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VIRTUES IN PRACTICE

VINCENTIAN HERITAGE



Pa, Ma, and Fa: Private
Lives of Nineteenth-Century
American Vincentians

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Pa, Ma, and Fa: Private Lives of Nineteenth-Century American Vincentians

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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 the recent multi-volume series *The Vincentians: A General History of the Congregation of the Mission*, and four new supplementary volumes of *Correspondence, Conferences, and Documents*, containing his translations of previously unpublished texts of Vincent de Paul.

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Reposing in the archives of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia is a cache of fifty-six private letters written by nine Vincentians to members of the prominent Willcox family of Ivy Mills, Pennsylvania. These letters offer probably the only surviving glimpse of the private lives and thoughts of American Vincentians in the mid-nineteenth century. This article sets out the story of this charitable family and their relationship to their Vincentian pastors. Given the lack of diaries, biographies, obituaries, or even newspaper accounts, any information about these priests is valuable. The letters are all the more interesting since they were private and not the usual formal letters addressed to superiors reporting on conditions of Vincentian houses and works.

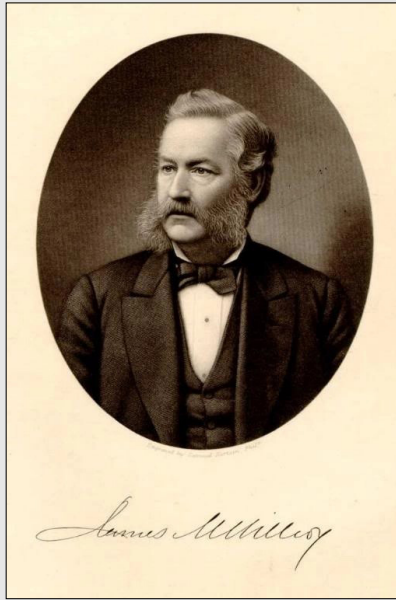
The Vincentian mission at Ivy Mills, Delaware County, Pennsylvania, does not form part of the standard American Vincentian story. Nevertheless, understanding how it functioned and the relationships involved there sheds an important light on how American Catholic parishes evolved. They began in the homes of Catholics before developing into small chapels and then generally into today's large parish complexes.

Ivy Mills was a settlement in Glen Mills near Chester Heights, Pennsylvania, west of Philadelphia. Its story begins with Thomas Willcox (d. 1779), an early English settler. He married Elizabeth Cole, an Irish-born Catholic, and it was this marriage that probably led to his becoming a Catholic, making him the head of the first Catholic family in Pennsylvania. Mass was celebrated from 1720 in his family home, in a place originally called Concord (now in Concord Township). The Willcoxes had ten children, among whom was Mark Willcox (19 August 1744–7 February 1827). Mark succeeded his father in running the nearby family paper mill.

James Mark Willcox (12 April 1791–4 March 1854), Mark's son, married twice. He married his first wife, Eliza Orne, on 4 October 1813. She died 28 January 1817 in Savannah, where she had gone for her health. His second wife was Mary Brackett (1796–1866), of Quincy, Massachusetts.¹ They married on 1 November 1819. She was of strong and old Puritan stock. James succeeded his father at the family business. He energetically built up the family fortunes, rebuilding the century-old Lower Glen paper mill. Willcox also took an interest in the West Chester and Philadelphia Railway and built a station serving Glen Mills in 1845.

From 1804 to 1827, the Willcox family and others in the area received Father Patrick Kenny, the pastor of St. Peter's, in Wilmington, Delaware. The chapel (actually a room in the family home) was called St. Mary's. The family had a portable altar of uncertain date that would fold up for storage, and it and some of its ornaments survive.

¹ The most important study is Sara Trainer Smith, "Sketch of Mary Brackett Wilcox of Ivy Mills, Pa. 1796–1866," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 7 (1896): 395–453; reprinted as Joseph Willcox, *The Catholic Mission at Concord, Delaware Co., Penna.*; and Sara Trainer Smith, "Sketch of Mary Brackett Willcox," reprint from *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society*, Philadelphia, 1897.



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Portraits of Mary Brackett Willcox and James Willcox.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

The old Willcox home was demolished in 1837 to be replaced by another on the same site. It continued having a space for Sunday worship and prayer. In 1852, when the Catholic community had grown, James donated land for St. Thomas Church. However, James and his father retained the privilege of having a private oratory in their home, an agreement that Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Philadelphia made. The original church was built in 1853.

James and Mary had five sons, of whom the eldest, another Mark (1824–1883), succeeded to the family business. He had studied in Georgetown and then in Rome, where he pursued languages, mathematics, and philosophy, in which he received a doctorate in 1847 from Pius IX.² Back in Ivy Mills, he oversaw the work. He abandoned Lower Glen Mills after 1866, and in its place built Upper Glen Mills, on Chester Creek. It is believed that he invented good banknote paper, and his paper mill became a leading supplier of paper for Provincial, Continental, and Federal currency, as well as of banknote paper for several South American nations in later years.³

His mother became a Catholic in 1827, much to her Puritan family's dislike. Bishop Kenrick confirmed both her and her husband on 1 May 1842, during a visit to their community, at which time he also confirmed other members of the incipient parish.

² Henry Graham Ashmead, *History of Delaware County, Pennsylvania 1884*, Philadelphia 1884; <http://genealogytrails.com/penn/delaware/delhistash.html>, accessed 7 October 2015.

³ Joseph Willcox, *Ivy Mills and Willcox and Allied Families* (Chester, PA: 1911), pp. 491–97.



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***Views of the Willcox home in Ivy Mills,
along with the altar inside the house chapel.***

Courtesy of the author



Mary and the Vincentians

The family began its relationship with the Vincentians in 1842. Three of them had moved from the Barrens in 1841 to take up the direction of the Philadelphia seminary.⁴ One confrere, Thomas Burke, came to celebrate Mass, and it is perhaps through this contact that the family offered their house for the seminarians.⁵ They wanted to provide a home and family setting for them. At the close of the academic year, then, faculty members brought some of the seminarians to Ivy Mills for a summer break. It is unclear how many there were, but out of about thirty seminarians, perhaps five or six would have lived at too great a distance to travel during the summer. With the exception of 1844, during the nativist riots in Philadelphia, the seminarians came yearly through 1854, when James (Pa) died. Family members who had a residence in the city sometimes returned the visits by calling at the seminary.

Besides the summer visits, in later years the Vincentians asked James and his son, also James M. (1824–1895), to sit on the board of trustees of Hamilton Village, in West Philadelphia. Four confreres (Thaddeus Amat, John Baptist Tornatore, Michael Domenec, and Andrew Rossi) and another layman, John Sullivan, laid there the legal groundwork for the purchase of land in Germantown for St. Vincent's Church on Price Street.⁶

⁴ On the seminary, see *Historical Sketch of The Philadelphia Theological Seminary of Saint Charles Borromeo. 1832–1905* (Overbrook, PA: Geo. W. Gibbons & Sons, 1905), see: [Philadelphia Theological Seminary](#); *The Philadelphia Theological Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo: A Record of Its Foundation, Charter, and Career; Comprising a List of the Trustees, Members of the Faculty and of the Priests Therein Ordained: 1832–1917* (Philadelphia: Catholic Standard and Times, 1917), see [Philadelphia Theological Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo](#).

⁵ *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Guide* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr., 1842), p. 81

⁶ Michael A. Drennan, "The Early History of 'the Congregation of the Mission' in Philadelphia," *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia* 20, no. 1 (March 1909): 12.

The Vincentians from the seminary came to Ivy Mills not only in the summer but also during the year, beginning at least in 1844. After 1845, they would travel to Glen Mills usually twice a month to celebrate Mass and baptisms and to hear confessions.⁷ As Mary became interested in developing her spiritual life, she relied on spiritual directors, both diocesan and Vincentian, as the existing correspondence shows.

Besides the Vincentian correspondence, she kept the majority of her incoming correspondence with another ten priests, both diocesan and religious. None of her outgoing correspondence with the Vincentians has survived. Interestingly, both the seminarians and the Vincentians called her Mother or Ma, undoubtedly at her urging. They also referred to her husband as Pa, although none of his correspondence with the Vincentians apparently exists. Probably as a joke, at least one of the Vincentians referred to himself and his confreres as Fa. The impression is therefore given of lighthearted but respectful relationships with the family. Some of the Vincentians were more formal, addressing Mrs. Willcox as “respected lady” (Mariano Maller), “my dear child in Christ” (Bartholomew Rollando, although she was fourteen years older than he), and “most respectable & devout servant of God” (Tornatore). Their closings were also a mixture of informal and formal, as might be expected.⁸

Correspondence

The surviving Vincentian correspondence dates from 1842 through 1856. The majority come from 1843 to 1847. The writers are presented here in chronological order of their earliest letters.

Mariano Maller

Maller (1817–1892) was the superior of the seminary in Philadelphia from 1841 to 1847, and vicar general of the diocese. Thirteen of his letters remain in the Willcox correspondence. He was young, nineteen years Mary’s junior. As superior of the seminary, he was responsible for the conduct of his students and must have kept a close watch on them during their time with the family. However, he never mentioned this concern in the surviving letters. As pastor of Ivy Mills in 1846–1847, he had many opportunities to visit. He succeeded John Timon (1797–1867) as provincial in 1846, but his office did not tie him down to a fixed residence. He supervised the union of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s of

7 For baptismal records and the names of the Vincentians: Joseph Willcox, “Catholic Mission at Ivy Mills,” *American Catholic Historical Society Records* 24 (1914): 30. See also *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity’s Guide*, (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr., 1844), p. 78; 1851 directory, p. 109.

8 Mary died on 21 March 1866, and was buried with her husband James Mark in the family graveyard, up the hillside from the family home. This private cemetery contains graves and stones of the original founding family and many of their descendants.

Mother Seton, Emmitsburg, Maryland, with the Daughters of Charity. He moved to Europe in 1850, was later provincial in Brazil, and, after a variety of other important positions, became provincial of Spain in 1866.

His letters are clearly written, conveying spiritual direction on a variety of topics: prayer, the will of God, the Bible, meditation, and the sorrows of maternal life, such as the death of her daughter Mary Elizabeth (1831–1846). His writing shows a man sure of himself, sober, and capable of leadership.

He also gave a good description of the rigors of travel in his period. In 1847, he happened to be taking the same train as the famous Henry Clay. His appearance caused a sensation wherever the train passed. On the same trip, Maller took the stagecoach and then boarded a steamboat from Wheeling, West Virginia, on his way to Cincinnati and ending in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, his new assignment.

Alexander Frasi

Fraasi (b. 1817) was a much different personality than Maller. Mary kept seventeen of Fraasi's letters, the most of any of her Vincentian correspondents. They date from 1843 to 1848. He was the only one to use "Fa" in his letters, perhaps a sign of his personality and closeness to the family. He arrived in the United States in 1842 from the province of Turin and came to Philadelphia to work in St. Charles Seminary. He was also assigned to what he called "my dear neat little church," St. Stephen in Nicetown, a neighborhood in North Philadelphia, which he visited twice a month.⁹ He was its first pastor from 1844 to 1846. He was also the first Vincentian to be named pastor of Ivy Mills. In a letter from 1844, he described his work and added, "Though I a'int [sic] a Yankee, they tell me they understand me well enough."¹⁰

The nativist (or Know-Nothing) riots of May and July of 1844 disturbed his peaceful world in Philadelphia. The anti-Catholic rioters burned and looted in the city, but left the country alone. Since the bishop did not want the seminarians to stay at Ivy Mills in that period, Fraasi reported that they fled and "were all frightened to death." The riots were soon put down and "arrests increase daily."¹¹

His language was often affectionate and even poetic, as in this letter of 15 March 1844, written to thank Ma for a gift of flowers: "James brought to me your present. How to thank you for it I know not. In there is such a delicacy of taste in the choice you have made I have mused over it, and I thought you intended to give me also an emblem in it of the

9 *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Guide* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr., 1846), p. 101.

10 Fraasi to Mary Willcox, 13 August 1844, archives of the American Catholic Historical Society, Philadelphia Archdiocesan Historical Research Center, Seminary of St. Charles Borromeo, Overbrook, PA. Hereinafter cited as ACHS.

11 Maller to Mary Willcox, 3 June 1844, ACHS; Fraasi to Mary Willcox, 18 July 1844, ACHS.



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***Willcox's Paper Mills.
Etching by Henry Graham
Ashmead in History of
Delaware County (1884);
and a painting after
the etching.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul
Image Archive Online

priestly life I should live. I thought the white and fragrant camellia to mean the purity of conscience, the balmy odor of which must always be diffused from the minister of the altar.”

He was also affectionate toward members of the family, especially the children. He wrote of Mary's son William Jenkins (1815–1845), his contemporary: “I love William very much.” Consequently, he was deeply moved by William's death: “I have lost the tenderest friend I had, I should say a fond brother!” Clearly, he had found warm friends and a family. However, he was unhappy in Philadelphia, probably because he did not fit in with his other confreres. Consequently, Timon, the provincial, planned to send Frasi to St. Louis in 1844. He received a reprieve; even before moving to St. Louis in 1846, he asked formally to return to Italy, alleging that he had been neglected.

Once at the seminary in St. Louis, he became homesick for Philadelphia, and especially for the Willcox family. “I am your exiled child.... I live a hermit life.... I have never been so unhappy in my life.... When the *blues* come on, and in spite of all my exertions they come too often ... I think of you and get better.”¹² He made no friends in St. Louis and must have been severely depressed. One reason for his condition was the “Italian Faction” at the seminary in St. Louis, a source of student complaints about the strict discipline imposed by the other Italian confreres (Francis James Burlando and Joseph Demarchi),¹³ presumably supported by Frasi.

¹² Frasi, St. Louis, Missouri, to Mary Willcox, 25 September and 13 November 1846, ACHS.

¹³ Emmanuel Domenech, John Anselm, and Francis X. Weiss, St. Louis, to Jean-Baptiste Étienne, Paris, 6 April 1848, in Archives of the General Curia, Rome [Hereinafter ACGR], American papers.

Another change in his life was Timon's appointment as bishop of the new diocese of Buffalo in 1847. Frasi, appointed the local (perhaps even the provincial) treasurer, had come down with typhoid besides. He wrote that Timon, "our good old man, is snatched away from us to make him a Bishop." He presumed that Maller, his former superior in Philadelphia and then in Cape Girardeau, would succeed Timon, thus further disturbing his balance.¹⁴

His regular correspondence with Ma ceases in 1847, either because he stopped writing or Mary did not keep his letters. In 1848, still in St. Louis, he had not improved and asked for a dispensation from his vows as a Vincentian, a request he repeated in 1849. His superior, Maller, stigmatized him as having a "bad character" and not living a regular Vincentian life.¹⁵ He was dispensed in 1850, went to Paris, returned to the United States, and then went at last to Italy at some point after 1854. There, he joined the diocese of Vercelli, where he died in 1871.

Antonio Penco

Penco (1813–1875), another Italian, arrived in the United States in 1840. Before he entered the Congregation, he completed his studies at the Vincentian school in Savona and then went to work in his father's business. He was attracted to the mission in the United States after attending a sermon by Jean-Marie Odin (1800–1870) on a recruiting mission in Italy. Penco then made his novitiate and seminary studies and was ordained in 1840.

As a sign of the difficulties in those early years of the American province, Timon, lacking anyone else, assigned this newly ordained priest to be the superior of the seminary in New York.¹⁶ He moved several times. He was in Philadelphia for the 1842–1843 academic year and became pastor of the Ivy Mills community in 1845. He was superior of the Cape Girardeau seminary for the following academic year. Financial and disciplinary conditions were too much for him, and Penco asked to return to Italy.¹⁷ Instead, Maller had him return to Philadelphia.

When Maller left for Europe in 1850, Penco replaced him as the third provincial of the American province. He served until he returned to Italy to help manage family affairs after the death of his brother.¹⁸ He never returned to the province he had once led.

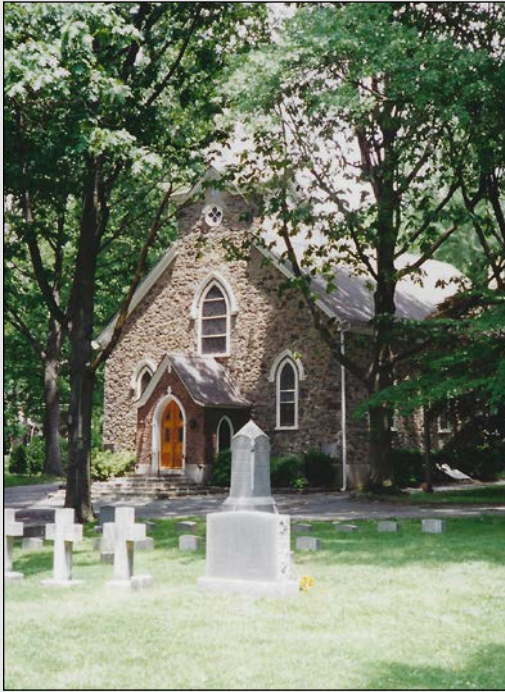
¹⁴ Frasi, St. Louis, Missouri, to Mary Willcox, 11 October 1847, ACHS.

¹⁵ General council minutes, vol. 1, meeting of 14 January 1850, ACGR.

¹⁶ Penco, New York, to Pierre Paul Sturchi, Paris, 2 November 1842, ACGR.

¹⁷ Penco, Cape Girardeau, to Étienne, Paris, 24 November 1845, ACGR.

¹⁸ On him, see John E. Rybolt, ed., *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States 1815–1987* (New York: New City Press, 1988), pp. 44–49. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/18/



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The old church, Ivy Mills, Pennsylvania.

Courtesy of the author

His only letter to Mary dates from 18 October 1845. In it, he expresses his gratitude somewhat formally to Mary and her family for their friendship and hospitality. He was about to leave for Cape Girardeau and wrote, “It is on an occasion as this, when nature urges more forcibly her rights than ever, that such feelings seem to grow deeper and deeper, and scarcely differ [defer?] to be controlled ever; however, we must bow to the divine will, and willingly, if not we cannot cheerfully part.”

Bartholomew Rollando

From Rollando (1810–1847) there are eight letters, written from 1845 to 1847. He entered the Congregation in Italy and was ordained there before leaving for the United States in 1834. He and four companions departed Livorno in August that year and arrived at the Barrens in November. In the following year, he was named director of the novitiate (the internal seminary) but expressed significant reservations about their chaotic formation: six directors were appointed over a little more than two years.

Like Frasi and Penco, Rollando had problems in his community life. His service as novice director lasted until 1839, when he was sent to the mission at Old Mines, Missouri, perhaps in the hope that his absence from the central house would allow him to reassess his behavior. He also gave some missions and was in Springfield, Illinois, in 1843.¹⁹ Living somewhat apart from the community did not prepare him for his new assignment, the seminary in Philadelphia. He arrived there in 1844 and was pastor at Ivy Mills as well. Still

¹⁹ Rollando, Springfield, to Étienne, Paris, 8 December 1843, in ACGR, American papers.

unhappy, he asked either to return to Italy or to be dispensed from his vows. Instead, Maller sent him to the mission in Texas. This was no better, and his “habitual irregularity,” that is, his lack of observance of the rules, made his relationships with the community difficult.²⁰ The general council studied this ongoing case and reluctantly agreed to Rollando’s departure,²¹ but for some reason he remained in Texas. In 1847, he signaled his intention to return to Italy but the province would not provide the money for his passage. He then wanted to work for a bishop and receive a salary to enable his return,²² but he died soon thereafter.

His relationship with the Willcox family must have been one of the bright spots in his troubled life. His surviving letters to Mary are warm, and he regularly offered her spiritual guidance. All the letters date from his time in Galveston. He reached there after a trip by railroad, stagecoach, and steamboat. Once in Galveston, he set to work at its only church, the cathedral of Odin’s diocese. Among other works, he supported the Galveston Catholic Benevolent Society. It had 125 members, both Catholics and Protestants. Its leader was Mrs. Elena Reyes Blossman (1815-1893), the Spanish-born wife of Richard Daniel Blossman (1833-1878). He was a successful businessman and English convert, and she was known for her charity, intellect, and literary abilities.²³ Rollando put Elena and Mary into contact, and one letter from Elena to Mary survives, joined to one of Rollando’s (19 August 1846).

The rest of his letters offer spiritual direction, information about his mission, and news about his health. One letter in particular, dated 22 May 1846, has a striking paragraph that Mary highlighted in the margin. Rollando is urging her to open her heart to God: “Ah, Madam, you have made this good God wait to [sic] long. He has been for so many years knocking & knocking again at the door of your heart saying to you, in the words of the spouse of the sacred canticles ‘Open to me my sister and my love ... behold I stand at the door and knock,’ without losing patience, without passing by, that having at last conquered it ... etc.”

A similar rhapsodic outpouring on humility and prayer followed in a letter of 11 February 1847: “Although I send the above canticle to Mark [her husband], it is for you also that you may burn, and be melted with very love for him who loved you when you were not born, who loved you when you did not love him, who loves you more now because you desire to love him, ... It is my ardent wish for one of my dearest children that I ever had, at the beginning of this new year and for ever.”

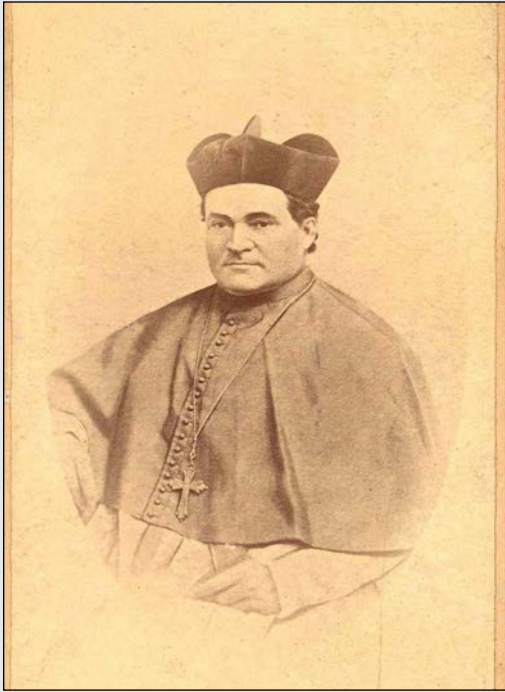
After Texas became a state, he was present when the American forces were recruiting soldiers for a war against Mexico. He clearly did not approve, writing, “They are here firing

20 General council minutes, vol. 1, p. 374, meeting of 6 October 1845, ACGR.

21 General council minutes, vol. 1, p. 387, meeting of 23 February 1846, ACGR.

22 General council minutes, vol. 1, p. 433, meeting of 2 August 1847, ACGR.

23 Obituary, *Corpus Christi Caller*, undated clipping, accessed from Elena Blossman, at: <https://www.newspapers.com/image/77717491/>



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Portrait of Thaddeus Amat, C.M.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

the canon [*sic*] very often to recruit volunteers for the Mexican war. Many of our men capable of bearing arms have already started for their work of destruction and plunder.”²⁴

In his own life, he battled illness. In August 1846, he complained of his recent sickness, “constantly puking,” but restricted himself to natural remedies.²⁵ In the following December, he had the misfortune of being dosed with calomel (also known as mercurous chloride), a common remedy at the time, but one that was extremely toxic. Rollando only got worse, and his system was likely weakened. The yellow fever epidemic of 1847 that broke out in New Orleans spread to Galveston and claimed Burlando, as Rollando reported.²⁶ Rollando himself died there on 11 October 1847, about a month after his final letter to Mary.

