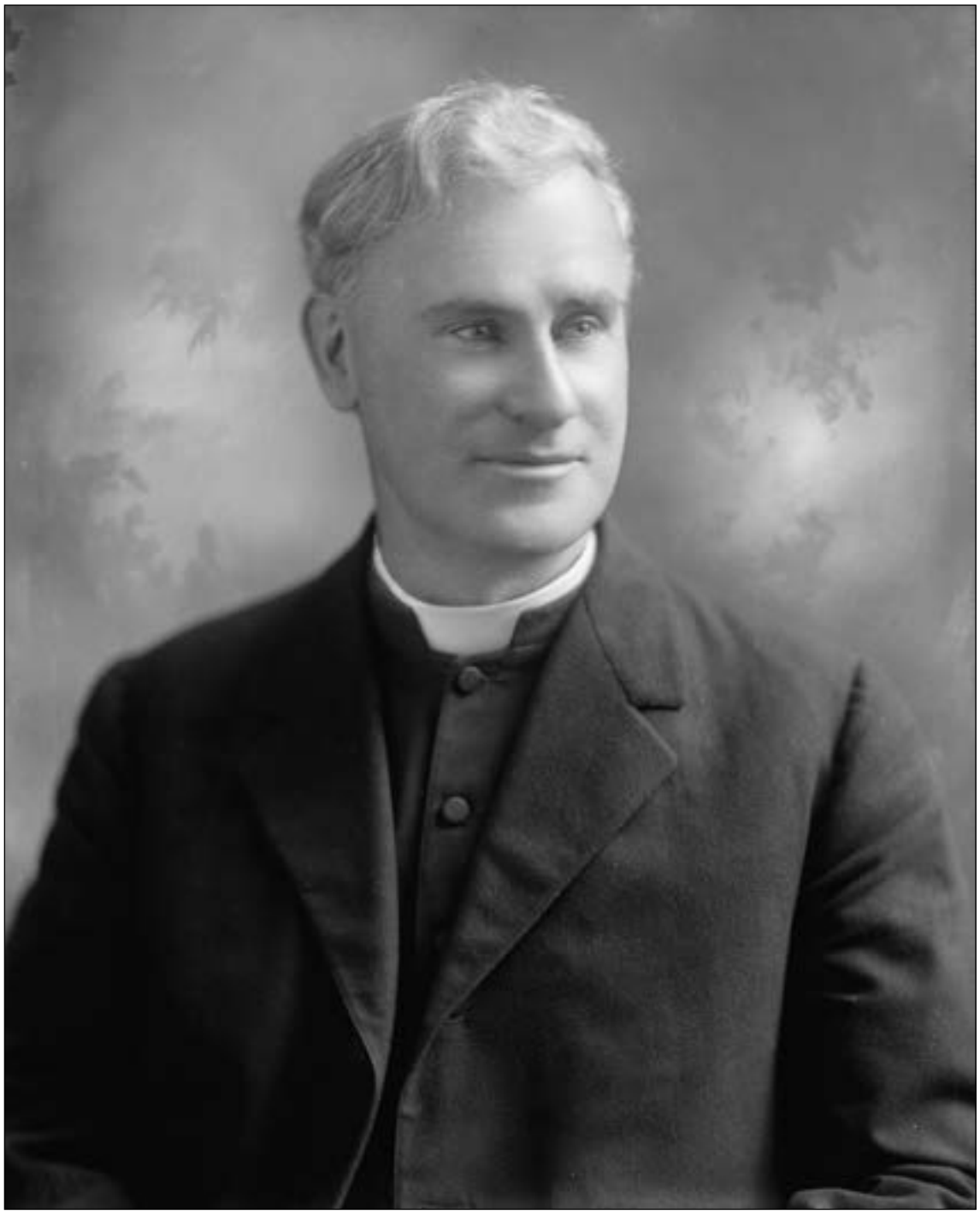
10 See Émile Perreau-Suassine, *Catholicism and Democracy: An Essay in the History of Political Thought,* trans. Richard Rex (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). Perreau-Saussine begins with the Civil Constitution of 1790 and from it dates "the breach between religion and what we call the modern world," 7. For "social fact" and its centrality, see 90. The second part of the book is entitled "A New Role for the Laity."

11 André Dodin, C.M., *Vincent de Paul and Charity: A Contemporary Portrait of His Life and Apostolic Spirit*, ed. Hugh O'Donnell, C.M. and Marjorie Gale Hornstein, trans. Jean Marie Smith and Dennis Saunders (New Rochelle, NY: New City Press, 1993), 24–25; see also Robert Bireley, S.J., "The Christian in the World," chap. 5 in *The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1999).

12 Congar locates a rediscovery of the apostolic role of the laity in France between 1925 and 1940, "those fine years of Catholic Action." See *Lay People in the Church,* 56.

13 For Congar's discussion of this definition, see ibid., 362–65. On the laity's part in the church's priestly and kingly functions, see chaps. 4 and 5 respectively. In a 10 January 2021 letter to Archbishop Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, on the occasion of the publication of his Motu Proprio *Spiritus Domini*, modifying canon 230, paragraph 1 regarding access of women to the ministries of Lector and Acolyte, previously only temporary or extraordinary, Pope Francis wrote: "A doctrinal development has been arrived at these last years that has brought to light how certain ministries instituted by the church have as their basis the common condition of being baptized and the royal priesthood received at baptism."



Portrait of Thomas A. Judge, C.M. (23 August 1868–23 November 1933), circa 1905.

Public Domain

2. Father Judge

Father Judge was born to Irish immigrant parents in South Boston in 1868. He died at Providence Hospital in Washington, D.C., in 1933 at age sixty-five. In 1899, he was ordained a Vincentian. From that time, the familiar "C.M." appeared after his name. Over his thirty-four years as a Vincentian, his outstanding contribution was his far-sighted vision for an apostolic laity. To that end, he founded a lay group known today as the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate. From that grew two religious communities: the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity, a women's community, who celebrated their centennial in 2018, and their male counterparts, the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity, who celebrated their centennial in 2021. Together with Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute, a secular institute, they all make up the Missionary Cenacle Family. The idea of a Cenacle family including laity, clergy, and women and men religious is central to Father Judge's vision.

The sources for Father Judge's vision are twofold. The life and conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul were the first source. Before souring on Father Judge in the late 1920s, Archbishop Michael J. Curley, Baltimore's ordinary from 1921 to 1947, once referred to him as "an American St. Vincent de Paul."[14] Father Judge's years in the internal seminary or novitiate at Germantown between 1893 and 1895 led him to the story of Saint Vincent de Paul. He came to dwell there. Eventually he would re-narrate Saint Vincent's story for the early twentieth-century United States. Immigrants in danger of losing their faith would replace rural peasantry as the focus of the work. The mission to the poor, the preservation of the faith, the key role taken by women, involvement of lay people, collaborative ministry between women and men—nearly every feature that defines the Cenacle is prefigured in Father Judge's novitiate notes on Louis Abelly's biography of Saint Vincent.[15] Instead of a seventeenth-century French peasant, imagine a second-generation Irish-American from Southie in Boston, instead of France in the Grand Siècle, imagine the Roaring Twenties in the United States. Instead of the Confraternities of Charity, imagine the early Cenacle. Instead of Louise de Marillac and the Daughters of Charity, imagine Mother Boniface Keasey and the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity.

One example will have to suffice. "Charity at white heat" or the "white heat of charity," as specifying zeal, is one of Father Judge's most recognizable and oft-cited sayings.[16] It would not be too much of a stretch to read these specifications of zeal as a disciple's riff, whether conscious or not, on an equally well-known saying of Saint Vincent: "If the love of God is fire, zeal is its flame."[17]

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14 As cited in Lawrence Brediger, S.T., ed., "Monsieur Vincent Lives On, 1660–1960" in *A Father Judge Anthology* (Silver Spring, MD: AST Archives, ca 1961), 152. Brediger began the Missionary Servants archives. He offers no source for this quote from Archbishop Curley. The article marks the tercentenary of Saint Vincent's death in 1960. He concludes the article with a long circular letter Father Judge wrote to members of the Cenacle on 19 July 1921, still, as he said, "in the octave of the feast of St. Vincent de Paul." Father Judge's three-and-a-half-page letter ends with this blessing:

> "St. Vincent's life has a special meaning for the children of the Cenacle. He is one of our very particular patrons. We look upon him as our Father: our hope and confidence in his prayerful intercession has thus increased the more. Plead with him that in our hearts and the heart of the Cenacle may be that great love of God that distinguished him; that we may hold our virtue in humility, that zeal may inflame our hearts, and that our discouragements and the strife with nature may be repelled by an ardent zeal for the poor and those desolate in all things spiritual. What more blessed grace, my dear children, can I prayerfully wish than that the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul may be yours. In St. Vincent then do I pray for you and bless you," 155.

15 On the young Thomas Judge's encounter with the spirit of Saint Vincent de Paul, see Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle,* 23–33, with references to the passages from Abelly on which Father Judge based his notes and references to particular conferences that he noted from *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents,* ed. and trans. Jacqueline Kilar, D.C. et al. vols. 1–14 (New York: New City Press, 1985–2014), vols. 11–12. Hereinafter *CCD*. See also John W. Carven, C.M., "Son of Saint Vincent," *Vincentian Heritage* 6:2 (1985): 241–46. This is Father Carven's sermon on the fiftieth anniversary of Father Judge's death in 1983. See also Dennis Berry, S.T., "A Study of the Spiritual Theologies of Saint Vincent de Paul and Father Thomas A. Judge, C.M." (Ph.D. diss., Washington University of St. Louis, 1989).

16 In a January 1922 circular letter to the Cenacle, "charity at white heat, zeal invincible" describes the "apostolic spirit"; AST, MF 12138. In a Pentecost conference of 31 May 1924, "zeal is the white heat of charity"; AST, MF 8477, as cited in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle,* 28, n. 46.

17 As cited in Dodin, *Vincent de Paul and Charity*, 54.

Fr. Judge's younger sisters Alice Judge, D.C., and Gerard Ledwidge, M.S.B.T., who both entered religious life.

Courtesy of the author

In addition to Saint Vincent de Paul, the second source for Father Judge's apostolic vision is his devotional approach to the Holy Spirit as maker of apostles. He found the Holy Spirit around 1911, having been ordained for more than a decade and, from 1903 to 1909, having traveled to East Coast cities on the Vincentian mission band. As the name Congregation of the Mission indicates, missions were the original work of Saint Vincent's community. Historian Jay Dolan describes parish missions in the United States as "Catholic revivals" and Father Judge was indeed a powerful preacher.[18]

In 1909–1910, census work at St. John the Baptist Parish in Brooklyn convinced Father Judge of the extent of immigrant "leakage" from the church, an early twentieth-century variant of "disaffiliation."[19] Virtually "abandoned" to settlement workers whose "Americanization" efforts often amounted to Protestant proselytizing, Italian immigrants and Puerto Ricans who came north after 1898 often didn't feel welcome in the largely Irish-dominated parishes of the urban Northeast. Census work and the counterexample of Jane Addams–style settlement workers convinced Father Judge that lay people would have a better chance than priests of reaching such people and helping them return to the church.