Thaddeus Amat

Mary preserved five letters from Amat (1811–1878), the best known among these correspondents because he became the bishop of Monterey, California.

He was born in Spain, fled from there during one of its many wars, and finished his preparations for priesthood in Paris. He was ordained there in December 1837 and departed for the United States the following August. He, six other Spaniards, and two Italians landed in New Orleans. His first ministry was in southern Louisiana. He moved to Missouri by 1844, serving in St. Louis and Cape Girardeau. He was also a member of the provincial

²⁴ Rollando, Galveston, to Mary Willcox, 24 December 1846, ACHS.

²⁵ Rollando, Galveston, to Mary Willcox, 12 August 1846, ACHS.

²⁶ Rollando, Galveston, to Mary Willcox, 17 September 1847, ACHS; see Ralph Bayard, *Lone-Star Vanguard: The Catholic Re-occupation of Texas (1838–1848)* (St. Louis: Vincentian Press, 1945), p. 383.

council. He and his fellow consultors resolved that the visitor, Timon, should go to Paris to explain in person the important and pressing affairs of the young province. These generally involved financial and personnel matters, which Timon was managing poorly.

Amat was the first consultor and hence responsible for the affairs of the province during Timon's numerous absences. By July 1848, Amat had moved to Philadelphia, where he served as the rector of the seminary until 1852. He was also the pastor of Ivy Mills, and the baptismal register shows him there from 1848 to 1850.²⁷ He seems to have ministered there either every month or every two weeks. He continued as a provincial consultor. Because of this role, he was acting provincial from 1848 to 1850, while Maller was negotiating the union of the Daughters of Charity and the Sisters of Charity. Bishop Kenrick thought so much of Amat that he named him his vicar general.²⁸ This lasted only briefly since Amat became bishop of Monterey (later Monterey-Los Angeles) in 1853.

When he received word that he could be named, he worked to avoid the appointment. He quickly went to Europe, visiting England, Spain, and France. Jean-Baptiste Étienne, the superior general, named him to accompany the first group of Daughters of Charity and Vincentians to Chile.²⁹ This never happened since the group's departure was postponed from 1850 to 1853, and by that time Amat was in Monterey.

His five letters to Mary date from 1849 to 1853. The earliest was written on 24 July 1849 from Paris. He related that cholera had recently broken out in the city, and the Daughters of Charity lost forty-two of their number during May and June. A year later, Amat was back in Philadelphia. He wrote to Mary with suggestions for her spiritual reading (Alphonsus Rodriguez, *Practice of Perfection and Christian Virtues*; and Lorenzo Scupoli, *Spiritual Combat*) and notes on what would help her spiritual development, such as weekly confession and regular communion. Nothing in these letters is found concerning his episcopal appointment, the turning point in his life. The letters are much less personal and revealing than those from his contemporaries in the Willcox circle of friends.

27 "Liber Baptizatorum in Loco Ecclesiae Sanctae Mariae dicto vulgo 'Ivy Mills,' Delaware Co. Pennsylvania S[ta]tu ab anno reparatae salutis 1809;" "Liber Matrimoniorum pro Ecclesia Sanctae Mariae in 'Ivy Mills,'" at Delaware County Historical Society, Broomall, PA, consulted in June 1997. A note accompanying the marriage records comes from Amat, who copied the original records for this register: "The following Records of from the actual Register of St. Mary's Ivy Mills, and inserted here, some of which are translated from latin [sic], for the sake of uniformity, by Rev. Thaddeus Amat actually Pastor of said place."

28 Amat, Philadelphia, to Sturchi, Paris, 27 October 1850, in ACGR, American papers.

29 Amat, Liverpool, to Sturchi, Paris, 23 June 1852; typed transcript in DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Amat papers, DePaul University; cited also in Francis J. Weber, *California's Reluctant Prelate: The Life and Times of Right Reverend Thaddeus Amat, C.M. (1811–1878)* (Dawson Book Shop: Los Angeles, 1964), p. 19.

John Baptist Tornatore

The eldest of the correspondents was Tornatore (1783–1864). Another Italian, he reached the American mission in 1829. His appointment was as superior of St. Mary's of the Barrens, the central house of the mission. He was to replace Joseph Rosati, who had been a bishop since 1823 but had continued as the superior of the Barrens. The two responsibilities became incompatible as time moved along, since Rosati was often absent, and others replaced him in the house on an *ad hoc* basis. Tornatore, a domineering personality of the old school, was expected to whip the mother house into shape through observance of the Congregation's traditional practices and outlook. One of his goals was to have his confreres live together in community, not separately in the scattered parishes that they had helped to establish in the Missouri wilderness.

As can be expected, his confreres did not share his commitments to strict observance, and he eventually moved to Cape Girardeau and to Old Mines. Thomas Shaw, who wrote a sketch of Tornatore's life, mentioned that the Italians at the Barrens disliked being there. Others complained that Tornatore's English was never very strong, and five unhappy young brothers even left the Congregation to return to Italy.³⁰

Tornatore was then called on to prop up the seminary of St. Thomas, near Bardstown, Kentucky. He was unsuccessful in the face of debts and opposition from local clergy, and he left after a short time for Philadelphia. There, he taught in the seminary and became its rector for the 1852–1853 academic year. Penco, who had taught there himself, was then the provincial, but he had no one to assign to Philadelphia after that year, and he withdrew his remaining men. Tornatore moved first to St. Louis then returned to the Barrens, where he would minister until his death in 1864. In a letter to one of the Willcox men, Tornatore contrasted the peace of the Barrens with the noise of the city: "That is the solitary place, where I live tranquil, & undisturbed as well as when I was at Ivy-mill; that is, afar from such a noise, as it was in Philadelphia, caused, every night, by fire men, with terror. This establishment is no [= not] rich, but pacific and collected [recollected]; hence I am pleased in it."

The rest of his letters are general letters of news and personal information. One to Ida Willcox, one of the daughters whom he greeted as "dear daughter of Jesus," was clearly written to a child:

I am very glad, that the fields begin to look green, and the trees bud; but I am not a calf to feed upon fine grass, neither a tree worm to eat into the leaves; I rather look for some red coloured fruit, as cherries, strawberries, as such ones I taste much.

30 Tornatore, Barrens, to Francesco Antonio Baccari, Rome, 31 December 1839, in vol. 1 of the DeAndreis materials in archives of postulator general, Rome, section F, pp. 263–66.



[Click to enlarge](#)

The grave marker for James and Mary Willcox, and their cemetery monument.

Courtesy of the author

Therefore as soon as such relishing fruit shall be ripe, I hope, you will inform me. When we will come, with the Seminarians, we will buy a good provision of fish-hooks to fish in the pond Pa has dug; and, on Friday, we will be able to eat fresh fish. Take care of the English rabbits of blue eyes.

He also offered Mary words of consolation over the loss of Pa, who died in 1854. The priest opened his letter with the formal salutation “most respectable, & devout servant of God, Madam Willcox.” He then offered his advice for her new life without her husband: “Concerning your person, Madam, you know that you are entirely of God; God is your heart, God is your mind; God is your will; God is your life; God is your all. But you must be so wholly of God, as, in due time, you mind & regulate your family; as our Lord bids every widow, and as you, thanks [be to] God, verily do, with a great deal of merit before God.”

Timothy D. O’Keeffe, Francis James Burlando, Andrew Rossi

The final three correspondents wrote between 1852 and 1854. O’Keeffe (1819–1885) came to the United States from Ireland. He had entered the Congregation in Paris in 1842 after his ordination, and he came to the Barrens as a novice in 1844, when he took his vows. There is little information about him, except that he was at Cape Girardeau when he wrote the surviving letter, and was later at the Barrens. He served briefly at the Philadelphia seminary, where he came to know the Willcox family. “You may rest assured that it will be a long time before I forget my kind friends of Ivy Mills,” he wrote on 21 October 1852.

Burlando (1814–1873) is much better known. He entered the Congregation in Genoa in 1837, was ordained a priest in Turin in 1838, and came to the United States, still a novice. He made his vows at the Barrens on Christmas Day 1839. His first important assignment was as superior of the seminary in Cincinnati at its opening under the Vincentians in 1842. He found the material conditions there disastrous, but he drew his consolation from the priests and students.³¹ The province left, however, in 1845. Burlando then became pastor of St. Vincent's parish in St. Louis, taught at the adjoining seminary,³² and was a consultor and provincial treasurer from 1848. When Maller left for Brazil in 1853, Burlando succeeded him as director of the Daughters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland. He would fill that responsibility until his death following a stroke in 1873.³³

The single letter from him came from Mt. Hope Institution in Baltimore.³⁴ He was recovering from some illness. The occasion of writing was to acknowledge a gift from Mrs. Willcox, a Christmas Day collection that had reached him only a month later. She was possibly embarrassed by the delay. In reply, he enclosed a picture of Pius IX.

Finally, there is one letter from Andrew Rossi (1819–1855), undated but probably 1854, inasmuch as it offers consolation on death of Pa. Rossi entered the Congregation in the house of Genoa in 1845. He arrived in the United States in the following year in company with three other Italian confreres. He was in Philadelphia from 1847 until 1853, as a member of the seminary faculty, and as a pastor at Ivy Mills (1847–1848). He continued his services at Ivy Mills until 1852. No more Vincentians appeared in the records after him. He himself went to Brazil in 1855, ostensibly for his health. As often happened, his health there declined rapidly and he died 19 January 1855.

In his letter, his condolences take the form of comparing the death of Jesus (he is writing on Good Friday 1854) with the death of Mr. Willcox: "I cannot write to you without touching the wound which is yet too fresh to be healed. It being good Friday, being a day on which the Church mourns for her divine spouse who is laid lifeless in the monument, I feel confident that in expressing my sympathy [*sic*] for you and in claiming a great share in your grief, I will not add sorrow to sorrow."

Michael Domenec, Thomas Burke

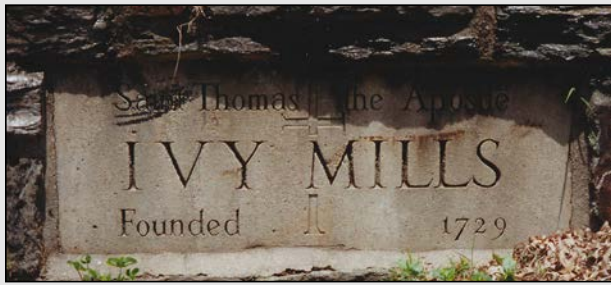
For some reason, there are no letters in the collection from these two remaining confreres in Philadelphia. Domenec (1816–1878), a Spaniard, taught at the seminary (1845–

31 Burlando, Cincinnati, to Sturchi, Paris, 6 June 1843, in ACGR, American papers.

32 *Metropolitan Catholic Almanac and Laity's Guide* (Baltimore: Fielding Lucas Jr., 1846), p. 134.

33 On Burlando, see "Notice sur M. Burlando," *Annales de la Congrégation de la Mission* 39 (1874): 476–83.

34 Burlando, Baltimore, to Mary Willcox, 28 January 185(?), ACHS.



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***Ivy Mills town sign, and the clerk's house
at the Willcox old mill.***

Courtesy of the author



1852) and was pastor in Nicetown after Frasi. Afterward he became bishop of Pittsburgh (later of Allegheny). He likely shared the hospitality at Ivy Mills.

Thomas Burke (1808–1877) was born in Ireland, entered the Congregation in Rome in 1834, and accompanied Bishop Odin and two others to the United States in 1837–1838. He was also at the Philadelphia seminary, its treasurer from 1842 to 1844.

Conclusion

What we can learn about the private lives of the Vincentians in this young period in the life of the American province?

The Willcoxes filled a significant emotional vacuum in the lives of these early confreres, almost all of whom had left their families behind in Europe and never saw them again. For Frasi, this was too much, and he returned to his homeland. Penco also returned, but only out of duty to his late brother's family. Despite the large number of extant letters, we do not know how frequently the Vincentians wrote, since it is uncertain whether Mary saved only some or all of the correspondence. If her outgoing correspondence to the Vincentians existed, that would provide an answer. The texts refer to previous letters on occasion, but not enough can be gleaned from these passing references to draw many conclusions.

The Vincentians exercised their priesthood relative to the family in various ways: being responsible for the Philadelphia seminarians, writing words of spiritual direction and encouragement for Mary, and administering the sacraments in the Willcox home. The hierarchical boundaries between clergy and people were blurred because of their friendship. Indeed, some of the letters do not even hint at the identities of the writers; they could have been simply social friends, as they were, instead of pastors.

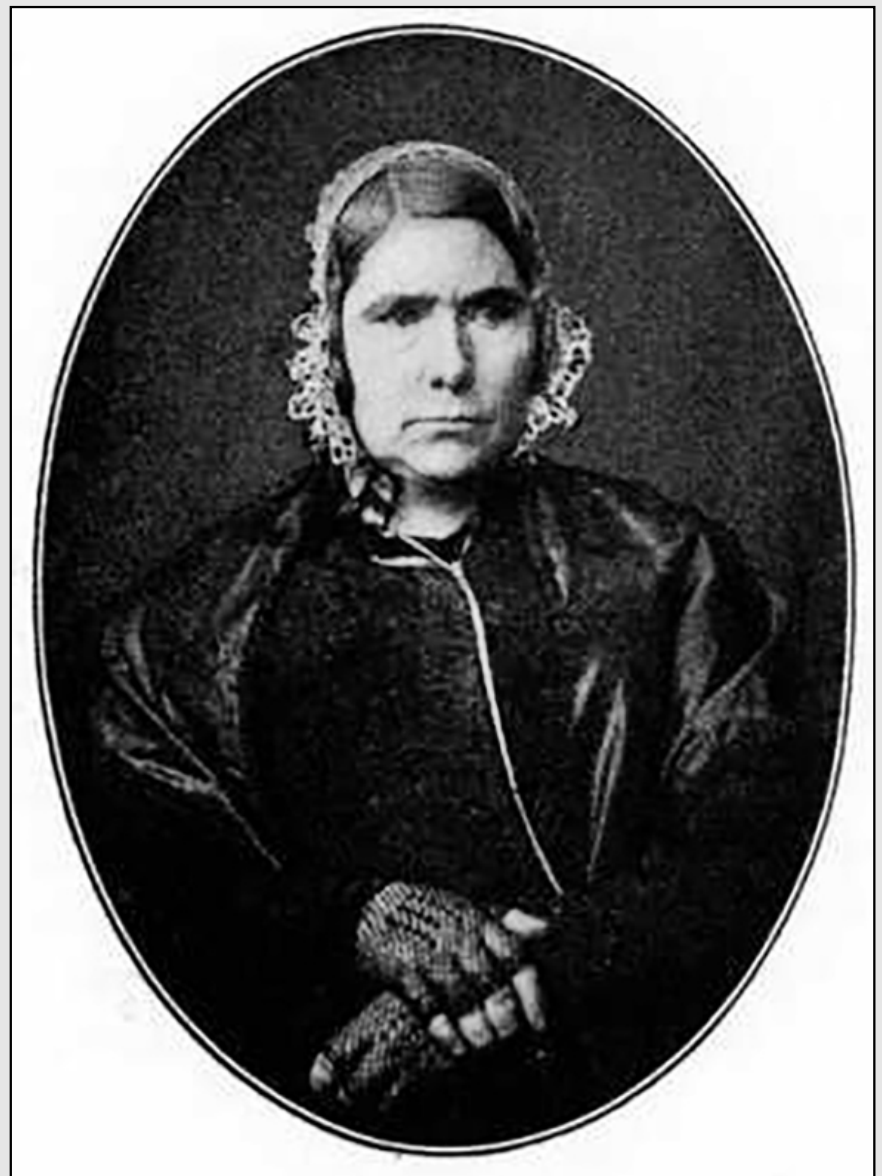
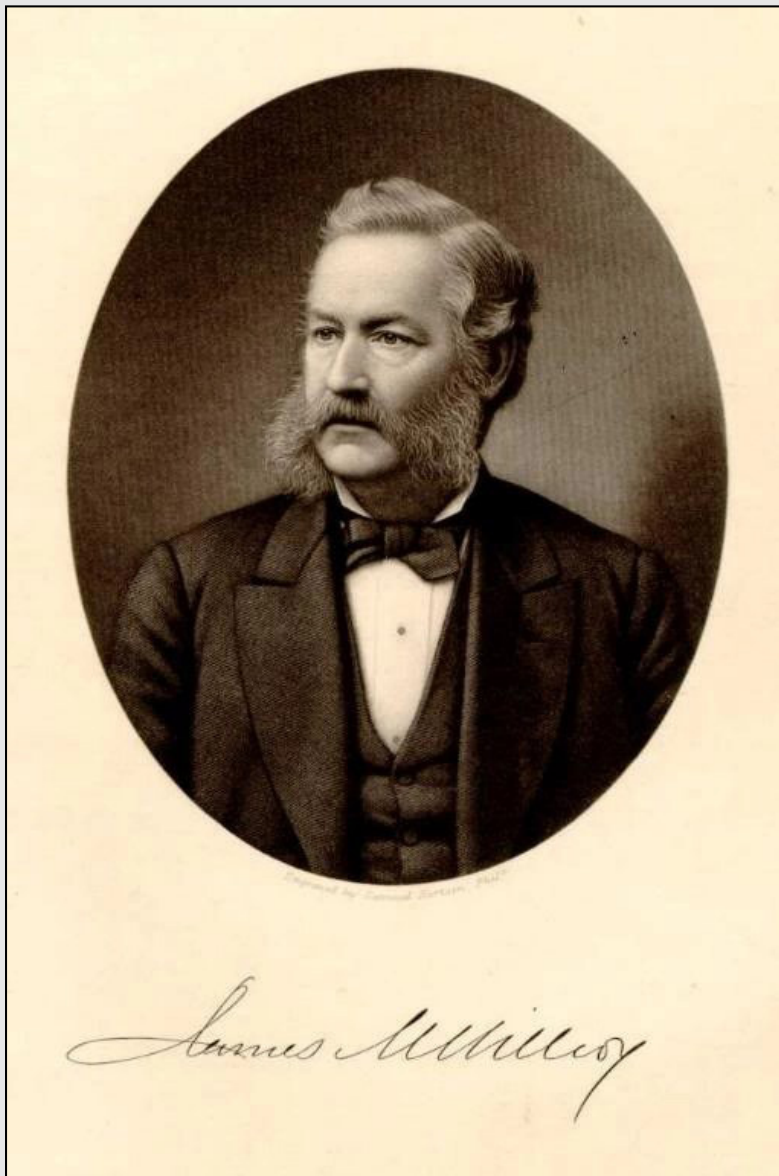
Vincentian life for the writers was often haphazard and disorganized as the province was beginning its life in the United States. Numerous changes of assignments are one indication of the condition, as are the complaints concerning financial and personnel issues. The writers, however, eschewed mere gossip concerning their confreres. Their health was another matter, since life was often rough. Rossi and Rollando both died in their thirties, but the others outlived the average age at death of Vincentians worldwide.

Their words of spiritual direction show a good balance in their recommendations. They proposed a standard range of spiritual practices, such as reading and meditation, and frequenting the sacraments. Surprisingly, these Vincentians never referred either to the Virgin Mary (or the Rosary), despite the name of their friend and hostess, or to Saint Vincent de Paul. They also avoided commentary on political issues, except for passing references to the nativist riots and the Mexican War. Neither did they discuss another major issue that would affect them, the union with Paris of the Sisters of Charity headquartered in Emmitsburg.

Their ministry in the United States faced great challenges in trying to establish faith communities in a mostly empty country. They also had to make their way through the new reality of dealing with members of numerous other churches, some hostile to Catholics. In this light, they took an interest in stories of conversion and were wary of persecution in a United States that was still working out the implications of its founding documents that guaranteed freedom of religion. One aspect that they could manage was construction, and new buildings were a significant index of accomplishment, as occasional references in the letters attest.

In general, these mostly young Vincentian missionaries come through in their letters as regular human persons, each with his own needs and ways of relating to others. Their spiritual teaching, which they hopefully followed in their own lives, shows them to be priests who were trying to be faithful to their commitments to the Church and the Congregation of the Mission.

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Portraits of Mary Brackett Willcox and James Willcox.

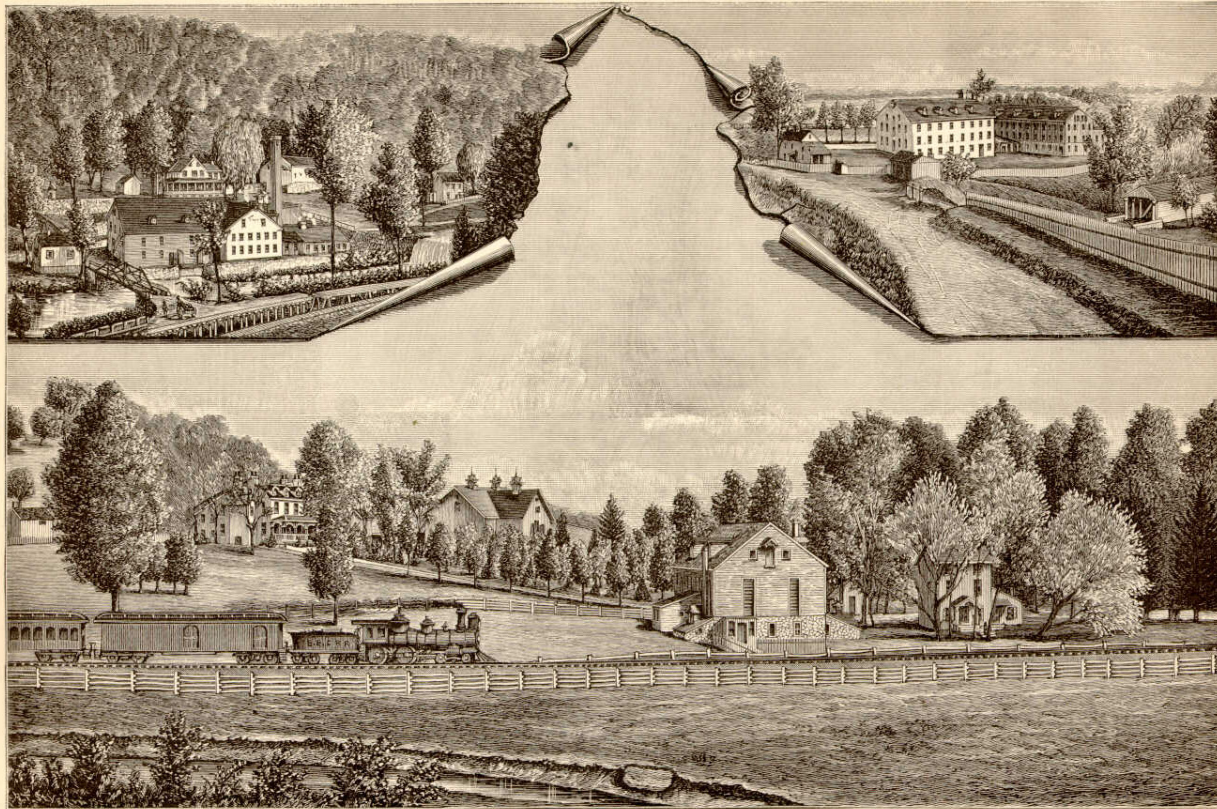
Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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Views of the Willcox home in Ivy Mills, along with the altar inside the house chapel.

Courtesy of the author



"Upper Glen Mills," erected 1836.

"Ivy Mills," erected 1729.

"Lower Glen Mills," erected 1845.

WILLCOX'S PAPER MILLS,
DELAWARE CO., PA.



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Willcox's Paper Mills. Etching by Henry Graham Ashmead in History of Delaware County (1884); and a painting after the etching.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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The old church, Ivy Mills, Pennsylvania.

Courtesy of the author



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Portrait of Thaddeus Amat, C.M.

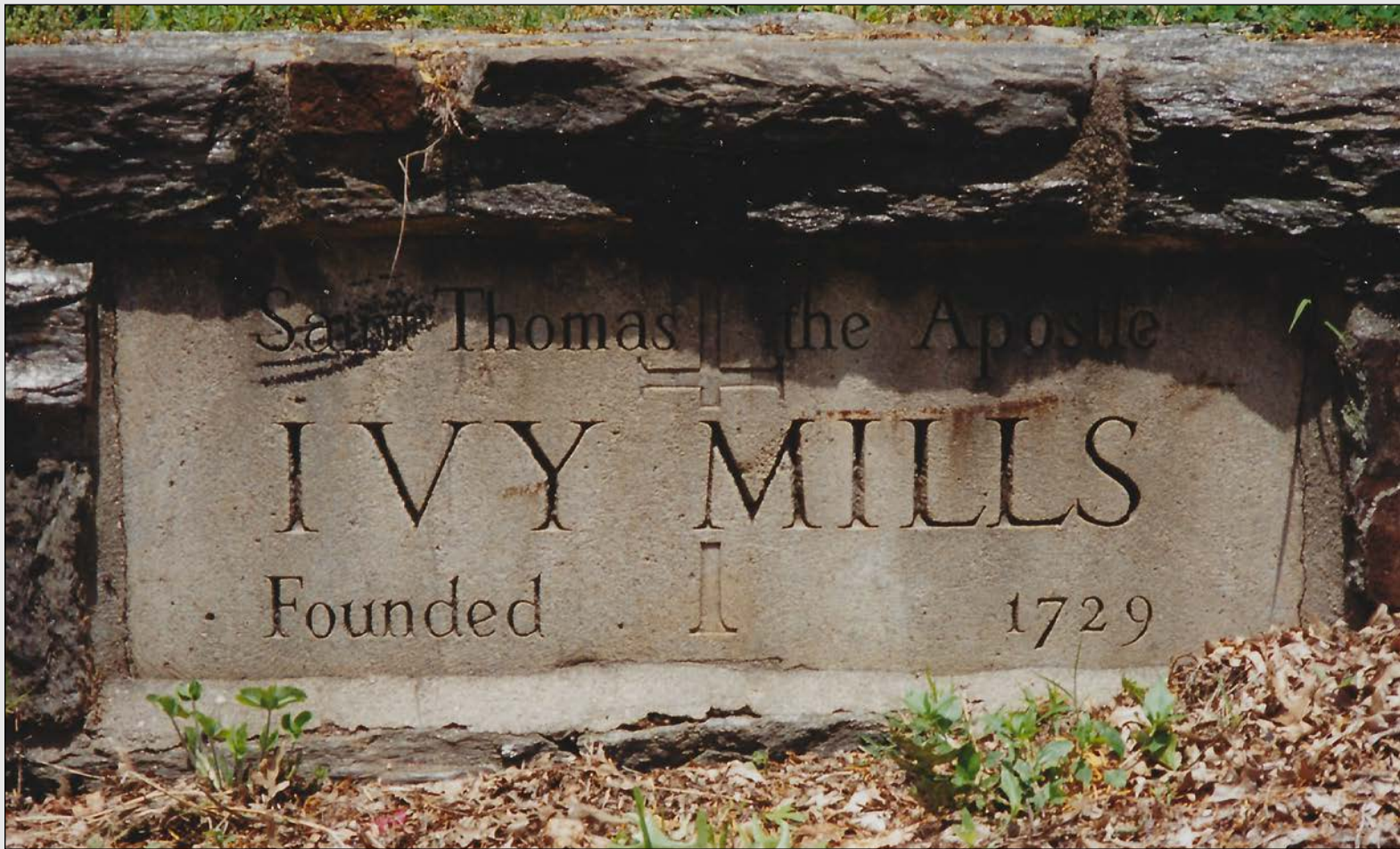
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The grave marker for James and Mary Willcox, and their cemetery monument.

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Ivy Mills town sign, and the clerk's house at the Willcox old mill.

Courtesy of the author

Bishop John Timon, C.M., Sisters of Charity Hospital, and the Cholera Epidemic of 1849

DENNIS CASTILLO, Ph.D.

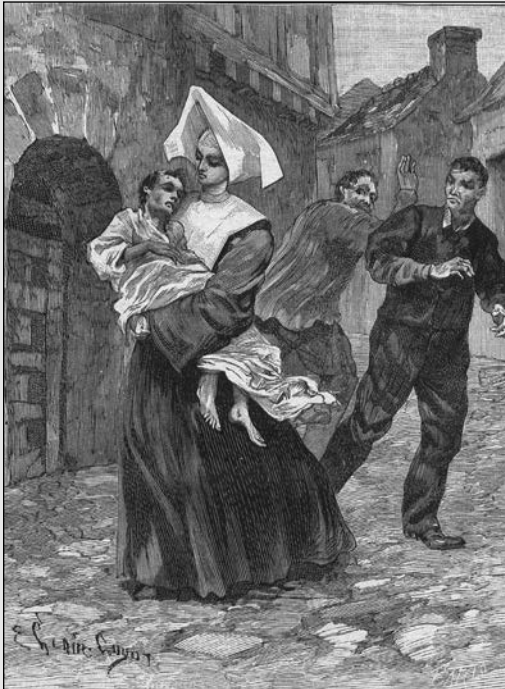
BIO

DENNIS CASTILLO, Ph.D., received his doctorate in the History of Christianity at the University of Chicago, and is currently Professor Emeritus of Church History at Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora, New York. He has given numerous presentations on the seminary's founder, Bishop John Timon, C.M. These have included the DeAndreis-Rosati Lecture at DePaul University and organizing a panel at the 2017 American Catholic Historical Association conference in Denver. Publications include: *Papal Diplomacy from 1914 to 1989: The Seventy-Five Years War* (Lexington Press, 2020), *A Catechist's Guide to the Early Church* (Twenty-Third, 2005), *The Maltese Cross: A Strategic History of Malta* (Greenwood, 2006), editing of *The Life and Times of John Timon: The First Bishop of Buffalo* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), *For the Spread of the Kingdom: A History of Christ the King Seminary, 1857-2007* (Café Press, 2008.), and *The Santa Marija Convoy: Faith and Endurance in War-Time Malta, 1940-42* (Lexington, 2012).

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Engraving of a Daughter of Charity coming to the aid of a cholera victim.

In *Les Soeurs de Charité: Histoire Populaire des Soeurs de Saint Vincent de Paul* (1888). Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

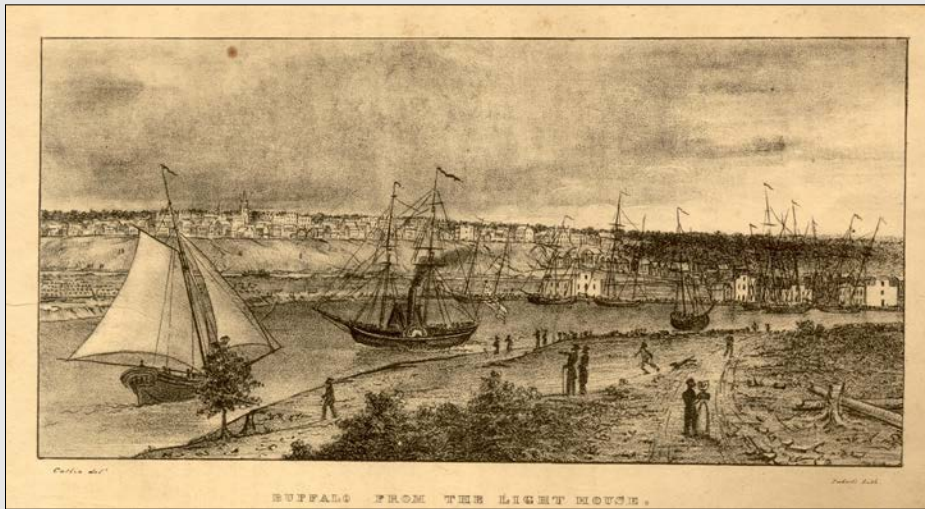
Introduction

While preparing biographical articles on Catholic bishops for an encyclopedia of American Christianity, I encountered many cases where these church leaders mobilized their congregations in response to cholera outbreaks. I was struck by how these communities, often composed of poor immigrants and ostracized by other Americans, could offer such a significant response to this serious health crisis. Would we ever consider asking today's Syrian refugees, after reluctantly allowing them to enter this country, if they could tackle the opioid crisis? The Vincentian John Timon, C.M., was the founding bishop of Buffalo, New York, and his charitable zeal brought into being the city's first hospital on the eve of the cholera epidemic of 1849.

Cholera

There have been seven cholera pandemics in world history. The first began in 1816 and the last ended in 1975. The United States was hardest hit by the second, third, and fourth pandemics. By the beginning of the twentieth century, modern water and sewage treatment eliminated this health problem in North America and Western Europe.

Cholera is an infection of the small intestine caused by bacteria. The main symptoms are watery diarrhea and vomiting. Transmission occurs primarily by drinking water or eating food that has been contaminated. Without treatment, severe cholera kills about half of affected individuals. Cholera has been nicknamed the "Blue Death" because a person's skin may turn bluish-gray from extreme loss of fluids. It was thought that this was a disease



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***Buffalo from the Light House, 1825.
Engraving by George Catlin (1796-1872).***

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of the “dirty, drunken” poor. The upper and middle classes, who lived clean, temperate lives, would be safe.

The second cholera pandemic from 1829 to 1849, also known as the Asiatic Cholera Pandemic, began with outbreaks along the Ganges River Delta in India. The epidemic became a pandemic when it reached Great Britain in December 1831. In London, the disease claimed 6,536 people; in Paris, 20,000 died (out of a population of 650,000), with about 100,000 deaths in all of France. In 1832, the pandemic reached Russia and North America.¹ Cholera came to Buffalo from travelers heading west along the Erie Canal and from others travelling south from Canada. Buffalo’s location at the terminus of the Erie Canal caused the population to increase from 2,500 in 1825 to 10,000 by the time of the 1832 outbreak. The area surrounding the canal was a particularly wild space, with one witness estimating that “sixty percent of the buildings on both sides of Canal Street from Erie Street to Commercial were houses of prostitution, thirty percent were saloons, and ten percent grocery stores” or legitimate businesses. Both human and animal waste, as well as the occasional human body, were tossed into the canal. The odor alone often made locals ill.²

Cholera patients were often taken by surprise. Even those who appeared perfectly healthy were at risk—people could be fine in the morning and dead by that night.³ Death carts roamed the city at night, collecting the bodies of the day’s fatalities with the drivers yelling, “Bring out your dead.” The victims were quickly buried, often within an hour or two

¹ Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 13.

² Richard Adler, *Cholera in Detroit: A History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 23.

³ *Ibid.*

after collection, and fear of the disease followed them to the grave. For a time, they were not permitted burial in the primary cemetery and special burial sites were established.⁴

The 1832 cholera outbreak in Buffalo lasted two months. Approximately 250 persons became ill, and 120 died.⁵ This was 1.2% of Buffalo's population, or the equivalent of 3,080 today.

Early attempts to establish a hospital

In the early nineteenth century, Buffalo had no organized health care and no coherent strategy existed to care for the sick poor. Like many other new commercial cities, it lacked the public sector capacity to establish municipal hospitals. The city was not set up to deal with the large numbers of working poor who lacked the means to employ a private physician. Furthermore, the poor lacked homes conducive to recovery from illness, to say nothing of transients who had no homes in which to receive treatment.⁶

The faculty of Buffalo Medical College recognized the city's need for a hospital for the sick poor. As early as 1841, Dr. Austin Flint began advocating the building of a hospital in Buffalo.⁷ While Dr. Flint and his colleagues were genuinely concerned about the medical well-being of the sick poor, they were guided by more than just altruistic concerns. A medical college with access to a hospital would enhance the reputation of Buffalo Medical College and the doctors who served as its faculty.⁸

Flint proposed that the hospital be endowed through New York State appropriations and private contributions. He claimed to have the backing of other Buffalo physicians, but his first appeal in 1841 received little support. In 1846, Flint formed a "public hospital association," including colleagues and civic leaders. A state incorporation charter allowing for a 150-member board was obtained in 1847, but no state money was granted. In 1848, the board of directors again petitioned the legislature, this time for \$40,000 to purchase a site to build the proposed hospital and for an additional endowment of \$2,000 annually for five years.⁹

Several Buffalo physicians who resented Buffalo Medical College sabotaged the campaign for state money. Half a dozen city physicians signed a petition protesting the appropriation for the hospital and sent it to the state legislature. The *Buffalo Morning*

4 *Ibid.*, 24.

5 *Ibid.*, 27.

6 Jean Richardson, *A History of the Sisters of Charity Hospital, Buffalo, New York, 1848–1900* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2005), 16.

7 Austin Flint, *An Appeal to the Citizens of Buffalo and of the County of Erie, on Behalf of New and More Efficient Means of Medical Relief for the Sick Poor* (Buffalo: Press of Thomas and Company, 1941), 14–18.

8 Richardson, 34.

9 "Buffalo City Hospital," *Buffalo Medical Journal* 2:6 (November 1846): 376.



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Portrait of John Timon, C.M.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

Express blamed the failure to obtain funding on this “interference growing out of professional jealousies.” This sentiment among the city’s physicians helped defeat the first efforts to establish a hospital.¹⁰

The hospital association tried again the following year, requesting \$40,000 and an endowment of \$5,000 per year for two years. Hospital advocates tried to avoid dissension by appointing all of the city’s regular physicians to the hospital association board, including the antihospital petitioners of the previous year. However, eight local physicians again petitioned the state legislature against the appropriation. They objected to the fact that although the dissenting physicians were board members, they were not proposed as staff members for the planned hospital. They claimed that the charter for the hospital was obtained solely in the interests of the Buffalo Medical College professors and was designed to serve the private interests of the college faculty rather than the public good. These envious physicians resented the control Buffalo Medical College faculty would exercise over the proposed hospital and feared that the hospital would be closed to the other doctors. They saw Flint and his colleagues as competition that was seeking state-supported advantages.¹¹ As a result, this growing city on Lake Erie continued to lack adequate medical facilities for all its residents.

Bishop Timon and the Sisters of Charity

John Timon, the former head of the American province of the Vincentians, arrived in Buffalo on 22 October 1847. This founding bishop, animated by the Vincentian charism for

¹⁰ “Editorial,” *Buffalo Morning Express*, 15 March 1849.

¹¹ Richardson, 36.



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***Sr. Ursula Mattingly, S.C. (1808-1874);
and an early ambulance.***

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charitable work, would create many social service institutions in the city over his twenty-year episcopate. His biographer, Leonard Riforgiato, wrote: “From his first day in Buffalo the bishop had planned to establish Catholic charitable agencies to meet the city’s most pressing social needs. Adequate medical care appeared to Timon to be the most urgent need, for the city lacked a hospital. Timon determined to provide one.”¹²

In March 1848, five months after his arrival in Buffalo, Timon traveled to Emmitsburg, Maryland, to invite the Sisters of Charity to staff a recently opened girls’ orphanage, and to establish a public hospital in Buffalo. Timon was familiar with the sisters’ work. He had been called upon on many occasions to give religious retreats to the community. In addition to its experience in hospital work, the order was attractive to the bishop for other reasons. As an American order, the Sisters of Charity were used to working with non-Catholics; on the other hand, many of the sisters were foreign born. Sixty percent of the sisters who served Sisters Hospital from 1848 to 1900 were foreign born, mostly from Ireland. The presence of immigrant sisters would be reassuring to Buffalo’s immigrant population.¹³ The order accepted his invitation. It should be noted that this occurred before the community changed its name to the Daughters of Charity.

At noon on 3 June 1848, the six sisters from Emmitsburg stepped off the train at Buffalo. All were clothed in simple black dresses with short shoulder capes and wore black caps with crimped borders and black crepe ties. Three of the sisters were to manage the

¹² Leonard Riforgiato, *The Life and Times of John Timon: The First Bishop of Buffalo, New York* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), 157.

¹³ Richardson, 44.

girls' orphanage in the city. The other three sisters would found the first hospital in Buffalo. For seven years, the Buffalo medical community had tried to establish a hospital. Together with Bishop Timon, the sisters would do it in three months.¹⁴

The foundresses of the Buffalo Hospital of the Sisters of Charity were Sisters Ursula Mattingly, Veronica O'Brien, and Ann Sebastian Warns. Sister Ursula was selected as the first sister servant of Sisters Hospital. She had entered the Sisters of Charity in 1830. In addition to missions at various orphanages, she worked for two years at the Baltimore Infirmary and served during the 1832 cholera epidemic at the Philadelphia Almshouse and Hospital. Sister Veronica, the first chief of the nursing staff, entered the order in 1841. Her assignments prior to the Buffalo mission were in orphanages. Sister Ann was born in Germany. She entered the Sisters of Charity in 1844, and her first assignments were also in orphanages.¹⁵

Founding the Hospital

Bishop Timon took the responsibility of acquiring property for the new hospital. He learned that the board of directors of the Buffalo Orphan Asylum was selling its current building in anticipation of a move to a new facility under construction. On 21 June 1848, Timon purchased the orphanage, originally built in 1829, for the hospital. Unfortunately, when the orphanage director learned that the Catholic bishop had purchased it for a hospital to be run by nuns, he refused to vacate the premises.¹⁶

Timon described his response to this obstacle in his semi-autobiographical history of the diocese, *Missions in Western New York and Church History of the Diocese of Buffalo*:

After fixing various days for giving possession and failing, on the 5th July [1848], the Bishop went to the Director ... and said: "This delay is a great inconvenience, as the Sisters [intended] for this house have now no place [to stay]. You say that you cannot find a suitable house. I will, then, take all your orphans, put the girls with the Sisters of Charity, and keep the boys in my own house; and when you find a suitable place you can take them back; only I will request you to leave the Catholics with me, and to take back the Protestant orphans only."¹⁷

Timon's tactic was successful. Alarmed that the board might find this request reasonable, which would result in a decrease in public funding per capita since a majority of the orphans were Catholics, the director moved out the following day. On 8 July 1848, the Sisters of Charity moved in, and they began operations on 1 October.¹⁸

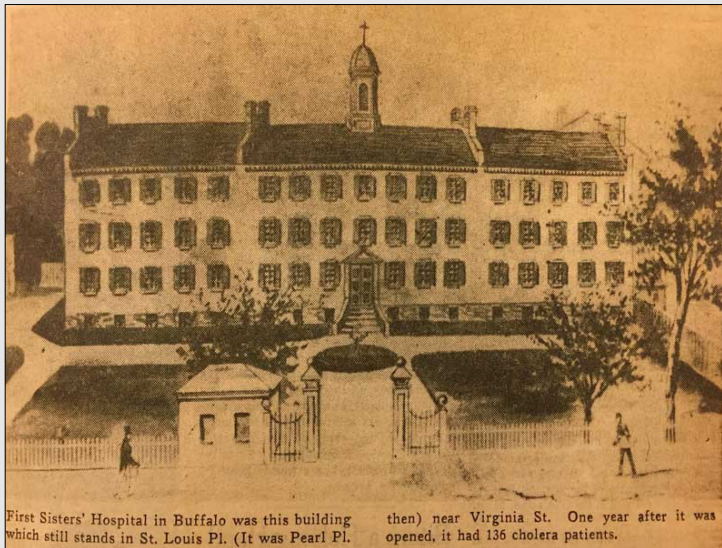
¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 183–84.

¹⁶ John Timon, *Missions in Western New York and Church History of the Diocese of Buffalo* (Buffalo: Catholic Sentinel Press, 1862), 252–53.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Riforgiato, 158.