The occasion for Father Judge's finding the Holy Spirit was most likely his "humiliation

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18 Jay P. Dolan, *Catholic Revivalism: The American Experience, 1830–1900* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994). See also Douglas Slawson, "'To Bring Glad Tidings to the Poor': Vincentian Parish Missions in the United States" in *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, 1815–1987,* ed. John E. Rybolt, C.M. (Brooklyn, NY: New City Press, 1988), 163–227.

19 For the near-contemporary use of "leakage," see Gerald Shaughnessy, S.M., *Has the Immigrant Kept the Faith* (New York: Macmillan, 1925). Four years after Father Judge's death, the Vatican would appoint Shaughnessy Custodian General of the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity to conduct an apostolic visitation.

and rejection or elimination" in the matter of his involvement with the Archconfraternity of the Holy Agony.[20] By 1908 and 1909, Father Judge had made the archconfraternity a staple of his mission work. His approach occasioned serious conflict with his superiors and confreres.

Part of the "counterrevolutionary mysticism" in nineteenth-century France, the Archconfraternity of the Holy Agony was founded by Vincentian Antoine Nicolle in 1862.[21] Central to the devotion was the red scapular (Scapular of the Passion) from the apparitions, begun in 1846, of Christ to Sister Appoline Andriveau, D.C. Based on devotion to the mental sorrows of Jesus in solidarity with a politically beleaguered pope, the archconfraternity grew. Pope Leo XIII authorized its spread beyond France in 1894. Two years before in 1892, Vincentian superior general Antoine Fiat recommitted the Congregation of the Mission to promoting the archconfraternity. Early in 1908, Father Fiat appointed forty-year-old Father Judge to promote the archconfraternity in the United States.

In France the archconfraternity had primarily been about prayer and devotion. On the missions in the U.S., Father Judge added apostolic work with those in danger of being lost to the church and the relatively unusual practice of frequent communion. In addition, on missions he especially directed appeals for the archconfraternity to men. Each of these three practices led to conflict with his confreres on the missions, particularly the latter which interfered with the Holy Name Society. Father Judge did not handle these conflicts well. Instead of working things out with local superiors, he complained to Paris about the lack of enthusiasm for the archconfraternity in the province. In February 1909, Father Judge was removed from the mission band and sent to do census work for parishes in Brooklyn. In June 1909, Father Fiat's assistant informed Father Judge that it would be best if he no longer worked to promote the archconfraternity. This increased his "humiliation and rejection or elimination."[22]

Despite these setbacks, the archconfraternity marked the beginning of Father Judge's organized work for the lay apostolate. The image of the abandoned Christ agonizing in the garden helped him reinterpret the traditional Vincentian work of preaching the gospel to the poor for twentieth-century immigrants in the United States. He took the motto "for the preservation of the faith" directly from the aims of the archconfraternity. Most importantly, it was from the ranks of the archconfraternity's promoters that the pioneer women lay

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20 These are Father Judge's words to Fiat, en route on a Pennsylvania Limited Pullman vestibuled train, 24 April 1909, from an incomplete copy in AST, microfilm 3083–87, as cited in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 71; for a full discussion of the Archconfraternity of the Holy Agony and Father Judge's involvement with it, see 46–72.

21 Joseph A. Komonchak, "The Enlightenment and the Construction of Modern Roman Catholicism" *Annual of the Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs* (CCICA) (1985): 37–41.

22 Portier, *op. cit*, pp. 71–72.

apostles came. They began the Cenacle with Father Judge in Perboyre Chapel in Brooklyn around April 1910.[23] Twenty-five years later, one of the "work-a-day women" who helped found the Cenacle, Amy Croke, Sister Marie Baptista, recalled: "He told us the condition of many children who had never heard the name of God or the sweet name of Jesus, or of his Blessed Mother. He spoke of the terrific leakage from the Catholic Church, which not even the number of converts, though large, could balance. He told us that proselytizing was rampant among aliens, especially Italians; that numbers of the unbaptized, invalid marriages, and of those who never went to Mass or the sacraments were all around us."[24]

In September 1910, Father Judge was reassigned to the mission band, this time based in Springfield, Massachusetts. The years between 1910 and 1915, the year Father Judge was sent to the Alabama mission in Opelika, were formative for the lay apostolic movement he had begun. Most striking about his letters and conferences over those years is the central role of the Holy Spirit. His choice of the name "Cenacle" for this movement suggests that we need look no further than the Acts of the Apostles to answer the intriguing question of its immediate source. In any case, the difference between Father Judge of 1909 and Father Judge of 1915 is the Holy Spirit.[25] A 1912 letter conference from a mission in Brattleboro, Vermont, to the Brooklyn Cenacle suggests that he imagined the Cenacle lay apostles taken up into the story of Acts, reliving the Spirit-filled apostolic moments in which the church began in Brooklyn. "Never forget," he wrote, "you are communicating a spirit to others. Pray, pray that it may be the Spirit of God, his good influence."[26]

After the Holy Agony disappointment, Father Judge's encounter with the Holy Spirit in Acts over these years healed and changed his approach to ministry and administration. The original group of five or six women lay apostles in 1910 continued to grow over the next five years. They came from the increasing ranks of women in the U.S. work force.[27] Cenacle groups sprang up over the Northeast. To their devotional lives Father Judge added apostolic work and sent them out to abandoned souls on the peripheries of burgeoning immigrant parishes. Largely through home visiting, they helped people return to the sacraments and the life of the church. Though many clergy welcomed their help, women lay apostles made

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23 There is some dispute about whether the Perboyre Chapel meeting that launched the Cenacle occurred in 1909, the "traditional" date, or 1910. On the date, see Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 74, n. 2.

24 Lawrence Brediger "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost," *Father Thomas A. Judge, C.M.*, Monographs 6 (1985), from Sister Marie Baptista's 1944 Missionary Cenacle Review article on the first meeting at Perbyoyre Chapel, as cited in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 75.

25 On Father Judge's new emphasis on the Holy Spirit, see Dennis Berry, *God's Valiant Warrior* (Holy Trinity, AL: Missionary Cenacle Press, 1992), 149–50; 252–55; Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 78–82.

26 As cited in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 82.

27 Leslie Woodcock Tentler, *Wage-Earning Women, Industrial Work and Family Life in the United States, 1900–1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

A group of women associates of a Missionary Cenacle pictured in the early twentieth century.

Courtesy www.msbt.org

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others anxious about boundaries between clergy and laity.

To ground their apostolic work, Father Judge promoted devotion to the Holy Spirit and a liturgically based dwelling in the central mysteries of the faith, especially the Incarnation and the Most Holy Trinity. His devotional approach to the mysteries of the faith, lived through the liturgical year, was based on his early encounter with the conferences of Vincent de Paul and the approach of the French School of spirituality as mediated through him. Though Vincent was not a disciple of Pierre de Bérulle, he shared many of the characteristics of the French School.[28]

Especially typical of the French School is the language of mystery so dear to Father Judge. Centered on the mystery of the Incarnation, Christianity is itself a mystery. All the

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28 On the French School, a term originated by historian Henri Bremond early in the twentieth century, see William M. Thompson, ed., *Bérulle and the French School: Selected Writings,* trans. Lowell M. Glendon, S.S. (New York: Paulist Press, 1989); Raymond Deville, *The French School of Spirituality: An Introduction and Reade*r, trans. Agnes Cunningham, S.S.C.M. (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1994).

Fr. Judge presiding over the first profession of vows.

Courtesy of the author

events of Christ's life, the agony in the garden, for example, are also mysteries. At the heart of each mystery is the inner state and disposition of Christ, expressing the complete possession of humanity by divinity. The masters of the French School taught their disciples to live the life of Christ by participating in or entering into the mysteries of his life. For example, in a conference on "Meditation," Saint Vincent advised that, when a mystery is the subject of meditation, rather than dwelling on a particular virtue, it is "better to think about the story of the Mystery and to pay attention to all its details because there isn't a single one of them … in which great treasure might not be hidden."[29] When Father Judge told early Cenacle members that they "were coming into the very life of the Holy Family, into the secrets of the Incarnation," he was speaking the idiom of the French School.[30]

In a 1913 draft of a rule for Cenacle associates, Father Judge described the work of the Cenacle women as "having a dignity, sacredness and almost priestly nature."[31] The following year, after Cardinal O'Connell had put a stop to Cenacle work in his archdiocese,

29 Conference 71, "Meditation," n.d., *CCD*, 11:80.

30 From a retreat conference of 14 September 1917, AST, MF 8394, as cited in Berry, *God's Valiant Warrior*, 235.

31 See AST, microfilm 12510–18, from Amy Croke's papers.

Father Judge sent the associates to the Acts of the Apostles. In a church basement in New York City, he told a group of them, "You are doing a work that we priests simply cannot do. We priests need help, and be it to your glory and honor to know that you are called to do that work." With careful language, he went on to suggest that, in some cases, they might even be doing more than priests: "You are the ones who are lifting the cross of Christ. You are doing more, maybe, in a certain sense, than some priests."[32]

In his 1922 encyclical *Ubi Arcano*, Pope Pius XI applied the royal priesthood text of 1 Peter 2:9 to the laity's apostolic work.[33] In 1913, however, the only theological account Father Judge could offer for the language of priesthood that he applied to lay apostles was a generalized argument based on "the respect women have for Christ."[34] The lack of a serious theological account for "almost priestly" made the lay apostolic vocation inherently unstable. Newly emerging canonical structures for apostolic religious life at this time would offer an obvious solution.

In 1915 Father Judge's superiors transferred him to the Alabama mission at Opelika near Auburn University but urged him to invite lay apostles to come south with him.[35] They came. Eventually they founded a Catholic school serving the children of local millworkers in Phenix City, Alabama. Lu Keasey (1885–1931), a young teacher from rural Butler County, Pennsylvania, served as principal. Within a few years, she would become Mother Boniface, second founder of the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity.[36]

In a 1918 *Ecclesiastical Review* article, Father Judge proclaimed it "the laymen's hour." In the country's premier journal for priests at the time, he urged clerical support for lay apostles. "If our people did but realize," he wrote, "that in the little circle where Divine Providence has placed them… they may stand for their Church, alert for her interests, zealous to reclaim the wayward, to strengthen the weak … what allies we would have in our priestly care for souls."[37]

The Cenacle lay apostolate continued to flourish in the north under the direction of Sister Marie Baptista, M.S.B.T. (formerly Amy Croke). Meanwhile in Alabama, with no subcultural parish structures to support their work and far away from home, the Cenacle women began to live together. To co-own property, they incorporated and were on their way

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32 General Meeting held at St. Andrew's Church, 30 November 1913, AST, MF 3327–28. See Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle,* 91–95.

33 Pope Pius XI, *Ubi arcano Dei consilio*, 23 December 1922, Paragraph 58 in Claudia Carlen, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals* (Raleigh, NC: McGrath, 1981), 3, 236.