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***The newly incorporated Sisters Hospital,
Buffalo, N.Y.***

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Timon believed in creating partnerships between church and state to provide needed social services. Therefore, he announced that the hospital would be open to those of all faiths and incomes and would be run in a nonsectarian manner; that there would be no attempt to proselytize patients; and that clergy of all faiths could visit and minister to its patients.¹⁹

Timon created a medical board to direct services, which included the early hospital advocate Dr. Austin Flint.²⁰ Furthermore, the bishop arranged for Buffalo Medical College to use the facility as a clinical teaching hospital, thus bringing the medical community, the university, the hospital, and the diocese into close alliance. This arrangement was to prove a potent aid toward obtaining state funding.²¹

In 1849, Timon incorporated the hospital, and the new hospital board consisted of himself, vicar general Bernard O'Reilly, and five Catholic laymen. Provisions were also made to transfer complete control to the Sisters of Charity by 1855. Timon and his new medical allies now petitioned the state legislature for a grant of capital development funds of \$9,000. It was secured with bipartisan support.²² Sisters Hospital qualified for funds because the state legislature provided capital development grants to existing sectarian hospitals where no nonsectarian hospital existed.²³

Thanks to Timon's efforts from 1851 to 1860, the state commissioners of immigration paid about \$3,712 annually per capita to Sisters Hospital for services provided to indigent,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Henry Wayland Hill, ed., *Municipality of Buffalo, New York: A History*, vol. 1 (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1923), 408.

²¹ Riforgiato, 158.

²² *Ibid.*, 159–60.

²³ "Buffalo Hospital of the Sisters of Charity," *Buffalo Medical Journal* 4:5 (October 1848): 325.

sick foreigners. By 1860, diocesan welfare institutions were receiving 86 percent of the approximately \$10,000 given annually to Buffalo facilities in these per capita payments.²⁴

The first regulations of Sisters Hospital emphasized its nonsectarian mission: “In admission of patients, no questions shall be made as to what the applicant believes, on matters of religion; and whenever a patient of any creed may wish to receive spiritual help from the minister of his religion, every facility shall be afforded for having his wish accomplished.”²⁵

A study of hospital’s early patient population verifies that the sisters admitted people of all backgrounds. Irish patients (who were presumably Catholic) were the largest subpopulation served at Sisters Hospital. A substantial number of patients identified simply as “American” (the majority of whom were Protestant) were also admitted during the 1848–1849 period. The percentage of “Americans” in the hospital population for the 1855–1856 period declined as the immigrant population increased in both Buffalo and the hospital. In terms of absolute numbers, “Americans” in the hospital population continued to increase as the number of patients served increased.²⁶

The sisters did not charge for care of the poor but, because their financial resources were limited, they did request that charitable societies that sent patients pay minimum charges sufficient to cover the patient’s expenses. These minimum charges were \$1.50 per week for each charity patient in the general ward. But even this minimal charge was not paid for many patients.²⁷

While Sisters Hospital was a public hospital that provided free care to the poor, it also accepted paying patients. The rates were graduated, based on ability to pay. For general ward patients who were able to pay, the rate was \$2.50 per week. Private rooms were available for \$4.00 a week, and patients could be attended by their personal physicians.²⁸

Regarding governance, the sister administrators set the policies for the hospital and exercised actual day-to-day authority. The male board of trustees, formed upon incorporation, in fact held little power. The early boards consisted of clerics and laymen. Through the years, the sisters assumed more and more control of the board. The bylaws stipulated that the bishop of Buffalo hold the office of president, and that the vicar general was a permanent member of the board. The laymen had no special expertise in managing a hospital, nor was such expertise needed. However, they had business and organizational

24 David A. Gerber, *The Making of an American Pluralism: Buffalo, New York, 1825–60* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 301.

25 “Buffalo Hospital of the Sisters of Charity,” 325.

26 Richardson, 45–46.

27 “Buffalo Hospital of the Sisters of Charity,” 325–26.

28 *Ibid.*

experience and were men of substance within the Catholic community. In most antebellum hospitals, the trustees' main responsibility was financial. Sisters Hospital's lay trustees accordingly confined their involvement in hospital affairs to such matters as keeping the books, raising funds, buying and selling land, and overseeing the information released to the newspapers. All other decision-making was in the hands of the sisters. Bishop Timon had the final word on actions of lay board members, and no act of the board was binding until approved by the bishop or by his vicar general.²⁹

Timon believed that it was his responsibility to oversee the successful launching of the hospital and to ensure that it was financially viable. However, he had many other projects to undertake, such as St. Mary's School for the Deaf, a new cathedral, and a seminary, to name just a few. By the 3 January 1854 board meeting, the bishop announced to the board that the hospital was well established. The hospital's financial situation was stable, and the facilities were furnished. Timon decided that the time had come for him to withdraw himself from the central role in the early life of the institution that he had assumed at the outset. He suggested that the trustees meet at the hospital, where the minute books and hospital books would henceforth be kept and where the affairs of the hospital would be managed. With the bishop's withdrawal, the lay trustees' role was reduced to one of guidance. Bishop Timon specified that they were to inspect the physical plant and notify the sister servant of needed repairs. He instructed the board members to aid the sister servant "in anything on which she may consult them whether it be help with the bookkeeping, or aid in collecting accounts or dealing with city officials." After this meeting on 3 January, the bishop rarely attended board meetings, but he did retain the office of president.³⁰

The bishop's withdrawal began the process by which the sisters gradually took complete control of the hospital. The board of trustees remained all male until 1855, when the Bishop nominated Sister Servant Ursula Mattingly and Sister Veronica O'Brien to replace two male members who wished to resign. Thereafter, at least one sister, the sister servant, sat on the board. At a meeting in 1857, the trustees passed Bishop Timon's proposal to change the bylaws to allow someone other than the bishop to hold the office of president. The vicar general filled the position of president thereafter. One year later, no longer having the time to act as a trustee, the bishop resigned. In 1860, the sisters took all seats on the board of trustees and the sister servant served as president.³¹

The first sister servant of Sisters Hospital, American-born Ursula Mattingly, served for seven years from 1848 to 1855. The second and third sister servants were born in

29 Sisters of Charity Hospital Minutes, 3 September 1850, 18 July 1851, and 29 July 1852.

30 Sisters of Charity Hospital Minutes, 3 January 1854.

31 Sisters of Charity Hospital Minutes, 9 November 1857 and 9 March 1858.



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The city of Buffalo, circa 1860. Of particular note, the crowded conditions along the Erie Canal which enabled the spread of diseases like cholera.

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Ireland. Sister Camilla O’Keeffe directed the hospital from 1856 to 1862, and the tenure of her successor, Sister Ann Louise O’Connell extended from 1862 to 1873.³²

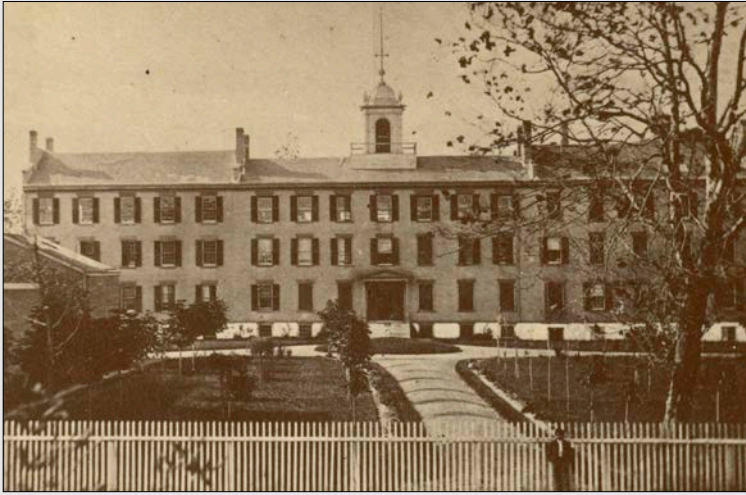
Return of Cholera

The opening of Sisters Hospital proved providential because in 1849 Buffalo suffered a second outbreak of cholera, which hit the immigrant sections of the city hardest. Mortality had been high in the epidemic of 1832, particularly with no hospital in existence. This time the Sisters of Charity were on hand to nurse the ill without regard for their own health, keeping patients clean and dispensing both medication and hope.

The epidemic swept through the city in the spring and did not end until September. The *Buffalo Medical Journal* reported that while the disease was not restricted to any particular part of the city, some areas did have a higher proportion of cases. The disease took the highest toll on streets near the Erie Canal, which were densely populated, and in “the Hydraulics,” a crowded and polluted industrial area in which working-class native-born Americans and Irish and German immigrants resided. Contemporary medical thinking blamed cholera on a miasma, with personal character as a predisposing cause. Therefore, physicians believed cholera was caused by immorality, imprudence, drunkenness, idleness, and bad hygiene rather than by inadequate drainage, crowded living spaces, and poor sanitation. Since the working classes were affected in greater numbers, and by far the majority were foreigners, prevailing prejudices against them were reinforced.³³

³² Richardson, 54.

³³ “Report on the Epidemic Cholera at Buffalo,” *Buffalo Medical Journal* 5:6 (November 1849): 317–18.



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An early photograph of the exterior of Sisters Hospital, Buffalo.

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At the epidemic's peak, deaths from cholera reached thirty-two per day. During the six months that the epidemic raged, 2,505 cases were reported out of a population under 40,000, and 850 died. Given the circumstances, the Buffalo City Council readily accepted the sisters' offer to use their hospital for cholera patients. The city also quickly established a makeshift hospital to handle cholera patients who became Erie County's charges. Sisters Hospital proved much more successful than Erie County's *ad hoc* public facility. Cholera patients at Sisters Hospital were more likely to recover than either cholera patients in the county hospital or those who stayed at home. *Buffalo Medical Journal* reported that the mortality rate at Sisters Hospital for cholera patients was 39 percent, while at the county's temporary hospital the rate was 53 percent.³⁴

Though many of the cases had been brought to Sisters Hospital only toward the end of the epidemic, the majority recovered. Charity cases made up 57 percent of the patients.³⁵ At the peak of the epidemic, the sisters even turned over their living quarters to the sick and moved into the building's damp basement. Bishop Timon believed that the service of the sisters during the crisis earned them respect and acceptance among Protestant elites. The sisters' actions and the services they provided solidified the public's support for the hospital,³⁶ which would be the sole medical facility until the opening of Buffalo General nine years later.³⁷

³⁴ "Cholera Epidemic Continues to Decline," *Buffalo Medical Journal* 5:4 (September 1849): 243.

³⁵ "Buffalo Hospital of the Sisters of Charity," *Buffalo Medical Journal* 6:9 (February 1851): 574.

³⁶ Richardson, 80.

³⁷ Riforgiato, 160.

The 1849 cholera epidemic forced the sisters to expand their services faster than they might have expected. It left many helpless victims, among whom were homeless widows and orphaned infants. Thus, with Bishop Timon's encouragement, Sisters Hospital expanded to include an infant asylum, a home for destitute (and usually aged) widows, and poor or abandoned pregnant women, who were often unwed. In 1852, Timon supported the sisters' appeal to their superiors for additional staff and in that year, three new sisters were sent to Buffalo.³⁸

Appreciation of the Local Community

In November 1849, the *Buffalo Medical Journal's* "Report on the Epidemic Cholera at Buffalo" voiced the local community's appreciation for Sisters Hospital. The report praised the self-sacrificing sisters lavishly for their untiring efforts:

We are free to say that, whatever credit is due to the Institution [Sisters Hospital] for the large proportion of recoveries, belongs to those, under whose immediate charge the Institution is placed.... Each patient admitted to the hospital was, at once, placed under the charge of one of the Sisters, and received her unceasing and assiduous care, as long as it was requisite.

Scrupulous exactness in the execution of all medical directives, and fidelity in the administration of remedies, could be confidently depended upon, together with all other attentions and appliances, which the circumstances of the case might suggest. The degree of patience and endurance exhibited by the Sisters of Charity, in their unwearied labors of mercy, during the period of the epidemic, was a matter of astonishment, not less than of admiration. Night after night, as well as on successive days, they were at their post, never manifesting weariness or diminished zeal; and during the whole period, not one was debarred by illness from the exercise of her voluntarily assumed duties.³⁹

In addition to the lives saved, an artistic legacy of the sisters' efforts was left in the poem titled "The Cholera Epidemic of 1850," using lines from Gerald Griffin's work "The Sister of Charity." The poem is proudly displayed today in Sisters Hospital:

Where want and affliction on mortals attend,

The Sister of Charity, *there* is a friend.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ "Report on the Epidemic Cholera at Buffalo," 331–33.



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John Timon, C.M., first Bishop of Buffalo; and the Timon seal, which reads: “Under the shadow of your wings.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

Unshrinking where pestilence scatters his breath,

Like an angel she moves 'midst the vapors of death.⁴⁰

As a Catholic-owned institution, the hospital did encounter anti-Catholic bias, particularly from some ministers when it sought state funding. Still, Sisters Hospital was the only hospital available for the Protestant physician-professors at Buffalo Medical College. They appreciated its availability and chose to affiliate with the hospital despite whatever anti-Catholic prejudice they may have held.⁴¹

In *A History of the Sisters of Charity Hospital, Buffalo New York, 1848–1900*, Jean Richardson writes that the founding of Sisters Hospital was a blessing for Buffalo Medical College: “Having failed to establish a hospital of their own, the College had entered into an agreement with the sisters. The College faculty offered to provide, gratuitously, medical and surgical services. The sisters accepted and Buffalo Medical College faculty comprised the medical staff for the next thirty-five years ... At most antebellum hospitals, including Sisters Hospital, attending physicians made up the active medical staff that supervised treatment ... physicians were willing to forgo their religious ideology when it proved advantageous to do so.”⁴² As Richardson explains, the connection with Sisters Hospital was important to Buffalo Medical College and its faculty:

Association with the hospital enabled the college faculty to see and treat large numbers of special cases, comparatively rare in private practice, and to develop a

⁴⁰ To read the full poem, see “The Sister of Charity,” in *The Works of Gerald Griffin, Esq.*, Vol. 1 (London: J. Wyatt, 1843) p. 356, at: [The Sister of Charity poem](#).

⁴¹ Richardson, 3.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 55.

reputation that could itself be remunerative. They could use suitable and interesting cases for teaching and research. Hospital physicians put in only a few hours each day at the hospital during their terms of six months. They earned their livelihood in care of well-to-do private patients in their homes who paid for the knowledge gained in hospital work. Sisters hospital [sic] afforded these practitioners a broadened practice, professional improvement, increased public exposure and a chance to advance their skill and knowledge.⁴³

Arrangements were immediately made with Sisters Hospital so that students attending medical lectures at the college could accompany physicians and surgeons into hospital wards for clinical instruction at bedside. This clinical approach, which went beyond lectures to include actually seeing patients, was new in nineteenth-century medical education and put Buffalo Medical College at the forefront. The students paid the hospital a small fee for this privilege. The *Buffalo Medical Journal* and the college catalogues continuously document the college's connection with Sisters Hospital and the emphasis on clinical instruction. The *Journal* editors credited the availability of clinical instruction at Sister's Hospital for enabling Buffalo Medical College to be on par with medical colleges in larger cities.⁴⁴

Conclusion

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Catholic Church in the United States experienced significant growth. Between 1785, when John Carroll reported to the Holy See on the status of Catholics in Maryland, and 1840, the Church grew from 25,000 to 663,000 members nationally. This was a healthy growth rate of 11,600 a year. It was significant but not threatening. Thus, the work of the Catholic Church in dealing with community problems, such as the cholera epidemics of the early nineteenth century, prompted many of our Protestant neighbors to reassess their anti-Catholic prejudices. In this way, the work of Bishop Timon and the Sisters of Charity greatly contributed to religious toleration in Buffalo, besides contributing to public health.

But by the time the second cholera pandemic came to a close, great waves of Catholic immigration began to arrive on American shores. By 1850, the Catholic population had more than doubled to 1,600,000 with a growth of 94,000 a year, eight times that of the previous period. By 1900, it reached twelve million, a growth rate of over 200,000 a year. To our Protestant neighbors, this looked more like an invasion than immigration. Fears of the Papist threat to the American republic replaced the warm feelings of gratitude to dedicated women like the Sisters of Charity.

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⁴³ *Ibid.*, 56.

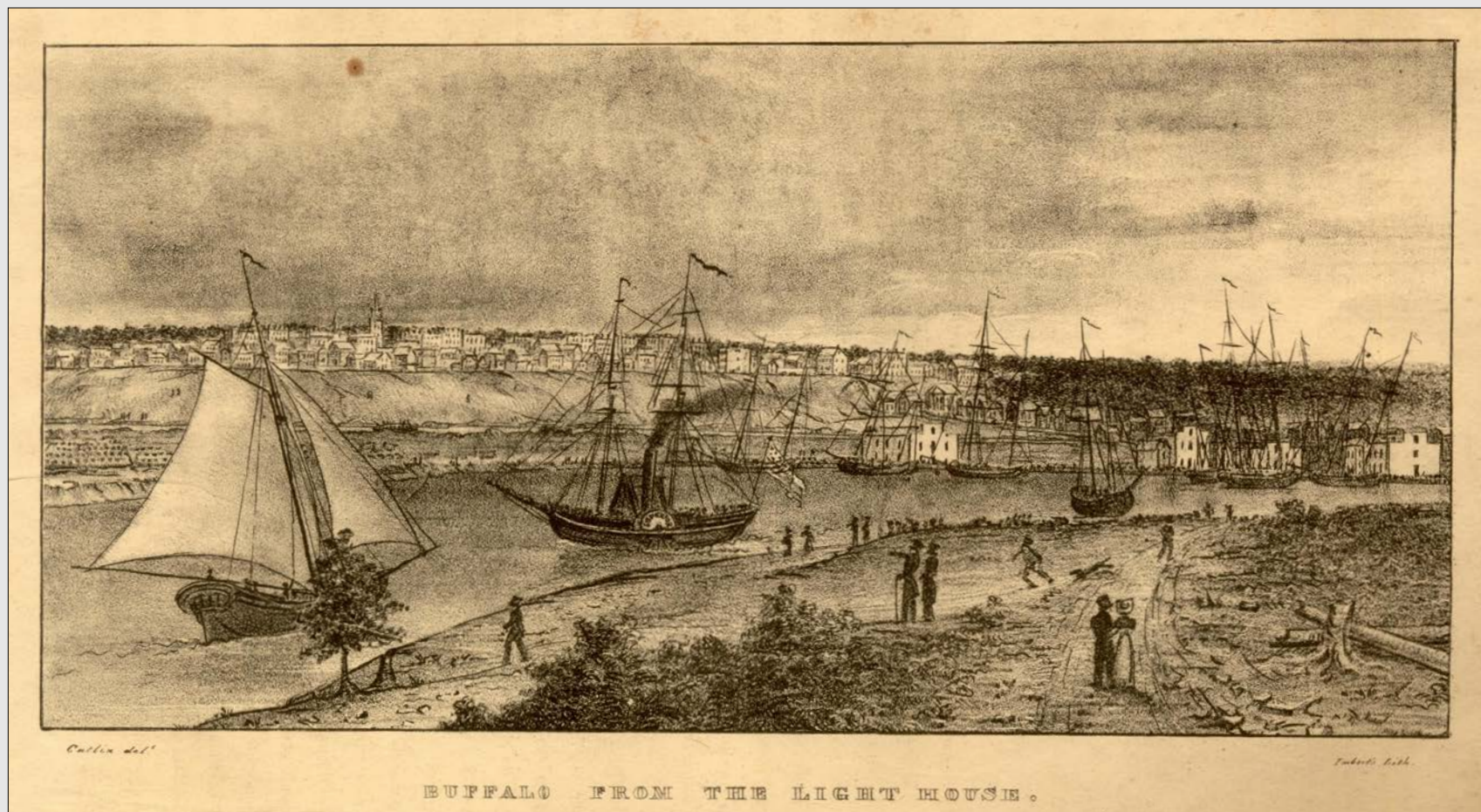
⁴⁴ "Buffalo General Hospital," *Buffalo Medical Journal* 14:3 (August 1858): 180.



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Engraving of a Daughter of Charity coming to the aid of a cholera victim.

In *Les Soeurs de Charité: Histoire Populaire des Soeurs de Saint Vincent de Paul* (1888). Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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***Buffalo from the Light House, 1825.
Engraving by George Catlin (1796-1872).***

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Portrait of John Timon, C.M.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

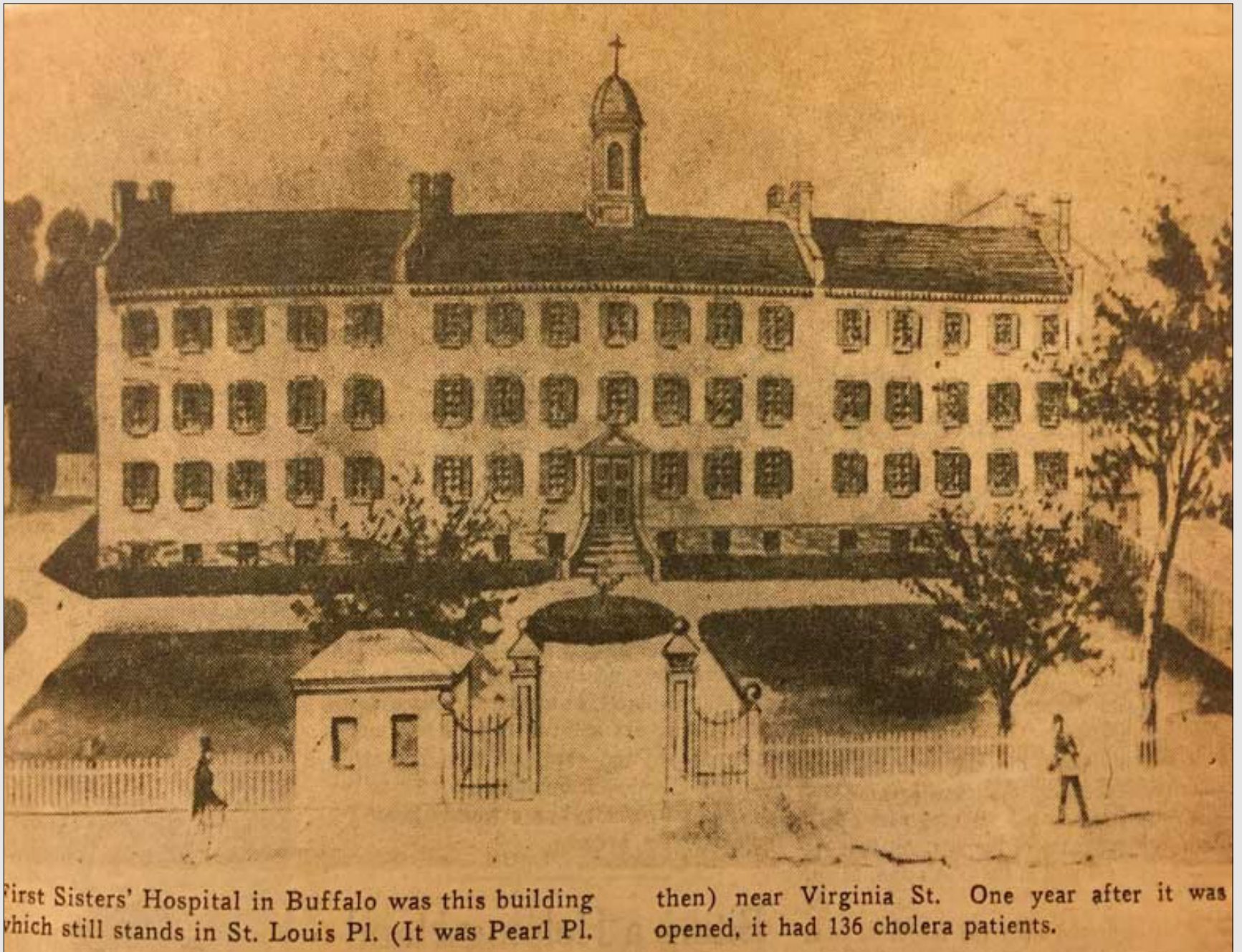


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***Sr. Ursula Mattingly, S.C. (1808-1874);
and an early ambulance.***

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First Sisters' Hospital in Buffalo was this building which still stands in St. Louis Pl. (It was Pearl Pl.

then) near Virginia St. One year after it was opened, it had 136 cholera patients.

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The newly incorporated Sisters Hospital, Buffalo, N.Y.

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The city of Buffalo, circa 1860. Of particular note, the crowded conditions along the Erie Canal which enabled the spread of diseases like cholera.

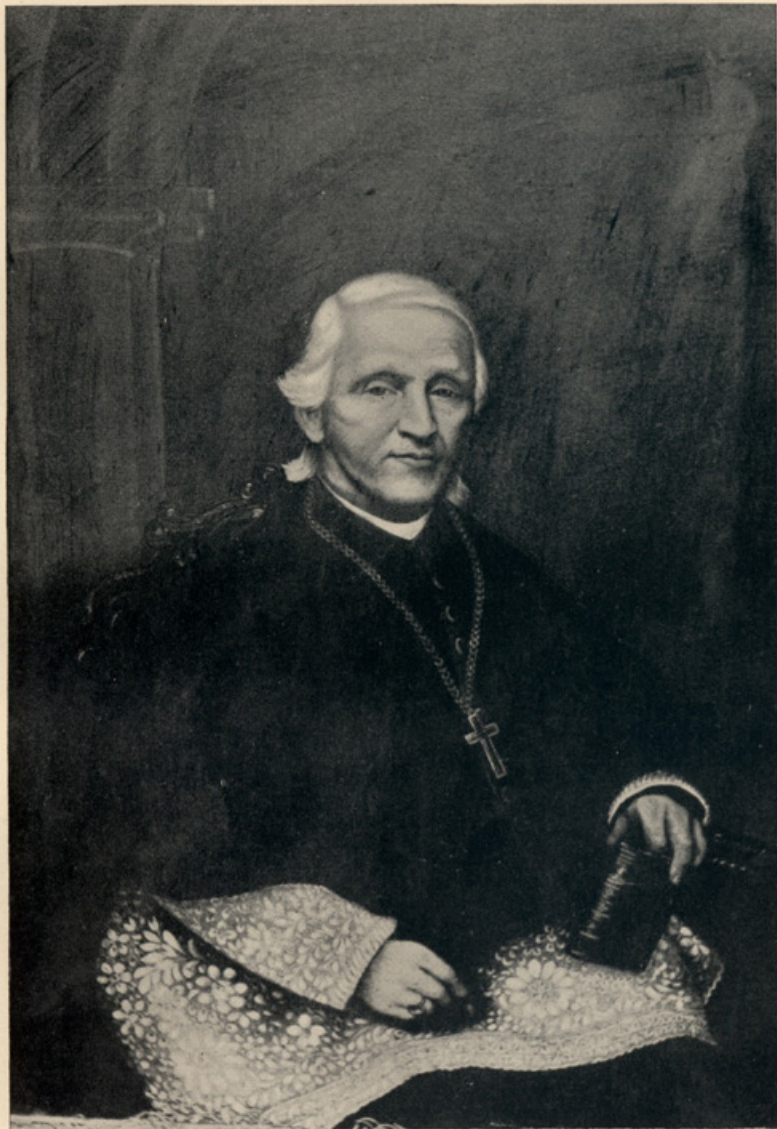
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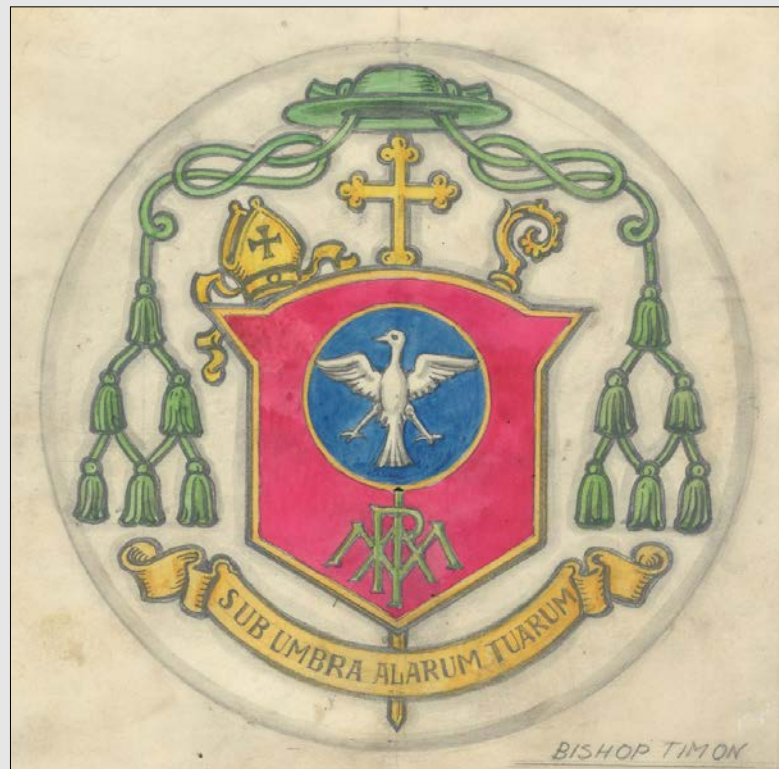
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An early photograph of the exterior of Sisters Hospital, Buffalo.

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RIGHT REV. JOHN TIMON, C. M., D. D.
First Bishop of Buffalo



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John Timon, C.M., first Bishop of Buffalo; and the Timon seal, which reads: "Under the shadow of your wings."

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Elizabeth Ann Seton's Vision of Ecological Community

Based on Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings, Volume Two

SISTER SUNG-HAE KIM, S.C.

BIO

SISTER SUNG-HAE KIM, S.C., is Professor Emerita in the Department of Religious Studies, Sogang University in Seoul, Korea. Sister Sung-Hae served as the General Superior for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill at the Generalate in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 2014 to 2019, and presently resides at the Seton Spirituality Center in Nonsan, Korea. After entering the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in 1965, Sister made her final vows in 1972. She received her M.A. in theology from Marquette University, and went on to earn her Th.D. in the History of Religions from Harvard University in 1981. Kim has had numerous articles published, including “The Ecological Spirituality of Elizabeth Ann Seton. Based on *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings, Volume One*” in *Vincentian Heritage* 32:2, and has authored the books *Understanding the History of Religion; Primitive Confucianism: A Hermeneutical Approach to the Analects, Mencius, Hsun Tzu*; and *The Gourd and the Cross: Daoism and Christianity in Dialogue* (Three Pines Press, 2014). She also served as co-editor for *Monasticism, Buddhist and Christian: The Korean Experience* (2008).

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Introduction

In my previous article on “The Ecological Spirituality of Elizabeth Ann Seton,”¹ I used the collection of Elizabeth’s correspondence and journals from 1793 to 1808 found in volume one of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*.² From these personal, intimate communications with family members and lifelong friends, I drew out four constitutive characteristics of Elizabeth’s ecological spirituality:

1. Nature as the space where Elizabeth encountered her friends and God;
2. Nature as the source of consolation when she experienced suffering and abandonment;
3. Her awareness of ecological balance;
4. Her focus on the present, on moderation, and harmony.

In order to best illustrate the ecological character of these qualities, I compared her spirituality with four contemporary philosophers who initiated ecological movements: Arne Naess and his deep ecology, Aldo Leopold and his land ethics, Murray Bookchin and his social ecology, and Anthony Weston and his postmodern communicative ethics.

In this paper, I will explore Elizabeth’s vision of ecological community using volume two of *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*,³ which includes her correspondence and journals from 1808 to 1820. These conclude just before her death on 4 January 1821. This volume covers thirteen years of her public life (from age thirty-four to forty-six) as an educator and founder of an apostolic community. Having accepted the invitation of Rev. William Dubourg, P.S.S., endorsed by Archbishop John Carroll to open a Catholic school for girls, Elizabeth left her hometown of New York City. She arrived at Baltimore on 15 June 1808, and on 15 March 1809, pronounced private vows to Archbishop Carroll. Joined by several other devout women she moved to Emmitsburg, Maryland, a small village in Frederick County. There they became the first members of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s, the apostolic community Mother Seton founded on 31 July 1809.

Within eight months, the Sisters of Charity established St. Joseph’s Academy and Free School (1810), the first free Catholic school for girls staffed by religious women in the United States. *The Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* were the model for two documents: *Regulations for the Sisters of Charity in the United States*, and the *Constitutions of the Sisters of Charity in the United States*. Both were approved by Archbishop Carroll on 17 January 1812. After Mother Seton and the first sisters completed their novitiate, they

1 Sung-Hae Kim, S.C., “The Ecological Spirituality of Elizabeth Ann Seton,” *Vincentian Heritage* 32:2 (2015), 35 pp. See: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol32/iss2/2/>

2 *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*, ed. by Regina Bechtel, S.C., and Judith Metz, S.C., vol. 1 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2000), 563 pp. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/9/

3 *Elizabeth Bayley Seton: Collected Writings*, ed. by Regina Bechtel, S.C., and Judith Metz, S.C., vol. 2 (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2002), 807 pp. Hereafter cited as CW. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/11/



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***Enamel after the famed Filicchi portrait of Elizabeth Seton.
Artist: Paula Martin, D.C., Madrid, Spain.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

made their annual vows for the first time on 19 July 1813. When Elizabeth died in 1821, she left behind fifty-nine sisters who would succeed her in living a consecrated and apostolic religious life.

Although the formation of this first American apostolic religious community required much of Elizabeth Seton's energy, she also continued to nurture relationships with her five beloved children, her sisters-in-law, and her friends, while maintaining social connections with benefactors, church leaders, students' parents, and graduates. In so doing, Elizabeth was forming three communities simultaneously, one of apostolic religious life, one of family, and one of social and ecclesial ties. These three communities were interconnected, in her words, like a "spider web of *earthly weaving*."⁴ Moreover, I propose that Elizabeth perceived these three communities through her innate ecological lens. I say this because her vision included the qualities of ecological community as described by noted philosophers Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862), and Murray Bookchin (1921–2006).

Peter Kropotkin was one of the first to promote the concept of "ecological community." Ideas of natural interdependence among humans and between humankind and the environment are essential to Kropotkin's theory. He believed that a set of fundamental ecological principles can be derived from nature: mutual aid, solidarity, cooperation, self-governance, harmony, balance, and community.⁵ These same principles repeatedly appear

⁴ Letter 7.147, "To Rev. John Hickey, S.S.," [before 19 March 1818], *CW*, 2:536.

⁵ Marius de Geus, *Ecological Utopias: Envisioning the Sustainable Society*, translated, extended and revised version of the Dutch title: *Ecologische Utopieën* (Utrecht, Netherlands: International Books, 1999), 88.

in Elizabeth's writings in reference to her threefold community life with the sisters, her children, and her social acquaintances.

I. Elizabeth's Ecological Vision of Apostolic Religious Community

Two months after her arrival in Baltimore, Elizabeth wrote a letter to Cecilia Seton, her sister-in-law who also longed for a deeper spiritual life. They shared a dream of living in religious community: "It is St. Clara's day—What did she not suffer in opposing the World - how tender and faithful was the love of her Agnes who followed her—shall we one day be so happy my dear one. He only knows who holds us in his hand."⁶ It was clear that Elizabeth intended to start not only a school, but also a religious community like St. Clara of Assisi and her sister Agnes. About a month later, she wrote to Cecilia describing her regular life in Baltimore, "in the Chapel at six until 8. school at nine - dine at one - school at 3. Chapel at six 1/2 examination of Conscience and Rosary [...] so goes day after day without variation."⁷ Soon thereafter Elizabeth announced the good news to Cecilia that the first candidates for religious life were coming. "It is expected I shall be the Mother of many daughters. a letter received from Philadelphia where my Blessed Father [...] has found two of the Sweetest young women, who were going to Spain to seek a refuge from the World [...] now wait until my house is opened for them."⁸

Elizabeth announced her small five-month-old school to longtime friend Julia Scott with great satisfaction: "From half past five in the morning until 9 at night every moment is full, no space even to be troubled—ten girls three of them almost women, keep the wheel going continually [...] but in the present state of my family we are so happy and live so much as a Mother surrounded by her children that I cannot resolve to admit a stranger, yet it must be eventually."⁹ Including her own three daughters, Elizabeth had ten girls to teach. She was extremely busy and tired, but also happy, and tried to maintain this trusting and affectionate atmosphere in her family life, her religious community, and in her ministry. This, in fact, is the basis of an ecological community, wherein people can enjoy the freedom to be themselves and the contentment of friendship.

6 Letter 5.6, "To Cecilia Seton," 12 August 1808, *CW*, 2:25. Elizabeth arrived at Baltimore on 15 June 1808, and this letter was written on 12 August of the same year. The footnote clarifies that this letter is written on the feast day of St. Clare of Assisi (1193–1253), who is a friend of St. Francis of Assisi and founder of the Poor Clares, a religious community of women. Agnes was a sister of Clare and also a founding member of the Poor Clare Order. Editor's note: Elizabeth liberally used a variety of punctuation, including dashes of varying lengths that give a poetic effect to her prose, and her capitalization was not always consistent. This article reproduces the punctuation and capitalization of the original text, except capitalization at beginnings of sentences will be changed silently to avoid distracting the reader. Ellipses added to the original will be bracketed.

7 Letter 5.9, "To Cecilia Seton," 5 September 1808, *ibid.*, 2:31.

8 Letter 5.10, "To Cecilia Seton," 6 October 1808, *ibid.*, 2:34.

9 Letter 5.13, "To Julia Scott," 6 December 1808, *ibid.*, 2:41.

A. The Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's: An Apostolic Religious Community

The community Elizabeth was establishing in St. Joseph's Valley was bordered by woods, meadows, and mountains. She described their surroundings to Julia with cheerful intimacy: "Our mountains are very black, but the scene below bright and gay, the meadows still green and my dear ones skipping upon them with the Sheep."¹⁰ Yet Elizabeth was concerned for Eliza's health. In a letter, she described a Sunday picnic with her community, wishing that Eliza could "breathe our mountain air and taste the repose of deep woods and streams. Yesterday we all – about twenty Sisters and children dined, that is eat our cold ham and cream pies in our Grotto in the mountain where we go on Sunday for the Divine Office.[...] my heart feels as bright as the Sun now setting and wants to share with you."¹¹ She always felt the presence of her friends and God in nature.

Elizabeth was now taking on the responsibilities of Mother or leader in forming her community, and she described this role in a letter to another close friend, Catherine Dupleix: "Your poor little shipwrecked friend is finishing her career under the strange and ill placed title of Abbess of a convent; I say ill placed because it is as much so as it would be to call me by any other name than that of Seton as the little community I have the charge of are bound by no obligations and are united only with the view of schooling children, nursing the sick, and manufacturing for ourselves and the poor, which to my disposition you know is the sum of all earthly happiness."¹²

The Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's did not take vows until 1813; thus, when this letter was written, they were following the primitive document, *Provisional Regulations for St. Joseph's Sisters*, which outlined the order of the day. They were united by their apostolate in teaching and serving the poor, but what bolstered their works was the happiness of a loving community. Elizabeth saw the value of the rules in maintaining the order of their house: "You will know the rule of our community in a Word, which amounts only to that regularity necessary for order and no more—You may conceive my content in such a situation, it is almost inconceiveable [*sic*] to myself that I possess it."¹³ Writing to another friend in New York about the simple practicality of the rule, Elizabeth said, "Our community increases very fast, and no doubt will do a great deal of good in the care of the sick and instruction

10 Letter 6.14, "To Julia Scott," 27 December 1809, *ibid.*, 2:95. Elizabeth's letters from Emmitsburg are full of descriptions of rocks, sunsets, insects, birds, and other animals. She also describes plants, such as a willow tree, spring wildflowers, jasmine, lilacs, roses, and green fields. She has memories of the great ocean. She summarized this capacity to appreciate nature to her letter to Julia: "The nearer a soul is *truly* united to God the more its sensibilities are increased to every being of his creation" (Letter 6.7 "To Julia Scott," 20 September 1800, *ibid.*, 2:82).

11 Letter 6.41, "To Eliza Sadler," 27 May 1810, *ibid.*, 2:131–32.

12 Letter 6.45, "To Catherine Dupleix," 4 June 1810, *ibid.*, 2:136–37.

13 Letter, 6.18, "To Eliza Sadler," 9 January 1810, *ibid.*, 2:98.



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***All this and Heaven, too.
Unsigned original watercolor in Daughters
of Charity house, Emmitsburg, Maryland.
Artist: Rebecca Pearl.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

of children which is our chief business. the rule is so easy that it is scarcely more than any regular religious person would do even in the world.”¹⁴

She understood the value of the rules in safeguarding true freedom, providing the boundaries or guidelines of living in community: “What an extravagant ideal it is that piety creates gloominess and disgust - unacquainted with the anticipation of a soul whose views are chiefly pointed to another existence [sic] it is inconcievable [sic] what liberty it enjoys - the cares and troubles of life surround it to be sure as others but how different their effect—human passions and weakness to be sure are never extinct - but they cannot triumph in the heart which is possessed by this friend of love and Peace.”¹⁵

Elizabeth wished to preserve the liberty of everyone living a life of faith. She considered her role to be as a friend to the other sisters, saying, “They will only find in me a friend to admonish and it will be in the hands of Mr. Dubourg either to rectify or dismiss them.”¹⁶ Of course, her role as head of their community became more complex after the Constitutions were approved. Nevertheless, her desire to be a friend and loving mother to the sisters continued throughout her life.

Elizabeth appreciated the experience of life in religious community, the wisdom gained from it, and the affectionate bonds it created:

14 Letter 6.22, “To Rose Stubbs,” [24 January 1810], *ibid.*, 2:104. Following the same vein, Elizabeth confessed her appreciation of the rules to Bruté: “I am so in love now with the rules that I see the bit of the bridle all gold, and the reins all of silk” (Letter 6.146, “To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.,” [n.d.], *ibid.*, 2:259).

15 Letter 6.7, “To Julia Scott,” 20 September 1809, *ibid.*, 2:86.

16 Letter 5.21, “To Julia Scott,” 23 March 1809, *ibid.*, 2:62.

I assure you 6 years experience of our daily duties and way of life has made many of our good Sisters as much old women as I am [...] their care and attention to save me every trouble would appear even ridiculous to others who not living with us, do not know the tie of affection which is formed by living in Community. perhaps you have no idea of the order and quiet which takes place in a regular way of life – every thing [*sic*] meets its place and time in such a manner that a thing once done, is understood by the simplest person as well as by the most intelligent.¹⁷

These strong ties of affection were demonstrated by their respectful care for dying sisters. As death approached the presence of Elizabeth was often requested, “she [Sister Mary Elizabeth Wagner] was struck with Death between 3 and 4 in the morning and cried out directly for ‘Mother,’ and I was with her till long after her last moments to give time for the *Solemn Silence*.”¹⁸

B. The Apostolic Ministry of the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s

Mother Seton’s community at St. Joseph’s Valley consisted not only of the sisters but also the boarding students they taught. Their number increased from fifteen sisters and thirty boarders in 1811 to a total amount of sixty in 1816. By 1818, there were one hundred “precious souls,” sisters and boarders, under her care.¹⁹ Elizabeth’s apostolic ministry was open and inclusive, embracing the Protestant girls in Emmitsburg as well as black children for first communion class.²⁰ When students misbehaved, Mother Seton disciplined them. She wrote to one of their parents, “She improves considerably in every respect except the high haughty temper which I am sure for her own happiness you would wish controuled [*sic*] but I treat it very gently, unless when she dares us all, which sometimes happens, then indeed I could only insist on her taking bread and water for her dinner and asking pardon.”²¹ Elizabeth sometimes had to handle complaints from students’ parents. As she described in a letter to Archbishop Carroll, “I have a cruel letter from a parent of one of the children with us [...] charging me with ‘the wages of iniquity’ etc,” and Elizabeth added, “But such foolish words will not prevent our continued care to fulfill the Providence of God to them.”²²

17 Letter 7.9, “To Julia Scott,” 23 March 1816, *ibid.*, 2:378–79.

18 Letter 7.190, “To Sister Cecilia O’Conway,” Octave of All Saints [9 November 1818], *ibid.*, 2:589.

19 The numbers of fifteen sisters and thirty boarders were reported to Catherine Dupleix, see Letter 6.70, “To Catherine Dupleix,” [date outside February 4th, 1811], *ibid.*, 2:172. The total of sixty is found in Letter 7.65, “To Catherine Dupleix,” [December 7 or 8], *ibid.*, 2:452. Finally, the growth to one hundred is noted to Antonio Filicchi in her Letter 7.175, “To Antonio Filicchi,” 8 August 1818, *ibid.*, 2:573.