34 General Meeting held at St. Andrew's Church, 30 November 1913, AST, microfilm 3327–28.

35 For the superiors' thinking in sending Father Judge to Opelika, see Summary of interview with Patrick McHale, C.M., by Joachim Benson, ST, 30 May 1934, copy in AST, as cited in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 97.

36 Sister Mary Tonra, M.S.B.T., *Led By the Spirit: A Biography of Mother Boniface Keasey, M.S.B.T* (New York: Gardner Press, 1984).

37 The Rev. Thomas A. Judge, C.M., "A Spiritual Militia," *The Ecclesiastical Review* 61:3 (September 1919): 277.

Lou (Lulu) Keasey, who received the name Mother Mary Boniface and was appointed by Fr. Judge to be the first General Custodian of the new Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity community.

Courtesy www.msbt.org

to becoming religious. The year before Father Judge's *Ecclesiastical Review* article, the new Code of Canon Law, commissioned by Vatican I, was finally published. It reflected prevailing theology on distinctions between clergy and laity and between laity and religious. It had no room for Father Judge's evolving vision of a Cenacle family made up of laity and women and men religious. The terms *Inner* and *Outer Cenacle* evolved over time to distinguish the lay apostles from the women and men religious. However, these terms awkwardly reflect theological tensions between clerical and lay vocations, as well as between religious and lay vocations. The strictures of the 1917 Code of Canon Law led some Cenacle members to wonder if one could live a full evangelical life outside of the priesthood or religious life.[38]

By 1920 the Cenacle had grown to such an extent that his Vincentian superiors in Paris freed Father Judge to work exclusively with it. Meanwhile, the sisters, incorporated in 1918, continued to grow. Between 1920 and 1926, Father Judge managed to juggle the growing lay apostolate, primarily in the North, the flourishing Missionary Servant sisters, and the struggling men's community, incorporated in 1921. Father Judge envisioned the men as promoting and spiritually supporting lay apostles. He personally continued to promote the lay apostolate, perhaps most eloquently at the 1923 Catholic Charities Convention in Philadelphia.[39] In 1932, more than twenty years after the first Cenacle meeting at Perboyre Chapel in Brooklyn, Father Judge wrote to a Cenacle lay apostle: "The Outer Cenacle movement seems to be merging into Catholic Action. What a consolation it must be to you

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38 Gerald A. Arbuckle, S.M., reflects on these tensions and the canonical challenges of religious founders in his review of *Every Catholic an Apostle* in *U.S. Catholic Historian* 37:3 (Summer 2019): 145–48.

39 "The Address of Father Judge before the National Conference of Catholic Charities in Philadelphia," *Holy Ghost*, October 1923, 6–8, and the summary discussion of the address in *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 196–97.

to know that long before we heard the phrase 'Catholic Action' in the Missionary Cenacle, you were working at it with your brothers and sisters."[40]

Just before Father Judge's death in 1933, the apostolic delegate described the Cenacle's work as "the only organized movement of its kind in the church today that so completely meets the wishes of the Holy Father with reference to the Lay Apostolate."[41] That may have been so, but the years between 1927 and 1933 were years of trial and loss for Father Judge. In 1926 Bishop Edward Allen of Mobile, who had welcomed the Cenacle to Alabama, died. Soon tension and then open conflict developed between Father Judge and Bishop Allen's successor, Bishop Thomas Toolen. The shift from Bishop Allen to Bishop Toolen represented a tremendous transition taking place in the U.S. church after the Great War. It was a shift from a missionary church to a brick- and-mortar subcultural network. Father Judge was more at home in a missionary church.

It was the era of the Great Depression. Serious financial and canonical conflicts with Bishop Toolen weakened Father Judge's already failing health. If the fledgling women's and men's communities were to survive, Father Judge would have to produce constitutions for them consistent with the restrictions of the new Code. He would have to squeeze his vision of a missionary Cenacle family into the growing canonical strictures for apostolic religious life. Though the sisters and their work flourished, their new motherhouse at Holy Trinity, Alabama, completed in 1926, burned to the ground in 1930. The next year Mother Boniface died of typhoid at age forty-six. Father Judge died about two years later.

Father Judge handled his years of conflict with Bishop Toolen much differently than he handled the conflicts with his superiors over the role of the Holy Agony devotion in the Eastern Province in 1908 and 1909. He consistently echoed and paraphrased the words of the Pharisee Gamaliel from Acts 5:38–39: "For if this endeavor or this activity is of human origin, it will destroy itself. But if it comes from God, you will not be able to destroy them; you may even find yourselves fighting against God." As those present recalled Father Judge's last meeting with them in Brooklyn, just before he entered the hospital, he wanted no antagonism or resentment against Bishop Toolen among the Cenacle: "If it is God's work, it will go on. If not, let God do whatever he wants with it." He insisted that Bishop Toolen had acted in good conscience. He could not leave them "until he had sought and pleaded for a charitable viewpoint of all that had transpired and that was catalogued as hateful and unjust, he knew, in our minds."[42]

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40 Judge to Jerome Degnan, Brooklyn, 9 March 1932, AST, microfilm 1963.

41 Msgr. Thomas Nummey to Bishop Thomas Molloy, Baltimore, 19 March 1932, Nummey Papers, Archives of the Diocese of Brooklyn. Nummey quotes Archbishop Pietro Fumasoni-Biondi from a personal conversation, as described in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 424.

42 These are the recollections of Sister Marie Campbell, M.S.B.T., "Father's Last Talk at Gold Street, 14 August 1933," Monographs 2:51, as cited in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 489–90; see also 92–93.

3. Looking to the Future

Pope Francis has described our time of COVID as accelerating a "change of era" already underway.[43] Once taken for granted categories and assumptions no longer work. Father Judge lived through a similar time, the major post–World War I transition in U.S. Catholic history. Until 1908, the Vatican classified the U.S. as a "mission" territory. Rather than by universal church law, Catholics were governed by the bishops, either individually or in plenary or regional councils. U.S. bishops had the "strongest nineteenth-century conciliar tradition in the Western Church."[44]

Mobile's Bishop Allen came from this relatively ad hoc, do-it-yourself missionary church. Things changed when East Coast cities with large Catholic populations began to predominate. Standardizing developments such as the National Catholic War Council (precursor to the present USCCB), the National Conference of Catholic Charities, and centralized mission funding, all represent this consolidating trend. The institutional network of schools, parish churches, and health care facilities that began to spring up at this time was also part of the trend. We see their remains all around us. A strong administrator, adept at handling finances, Bishop Toolen was native to this consolidating church.

Father Judge's smaller-scale, family-style Cenacle movement did not always fit comfortably into emerging Catholic institutional networks, and especially into the new, one-size-fits-all universal Code of Canon Law. He criticized emerging "scientific social work" as ignoring people and their spiritual needs. The Congregation for Religious sent back his original drafts of constitutions for both women's and men's communities as too devotional. To say that his financial practices were irresponsible would be no exaggeration, leading to some of his most serious conflicts with Bishop Toolen. For Father Judge, finances were held in common. After Mother Boniface's death, at least three Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity would crack under the pressure of trying to manage money for the men's community.

So, though his vision of an apostolic laity was indeed ahead of its time, by the later 1920s Father Judge was in many ways a man from another era. But things tend to come around again. The dispositions and approaches with which Pope Francis urges us to face our own change of era resonate with Father Judge's spirit. In his 1923 address to a national gathering of social workers he asked them to imagine how they might bring Catholics to realize that "in their everyday providence they are the Catholic Church." He urged them to ask what they could do "to make every Catholic a missionary."[45] After their initial successes, he reflected with leaders of northern

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43 Pope Francis in conversation with Austen Ivereigh, *Let Us Dream, The Path to a Better Future* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 54. See n. 54 below.

44 James Hennesey, S.J., "The Baltimore Council of 1866: An American Syllabus," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 76 (1965): 165, 175–89.

45 "The Address of Father Judge before the National Conference of Catholic Charities in Philadelphia," *The Holy Ghost* (October 1923), 8.

Fr. Judge on the wagon with Sr. Rita, the farm manager or boss.

Courtesy of the author

cenacles on the text of Matthew 28 and Jesus's command to "go forth" and make disciples. He told them they "were very much in the mind of Jesus when he spoke these words."[46]

For the past decade, the church has had a pope who, in his post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (24 November 2013), the charter of his papacy, proposed a church of "missionary disciples." Like the Cenacle leaders whom Father Judge led in a meditative reading on Matthew 28, this is a church that goes forth, a church not focused on its own internal maintenance, but one that faces outward in the kind of interpersonal witness envisioned in *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (1975). We might imagine that Father Judge

46 From an address of Father Judge to a group of leaders of Northern cenacles, reflecting on Matthew 28:19–20, from a record preserved in Minutes of the General Council, 4 May 1917, Elmhurst, NY, AST, microfilm 11996–98. See discussion in Portier, *Every Catholic an Apostle*, 141–43.

would welcome *Evangelii Gaudium's* call for a "pastoral" renewal of the church whose primary emphasis falls not on structural change, but on "Spirit-filled evangelizers" and celebrates the Holy Spirit as the maker of apostles.[47]

Inspiring works such as *Evangelii Gaudium*, Austen Ivereigh's *Wounded Shepherd*, or *Let Us Dream*, the book that Pope Francis did with Ivereigh in 2020 at the height of the COVID pandemic, suggest to me two images.[48] First is the ruined cathedral of Notre Dame de Paris, devastated by fire on 15 April 2019. Here in the U.S, we watched footage of Parisians gathered in the square outside the cathedral's iconic bell towers. They sang *Ave Maria* and watched in disbelief as the almost nine-hundred-year-old cathedral began to collapse before their eyes. When the fire was finally extinguished, most of the wooden roof had collapsed, leaving a gaping hole in the ceiling. Twelfth-century medieval craftsmen had built that roof from 5,000 oak trees. Without the roof to hold them in place, the ceiling arches and other parts of the structure were in danger of collapsing. The 300-foot wooden spire atop the roof had already collapsed and shattered to pieces on the charred floor.[49]

I keep reminding myself that this fire was a unique historical event with complex causes, and not a symbol of the end of the Catholic Church as I have known it. But almost four years after the fire, the sorrowful feeling remains. Notre Dame's ruins somehow represent the end of the solidity and stability of the church I have known, and our entry into a future that dissolves as it unfolds, a change of era.

Yet, the Catholic Church in the U.S. is not going up in flames before our eyes as Notre Dame de Paris did for Parisians. But it is a church in high transition. Disaffiliation is rampant. Over one in every ten adult Americans are ex-Catholics.[50] The venerable Catholic infrastructure of parish churches, schools, hospitals, colleges, universities, and social service agencies that began during Father Judge's last decade can no longer be sustained. Most U.S. Catholics have experienced parish closings, amalgamations, and downsizings. Dwindling numbers recently forced the Vincentians to leave St. Joseph's parish in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where they had served since 1852. Likewise, as some European Catholics might

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47 See especially chap. 1 of *Evangelii Gaudium* on "the church's missionary transformation" and chap. 5 on "Spirit-filled evangelizers." Pope Francis, *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* (Frederick, MD: The Word Among Us Press, 2013).

48 See Austen Ivereigh, *Wounded Shepherd: Pope Francis and His Struggle to Convert the Catholic Church* (New York: Henry Holt, 2019); Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream*.

49 On the Notre Dame fire, see Vivienne Walt, "We Tried to Save Notre Dame Too Late, Says Champion of Cathedral Restoration," 16 April 2019, *Time*, https://time.com/5571554/paris-fire-notre-dame-shock-damage/ and Walt, "An Exclusive Look Inside the Recovery Efforts to Save Notre Dame," *Time*, 11 July 2019, https://time.com/longform/inside-notre-dame-exclusive-photos/. See also Jason M. Baxter, "What We Lost When Notre Dame de Paris Caught Fire," *America*, 3 April 2020; Doug Giradot, "Please Don't Turn Notre-Dame into a Post–Vatican II Cathedral to the Modern World," *America*, 8 December 2021; and, for a progress report on efforts to rebuild the cathedral, "Sacred Architecture News," in *Sacred Architecture Review* 39 (2021), 4.

50 See, for statistical example: https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2018/10/10/7-facts-about-american-catholics/.

put it, the Catholic Church is "liquidating" in Europe.[51] Apocalyptic visions may tempt many to turn inward to maintain and cling to what remains. But this is not a structural problem that can be solved by being fortunate enough to have competent administrators to preside over this transition.

The church mirrors the divisions in our country. Sometimes it feels less like a transition and more like an apocalypse. It does no good for historians to remind us that the church whose passing I grieve is less than a century old. We want to know whose fault all of this is. Our deep divisions make it impossible for us to agree on what is happening, who is to blame, what we should do, or whom we can trust. Historical perspective offers little comfort. In addresses such as his remarks at a recent Vatican conference "Pastors and Lay Faithful Called to Walk Together" given on 20 February 2023, Pope Francis has tried to help us overcome our divisions and face this transition spiritually as religious people. "I would like all of us to have in our hearts and minds," he said, "this beautiful vision of the church: a church committed to mission and where we unify our forces and walk together to evangelize, a church where what binds us is our being baptized Christians, our belonging to Jesus."[52]

The second image that the ruined Notre Dame de Paris brings to mind is one Pope Francis has used consistently over the past decade. I first heard it in the surprise interview he gave to Antonio Spadaro, S.J., that appeared in English in *America*: "The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful; it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if they have high cholesterol and about the level of their blood sugars! You have to heal their wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds …. "[53]

Pope Francis's image of the church as a field hospital is based on the "synodal experience" of the Latin American bishops' conference (CELAM) in the early part of this century. They came together to respond to a "change of era," a time when the church no longer worked from a position of cultural strength and confidence, a time when the church is merely one among a number of voluntary institutions.[54] As the pandemic began to hit Italy, Antonio Spadaro urged that Francis does not intend the field hospital simply as an "engaging, rhetorically effective image." Rather, he imagines "a piecemeal world war," a "global crisis … expressed in conflicts, trade disputes, barriers, migration crises, failing regimes, hostile new alliances, and trade routes that open the way to wealth, but also threaten

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51 Kees de Groot, "The Challenge of a Church Going into Liquidation," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 84:4 (2019): 409–23.

52 Cindy Wooden, "Catholics must overcome 'temptation' of divisions, pope says," 20 February 2023, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, at: https://www.usccb.org/news/2023/catholics-must-overcome-temptation-divisions-pope-says.

53 Antonio Spadaro, S.J., "'A Big Heart Open to God': An Interview with Pope Francis," 30 September 2013, *America*, at: https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis.

54 On Aparecida'a discernment of a "change of era," see Ivereigh, *Wounded Shepherd*, 168, n. 32.

Fr. Judge pictured with a group in 1924.

Courtesy of the author

tensions. You could draw a map, but it would always be incomplete."[55] The field hospital is how Francis envisions the role of the church amid what some might call liquid modernity.[56]

As Cardinal Blase Cupich of Chicago put it, seeming to address an aging European American sector of the church in this country, the field hospital image could radically change how we think about church life. We might no longer just be "a group of people that live in the same neighborhood, have a common ethnic heritage or social status, regularly go to Mass or are registered parishioners." A field hospital church might look for ways to also attend to Jesus's mission "to bring glad tidings to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, and recovery of sight to the blind" (Luke 4:18).[57] Pope Francis brought chapter 1 of *Evangelii Gaudium* to a close with these words: "My hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up

55 Antonio Spadaro, S.J., "Defy the Apocalypse," *La Civiltà cattolica*, 20 January 2020. Like Ivereigh's *Wounded Shepherd*, this article urges a third gospel alternative between announcing the apocalypse while trying to accelerate its coming and building a retaining wall to save us from catastrophe. The alternative is the field hospital church.

56 On Francis and "liquidity" or "the liquid society," see Ivereigh, *Wounded Shepherd*, 211–12; on Francis and sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, 241–42.

57 Blase J. Cupich, "Cardinal Cupich: Pope Francis' 'Field Hospital' Calls Us to Radically Rethink Church Life," 29 December 2017, *America*, at: https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/12/29/cardinal-cupich-pope-francis-field-hospital-calls-us-radically-rethink-church-life.

within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits that make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not tire of saying to us: 'Give them something to eat' (Mark 6:37)."[58]

Francis's call for us to be a church that goes forth as missionary disciples presents us with a momentous challenge. A bitterly divided U.S. church cannot even coherently receive Francis's signature phrase "missionary disciples." For some, "missionary disciples" is a pastorally ingenious way of circumventing a culture war stalemate between lay apostles and lay ecclesial ministers. For others, it is just typically unclear, confusing, and evasive. U.S. Catholics need to learn how to turn our present change of era from something bad happening to the church to something good a wounded church is doing.[59]

For Francis, discernment and synodality offer a path forward. As *Evangelii Gaudium* emphasizes, and as Father Judge discovered in his midlife ministry crisis, it is the Spirit "who made the apostles go forth from themselves and turned them into heralds of God's wondrous deeds, capable of speaking to each and every person in his or her own language."[60] Only the Spirit can convert all of us. "To know both Peter disheartened, and Peter transfigured is an invitation to pass from being a church of the unhappy and disheartened to being a church that serves all those people who are unhappy and disheartened."[61]

For Francis, synodality offers a way to approach the challenges of our divisions in a way that is open to movements of the Spirit. As an ecclesial microcosm, the synodal process presents vast administrative challenges which must be addressed if it is even to happen. These challenges highlight the canonical reality that, despite openings in Pope Francis's 2022 reform of the Roman Curia in *Praedicate Evangelium*, authority to make decisions in the church still comes chiefly from ordination and office. Lay bodies are solely consultative. "The Code's present structure of consultations does not ensure the goal of shared governance."[62] Though *Praedicate Evangelium* could make a big difference, the voices of those who are not bishops or pastors still risk being muffled. Think of diocesan advisory boards in the matter of clergy sexual abuse. At present, their decisions cannot bind a bishop. The law does require consultation in many cases. Is it canonically possible for the

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58 Pope Francis, Paragraph 49, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 43.

59 See Ivereigh, *Wounded Shepherd*, chap. 5, "A Church of Wounds."

60 Pope Francis, Paragraph 259, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 178.

61 Ivereigh is citing Francis in the cathedral at Santiago, Chile, in 2018, preaching to the scandal-ridden Chilean church, *Wounded Shepherd*, 123.

62 Lynda Robitaille, "Decision-Making in the Church: Shared Governance" in Orsuto and White, eds., *Full, Conscious, and Active,* 123. Robitaille addresses the question, how can the vote of those consulted—consulted because the law encourages or requires consultation—be binding? She goes on to discuss the Synod of Bishops, the Roman Curia, diocesan structures, and parish structures and illustrates the key role engaged canon lawyers might play in the synodal process. *Praedicate Evangelium* would require revisiting the section on the Roman Curia. See Massimo Faggioli, *The Apostolic Constitution Preach the Gospel Praedicate Evangelium* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2022).

Fr. Michael Barth, ST, presents Pope Francis with a copy of the Spanish translation of Every Catholic an Apostle: A Life of Thomas A. Judge, CM, 1868–1933, at the January 2020 meeting of the Vincentian family in Rome.

Courtesy of the author

voices of those consulted to be in any sense binding? Synodality will need smart and holy canon lawyers to navigate the canonical labyrinths to find a way with which to address such concerns.

But without changes of heart and will, all the canonical and administrative strategies in the world cannot turn us into a church that goes forth. They can always be circumvented or ignored. In the present synodal process which will culminate in 2024, what are the chances that the voices of all the faithful will be heard and taken seriously?[63] To answer this, I offer just a very small sign. After recently attending several disappointing meetings between bishops and theologians, younger theologians took selfies with bishops after the meeting. One bishop stood with us outside the USCCB building in Washington calling airport Ubers. Perhaps hearts were touched. To borrow a phrase from Massimo Faggioli, this represents a different kind of "ecclesial style," perhaps something we might hope for from the synodal process. If time, as Francis insists, is indeed greater than space, we might at least hope for a beginning. Even that would be better than the present siloed stalemate.

In the face of the passing of a familiar world we have known and the real possibility of future catastrophe, many are tempted to play prophets of doom and announce the end of church and world. Others are tempted to focus solely on policies and procedures that might stave off impending apocalypse. But we all need to take a deep breath. For Pope Francis,

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63 In encouraging each bishop "to always foster this missionary communion in his diocesan church," Pope Francis exhorts bishops that they will have to "encourage and develop the means of participation proposed in the Code of Canon Law." The references are to canons 460–68; 492–502; 511–14; 536–37. Paragraph 31, *The Joy of the Gospel*, 32.

Stained glass window of Fr. Judge in The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, Washington, D.C.

Courtesy of the author

only the Holy Spirit can "unmask agendas and hidden ideologies … [W]e cannot speak of synodality unless we accept and live in the presence of the Holy Spirit."[64]

In a gospel image dear to both Saint Vincent and Father Judge, Jesus is indeed in our boat, and, as Pope Francis insists, it is indeed carried by the winds of the Holy Spirit. To extend these gospel images, the synodal process is inviting everyone who makes up the

64 Pope Francis, *Let Us Dream*, 86. See Francis's reflections here on what a synod is.

church, including the laity, to ponder together in prayer how Jesus might be inviting us to step out on the stormy sea or to cast into the deep. At “Pastors and Lay Faithful Called to Walk Together,” Pope Francis put it in terms we might fruitfully imagine both Saint Vincent and Father Judge meditating on: “The need to value the laity does not come from some theological novelty or even from the functional needs left by the diminishing number of priests …. Rather, it is based on a correct vision of the church: the church as the people of God, of which the laity are a full part along with ordained ministers. Thus, ordained ministers are not the masters, they are the servants …. It is time for pastors and laity to walk together, in every area of the church’s life, in every part of the world ….”[65]

65 See n. 48 above.

Vincentian Formation in Africa for Missionary Preaching in the Footsteps of Saint Vincent de Paul

Linus Umoren, C.M.