20 Letter 6.195, “To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.,” St. Scholastica [10 February 1815], *ibid.*, 2:329–30.

21 Letter 6.190, “To Robert Goodloe Harper,” 16 February 1815, *ibid.*, 2:307.

22 Letter 6.209, “To Archbishop John Carroll,” 9 October 1815, *ibid.*, 2:349.

She was very honest with Carroll, reporting the worst incidents and noting that “[her] heart sickens at every word of it.”²³ Yet, at the same time, she knew how to find balance in the trials the apostolate faced.

Instead of resenting the harsh words of some parents, or falling into despair, Elizabeth moved on calmly, trusting that she was doing what God asked her to do. This ability to preserve balance in the midst of trials is an ecological virtue, and because Elizabeth was able to practice it, her community maintained an ecological character of harmony, stability, and solidarity. Of course, because of her fundamental conviction that “the grace and the trial [she faced would] be proportioned,”²⁴ she found strength in knowing that God would reveal the good through such “interior and external trials.”²⁵

In her lifetime, Elizabeth began two missions, one in Philadelphia in 1814 and another in New York City in 1817. She wrote a former student about the joy found in spreading the ministry, “Our establishment increases continually I have the happiness to see a good settlement of Sisters in New York who have the charge of a multitude of Poor children—what joy to me—Sister Fanny [Jordan] has charge of the orphans in Philadelphia and succeeds admirably.”²⁶ This growth of mission not only reflects the openness of her community, but the close cooperation and mutual aid among the sisters that made it possible. In a letter to Eliza, Elizabeth vividly depicted such mutual aid in religious community with a metaphor:

Next May to look at our mountains you will find my plants in lovely order - the parent root to be sure is almost sapless and appears quite decayed but when the wind blows hard the little ones surround and bear it up—indeed it is true Eliza when I am so weak as to suffer vexations and cares to press upon my mind only the look of these dear ones who seem to say Mother live for us acts like a main spring—but yet it is not the main spring or if it was no higher I should be worse than ungrateful.²⁷

This beautiful image of young trees surrounding an older one in order to preserve it echoes how Elizabeth saw herself energized by the younger sisters surrounding her. Mutual aid supported by the bond of love is the energy that maintains a religious community through generations, and its ecological quality can be seen here.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Letter 7.3, “To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.,” *ibid.*, 2:368.

²⁵ Letter 6.22, “To Rose Stubbs,” [24 January 1810], *ibid.*, 2:103–04.

²⁶ Letter 7.128., “To Mary Diana Harper,” 9 December 1817, *ibid.*, 2:518. Elizabeth reported further development of the community’s mission activity with a Dutch settlement and educating them “so as to extend their usefulness whenever OUR SWEET PROVIDENCE may call” (Letter 7.265, “To Antonio Filicchi,” 19 October 1820, *ibid.*, 2:670).

²⁷ Letter 6.26 “To Eliza Sadler,” 8 March [dated 1809 but content indicates 1810], *ibid.*, 2:110.



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Portrait of Peter Kropotkin, circa 1890.

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C. The Ecological Value of Elizabeth's Apostolic Religious Community

Elizabeth's ecological vision of religious community might best be considered in light of Russian geologist and philosopher Peter Kropotkin, who presented utopia as an ecological community. In his magnum opus, *Mutual Aid* (first published in 1902), he wrote that his geographical explorations of Siberia revealed that mutual aid and support played a prominent role among animals. He realized that this could be vital to the maintenance and evolution of a species, and concluded that because the vast majority of animal species live in communities, they have the best chance of survival. Mutual struggle is detrimental to a species; therefore, the fundamental law of nature is one of mutual aid. Kropotkin wrote, "In proportion we ascend the scale of evolution; we see association growing more and more conscious. It loses its purely physical character. It ceases to be simply instinctive; it becomes reasoned. With the higher vertebrates it is periodical, or is resorted to for the satisfaction of a given want—propagation of the species, migration, hunting, or mutual defense."²⁸

From the prehistoric age onward, humans have formed societies in which they cooperate to provide for the community's basic needs. From these first beginnings, mutual aid has dominated over individualism and egoism. Kropotkin believed that the development of humankind is a direct result of the cooperative spirit inherent to human nature: "It is a feeling infinitely wider than love or personal sympathy—an instinct that has been slowly developed among animals and men in the course of an extremely long evolution and which has taught animals and men alike the force they can borrow from the practice of mutual aid and support, and the joys they can find in social life."²⁹

²⁸ Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor in Evolution* (Boston: Porter Sargent Publishers, 1976; repr., Lexington, KY: 2016), 40.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8 and also refer to De Geus, *Ecological Utopias*, 88–90.

In cities of the Middle Ages, Kropotkin saw the culmination of the practice of mutual aid and support, especially in guilds. As far as internal affairs, the guilds were sovereign, and decisions were made in general meetings. In this way, guilds were organized based on mutual aid principles, self-jurisdiction, and sovereignty. This spirit of federation permeated all spheres of life as the elements of freedom, mutual aid, and organization grew from simple to complex. In this ecological, libertarian society three principles were implemented: decentralization, self-government, and free agreement. The goal of society was not enforced unity or order, but organic and natural harmony. Kropotkin even argued for the abolition of private property in order to secure well-being for all.³⁰

Kropotkin rejected the state, believing it to be a triple alliance of military chiefs, judges, and priests. However, he recognized that at their earliest stages Buddhist and Christian communities possessed the principles of mutual aid. Other religious movements also often appeared to practice the best aspects of mutual aid early on in their communities.³¹ Elizabeth's apostolic religious community possessed all the ecological qualities Kropotkin praised: harmony, mutual aid, respect for freedom and free agreement, self-government, and equality without private property. One notable difference, though, was that Elizabeth's ecological community was based on and strengthened by faith in the Providence of God.

30 De Geus, *Ecological Utopias*, 90–100.

31 Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid*, 190.



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The Paca Street House, Baltimore, Maryland.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

II. Elizabeth's Ecological Vision of the Family as Community

A. Simple Joy of Family Being Together

In her “Dear Remembrances,” Elizabeth recalled the first time she and her five children gathered in her beautiful little home on Paca Street in Baltimore, experiencing the joy of being together as a family. “First Charities of Mr. Dubourg and his excellent Sister Madame [Victoire Françoise] Fournier to the Stranger and orphans!!! My lovely good sweet Boys at Georgetown—after two years absence in their Mothers arms—let the children of prosperity rejoice, but they can never guess the least of our joys who possessed nothing but in each other.”³² Elizabeth was well aware that her five children had neither a father nor prosperity; yet she not only accepted this reality, but also found in it the unique value and happiness a poor family could enjoy. Because Elizabeth saw that poverty helps us to appreciate the most essential part of family, i.e., each other, she was able to teach her children to live with dignified simplicity.

When Elizabeth sent her ailing daughter Rebecca to Dr. Chatard in Baltimore for a remedy, she wrote to Mrs. Chatard, “Well she is *yours* and your sweet charity may overflow. the success is left to our adored with the most peaceful perfect confidence,” adding, “She is poor you know and must not mind the wardrobe.”³³ Accepting poverty as a part of their lot in Divine Providence, Elizabeth taught her children to value each other and family. In another incident, after her friend Julia’s visit to Emmitsburg, Elizabeth expressed her gratitude to God that she was not rich: “Oh when the beautiful coaches and horses went off so grand and gay how Mothers Soul darted through the blue heavens to bless and praise that we

³² 10.4, “Dear Remembrances,” *CW*, 3a:520.

³³ Letter 6.107, “To Marie Françoise Chatard,” [25 June 1812], *ibid.*, 2:220.



[Click to enlarge](#)

Portrait of Reverend Simon Bruté, S.S.

From *The Who-When-What Book: Containing Five Hundred Carefully Prepared Biographical Sketches of the World's Most Famous and Notable Men and Women* (1900).

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are not numbered with the rich in this world.”³⁴ She valued life’s simplicity as the basis of ecological living for both family and religious community. While she was forming her religious community in Emmitsburg, she tried to gather her five children together outdoors at least once a week. Elizabeth described one such bright spring day to Julia:

What would I give if at this very moment you could see your own friend with the *five* playing all sorts of fancies and round her in a bright sun, and as merry as the larks skipping over the meadow before us.[...] I sit on the porch, visit the young calves, pigs and chickens, etc, with as much interest as the children, who are wild with pleasure when the two Brothers, three sisters and old Mother set out together ... do sometimes think how truly happy your friend is and it will repay you for the many anxieties she has given you.³⁵

Another time, Elizabeth detailed a similar experience when the family was together, actively enjoying each other and the animals around them:

Since the weather is more mild and settled I am stronger. The children are all health [*sic*], spirits of course.[...] I have the five together, which is always once sometimes twice a week, [more] than I ever could have even hoped for.[...] my Anna. my William. my Richard. my Kate. my Rebecca especially if you could see her on her knees milking her little white cow and afterwards loaded with a little tin pail in each hand running

34 Letter 6.206, “To Rebecca Seton,” 25 September [1815], *ibid.*, 2:343. See footnotes one and two on page 343 for the reasons behind Julia’s visit.

35 Letter 6.72, “To Julia Scott,” [dated outside March 9], *ibid.*, 2:176. At the time this letter was written, Elizabeth was thirty-seven years old. Two boys were studying at Mount St. Mary’s in Emmitsburg and able to come to join the family.

over and her eyes glistening with the delight of the wonders she can do. Kits greatest pleasure is feeding the lambs with salt from her hand Annas in decking the graves of dear C[ecilia] and H[arriet] and the Boys in asking Mother increasing questions about all their friends and connections and their hopes and prospects in life—how often is poor Mother obliged to point upwards.³⁶

At the end of this letter, Elizabeth invited her friends to come to the mountains to visit. The world that she wanted to share with them was filled with natural wonders, “the beauty of its shades in the setting sun, the waving of the wheat fields, our woods covered with flowers, and the quiet contented look of our habitation and its inhabitants.”³⁷ It was this simplicity of life, surrounded by nature and its occupants, which made her family happy.

It is noteworthy that in spite of her abundant love for her five children, Elizabeth was aware of their limitations and valued them for who they were. She also recognized her own limitations in understanding and nurturing them. In a letter to Antonio Filicchi, Elizabeth described her two sons, saying, “They do not seem to have either talents or application which is a great cross to me but they are innocent in their conduct and do not show any bad dispositions in other respects, and I must be patient.”³⁸ In another letter to Dué, Elizabeth expressed resignation as to their ordinary quality: “The talents of neither of them are distinguished, which does not disappoint me, knowing well they often ruin their owners.”³⁹ Even though Elizabeth confessed difficulty understanding her adolescent daughter Anna,⁴⁰ she was happy with the fine qualities her three daughters possessed. She said of one daughter: “Kit rules books, sets copies, hears lessons and conducts herself with such grace that girls twice her age show her the greatest respect.”⁴¹

B. Elizabeth’s Maxim to Her Family Members: See the World as It Is

The constant lesson Elizabeth tried to impart to her children was that they should see the world as it is. She wished that her oldest daughter Anna, in love with a young man from another country, would learn this: “She will be much better in the mountains than in Baltimore or any where else, all I have to wish for her is that she may see the world in

36 Letter 6.75, “To Eliza Sadler,” 12 May 1811, *ibid.*, 2:182–83.

37 *Ibid.*

38 Letter 5.14, “To Antonio Filicchi,” 16 January 1809, *ibid.*, 2:47.

39 Letter 6.45, “To Catherine Dupleix,” 4 June 1810, *ibid.*, 2:137.

40 Letter 6.7, “To Julia Scott,” 20 September 1809, *ibid.*, 2:83.

41 Letter 6.45, “To Catherine Dupleix,” 4 June 1810, *ibid.*, 2:137.

its true colours.”⁴² Elizabeth repeatedly asked her son William to see things as they were, saying, “Now as a man you will see things in their true light I trust knowing well that in every situation and place on earth we must find contradictions and difficulties.”⁴³ She herself saw everything that way, as part of a whole, as she noted to her spiritual director Reverend Simon Bruté, S.S.: “Not even little acts for obtaining fear or anxiety about this *Death* can move that strong hold of peace, thanksgiving and abandon of every atom of life and its belonging to him—even William I can see but in the great Whole.”⁴⁴

In order to remain calm in facing disappointments, Elizabeth had to distill and rely upon her love for her children, especially for William, her first son. She expressed these feelings to Antonio after having sent William to him to learn the family business in Leghorn, Italy: “I cannot hide from our God, though from everyone else I must conceal the perpetual tears and affections of boundless gratitude which overflow my heart, when I think of him secure in his *Faith* and your protection—Why I love him so much I cannot account, but own to you my Antonio all my weakness. pity and pray for a mother attached to her children through such peculiar motives as I am to mine. I purify it as much as I can, and our God knows it is their Souls alone I look at.”⁴⁵

When Antonio wrote her saying William did not have the requisite qualifications of a merchant,⁴⁶ she calmly accepted the disappointment. Then, she wrote William and assured him it was all right, and that she was happy he could be honest with her: “The more I think of it the happier I am you have spoken your dear heart out.”⁴⁷

Even when writing her daughter Catherine asking her to come back to Emmitsburg for the summer, Elizabeth was careful not to force the issue. Respecting Catherine’s freedom, Elizabeth tried to give her room to choose: “I fear almost to press your dear heart too much by telling you mine that I do wish you so much to be again with your poor Mother at least for this summer—you will be able to return to New York with little Burns and Manghans family in the fall if you wish it.”⁴⁸ She treated her children respectfully and with sensitivity, attempting to persuade rather than command them. This dialogical approach is ecological, for while family members care for each other, they have to respect individual freedoms and differences in order to form a harmonious community.

A good example of how she treated her family, and how we might best treat ours, can

42 Letter 5.22, “To Cecilia Seton,” Easter Tuesday 3 April [1809], *ibid.*, 2:64.

43 Letter 6.194, “To William Seton,” [17 June 1815], *ibid.*, 2:314.

44 Letter 7.156, “To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.,” 21 April 1818, *ibid.*, 2:549.

45 Letter 6.214, “To Antonio Filicchi,” 20 November 1815, *ibid.*, 2:356.

46 Letter 7.81, “To Antonio Filicchi,” 1 April 1817, *ibid.*, 2:471.

47 Letter 7.82, “To William Seton,” 4 April 1817, *ibid.*, 2:472.

48 Letter 7.160, “To Catherine Seton,” 5 May 1818, *ibid.*, 2:553.

be found in Elizabeth's advice to Reverend John Hickey, S.S., whom she knew from his days in the seminary:

When you ask too much at first you often gain nothing at last - *and if the heart is lost all is lost*, if you use such language to your family they cannot love you, since they have not *our* Microscope to see things *as they are*. Your austere hard language was not understood by Ellen, who dear Soul considers your letters as mere curiosities, she loves and venerates you but do not push her away [...] gently gently my Father in God and son in heart, do you drive so in the tribunal [confessional], I hope not - the faults of young people especially such faults as Elenors must be moved by prayers and tears because they are *constitutional* and cannot be frightened out.⁴⁹

We must employ gentle language toward everyone, but especially with our family members as we frequently see each other's faults. It is amusing to read how Elizabeth advised her two daughters, Catherine and Rebecca, when they quarreled: "The fault of quarreling you have so often confessed and declared you would not do so again, that it hurts my very heart to find you have been guilty of it," and she added, "Tell Rebecca I did not think she would so soon forget her good promises."⁵⁰ Elizabeth begged the Lord to pardon them for all their faults. Although this advice likely did not stop them, Elizabeth's approach was gentle, asking her daughters to take responsibility for what they did and guiding them to mature. It is no wonder that Catherine remembered her as "the best of Mothers."⁵¹

Elizabeth believed her responsibility to her children came first, before her own rights or dreams. "The thought of living out of our Valley would seem impossible, if I belonged to myself, but the dear ones have their first claim which must ever remain inviolate."⁵² She was willing to make every sacrifice in order to fulfill her first duty as a mother.⁵³ She was faithful to this duty to the end, trusting her unmarried daughter Catherine to lifelong friends.⁵⁴ It is moving to read Elizabeth's letter to her dying daughter Rebecca, assuring her that the bond of love in family will continue through eternity: "My Rebecca *we* will at last, at last unite in his eternal praise, lost in him You and I closer still than in the nine months so dear when as I told you I carried you in my bosom [...] *then* no more Separation."⁵⁵

49 Letter 7.147, "To Rev. John Hickey, S.S.," [before 19 March 1818], *ibid.*, 2:536.

50 Letter 6.27, "To Catherine Seton," 9 March 1810, *ibid.*, 2:112.

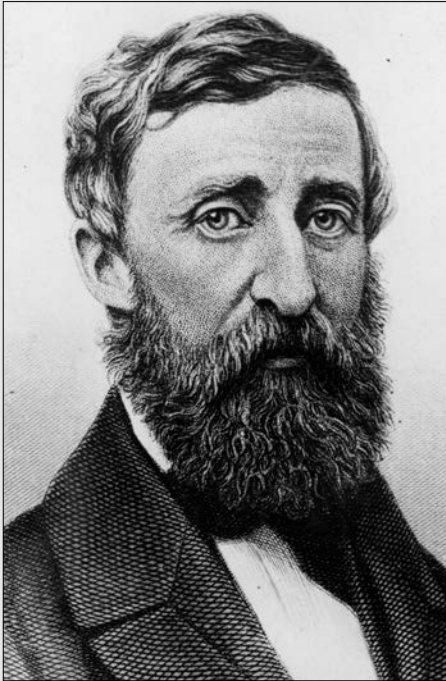
51 10.3, "Catherine Seton's Little Red Book," [after 1816], *ibid.*, 3a:489. At the beginning of this notebook, Catherine Seton wrote, "O may it be my daily study to follow the advice of the best of Mothers."

52 Letter 6.50, "To Julia Scott," 20 July 1810, *ibid.*, 2:146. Also in Letter 6.54, "To Eliza Sadler," [postmarked 3 August 1810 or 1811. The contents suggest 1810.], *ibid.*, 2:153.

53 Letter 6.83, "To Archbishop John Carroll," 5 September 1811, *ibid.*, 2:196.

54 Letter 7.238, "To Julia Scott," [15 March 1820], *ibid.*, 2:642.

55 Letter 6.206, "To Rebecca Seton," 25 September [1815], *ibid.*, 2:343. Elizabeth had Rebecca in her arms for "9 weeks nights and day" until Rebecca "gave the last sigh" (Letter 7.61, "To William Seton," St. Martin's 11 November 1816, *ibid.*, 2:447).



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Portrait of Henry David Thoreau, in 1861.

From *The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850–1920*
(Library of Congress).

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C. Thoreau's Ultimate Simplicity and Elizabeth's Ecological Family

Henry David Thoreau lived alone in the woods from July 1845 to September 1847. He resided in a self-constructed cabin on the shore of Walden Pond, near Concord, Massachusetts, his birthplace. Thoreau wanted to test how living an independent life might lead to a higher form of personal happiness. He thought people became their own slave drivers, unaware that there was an alternative to their never-ending quest for affluence. Thoreau hoped to escape this conventional desire for abundance and luxury, and he chose a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust. According to him, most luxuries and many of life's conveniences can be done without, as they hinder the moral uplifting of humanity.⁵⁶

The crux of his argument was simplicity: "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! [...] Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion."⁵⁷ What is noteworthy here is that Thoreau connected simplicity of life with elevation of human purpose. Elizabeth regarded the poverty her family faced after the bankruptcy and death of her husband similarly. It was because her family did not possess anything except each other that they were able to value each other in pristine clarity.

Most of *Walden* consists of fine, often lyrical descriptions of the hills, woods, meadows,

⁵⁶ De Geus, "Henry Thoreau: The Utopia of Ultimate Simplicity," chap. 4 in *Ecological Utopias*, 73–77. Also refer to Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. Lyndon Shanley, 150th anniversary ed., (1971; repr., Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 14–15, where he describes a true philosopher: "To be a philosopher is not merely to have subtle thoughts, nor even to found a school, but so to love wisdom as to live according to its dictates, a life of simplicity, independence, magnanimity, and trust."

⁵⁷ Thoreau, *Walden*, 91–92.



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The tombs of William Seton and Antonio Filicchi, Livorno, Italy.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

ponds, animals, and plants surrounding Thoreau. He listened attentively to the sounds of nature, such as the sighs of the wind, the hooting of owls, and the croaking of frogs. He applied himself to an inner, spiritual contemplation of what stirred him personally, the real objectives of life and the true value of earthly existence.⁵⁸ Elizabeth did the same in St. Joseph's Valley, but accompanied by her five children, her sisters in religious community, and her boarding students. While Thoreau searched alone for simplicity of life, and Elizabeth found joy and contentment in community, both lives were ecological because they lived simply and wisely, well aware they were a part of nature and the harmony found within it.⁵⁹

III. Elizabeth's Ecological Vision of the Social and Ecclesial Community and Beyond

Elizabeth's "spider web of earthly weaving" was much wider than St. Joseph's Valley, encompassing three groups in particular. The first group consisted of friends such as the Filicchi family in Italy; Matthias O'Conway, the father of Sister Cecilia O'Conway in Philadelphia; and George Weis, a carpenter and builder in Baltimore. Her three lifelong friends, Julia, Eliza, and Dué belong to this group too, as already discussed in Elizabeth's

⁵⁸ De Geus, *Ecological Utopias*, 78.

⁵⁹ Thoreau, *Walden*, 70, where he concluded: "In short, I am convinced, both by faith and experience, that to maintain one's self on this earth is not a hardship but a pastime, if we will live simply and wisely." Marius de Geus wrote that Thoreau developed three central ideas in *Walden*: 1. The necessity of protecting nature, for throughout the book Thoreau expressed his concern for the damage caused by current human activities to the natural environment; 2. The relationship and essential connection between humans and nature as the mother of humanity; 3. The importance of limiting consumption and leading a more simple life with the ideals of "satisfied with little" and "having enough" (*Ibid.*, 78–82). I would agree that Elizabeth practiced the last two points, while the first point was not her concern because protecting nature was not the theme of her day, even though Thoreau lived in *Walden* only twenty-five years after Elizabeth's death.

letters to them. The second group consisted of the leaders of the Catholic Church at the time, such as Archbishop John Carroll, Simon Bruté, and John Hickey, as well as other Sulpician priests like Louis William Dubourg, John Baptist David, and John Dubois. The third group was comprised of the graduates of St. Joseph's Academy, and the parents of those students, notably the Harper Family with whom Catherine Seton went to live after Elizabeth's death. Elizabeth nurtured relationships with these three groups, which proved mutually enriching. They were maintained and strengthened with an ecological character, with heightened sensibilities of one another without need for domination, like the "ecological society" Murray Bookchin defines and which will be explored in a later section.