BIO

REV. LINUS UMOREN, C.M., was born on 20 October 1969, in Akwa-Ibom State, Nigeria. He joined the Congregation of the Mission in 1988 and made his first vows in 1989. Fr. Umoren obtained his philosophy degree from St. Joseph Major Seminary, Ikot Ekpene, and a degree in Sacred Theology from Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, Nigeria, in 1997. He also holds a master's degree in clinical psychology and psychotherapy from the Gregorian University in Rome, as well as a certificate in spiritual direction. He made his final vows on 27 September 1996, and was ordained a priest on 29 June 29, 1997, the feast day of Saints Peter and Paul. Since his ordination, Fr. Umoren has served as the director of different seminary formation levels in Nigeria (Novitiate 1997, Philosophy 2001, Theology 2007-2014). In Rome, he served as the coordinator of international Vincentian students (2004-2006). He was the provincial director of vocation from 2011–2014, and a member of the

Previous Article

Table of Contents

provincial council from 2010 to 2012. Fr. Umoren also served briefly in the diocese of Buffalo, New York, as an associate pastor at Prince of Peace Parish (now St. Vincent de Paul parish), Niagara Falls, Buffalo. After returning to America in 2014, Fr. Umoren has served as the Pastor of Holy Family Church in Cahokia, IL, Sacred Heart Church in Dupo, IL, and Ss. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Waterloo, IL. He has been a member of the Presbyterial Council since 2019 and is currently completing his doctoral degree in homiletics at the Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, MO. He has published two books: *The Radical Christian* (2000); and *Homosexuality and Lesbianism: Un-African, Sickness, or a different way of Loving*? (2013).

Introduction

The goal of the Congregation of the Mission is realized in the evangelization of the poor. Part of the foundation contract of 17 April 1625 states, "They could devote themselves entirely and exclusively to the salvation of the poor common people. They would go from village to village, at the expense of their common purse, to preach, instruct, exhort, and catechize those poor people and encourage all of them to make a good general confession of their whole past life"[1] The evangelizing mission to the poor was to be free of charge because the vocation to preach was a gift from God.[2] Consequently, the foundation charism of the Congregation of the Mission is based on two pillars: mission and charity.

Preaching was more than a ministry for Saint Vincent de Paul. It was a way of life. His priestly ministry was defined not just by the code of canon law but also his experience as a priest. It is often said that you study how to become a priest in the seminary, but you become one through a series of ministerial experiences. Two of Vincent's experiences were the defining moments of his vocation as a priest: his mission in Folleville, and the organized charity in the parish at Châtillon-les-Dombes. The date of 25 January 1617, in the history of the Congregation of the Mission, is like the biblical Pentecost day. On this date, Vincent witnessed the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on him and his audience and something new began to happen. Vincent narrates this event thusly:

> That took place in the month of January 1617, and, on the twenty-fifth, the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, that lady asked me to preach a sermon in the church of Folleville to urge the people to make a general confession, which I did, pointing out to them its importance and usefulness. Then I taught them how to make it properly; and God had such regard for the confidence and good faith of that lady—for the large number and enormity of my sins would have hindered the success of this act— that He blessed what I said; and those good people were so moved by God that they all came to make their general confession. I continue to instruct them and to prepare them for the sacrament.[3]

Divine Providence set Vincent apart to radically help the church to renew the ministry to the rural poor people—to be with them, teach them, and feed them.

The Châtillon experience is the other significant event. On the recommendation of Father de Berulle, Vincent took up the pastorage of the parish of Châtillon-les-Dombes where he experienced the material poverty of the parishioners. While preaching one day in

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1 Document 59, "Foundation Contract of the Congregation of the Mission," 17 April 1625, 13a:214 in Pierre Coste, C.M., *Vincent de Paul, Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al., vols. 1–14 (New York: New City Press, 1985–2014). Hereafter cited as *CCD*. Available online: http://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/.

2 Ibid.

3 Conference 2, "The Mission Preached in Folleville in 1617," n.d., *CCD*, 11:3–4.

the parish, he moved the people to feel the devastating effect of poverty. Many parishioners decided to help and save a family from poverty, sickness, and misery. They offered material support to the family. But to make the charity more effective and sustained, Vincent established a parochial charitable group for the women. On 23 August 1617, the first confraternity of charity was established with two proposed goals: "to assist body and soul: the body by nourishing it and tending to its ailments; the soul by preparing those who seem to be tending toward death to die well, and preparing those who will recover to live a good life."[4]

Saint Vincent de Paul was alert to the circumstances of his time. The work of preaching, caring, and converting needed committed priests. The formation of the priests at this time was defective and could not provide adequately for pastoral need. There were no seminaries. A good number of those who became priests did so by way of apprenticeship. To become a priest, a candidate needed to have a little private income. He could have acquired the income through a benefice or from his family or a generous benefactor. He needed to know how to carry out the rites and to read the missal and nothing more.[5] The pastoral life of the priests was disastrous. Most parish priests were not residents in their parishes. They often functioned through a substitute priest, even though they continued to enjoy the benefits accruing from their office. Such was the condition that motivated Vincent to initiate retreats for those preparing for ordination. The retreat eventually developed into an essential requirement for the preparation for the priesthood. Saint Vincent de Paul was primarily inspired by the decree of the sixteenth-century Council of Trent (1545–1563) that legislated the institution of seminaries as the proper house of priestly formation. If the mission were to be effective, the priests had to be well-formed—not merely intellectually or morally, but fundamentally as preachers.

As in Vincent's day, the new realities of our time challenge missionary preaching. Presently, the provinces in Africa are enriching the Congregation of the Mission with dynamism and freshness. The Congregation is growing in Nigeria, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Madagascar, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Cameroon, Tanzania, and Kenya. The growth is an outstanding opportunity in the history of the Congregation. African freshness and passion boosts the hope for a sustained missionary effect. Africans bring a deep sense of awe in God's presence, and a deeply religious disposition, spontaneity, and cheerfulness in proclaiming the gospel. For Cardinal Dolan of the diocese of New York, African pastors testify with innocence when it comes to the gospel stories. When Africans speak the biblical faith,

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4 Document 124a, "Foundation of the Charity in Châtillon-les-Dombes," 23 August 1617, *CCD*, 13b:3.

5 Luigi Mezzadri, C.M., "Saint Vincent and the Church in his Time," We are Vincentians: The Vincentian Formation Network, 15 July 2016, https://vincentians.com/en/category/history-of-the-vincentian-family/page/23/.

Vincent de Paul preaching to Sisters, children, and the elderly.

Painting in parish church, Gannes, France.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

you can see Irenaeus; you can hear Ignatius of Antioch, you can hear Polycarp. They speak with heroism and conviction.[6] The orality of African theology offers them the opportunity of intimacy with the gospel. Also, Africans generally value presence and community. The measure of the usefulness of time among most Africans is based on how the needs of the people around them are met. If the Church has hope, it is this inspirational, countercultural presence and prophetic voice of the African Church that is needed.

Presently, different crises rock the Church from all angles. These include the sexual abuse crisis, relativism, the absence of young people in the Church, the increased rate of divorce and broken families, and the distrust of authority and tradition. The Western world experiences empty churches because of what Pope Benedict XVI claimed was a crisis of faith. While speaking in Germany to Catholics, he said, "We see that in our affluent Western

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6 "CNS video – Cardinal Dolan on the Church in Africa," Catholic News Service, 10 October 2014 https://synodonfamily.wordpress.com/2014/10/14/cns-video-cardinal-dolan-on-the-church-in-africa/.

world much is lacking. Many people lack experience of God's goodness, they no longer find any point of contact with the mainstream churches and their traditional structures."[7] The prophetic voice of the Church seems shaky in the West.

On the other hand, Africans attend church more regularly, pray more frequently, and would claim the importance of religion in their lives. Yet there is a gap between worship and practice. It is not uncommon to profess Christianity and still hold on to the cult of ancestors and traditional beliefs. The Church in Africa seems to function from the cultural perspective of "belonging before believing." While the recourse to traditional religion and practices, especially regarding health, may be driven in part by economic and medical disadvantages, it may also be rooted in religious beliefs about "belonging" to that traditional structure. Christianity in Africa appears less concerned with doctrines as it is with rituals, ceremonies, and lived experience. When the Christian religion in its Western form does not supply the needed answer to the difficulties of daily life, many African Christians turn to follow the traditions of their village community.

How can the Vincentian missionary preachers in Africa be prepared in formation to bring people to hear a prophetic voice toned with dynamism and freshness? How can they better engage the "little method" of Saint Vincent de Paul in the practice of prophetic imagination in the twenty-first century, be it in Africa or other parts of the world?

The Dynamics of Roman Catholic Preaching in Saint Vincent's Time

The Ripples of Reformation and Counter-Reformation

The Protestant reform of the sixteenth century had claimed that the Catholic clergy was biblically illiterate. It also criticized the Catholic Church for neglecting the mandate to preach the word of God and instead emphasizing more of Church tradition. Preaching the word of God was at the heart of the Reformation theology. Luther considered "preaching to be the most important office in the world, more important than even that of officiating the sacraments. It [was] a medium through which salvation [was] bestowed."[8] The Reformation ecclesiology described the Church as the place where the word was preached in its purity. People who were deprived of preaching often lost their faith.

In response, the Catholic Church initiated several internal reforms. It was the Council of Trent that most consistently dealt with forming adequate clergy and making preaching an essential exercise. Every cathedral and metropolitan church were obliged to establish

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7 "Church in West Suffering Crisis of Faith, Says Pope," Catholic News Agency, 24 September 2011, https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/church-in-west-suffering-crisis-of-faith-says-pope.

8 O. C. Edwards, Jr., *A History of Preaching* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2016), 1:837, Kindle.

Vincent de Paul preaching from the pulpit in Folleville, Gondi family below.

Original in St. Vincent church, Mâcon, France. From series of etchings by De Troy produced in honor of Vincent's canonization.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

a special institution or seminary for the education of future priests. The candidates for formation were to be at least twelve years of age, be able to read and write, and they were to have character that indicated fitness for the ministry. Preference was to be given to the sons of the poor.[9] The council ordered priests to preach the word much more than emphasize Church tradition—and bishops were to see to the content of preaching.

In the sixteenth and the early seventeenth centuries, sermons were mostly in the form of a long poem or expository tract, an art of persuasion linked to the European rhetorical tradition. Sometimes the preacher's duty was to make a presentation connecting anecdotes, illustrations, and analogies. People regarded the preachers as artists.[10] By this time preaching was as important to Catholics as it was to Protestants. Incidentally, in the Counter-Reformation there was no single hermeneutical principle that guided preaching nor was there the stress on exegesis in the way that justification and exegesis dominated the Protestant preaching of Luther and Calvin.[11]

The Seventeenth Century and the Crisis of Missionary Preaching

By the seventeenth century, preaching was mostly considered a branch of rhetoric rather than a sacred office. The aim of preaching was to persuade the audience through the

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9 H. Woestman, *The Sacrament of Orders and the Clerical State* (Bangalore: Theological Publication in India, 1999),79.

10 Peter Bayley, *French Pulpit Oratory, 1598–1650: A Study in Themes and Styles with a Descriptive Catalogue of Printed Texts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 3–5.

11 Edwards, *A History of Preaching,* 1001.

logical presentation of arguments and counterarguments. The pulpit, therefore, became a magisterial space for the dissemination of political philosophy and the exhibition of religious power. Sermons were therefore reckoned as the most pervasive way of impacting public opinion.[12]

In France, for example, the style of preaching was overly influenced by the Renaissance. The Renaissance itself was a kind of rebirth that ushered in changes and growth in many areas of European life. There was a renewed interest in Greek classics, literature, and Roman culture. Thus, church oratory and preaching were heavily tinted with quotations, examples, and references from Greek mythology, Roman culture, and pagan philosophy.[13] Sermons might have been thought distasteful because they centered more on human reason and human achievement.

Another challenge to Christian preaching induced by the Renaissance was the confusion between theologizing and preaching. The subject matter of theology is God but in the speculative sense. But the subject matter of preaching is God as encountered through faith and experience. The preacher therefore directs his message to the faithful before him, within whom he urges faith to action. The rhetoric of the Renaissance instead introduced the cause of a god who is subject to speculation. Preaching in the Renaissance era suffered many blows, having fallen to "the perversion of the literary and of the moral sense."[14]

Pierre Coste gives us a good picture of Vincent de Paul's experience of pulpit eloquence: "Bad taste held undisputed sway: the pulpit resounded with incessant reference to mythology, display of secular learning; frequent employment of dry scholastic phraseology; flowery, over-emphatic, trivial and grotesque language; a laborious and subtle search of scripture for the unexpected symbolical interpretation ... imprudent satire ... and contemptuous attacks on political adversaries and on partisans of the reformed religion."[15] Saint Vincent was greatly troubled by the decadence of preaching at this time. He "sorrowfully noted that in Paris the preachers during Advent and Lent, with all their 'affected speech,' 'pompous display,' and 'empty eloquence,' did not convert a single soul."[16] He frowned at the flamboyant attitude of some preachers that showed "pride of life: the desire to be always successful, to select new-fangled words," and the desire "to shine in the pulpit, in discourses to ordinands and catechetical instructions."[17]

For Vincent, the primary character of pulpit eloquence should be realized in its sacredness and not exhibitionists' rhetoric. The source of preaching should be the sacred,

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12 Jeanne Shami, "Introduction: Reading Donne Sermons," *John Donne Journal*, vols. 1&2 (Raleigh, NC: 1992), 1–19.

13 Henry S. Lucas, *The Renaissance and the Reformation* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1934), 193–217.

14 Ibid., 213.

15 Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Joseph Leonard, C.M., 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1987), 2:197.

16 Ibid., 2:214.

17 Ibid.

its fundamental material should derive from scripture and ecclesiastical tradition, and its aim and objective should be directed to "the truths of faith and to build up and reform Christian morality."[18] Vincent sought to reform and restore preaching to its original dignity. Preaching must lead to the act of conversion. He recommended the attitude of humility, simplicity, and purity and focused intention to his confreres.

Simplicity was so important to him that he stated it "is one of the chief qualities to be desired in the preacher. In the first place, his matter should be simple. He should 'suit himself to the capacity and intelligence of his hearers' and therefore put aside lofty and elevated subjects and employ familiar comparisons to explain the truth of the Gospel."[19] What is the need of preaching if the hearers do not understand with their hearts? In other words, preaching must meet the needs of the congregation, and the effective preacher must understand and identify and sympathize with their audience.

Vincent said to the priests of the company, "How did the apostles preach? Very plainly, simply, and familiarly. That is our style of preaching too: plainly and familiarly in ordinary language. To preach like an Apostle Messieurs, that is, to preach well and in a helpful way, you have to approach it with simplicity, using familiar speech, so that each person will be able to understand and profit from it."[20] Vincent's emphasis on simplicity does not mean being simplistic. His approach to preaching appreciates the complexities and the challenges of reconciling faith and life and does not minimalize or gloss over them.

It is this background then that sets the tone for Saint Vincent's interest in the formation for missionary preaching among the confreres and the diocesan clergy. For the members of the Congregation, preparation for preaching began in the year before ordination. Preaching was a course in the syllabus of studies in the same way liturgy, moral theology, and plain chants were. The methodology for teaching it was the duo of theory and practice. The confreres in the motherhouse were required to practice the skill of oratory during vacation, and everybody, including nonclerical students, had to preach during meals in the community. The "little method" is the classical and effective tool that Vincent used to reform preaching. It was found to be so effective that the bishops of the dioceses of Paris sent their priests to join the assemblies where Saint Vincent taught it.[21]

The Little Method of Saint Vincent de Paul

The little method in the pulpit is to be accompanied by a similar simple sacramental

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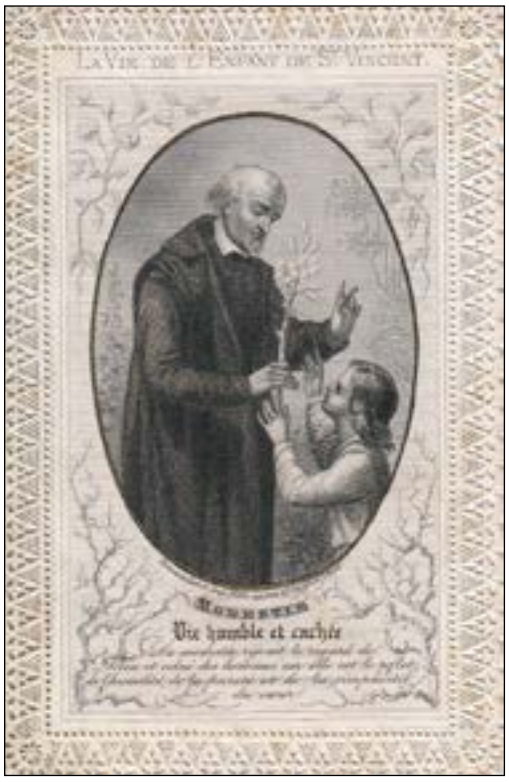
18 Ibid.

19 Ibid., 2:215.

20 Conference 134, "Method to be Followed in Preaching," 20 August 1655, *CCD*, 9:237.

21 Coste, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, 219.



Vincentian holy card which reads: "Modesty rejoices the face of God and that of men, since it is the reflection of humility, purity, and simplicity of heart."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

service to the members of the parish. The method requires an intimate relationship between the preacher and the congregation whereby the preacher identifies with his listeners, and they identify with the preacher. Thus, the preacher is enabled to say things prophetically with love and respect, and the hearers are moved to action.

Although the little method was formally presented by Saint Vincent to the members of the congregation on 20 August 1655, he had almost always used this method to preach. His popular sermon on 25 January 1617 had all the same characteristics. Both the spirit and the style of the little method were focused on the reformation of the bad taste of homily in seventeenth-century France. People were denied the opportunity of growing spiritually through the word of God as mediated by preachers. The preachers either enveloped their words in classical languages or sacrificed the word of God on the altar of sophistry or mythology. Hence, the little method provided the alternative voice so much needed in France at that time.

Vincent used the little method in one way when ministering to a parish community through sermons and used it in a different way in his conferences to confreres, sisters, the Tuesday conferences, and the Ladies of Charity. Parochial preaching was linked to the liturgy and sacraments.

Although the little method was a homiletical style developed to suit the needs of the poor and uneducated people, it was quite adaptive to the needs of a more educated group. For instance, when preaching to people who were in error or opposed to true faith because of their philosophy or level of education, Saint Vincent recommended indirect refutation by

clear exposition and evidence.[22] Arguments, in Vincent's view, were not good for conversion. Priests authentically living their faith would have more of an impact on people.

Since the little method was for everyday use, Saint Vincent not only taught it but also welcomed feedback from priests and seminarians of the Congregation and of other dioceses in Paris. The teaching of the method incorporated discussions on virtues, morals, and attitudes. He would often call for individual participants to suggest a motive, an affection, or a simple explanation for the practice of the virtue under discussion. Some participants developed the habit of writing down the discussions so that they could use them effectively in their sermons.[23]

Vincent explained his method in a lengthy conference, which he gave to the community on 20 August 1655. Theoretically, the little method can be divided into three parts: the introduction or exordium, the body of the sermon, and the conclusion or peroration. Vincent strongly suggested that the introduction to the sermon should be brief so that they did not lose the audience. Also, it should not be glossed over. A good introduction presents to the audience "just what is to be accomplished by the sermon; what they learn; and consequently, what they are to do as a result of the sermon."[24]

The entire method centers around three elements: motives, nature, and means (why, what, and how). In other words, why does the preacher preach? What is the content of his preaching? And what is the process by which he preaches? As Charles E. Miller, C.M., writes, "The motives present the advantages for a proposal, the nature explains the exact meaning of the proposal, and the means indicates how the proposal is to be attained."[25] The preacher must be motivated by his experience of the goodness of God and his tenderness. The content of his sermon must stress hope with an eschatological bias, and the process must be the imitation of Christ. The preacher preaches with the disposition of indifference or abandonment to divine providence.

Vincent preached as a "local theologian" as well as a "pastoral theologian." As a local theologian, he brought the world of the text and the context of preaching into one creative conversation. As a pastoral theologian, he based his preaching on the Catholic faith, which as a priest he appropriated through his theological formation. This theological formation continued to evolve, deepen, and be transformed into a tradition for the Congregation—a tradition of words and action as the concrete expression of faith.

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22 Ibid.

23 Henri Lavedan, *The Heroic Life of Saint Vincent de Paul*, trans. Helen Younger Chase (London: Longman, Green,1929), 196.

24 Charles Herbst, C.M., "The 'Little Method' of St. Vincent de Paul: A Reform in the Method of Preaching," (master's thesis, Catholic University of America, 1951), 38.

25 Charles E. Miller, C.M., *Ordained to Preach: A Theology and Practice of Preaching* (Oregon: Wipf and Stock), 192.

Besides the use of the little method, Saint Vincent emphasized simplicity as the characteristic mark of the missionary preacher. He spoke of the persuasive and incisive force of simplicity and urged his missionaries to clothe themselves with the virtue of simplicity, especially in preaching. He would often say, "O Sauveur! O simplicity, you are really very persuasive! Simplicity converts everyone. It is quite certain that, to convince and win over the human spirit, we have to act simply; we usually don't manage to do this by using beautiful, set speeches; they shout aloud and make a lot of noise but do nothing else."[26]

In the context of preaching, communication is either "speaker oriented" or "hearer oriented." In a speaker-oriented event, the preacher does not pay attention to the primary need of the listeners. He uses images that are more familiar to him than to his audience. On the contrary, when the preacher invites the hearers to relate to the words within their own framework and world, it is a hearer-oriented event. The little method of Saint Vincent adopts a hearer-oriented process. Thus, the preacher meets the hearers on their ground. The preaching, in turn, provides a world for the hearers to live as it empowers their faith and hope.