A. Elizabeth's Ecological Relationship with Her Friends

Elizabeth Seton met her husband's business friends Filippo and Antonio Filicchi and Amabilia, Antonio's wife, in Leghorn. After William's death, Elizabeth and her daughter Anna stayed in Antonio's house for several months. It was here she was first attracted to the Catholic devotion to the Eucharist, and she continued a close relationship with the Filicchi family throughout her life. She respected their faith life, as she noted in commending Filippo to her son William: "I rejoice that you have known him and had the opportunity of seeing a true gentleman in a true *Christian*, and *wealth* sanctified by *Religion*."⁶⁰ Since Antonio not only encouraged her conversion to Catholicism, but also accompanied her and Anna in their return to the United States as well as her entrance to the Catholic Church, Elizabeth was convinced that their relationship was ordered by Divine Providence. She wrote, "How great that attachment is, and with how much reason can only be known by one who once was what I have been, and can conceive how great the contrast of past and present is—this is understood by him alone who gave you to me and us to you—for which I trust we will love, praise and adore thro' eternity."⁶¹

Each year Antonio sent four hundred dollars for Elizabeth's two sons,⁶² which freed her from the financial burden of the boys' education. This enabled her, with additional donations from Julia, to separate her family's finances from that of the religious community. Eventually Elizabeth sent her two sons to Leghorn so that Antonio could teach them business. Even though this did not work out as she had hoped, it is evidence of the trust, mutual respect, and interdependence between Elizabeth and Antonio's family. Elizabeth wrote her conversion journal to Amabilia⁶³ describing all the spiritual struggles and sorrow she

60 Letter 7.4, "To William Seton," [January 1816], *CW*, 2:370.

61 Letter 6.39, "To Antonio Filicchi," 20 May 1810, *ibid.*, 2:130.

62 Letter 6.154, "To Eliza Sadler," [postmarked 23 March] 1814, *ibid.*, 2:266. Julia Scott also helped Elizabeth's children financially whenever the need arose. Elizabeth told her children that Julia was more to them than her own sister Mary Post (Letter 6.152, "To Julia Scott," 14 March 1814, *ibid.*, 2:264).

63 3.31, "Journal to Amabilia Filicchi," 19 July 1804, *ibid.*, 1:367–78. This journal continues until 14 April 1805, when Elizabeth finally converted, had the first communion, and Easter communion.

had endured, finally ending with the joyous exclamation “GOD IS MINE and I AM HIS.”⁶⁴ To the end of her life, Elizabeth reported to Antonio on how the religious community she founded was flourishing, and she frequently assured him of her gratitude to and prayers for the Filicchi family.

Another layperson with whom Elizabeth built a firm, mutual, and spiritual relationship, was Matthias O’Conway. He had emigrated from Ireland, served in the United States Army, and worked as a Spanish and French interpreter. His daughter Cecilia became the first woman to join Elizabeth in forming the Sisters of Charity. After Cecilia was sick for some time on Paca Street in Baltimore, Elizabeth wrote to her father, “Your or rather our dear Cecilia Veronica [O’Conway] has had one of those suffering turns of pain in her breast [...]. She is now perfectly recovered and both yesterday and this morning has received with me Our adored daily Bread. Oh my dear friend if we are not happy who is?”⁶⁵ Approximately one year later in Emmitsburg, Elizabeth wrote again, sharing how precious Cecilia was: “Oh happy happy Father of such a precious child Virgin Modesty and grace personified and yet always a proper confidence when *necessity commands* a true pattern of Innocence and piety = think what a true and solid comfort she is to me.”⁶⁶ It is obvious Sister Cecilia was the bond between her father Matthias and Elizabeth.

However, their trust in each other was much deeper than in any ordinary relationship. In the same letter of 1811, Elizabeth confided her deepest feelings to Matthias on the conflict between Father David and herself regarding the adoption of the French Rules of the Daughters of Charity:

We are to have a retreat in July, and then it will be settled, final Rules proposed, and our yearly Vows made. You will laugh at me when I tell you I have seen more real affliction and sorrow here in the ten months since our removal than in all the 35 years of my past life which was all marked by affliction.—You will laugh, I repeat, because you will know that the fruit will not be lost - at least I hope not, tho’ indeed sometimes I tremble. it is not needful to tell you *this is SACRED*.⁶⁷

Elizabeth was ready to leave the religious community if her maternal responsibility for her children contradicted the requirements of the French Rules. Both her Sulpician superiors and Archbishop Carroll were ambiguous in their position and only asked that she be patient. Elizabeth trembled, not knowing whether her dream of religious life would dissolve, but also confident this suffering would be fruitful and that her perseverance was holy in the

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:376.

⁶⁵ Letter 5.27, “To Matthias O’Conway,” [postmarked 16 May 1809], *ibid.*, 2:70–71.

⁶⁶ Letter 6.46, “To Matthias O’Conway,” 5 June 1811, *ibid.*, 2:141. Despite the date on the letter, the footnote says its contents indicate that it was written in 1810.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 2:140.



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***Reverend John Carroll, circa 1809.
Oil on canvas. Artist unknown.
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.***

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eyes of God. It is wonderful to see their deep friendship, evident in Elizabeth's willingness to confess such a sacred part of her heart to this layman.

Elizabeth not only trusted but provided spiritual direction to another layperson, George Weis. He was a carpenter who lived in Baltimore and built the chapel of St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore and Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg. When Elizabeth left for Emmitsburg in 1809, she formed a deep friendship with his family. Elizabeth wrote twenty-five letters to George, many of which dealt with her request that George bring furniture, or buy oysters for Anna, who was dying. When George's business failed and he faced financial difficulties, Elizabeth accompanied him through every trial: "I can never forget the kindness you have shown us but my mind and body have both suffered what God alone can tell since I left you but he knows how truly I am attached to you and how fervently I beg His blessings may be with you forever. If in this world he gives them to you as to me in crosses and contradictions let us live by faith since we know it is much better to suffer for a time that we may afterwards partake of His glory."⁶⁸

After Elizabeth heard that George's financial situation had worsened and that sickness burdened him even more, she encouraged him by using herself as an example: "If I could inspire your dear soul with as much indifference as is in mine, provided his adorable will be done during the few remaining days of my tiresome journey."⁶⁹ She continued, "Let all be in the order of his providence neither asking nor refusing" and added, "George, George; be

⁶⁸ Letter 6.5, "Copy to George Weis," 26 August 1809, *ibid.*, 2:80.

⁶⁹ Letter 6.57, "Copy to George Weis," 9 August 1809 or 1810, *ibid.*, 2:156.

a Man but a supernatural man crucified in Christ—Eternity.”⁷⁰ As his suffering continued, Elizabeth focused on the hope of eternity, “look only forward to our long long Eternity [...] my poor poor George take courage—sow in tears to reap in joy, look to the master Carpenter you follow after.”⁷¹ Faith is the primary difference between Elizabeth’s beliefs and those of contemporary secular ecologist Murray Bookchin, whose theory we will review later.

B. Elizabeth’s Ecological Relationship with Church Leaders

Elizabeth wrote twenty-eight letters to Archbishop Carroll, the first of which was before her conversion and after being introduced to him by Antonio. Out of those letters, nine concerned conflicts with superiors who had direct authority over the newly formed community before the Constitutions were approved. Two letters deal with problems with the first superior, William Dubourg. This conflict, however, was nothing compared to what she faced with the second superior, John Baptist David. Father David tried to rule the community, and the school, strictly and without consultation with the sisters. Elizabeth revealed her confusion to Archbishop Carroll:

Circumstances have all so combined as to create in my mind a confusion and want of confidence in my Superiors which is indescribable. if my own happiness was only in question I should say how good is the cross for me this is my opportunity to ground myself in patience and perseverance [...] but as the good our Almighty God may intend to do by means of this community may be very much impeded by the present state of things it is absolutely necessary You as the head of it and to whom of course the Spirit of discernment for its good is given should be made acquainted with it before the evil is irreparable.⁷²

The issue was very clear. Elizabeth believed God wanted her to form a community for the good of everyone. She objected to David’s hierarchical idea of community, commanded by the superior without consultation or agreement of members, ruled without human warmth and sensitivity. Being honest, Elizabeth told the bishop that her heart was closed and that she was paralyzed by the now stifling atmosphere of this community that discouraged every creative action and desire to serve God.

Carroll delayed in answering, eventually advising Elizabeth that the community would succeed only through her sacrifice and complete trust in God. Elizabeth endured this

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Letter 6.113, “Copy to George Weis,” 10 July 1812, *ibid.*, 2:225.

⁷² Letter 6.23, “To Archbishop John Carroll,” 25 January 1810, *ibid.*, 2:106.

conflict for one-and-a-half years, until the Archbishop finally approved the Rule with an adaptation for Elizabeth's children. He said, "I am exceedingly anxious that every allowance shall be made not only to the sisters, generally, but to each one in particular [...] provided that this be done without endangering the harmony of the community," and he added, "I read the constitutions to consult in the first place the individual happiness of your dear Sisters and consequently your own."⁷³ In short, Carroll agreed with Elizabeth that the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph's should have a community concerned with individual happiness, which took into account the diversity of its people and situations. They sought an ecological community, where equality, diversity, and spontaneity were nurtured.

We also find an ecological quality to Elizabeth's relationships when we consider how she nurtured both John Hickey and Simon Bruté until her death. Rev. John Francis Hickey, S.S. (1789–1869), was the first priest ordained at Mount St. Mary's, and the first American member of the Sulpicians. When he was a young priest, Elizabeth reprimanded him for a careless sermon: "O Sir, that awakens my anger do you remember a priest holds the honor of God on his lips do you not trouble you to spread his fire he wishes so much enkindled, if you will not study and prepare while young, what when you are old - there is a Mothers lesson [...] yes prayer and *preparation too*."⁷⁴

Previously, we have noted how Elizabeth helped Father Hickey gently treat his younger sister Ellen. In every letter, Elizabeth wrote to Hickey she expressed her concern for him and always asked his prayers for her: "Pray for one who remembers you always. All your concerns mine."⁷⁵ She signed these "your little Mother," or "your poor little St. Joseph mother," or "Your Poor little bad devoted Mother EAS."⁷⁶ Elizabeth's motherly heart nurtured, sometimes with admonition, but always with gentleness and sensitivity.

Born in France, Rev. Simon Gabriel Bruté de Remur, S.S. (1779–1839), became a physician and was then ordained to the priesthood. In 1810, he came to the United States, bringing an extensive library of several thousand books that he shared with Elizabeth. In Emmitsburg, he developed a deep spiritual bond with her, becoming her spiritual director for the remaining ten years of her life. Bruté helped Elizabeth widen her spiritual scope to reach new heights of spirituality, and she helped him with his English homilies and growth in his priestly vocation. Father Bruté called Elizabeth "my mother" when he asked her to

73 Letter A – 6.83a, "Archbishop John Carroll to Elizabeth Seton," 11 September 1811, *ibid.*, 2:745–46.

74 6.195, "To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.," St. Michael [8 May 1815], *ibid.*, 2:323.

75 Letter 7.147, "To Rev. John Hickey, S.S.," [before 19 March 1818], *ibid.*, 2:537.

76 *Ibid.*, 2:537; Letter 7.204, "To Rev. John Hickey, S.S.," [19 February 1819], *ibid.*, 2:603; Letter 7.235, "To Rev. John Hickey, S.S.," [January 1820], *ibid.*, 2:637.



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***Elizabeth and student.
Maquette in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, after the life-size
bronze sculpture in Seoul, Korea. Sculptor: Jin Seop Han.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

correct his homilies: “I pursue, my dear Mother, the useful task which our father imposes upon me, but I cannot succeed without many corrections, or even compositions anew. Be so good as to give hands for that to your brother.”⁷⁷

Once, he confessed how much Elizabeth meant to his missionary life in the United States: “You whom I like to call a mother here as I call one in France my mother you add not indeed, but you have so well helped me better to know, yes better still, a priest of his as I was, to know my happiness and desire.”⁷⁸ It is clear that Elizabeth appreciated his sacrifice as a missionary and his total resignation to Divine Providence: “You would never believe [...] the good *Your return* does to this soul of your little Mother - to see you *again* tearing yourself from all that is dearest—giving up *again* the full liberty you lawfully and justly possessed—exchanging for a truly heavy chain, and the endless labyrinth of discussions and wearisome details.”⁷⁹

Bruté began serving as president of St. Mary’s College in Baltimore in 1815. Elizabeth recognized the freedom of heart within him, having left his home country behind. They encouraged each other in the progress of their spiritual path: “Do you read well your Mothers *whole* heart in this Resignation [...] but you know the only Security and heavenly Peace in that point so dear rests all on this essential abandon - so at least you taught me.”⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Rev. Simon Bruté, Emmitsburg, to Elizabeth Seton, Emmitsburg, transcribed from Bruté’s Connection with the Community, 7–8 (20 November 1812), 2.323, Archives of the Province of Saint Louise [APSL, formerly ASJPH] 1–3-3–13:1 and 1b.

⁷⁸ #164 Rev. S.G. Bruté, 2.368, APSL [ASJPH] 7–3-1.

⁷⁹ Letter 7.1, “To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.,” [January 1816], *ibid.*, 2:365.

⁸⁰ Letter 7.47, “To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.,” Sunday the Leper [September 2], *ibid.*, 2:421.

Elizabeth's letters to Bruté also provide insight into her views on the Islamic faith, as well as other religions. Her attitude toward people outside the Catholic Church, which she called "the Ark in the world," was open, trusting them to the mercy of God: "All the heathens, savages, sects etc were only in my heart for prayer, but never in my brain for what became of them, or to trouble my Faith in his wisdom and mercy, the Father most tender Father of *all* my immense God, *I his alone*."⁸¹ One particular mention of Muslims in her writings connects to the universal importance of pardon.

God has taken his symbol of Reconciliation a *bow* [rainbow after the flood] without arrows says St. Ambrose to instruct us that his divine Majesty is Sweet and Peaceful—

= will not pardon? - oh worse that [*sic*] Turks or Moor for Turks have their feast called *Behiram* wherein all injured are pardoned, so then go out from God's church if thou wilt not pardon or at least open not thy mouth before the Wounds of Christ which bleed against thee.⁸²

Elizabeth's relationship to people of other faiths was summarized succinctly in her own words, "tho I sincerely love and respect Individuals of other Faith, yet the Faith of the Catholic church is the only one I can teach or advise to any one committed to my charge."⁸³

C. Elizabeth's Social Relationship with the Graduates and Parents of St. Joseph's Academy

Elizabeth maintained relationships with the graduates of St. Joseph's Academy through letters. These demonstrate her interest and deep concern for their lives following graduation, and in them she often offered appropriate advice. Regarding married life, Elizabeth advised a former student named Ellen Gottsberger: "I wish very much to know if you make a *good Obedient wife* studying the happiness of your husband, and you wish him to study yours, and as a *true Christian* setting him the first example of a humble heart and forbearing temper, if you take care of the Soul As well as the body of your servants who must find a Mother as well as a mistress in you."⁸⁴

Elizabeth's lesson was that husbands and wives should concern themselves with what constitutes the happiness of each other. Humility and even temper, then, would serve to realize their happiness. In addition, she focused on the whole household, asking Ellen to take care of the physical and spiritual needs of the servants who worked for them. Always seeing the picture as a whole, Elizabeth had an ecological concern for everyone's happiness.

81 Letter 7.66, "To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.," [26 December 1816], *ibid.*, 2:454.

82 Letter 7.77, "To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.," [February 1817], *ibid.*, 2:467.

83 Letter 7.236, "Draft to Ann C. Tilghman," [after 1 January 1820], *ibid.*, 2:638.

84 Letter 7.110, "To Ellen Gottsberger," 23 August 1817, *ibid.*, 2:501.

To Mary Diana Harper, Elizabeth strongly recommended controlling her temper. “The first step to happiness is to *subdue our feelings* [...] and mind my Mary I repeat you my old prophecy if you do not give *religion* its proper place in your heart, you will be truly wretched since any *one* of your passions [...] are enough to destroy your peace.”⁸⁵ Elizabeth repeatedly warned Mary to control her quick temper not only for others, but also for her own sake, writing that “unless they are subdued you can have no rest with yourself or others.”⁸⁶ Then Elizabeth assured Mary that whatever pain she experienced because of this direction was simply due to a wish for her true happiness.

Another graduate, Mary Smith, entered the Carmelite Monastery. Elizabeth wrote to her advising, “Let us trust in his dear mercy, and let not our hearts be so much troubled about our sins as to forget to trust in him [...] I told my Jesus this morning when I had the happiness of receiving him, I said, ah could I say with St. Paul ‘it is not I who lives [*sic*], but it is Jesus [who] lives in me.’”⁸⁷

Robert Goodloe Harper was the parent of three students, including Mary Diana, and served as financial and legal advisor to Elizabeth. As a lawyer, he helped incorporate the Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph’s in Maryland. When Mary Diana died in France, Elizabeth consoled him and his family as she would members of her own:

I hesitate much my dear sir in daring to say a word to you at this moment yet your Mary was my own, more than you can imagine, and in her particular turn of temper had made her lovely Soul known to mine, more perhaps than even to her own parents—therefore my tears will flow with theirs and my heart feel as if I too was losing again a dear + darling child. But I am sure my dear Mr. Harper you will look at the consoling side of this deep affliction, and the painful uncertainties of our life of trial.⁸⁸

In a letter of Elizabeth’s to Julia, we find how deeply she trusted the close relationship between herself and the Harper family. The Harpers had invited Catherine Seton to stay with them if Elizabeth should not recover from illness: “You know my own beloved friend I see all in the order of Providence, and wish only to use the generosity of others as far as it enters in that beautiful order, therefore we have never yet in any way taken advantage of the goodness of Mr. and Mrs. H to us.”⁸⁹

In her friendship with the Harpers, as well as in all other relationships she nurtured in her life, Elizabeth saw the beautiful order of Providence. Because her social relationships were always rooted in such order and harmony, we recognize the ecological character of Elizabeth’s social community.

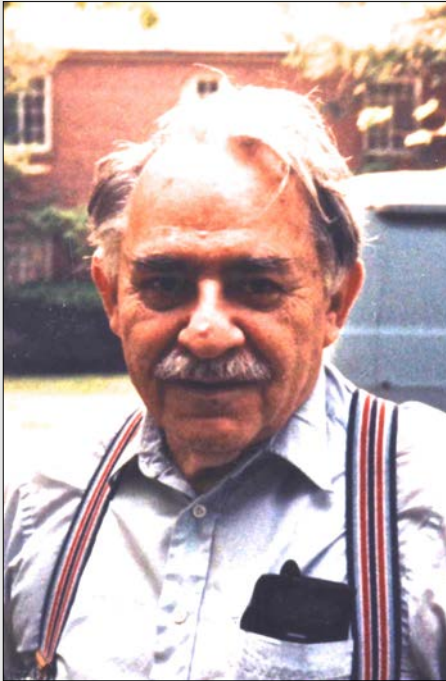
85 Letter 7.128, “To Mary Diana Harper,” 9 December 1817, *ibid.*, 2:517.

86 Letter 7.113, “To Mary Diana Harper,” 26 August 1817, *ibid.*, 2:504.

87 Letter 6.161, “To Mary Smith (Sister Stanislaus of the Infant Jesus, O.C.D.),” WhitSunday 29 May 1814, *ibid.*, 2:271.

88 Letter 7.152, “To Robert Godloe Harper,” 5 April 1818, *ibid.*, 2:543.

89 Letter 7.238, “To Julia Scott,” [15 March 1820], *ibid.*, 2: 642.



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Murray Bookchin pictured in 1989.

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D. Murray Bookchin's Social Ecology and Elizabeth's Social Community

The concept of social ecology constitutes the basis of Murray Bookchin's theory, and the starting point of his major published work *The Ecology of Freedom*: "I cannot emphasize too strongly that such a two-fold definition of 'nature' is one of the most important distinctions I tried to make in this book[...]. Social ecology, in turn, is a philosophy of evolution, not a mystical restatement of Saint John's apocalypse. Humanity, in turn, is both an extension of ecology's insight into social development, from a biological first nature into society's second nature. *The Ecology of Freedom* tries to *synthesize* these two natures into a third nature. It tries to transform both nonhuman and human-made natures into a more complete nature that is conscious, thinking, and purposeful."⁹⁰

The primary goal of social ecology is to provide us with a holistic analysis of relationships in nature and society.⁹¹ Since Bookchin concluded that the social hierarchy of humans produced our domination over nature, it is of paramount importance to establish nonhierarchical relationships and organizations within political and economic systems. Therefore, Bookchin proposed that "hierarchy, in effect, would be replaced by interdependence, and consociation would imply the existence of an organic core that meets the deeply felt biological needs for care, cooperation, security, and love. Freedom would no longer be placed in opposition to nature, individuality to society, choice to necessity, or personality to the needs of social coherence."⁹² Bookchin also hoped that ecocommunities

⁹⁰ Murray Bookchin, preface to *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (Edinburgh, UK: AK Press, 2005), 11.

⁹¹ De Geus, "Murray Bookchin: The Utopia of 'Ecocommunities,'" chap. 11 in *Ecological Utopias*, 192–193.

⁹² Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 414.

would establish a new era in face-to-face relationships, and democracy itself, so that the split with nature created by our hierarchical society ages ago would be healed and transcended.⁹³

It is interesting to find in the social networks of Elizabeth Seton examples very close to Bookchin's social ecocommunity, woven by face-to-face relationships of interdependence, care, equality, and freedom. Bookchin was largely opposed to religious institutions, writing that "rarely, as the history of all the great world religions attests, have they created an ecologically humanistic society."⁹⁴ Contrary to Bookchin's judgment, though, Elizabeth nurtured her social relationships as a Catholic religious woman and the founder of a community. This can be seen in her friendships with the Filicchi family across the ocean, the Matthias O'Conway family, the George Weis family, the many graduates, her friends, and with Archbishop Carroll and the Sulpician priests. Their relationships were deepened by honest dialogue, healthy interdependence, mutual appreciation, and trust in the order of God's Providence, all of which fostered social ecology.