Vincentian Formation in Africa

Many Western people might stereotype Africa as a continent of massive jungles where crocodiles, elephants, lions, hippos, and zebras warm themselves on the streets. However, Saint Vincent de Paul loved Africa not for her animal life but for her pastoral needs. Vincent sent missionaries to North Africa and to Madagascar. By doing so, he affirmed the evangelical needs of that vast continent and the call of Providence to bring the good news to them.

Between the foundation of the Congregation of the Mission in 1625 and now, a lot has changed both in Africa and in the Western world. Presently, the Vincentian communities in Western Europe and North America are exploring the restructuring and consolidation process in response to secularism and shifting demographics, such as smaller families, aging populations, and diminishing numbers of confreres. In Africa, though, the Congregation sees large families, a vibrant Church, and burgeoning seminaries and formation houses. Pope John Paul II described the growth as the result of a systematic evangelization brought about by the extraordinary effort of the apostles of the African mission.

The common theologate in Africa, a COVIAM (Conference of Visitors in Africa and Madagascar) initiative located in Nigeria, is an attempt to confront the challenge of effective formation for the growing number of African Vincentian students.[27]

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26 Document 134, "Method to be Followed in Preaching," *CCD,* 11:259.

27 In May 2013 during the COVIAM meeting in Kigali, Rwanda, Richard Benson the then-mission superior in Nairobi gave a renewed push to an age-long desire of COVIAM to have a common theologate. Benson's view was to use the facility at De Paul Center in Nairobi, Kenya, to kick-start this program. Unfortunately, that plan did not work exactly the way he thought. But the initiative took a new dimension with the decision of COVIAM to have Nigeria be the host province of the theologate. The COVIAM theology house was inaugurated in Enugu, Nigeria, on 27 September 2019— a landmark project sponsored by VSO (Vincentian Solidarity Office). The inauguration also witnessed the ordination of the first COVIAM priests.

Go and preach the Gospel to all nations.

Frontispiece from Les Missions Catholiques (1919).

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

Some cultural anthropologists have argued that people in some respects are *like others, like no others, and like some others*. Like others, they share the same traits and general disposition of being human; like no others, they possess traits that make them different and unique; like some others, they share in a particular group worldview and emotional experience.[28] This uniqueness and the intersectional realities of our world bear some implication for preaching and preparation for mission.

The common theologate challenges COVIAM to a threefold task: (1) training of mature and competent formators, (2) developing a formation program with missionary orientation, and (3) demonstrating familiarity with the different patterns of preaching and integrating them with the little method of Saint Vincent de Paul.

Training of Mature and Competent Formators

The formation of the clergy is a delicate job. The Vincentians are called to this task as the "formators of formators." In one of his conferences on the ministry with the ordinands, Vincent touted with precision, "Since God is bestowing on this Little Company, the least and poorest of all, the honor of devoting itself to that, we must, on our part, put all our effort into making success of this apostolic plan which aims at preparing future priest for major orders and to carry out their ministry properly."[29] Since no one gives what he does not have, members of the Congregation of the Mission need adequate formation to be excellent formators and

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28 Detail on how people are like others, like no other, and like some others can be found in Clyde Kluckhohn and Henry Murray, *Personality in Nature, Society and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948).

29 Conference 6, "Ministry with the Ordinands," n.d., *CCD*, 11:8.

missionary preachers.

As a regional conference with the desire to bring a unique, dynamic, and cheerful culture to the Vincentian mission, COVIAM has a primary task of preparing her formators. These should be men who integrate self-transcendent values in Christ, maturity of attitude, and a clear understanding of the Vincentian charism to evangelize the poor and be evangelized by them.

The *Ratio Formationis of the Congregation of the Mission* underscores adequate preparation of formators as essential to a formidable formation. It states, "Formation is a specialized ministry. No formator has all the skills needed for this ministry by nature or personal temperament. Each confrere who takes on formation ministry should be offered specific formation for that ministry."[30] It is particularly important to note that formation is an apostolate of example and service. The Vincentian formator therefore should mirror some Vincentian virtues. He should understand the Congregation's charism, be rooted in the person of Christ, and be able to work with young people. The emphasis on mature and competent formators accentuates maturity as a predicate for willing example and humble service. Candidates in formation would tend to be helped more by the formator whose attitude is their model than by the formator who gives instructions.

The arduous task of formation in Africa is rooted in the continent's long experience of humiliation, suffering, and misunderstanding. Due to the colonial scramble for Africa, slavery, social stigmatization, and theological importation, Africans have had to rebuild and reconstruct their social and theological identity. Such is not achieved overnight. This crisis of identity presents some challenges for formation. First, freedom to have self-understanding and theocentric self-transcendence is limited. Second, the crisis of identity smacks of an inferiority complex and negative compensatory viewpoints leading to aggressive behaviors and carefree attitudes.

Trained formators who have gone "through the work of exploring, converting, and integrating their own personalities"[31] are more likely to understand the struggle of the young African seminarian who shows up to be a Vincentian missionary preacher. A history of excellent academic performance is not enough to qualify a person to be a formator; one also needs a certain degree of human and spiritual maturity and sufficient training in the skill of accompaniment and group dynamics. He should manifest stability in his Vincentian vocation and have an excellent disposition to accompany others.

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30 "Ratio Formationis Congregationis Missionis," *Vincentiana* 58:4 (October–December 2014). Available online at https://cmglobal.org/en/vincentiana-2014-n-4-eng/.

31 L. M. Rulla, *Anthroplogy of Christian Vocation* (Rome: Gregorian University Press,1996),1:399.

Developing a Mission-oriented Formation Program

Traditionally, Europe and America sent missionaries to Africa. Confreres from the Western world established most of our African provinces. These men and women had the traditional knowledge, the Western philosophy, the structure of the Mother Church, and the theological precision. But with Christianity shrinking in the global West, Africa is emerging as a new missionary nursery. As Walbert Buhlmann writes, "No one who visits Africa can forget the experience. The singing and dancing people who are so cheerful, spontaneous and emotional —and therefore unpredictable too, who transform huts into homes, work into rhythmic movement, and worship into a real celebration, must have something to offer the Church and mankind."[32] The Africa that Buhlmann describes is what most people witness in the African provinces of our Congregation today. The African people preach with action words that derive from their rich oral tradition. They use a large amount of imagery in their narrative and tend to make existential exegesis of the scripture that stirs the five senses. The Christian world has a high expectation of Africa as pertains to mission and this expectation must suggest something to our formation program.

Mission-oriented formation must begin with constructing a theological identity. In 1969 Pope Paul VI said in Kampala, Uganda, "An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the Church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense, you may, and you must, have an African Christianity."[33] Unfortunately, the theological and philosophical preparation in the seminary that is all too Western robs the young African mind of an authentic and rooted way of understanding God. Often, the African reading of the gospel is still a perfect copy of what the Western Church produced. Africa has yet to have a sufficiently developed theological identity of her own.[34] Generally, identity has to do with one's sense of self. What does it mean to be an African Vincentian? If the formation forum does not address this question, then the students would have a limited understanding of the mission. Since mission begins with establishing self-identity, our students need to articulate an African Christian and Vincentian self-understanding. Interestingly, one of the main goals of COVIAM, and by extension, the new common theologate, is that of enculturation of the Vincentian charism, vocation, and mission in Africa and Madagascar. Let me suggest some practical ways to do this:

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32 Walbert Bühlmann, *The Church of the Future* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1986), 153.

33 "Pope Paul VI's Apostolic Pilgrimage to Uganda, 31st July–2nd August 1969," Accessed 6 November 2019, at: http://www.totus2us.com/universal/uganda/.

34 Theophilus Okere, "The Task before the Theological Conference," *The Nigerian Journal of Theology* 9:1 (June 1995): 5–11: "There is need to develop a conceptual framework for articulating the faith in an African idiom so that our faith becomes genuinely ours. There is need to critically sift and appropriate nearly 20 centuries of meditation and nationalization done by the older Christians on all aspects of faith."

Tomaž Mavrič, C.M., Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, during a March 2023 visit with Vincentian Marian Youth from Rwanda and Burundi.

Courtesy jmvinter.org

- exploring with the students their understanding of themselves as African missionaries.
- examining the African values that are significant to mission.
- sharing missionary stories—for example, the mission story of the likes of Justin de Jacobis and the first early Vincentian and other missionaries who came to Africa.
- engaging African confreres who are in the mission field or have been outstanding missionaries elsewhere to share their experience with the students.
- helping the students to establish and understand the dialogue between narrative theology and systematic theology concerning mission and inculturation.
- getting the students to share their imagined missionary stories and to discover their missionary talents.

In many parts of Africa, the communal and deeply religious experience of the people is challenged by serious crises that beg for a prophetic voice. These crises include the cult of witchcraft, the exploitation of women and children, gross violations of human rights, ethnic conflicts, xenophobia, civil wars, and political injustice and oppression. Cultural identity and formation are predictors of how people preach and how the message is received. If the preacher is not at home with his "shame," he would be unable to name grace and stir up the audacity to hope. The African missionary preacher is therefore called primarily to be the prophetic voice that names the crises within the culture but also speaks to them as finite disappointments.

Thus, the COVIAM theologate must aim at stimulating African Vincentian thinking and facilitate the process of authentic missionary enculturation. First, preachers must appreciate their African identity and discover the enculturated gospel message that can meet Africans in their life experience. This is the way to challenge the status quo, and consequently propose an alternative believing community. In this way, the people would feel understood, accompanied, and redeemed within their culture. Second, we must look at evangelization and preaching not from "above" (theological discourse), but from "below," from a local articulation of the Christian faith. However, a deep understanding of enculturation is needed here.

The Vincentian *Ratio missionum* states that "entry into a new culture is difficult. Confreres sent to the mission need adequate preparation. Besides basic theological and Vincentian formation, their preparation should include anthropological and sociological study. An understanding of enculturation in general and [a] study of the specific culture and language are essential."[35] Effective preaching values the context and the uniqueness of a particular audience. It respects the presence of real people in the real world with real-life stories. That is why missionary preaching needs adequate preparation. It is ineffective to require contextual preaching from priests when that emphasis is not well coordinated in their curriculum of formation.

Familiarity with the Patterns of Preaching and Integrating Them with the Little Method of Saint Vincent de Paul

Preaching today is a lot different from twenty-one years ago. We live in a world where religion and religious belief means different things to different people. Tradition and divine authority, which once were the sources of truth, have now come under assault. The postmodern world is curious about most things—although such curiosity is not against truth in and of

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35 "Ratio Missionum Congregatio Missionis: 1-4," *Vincentiana* 46:1 (January–February 2002), 3.3.2. Available online at: https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol46/iss1/8/.

At left, Blessed Vincent de Paul, shown in the ample Parisian surplice. A whip and a "discipline" are placed among the thorns framing the figures. Hand-colored engraving in the Vincentian museum, Paris. Produced before 1737. At right, Vincent de Paul, wearing traditional pleated Parisian surplice. Marble statuette, DePaul University collection.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

itself but against the claims and assertions of self-evident truth.[36] A stark reality is that the Christian message is contesting for relevance in a world that is no longer so receptive to strictly religious claims. According to the Pew Research Center, between 2007 and 2017 government restrictions on religious practices and beliefs have significantly jumped around the world.[37] It is most likely that postmodernity, scandals in the Catholic Church, and dissatisfying Church

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36 David J. Lose, *Preaching at the Crossroads: How the World and Our Preaching is Changing* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 19. Lose is of the view that postmodernity's stance derives from the conviction that once you declare something self-evident you place it beyond the realm of critical review. Doing so allocates too much power to one voice in the conversation and restricts other voices that may have other viewpoints.

37 "A Closer Look at How Religious Restrictions Have Risen around the World," Pew Research Center, 15 July 2019, https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2019/07/15/a-closer-look-at-how-religious-restrictions-have-risen-around-the-world/. This article notes:

> Over the decade from 2007 to 2017, government restrictions on religion—laws, policies and actions by state officials that restrict religious beliefs and practices—increased markedly around the world. The latest data shows that 52 governments—including some in very populous countries like China, Indonesia and Russia—impose either "high" or "very high" levels of restrictions on religion, up from 40 in 2007. And the number of countries where people are experiencing the highest levels of social hostilities involving religion has risen from 39 to 56 over the course of the study.

Peter Mutula, C.M., celebrates the Eucharist during the 2023 Feast of St. Vincent de Paul at St. Lazare House, Nairobi, Kenya.

Courtesy www.facebook.com/vincentianskenya/

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teachings have contributed to the emergence of the "Nones" and "Dones" subgroups.[38] The "Nones" deny religious affiliation, and the "Dones" have turned away from the practice of religion.

The emergence of these two subgroups suggests something to missionary preaching. The wise counsel given by Saint Vincent in this regard is that "no matter what we do, people will never believe in us if we do not show love and sympathy towards those we wish to believe in us."[39] In other words, the preacher has to be a pastor. Vincent knew and practiced

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38 Neil Carter, "The "Nones" vs. the "Dones," accessed 6 November 2019, https://www.patheos.com.
The "Nones" are the religiously unaffiliated. Some of them, perhaps, were formerly religious. However, many of them still regard themselves as spiritual persons who simply no longer identify with any religious denomination. Their faith is still meaningful to them. A few of them identify as agnostics or even atheists. The "Dones" are fatigued with the Sunday routine of sermons, prayer, and paying tithes. They want to play. They want to participate. But they feel spurned at every turn. It seems preachers are learning how to get the "Dones" to return to the Church.

39 Coste, *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, 2:218.

the preacher-pastor life so well that in his little method he emphasized that the preacher must speak in the language of the people, using everyday illustrations and examples which speak to the experience of the people. He must do this in such a way that people hear him in their particular circumstances.[40] At the heart of preaching is the consideration for the audience and its subculture, values, and ethos. A missionary preacher must therefore be familiar with the theological meaning of adaptation, indigenization, contextualization, and enculturation. Such approaches incarnate the word of the scripture.

Exposing students to the patterns of preaching involves naming some of the common patterns of preaching: traditional patterns, contemporary patterns, patterns of subjects, and patterns of theology. The *traditional patterns* illustrate historical models of sermon structure that can still help the congregation encounter the gospel. The *contemporary patterns* focus on approaches to preaching that have emerged in the last twenty years and continue to be suitable for preaching today. The *patterns of subjects* demonstrate how different subject matters and different foci can lead to particular approaches in the sermon. The *patterns of theology* show how different theological methods (for example, liberation theology) result in sermons that are faithful to the gospel even though they are nuanced according to a particular theological bias.[41] Let us identify three worldviews of preaching here: the world of the text, the world of the preacher, and the community's world. It is in the world of the preacher and the community that preaching takes place. An attentive preacher therefore mediates between the world of the text and the world of the community in such a way that a local theology is born.

The patterns of preaching suggested here, when properly integrated with the little method of Saint Vincent de Paul, can give birth to a local theology grounded in the scripture and the faith experience of the community. This means that the preacher is motivated by his experience of the goodness of God and his tenderness as revealed in the scripture. The preacher utters his words in simplicity and humility, but the responsibility to convert belongs to the Holy Spirit. The final consequence is the sacred eloquence that "nurtures, nourishes, and evokes a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us."[42] Secularism as the dominant culture tends to rebel against the idea that God is in control and that truth is founded in God. But effective preaching is consistently Christocentric and heralds grace.

Saint Vincent de Paul always sought to imitate Christ in his preaching. The formation of the little method is drawn from the example of Christ's sermons in the gospel. In

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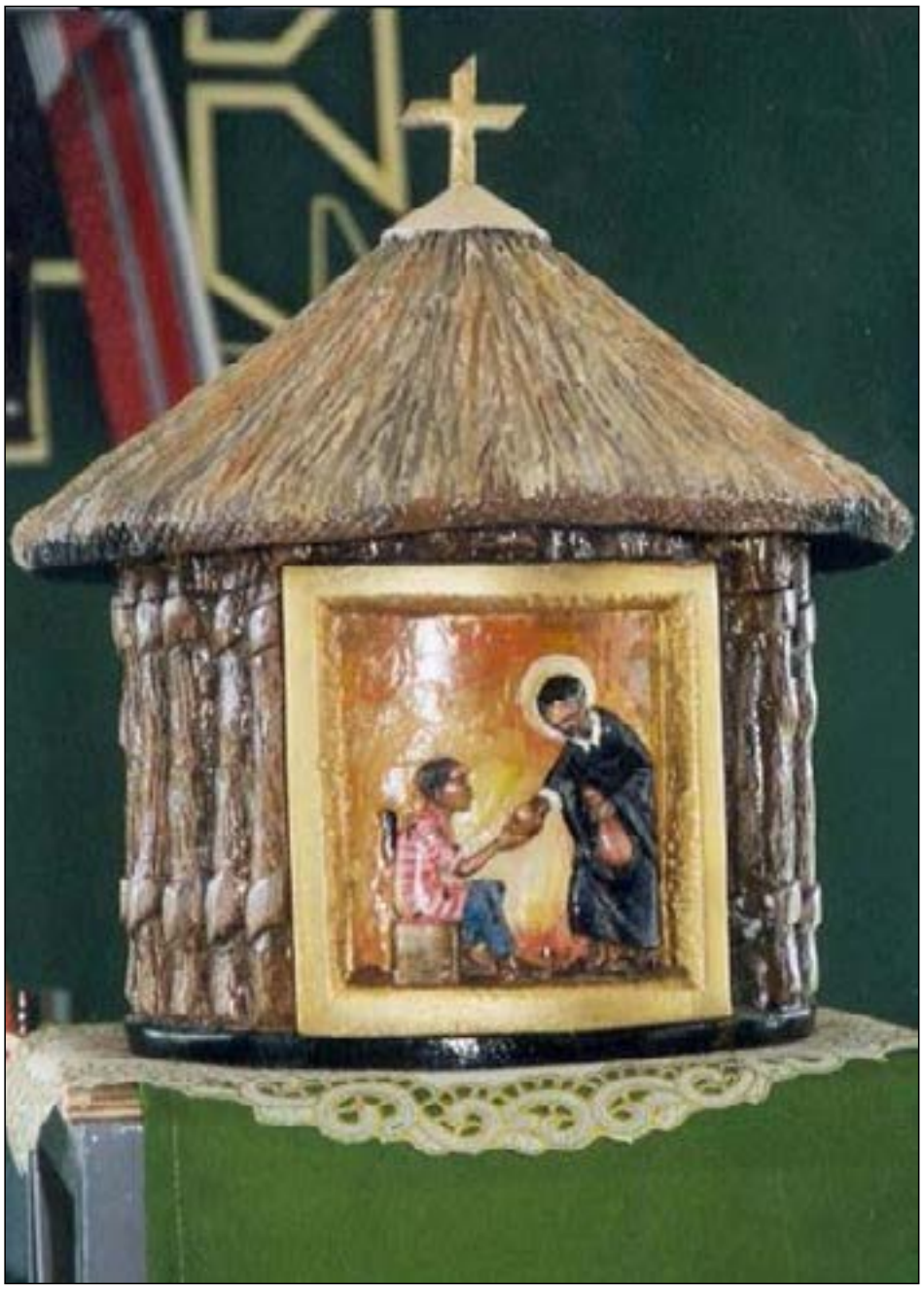
40 Herbst, "The 'Little Method' of St. Vincent de Paul," 56.

41 Ronald J. Allen, ed., *Patterns of Preaching: A Sermon Sampler* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1998), xiii.

42 Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 13.



At left, ceramic tabernacle depicts Vincent de Paul holding a water gourd and distributing food to a seated African man. Original in DePaul Center, Nairobi, Kenya. At right, a stained-glass window in the Damascus House chapel, Nairobi, Kenya, portrays Vincent with three children. Latin reads: "He opened his hand to the poor...."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

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imitating Christ, Vincent aimed at helping people to hear, see, and touch Christ through sacred eloquence. He further described the missionary preachers in these words: "The state of the Missioners is in conformity with the evangelical maxims, which consists in leaving and abandoning everything, as the apostles did, to follow Jesus Christ and, in imitation of Him to do what is proper ... for is there anything more Christian than to go from village to village to help poor persons to be saved, as you see being done with great fatigue and inconvenience!"[43] Thus, the emergence and the spirituality of the Congregation of the

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43 Conference 1, "The Vocation of a Missioner," n.d., *CCD*, 11:1.

Mission is Christocentric. It is Christ the evangelizer whom the missionary preacher must imitate.

Conclusion

The demographic shift in the universal Church and our Congregation is a real one. In this article, I have looked at Saint Vincent's time and how he navigated through challenges. I have not only presented the critical situation in Africa that needs a prophetic voice, but also some of the challenges of the postmodern world concerning preaching. Since our mission is worldwide, our worldview must widen. And, I have made some prescriptive suggestions for COVIAM formation in Africa.

As a formator for most of the years of my priesthood, I am concerned about how the prosperous vocation in Africa can be welcomed and nurtured for the mission *ad gentes*. Saint Vincent de Paul always believed that for the good of the Church and authentic conversion, we needed to form good priests. He would say, "Oh Messieurs! What a great thing a good priest is! What is there that a good priest can't do and what conversion can he not obtain … the success of Christianity depends on priests; for, when good parishioners see a good member of the clergy, a charitable Pastor, they honor him, do what he says, and try to imitate him."[44] The new missionary paradigm entrusts unto Africa (COVIAM) the mandate of forming similarly committed and stable missionary preachers.

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44 Conference 4, "Formation of the Clergy," *CCD*, 11:6.

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Table of Contents

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Cover image: French etching of Vincent de Paul with foundlings and Daughters of Charity. Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive.

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