Conclusion

Learning from nature, Elizabeth lived her community life ecologically based on her insight that "all must take its course in this world,"⁹⁵ because "the hand that allots always proportions."⁹⁶ Since it takes time for fruit to grow, we have to be patient for a child to mature. Elizabeth once wrote to a parent, "I think you are too anxious for the fruit of your dear little tree, which is ripening very fast.[...] But we must wait for these fruits; for, if there is a true danger for one of her turn, it would be to push her too fast, and force an exterior look without the interior spirit."⁹⁷ Elizabeth valued moderation and "the peace and safety of a mortified spirit" in daily life.⁹⁸ When she had enough money to pay for her children's emerging independence, Elizabeth wrote to Antonio, "I rejoice to draw no more from Messrs. Murrey."⁹⁹ Elizabeth knew when enough was enough, an ecological virtue, and she was grateful to her friends. She once wrote to Julia, "Do not think of me dearest but under the line of my beautiful Providence, which has done so well for us so many years - you keep me *out of debt*."¹⁰⁰ The social network that Elizabeth fostered provided the basis for an ecologically rounded and balanced family and community.

93 Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montréal-Buffalo: Black Rose Books, 1991), 69.

94 Bookchin, *Ecology of Freedom*, 63.

95 Letter 6.207, "To Eliza Sadler," [postmark October 10], *ibid.*, 2:345.

96 Letter 7.9, "To Julia Scott," 23 March 1816, *ibid.*, 2:378.

97 Letter 7.312, "To a Pious Lady, a Parent," [n.d.], *ibid.*, 2:701.

98 Letter 6.92, "To Rev. Pierre Babade, S.S.," [December n.d.], *ibid.*, 2:205.

99 The New York firm that handled the Filicchi accounts. Letter 7.19, "To Antonio Filicchi," 22 April 1816, *ibid.*, 2:391.

100 Letter 7.186, "To Julia Scott," 25 October 1818, *ibid.*, 2:586.



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***Elizabeth Ann Seton stained glass window.
Daughters of Charity Provincial House, Rome, Italy.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

We see how the three communities Elizabeth was nurturing—her apostolic religious community, her family, and her social community—were as interwoven as a spider’s web. Elizabeth helped her children interact with students in St. Joseph’s Academy in various ways. Once, Elizabeth wrote to Julia of her daughter Catherine, “I have told Kit that I fear some of the children of our school with all of whom she has been such a favorite may be troublesome calling to see her.”¹⁰¹ Through another letter, Elizabeth introduced Mr. and Mrs. Harper, who were travelling in Italy, to Antonio and Amabilia Filicchi: “To tell you the boundless kindness of Mr. and Mrs. Harper for my Individual family as well as our Community would be impossible, and you may suppose how anxious I am that your beloved Amabilia should meet so elegant a woman from our country.”¹⁰² Elizabeth connected Sister Margaret George with her friend Dué in New York: “It delights me so that you love my little Margaret [George], it is a heart so truly made to be loved and I am sure will not disappoint you.”¹⁰³ Tellingly, Elizabeth remained at the center of this spider’s web, connecting different corners of the three communities she nourished through caring, freeing, and responsibility toward one another.

To a former student Elizabeth wrote of her failing physical condition, “Three wheels of the old carriage are broken down, the fourth very near gone; then with the wings of a dove will my soul fly and be rest.”¹⁰⁴ She embraced an ecological view of death and the conviction

101 Letter 7.141, “To Julia Scott,” 19 February 1818, *ibid.*, 2:529.

102 Letter 7.181, “To Antonio Filicchi,” 27 September 1818, *ibid.*, 2:579.

103 Letter 7.221, “To Catherine Dupleix,” [21 August 1819], *ibid.*, 2:622.

104 Letter 7.329, “To a Student,” [probably after 1818], *ibid.*, 2:710.

that it is natural and the common lot for all human beings: “As to sickness and death itself if it comes to us again we know that they are the common attendants of human life they are our certain portion at one period or other.”¹⁰⁵ On one autumn day she wrote to Julia, “The sun so bright, the country so to my mind all falling and [...] speaking the promise of the grave—the grave so—dark to [*sic*—but so bright to the longing, desiring active soul of the prisoner looking beyond its narrow passage to the fields of everlasting Verdure.”¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth saw two sides to death, and in the “everlasting Verdure,” she saw the promise of the fresh, life-giving energy known as the “*viriditas*.”¹⁰⁷ Referencing nature, Elizabeth described her peaceful acceptance of death to Father Bruté:

now near death - O our Jesus!—

All as quiet as the still breeze over the little lake....¹⁰⁸

In conclusion, perhaps the following quotation taken from a later piece of correspondence best portrays Elizabeth Seton’s mature personality. This woman, the foundress and saint, as demonstrated, lived as a loving mother to her three-fold religious, family, and social ecological communities:

Alone on a rock this afternoon, surrounded by the most beautiful scenery, adoring and praising Him for his magnificence and glory [...] the soul cried out, O God! O God! Give yourself. What is all the rest? A Silent voice of love answered, *I am yours*. Then, dearest Lord! Keep me as I am while I live; for this is true content,—to hope for nothing, to desire nothing, expect nothing, fear nothing. Death! Eternity! Oh, how small are all objects of busy, striving, restless, blind, mistaken beings, when at the foot of the cross these two prospects are viewed!¹⁰⁹

Skip Gallery

¹⁰⁵ Letter 6.14, “To Julia Scott,” 27 December 1809, *ibid.*, 2:95.

¹⁰⁶ Letter 6.22, “To Julia Scott,” 23 October 1810, *ibid.*, 2:161.

¹⁰⁷ “*Viriditas*” is a technical term in Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179), signifying greening power of all creation. Refer to Anne H. King-Lenzmeier, *Hildegard of Bingen: An Integrated Vision* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 72. For the biblical source of *viriditas*, refer to Psalms 23:2 and 52:8.

¹⁰⁸ Letter 7.287, “To Rev. Simon Bruté, S.S.,” *ibid.*, 2:685.

¹⁰⁹ Letter 7.324. “To an Unknown Person,” *ibid.*, 2:707–08.



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***Enamel after the famed Filicchi portrait of Elizabeth Seton.
Artist: Paula Martin, D.C., Madrid, Spain.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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All this and Heaven, too.
Unsigned original watercolor in Daughters of Charity house,
Emmitsburg, Maryland.
Artist: Rebecca Pearl.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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Portrait of Peter Kropotkin, circa 1890.

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The Paca Street House, Baltimore, Maryland.

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Portrait of Reverend Simon Bruté, S.S.

From *The Who-When-What Book: Containing Five Hundred Carefully Prepared Biographical Sketches of the World's Most Famous and Notable Men and Women* (1900).
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Portrait of Henry David Thoreau, in 1861.

From *The Evolution of the Conservation Movement, 1850–1920* (Library of Congress).
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The tombs of William Seton and Antonio Filicchi, Livorno, Italy.

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***Reverend John Carroll, circa 1809.
Oil on canvas. Artist unknown.
National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution.***

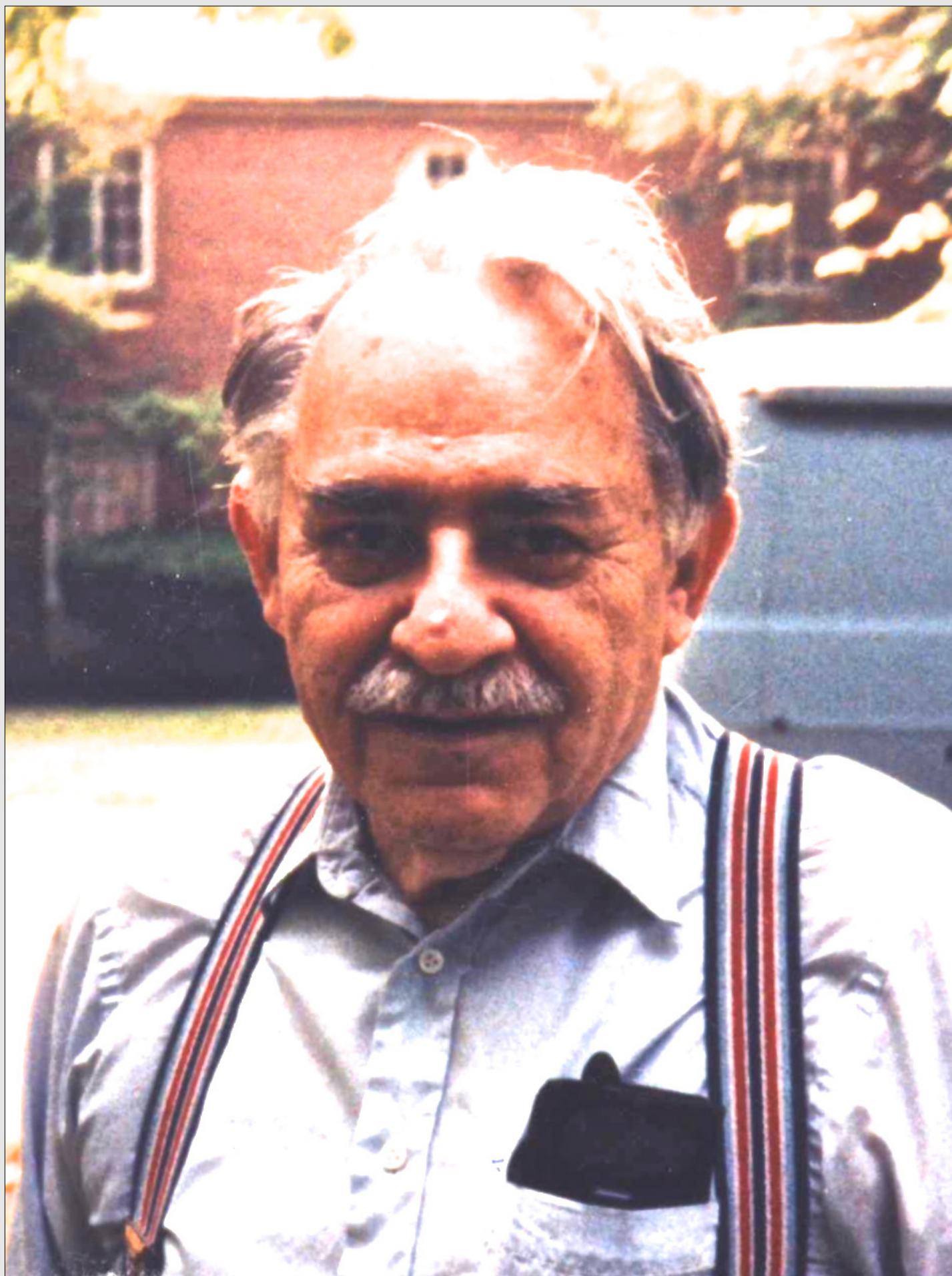
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***Elizabeth and student.
Maquette in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, after the life-size
bronze sculpture in Seoul, Korea. Sculptor: Jin Seop Han.***

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Murray Bookchin pictured in 1989.

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***Elizabeth Ann Seton stained glass window.
Daughters of Charity Provincial House, Rome, Italy.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

BOSSUET

Testimony Concerning the Life and the Eminent Virtues of Monsieur Vincent de Paul (1702)

A previously unpublished manuscript

Published with an introduction by Armand Gasté

Professor of the Faculty of Letters of Caen

Paris, Alphonse Picard, Editor, 82, rue Bonaparte, 1892

Translation and additional annotation by

REV. EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M., Ph.D.

BIO

REV. EDWARD R. UDOVIC, C.M., Ph.D., is a Vincentian priest from the Western Province of the Congregation of the Mission. Ordained in 1984, he has a doctorate in Church History from the Catholic University of America. Retired in 2019, Rev. Udovic formerly served as the Secretary and Vice President for Mission and Ministry at DePaul University in Chicago. He also served as a professor in the Department of History. Rev. Udovic has written extensively in the area of Vincentian history. His most recent monograph, *Henri de Maupas du Tour: The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul, 23 November 1660*, was published in 2015. Rev. Udovic has also given presentations throughout the United States and internationally on Vincentian history, spirituality, and leadership.

Note: For more information on Armand Gasté (1838–1902) see: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armand_Gasté. Gasté's original footnotes will be inserted in red in the text that follows. For background information on Bossuet's life, career, and relationship with Vincent de Paul, see Edward R. Udovic, C.M., "On the Eminent Dignity of the Poor in the Church: A Sermon by Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet," *Vincentian Heritage* 13:1 (1992), 37–45, at: <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol13/iss1/3/>

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***Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux.
Engraving by Pierre-Imbert Drevet after Hyacinthe Rigaud. 1723.
Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.***

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The Bossuet manuscript I am publishing (*Testimony of Bossuet Relative to Monsieur Vincent de Paul*, 1702) was part of a bound folio volume entitled *Diverse Manuscripts* labeled B/165. Before the unfortunate events of 1871, this document was located at the *Bibliothèque particulière* of the king at the Louvre Palace.¹ The fire started by the communards destroyed this important manuscript along with a great number of other historic documents. Fortunately, the conscientious historian of Bossuet Amable-Pierre Floquet had made an exact copy. Undoubtedly, he would have published it in the last volume of his *Studies on the Life of Bossuet to 1702*.² Unfortunately, death interrupted the work of this indefatigable researcher.³

In 1890, when Monsieur Floquet's estate dispersed his library and papers, I had the good fortune to acquire some autograph pages from his planned work on Bossuet. Included among these was this great bishop's *Testimony* regarding the holy priest whom he so rightly described as being "Providence's steward."

In his *Studies on the Life of Bossuet*, Floquet alluded to the existence of this unpublished *Testimony* and quoted two important passages. For example, he noted Bossuet's comment that "he had been very fortunate during the last six years of M. Vincent's life to have been a member of the Tuesday Conferences."⁴ This would establish a date of around

1 Following France's swift and humiliating defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870, a bitter and bloody civil war broke out in Paris from 18 March to 28 May 1871. Both sides of the conflict committed atrocities, and fierce fighting took place at the barricades and in the city streets. Large swaths of the city lay in ruins at the conclusion of the conflict.

2 Amable-Pierre, Floquet, *Études sur la vie de Bossuet jusqu'à son entrée en fonctions, en qualité de précepteur du dauphin (1627–1670)*, 3 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1855).

3 Floquet died on 3 August 1881.

4 Floquet, *Études*, 1:397.

1654 for Bossuet's admittance.⁵ The bishop also testified his admission "into this honorable society brought him much happiness and spiritual enlightenment."⁶

We also learn from this manuscript that after the death of Vincent de Paul in September 1660, Bossuet attended the service held on 23 November in memory of this "good priest." Bossuet noted the funeral oration had been delivered by another distinguished ecclesiastic belonging to the Tuesday Conferences, Henri de Maupas du Tour, the bishop of Puy. Monsieur Floquet quoted a lengthy passage concerning this event from Bossuet's unpublished *Testimony*. Bossuet recalled, "The service was magnificent. The funeral oration delivered by Monseigneur the bishop of Puy lasted two hours. The personal knowledge the bishop of Puy had of the servant of God, combined with his own illustrious reputation, attracted a large and celebrated audience that day, all of whom listened with extraordinary attention. His discourse caused many who were present to be moved to tears, especially when he spoke about the profound humility and the incomparable charity toward the poor characteristic of this venerable servant of God."⁷

It is unclear whether Bossuet ever sent this *Testimony* to Rome. (The document is undated, and is not countersigned by his secretary.)⁸ To research this point further, I wrote to the eminent director of the French School in Rome. I previously had the pleasure of attending his brilliant lectures at the *École Normale Supérieure*.⁹ With his usual kindness, which I will never be able to repay, Monsieur Geffroy put me in touch with the Procurator General of the Lazarists in Rome¹⁰ who volunteered to undertake the necessary long and patient research in the Archives of the Congregation of Rites.¹¹ This research, I must note, has to date been fruitless.¹² However, the absence of this document from Saint Vincent de

5 Michel-Ulysse Maynard, *Saint Vincent de Paul: sa vie, sons temps, son influence*, 4 vols. (Paris: A. Bray, 1860) 2:44ff.

6 Op cit., 1:397.

7 "Ms. *Témoignage de Bossuet (en 1702) sur la vie et les vertus éminentes de Vincent de Paul*." See note in Floquet, *Études*, 2:20. See also Maynard, *Saint Vincent de Paul*, 4:334, citing the same quotation from the *Témoignage* reinforcing the conclusion that the document is authentic.

8 The author here betrays a lack of knowledge of the canonization process. Bossuet would not have sent his testimony directly to the Holy See. The Lazarist postulator of the cause would have included it together with several hundred other sworn statements and letters of support.

9 Founded in 1794 and later reorganized by Napoleon, the *École Normale Supérieure* is an elite educational institution (grande école), originally conceived as a training ground at the service of the Republic for a new generation of professors grounded in secular values and in the critical scholarship standards developed in the nineteenth century. In 1847, it moved to its present location on the rue d'Ulm near the Pantheon in Paris.

10 At this time, the Lazarist headquarters was in Paris. The superior general would typically appoint an Italian confrere to represent him and undertake the Congregation's day-to-day relations with the Holy See and the Roman Curia. This official's title was Procurator General to the Holy See. It is strange that Gasté apparently did not attempt to search the Lazarist archives at the maison-mère in Paris.

11 Mathieu-Auguste Geffroy (1820–1895).

12 It is clear that the author had no real conception of the details surrounding the process and timeline for Vincent's canonization cause. For these details see Pierre Coste, C.M., *The Life and Works of Saint Vincent de Paul*, 3 vols. English edition, (New York: New City Press, 1987), 3:401–32. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_engbio/



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Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet.
Oil on canvas. 1698.
Uffizi Museum, Florence, Italy.

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Paul's dossier does not cast doubt upon its authenticity. Bossuet died in 1704, two years after having written or dictated his *Testimony*. The Reverend Noël Barbagli, C.M.,¹³ believes this manuscript is not in the "Acts" of the Congregation of Rites because the bishop of Meaux had already been dead for some years¹⁴ when the cause for Vincent de Paul's beatification¹⁵ opened in Rome in 1713.¹⁶

The document I am publishing bears all the signs of being authentic. Monsieur Floquet would never have published passages from this source if he had any doubts as to its authenticity. However, before publishing this document, I also asked the opinion of the learned historian who is the author of the *Predication de Bossuet*. Here is the response of Monsieur l'abbé Joseph Lebarq, an expert on Bossuet manuscripts: "Even though you have not been able to find any evidence in Rome, this has done nothing to change my conviction about the document's authenticity. One could not forge a document of such an exceptional nature. A forgery could not match the genuine simplicity of this manuscript that is apparent from beginning to end."¹⁷

13 Noël (Natale) Barbagli, C.M., (1859–1931). In 1697, the general assembly of the Congregation of the Mission authorized the beginning of the official preparations for their founder's canonization, including interviews with those who had known Vincent de Paul in their youth. By the time of the opening of the Roman phases of the cause, all of these witnesses had died. Their sworn testimonies entered into the record of the process. Thus, it was irrelevant if the author of a sworn testimony was deceased when the cause began in Rome.

14 **Letter of 10 November 1891.**

15 **The Holy See issued the bull for Vincent de Paul's beatification on 13 August 1729.**

16 **In his letter of 11 January 1891, Monsieur l'abbé Lebarq wrote: "Since this document would have needed government approval, I wonder if perhaps it was lost in some office, or was held up by Gallican sensibilities. Regardless, it still represents the genuine testimony of Bossuet and it should be published."** Translator's note: Both Louis XIV and Louis XV supported the canonization of Vincent de Paul with the weight of royal authority. Bossuet's testimony followed the standard template and format prescribed by the Congregation of Rites.

17 **Letter of 11 June 1891.**

One last word before completing this introduction. I would have preferred that Monsieur l'abbé Joseph Lebarq publish this document, since Monsieur Floquet had given him a copy and authorized him to publish it.¹⁸ However, in a letter M. l'abbé Lebarq wrote to me on 18 April 1891, he noted, "I am in the middle of the *Œuvres oratoires de Bossuet*, and this work must now command my full attention."¹⁹ Therefore, it now is up to me to have the honor of publishing the *Testimony* of Bossuet relative to Monsieur Vincent de Paul, using the copy made by Monsieur Floquet at the Bibliothèque du Louvre.

Bossuet
Testimony²⁰
Concerning Monsieur Vincent de Paul
(1702)²¹

Jacques-Bénigne, by the grace of God and of the Holy Apostolic See, bishop of Meaux, councilor of the king in his Council of State, formerly tutor to Monseigneur the Dauphin,²² and first chaplain to Madame the Duchess of Bourgogne,²³ aged seventy-four years.

It is for God's glory and the Church's edification that we attest,²⁴ to the best of our ability, to the following truths with respect to the venerable servant of God, Monsieur Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission. During the last six years of his life, we had the consolation of witnessing with our own eyes the actions of this apostolic man. We heard with our own ears the life-giving words he spoke. This took place after the company of ecclesiastics who assembled for the Tuesday Conferences admitted us to its membership.²⁵ A large number of prelates and doctors belonged to this

18 Abbé Joseph Lebarq, *Histoire critique de la Prédication de Bossuet*, 1re et 2me éd. (Paris: Société de Saint Augustin, 1888), 151, note 2.

19 Joseph Lebarq, *Œuvres oratoires de Bossuet*, 7 vols. (Paris: Desclée et Brouwer et cie, 1890–1897).

20 Translator's note: Bossuet penned his "testimony" more than forty years after the death of Vincent de Paul. Bossuet's memories of his mentor were vivid but limited. Here and there in his testimony, Bossuet shares unique details. Since Bossuet had to follow the template for such testimony set out by the canonization process, he often consulted the Abelly biography to refresh his memory. In these instances, his testimony is heartfelt but still rather perfunctory and flat. As a whole, his testimony is worth examining because of his prominence in the French Church, his personal knowledge of Vincent, and as an example of similar testimonies collected after 1697 from the remaining and shrinking group of witnesses who encountered Vincent de Paul in their youth.

21 *Biblioth. part. Du Roi (au Louvre), un volume in-f° relié, intitulé: Pièces diverses. Coté B/165.*

22 Louis the so-called Grand Dauphin, the son and heir of Louis XIV, (1661–1711).

23 The Grand Dauphin's wife, Marie-Adélaïde de Savoy (1685–1712).

24 On 2 August 1702, Bossuet sent the following letter to Pope Clement XII. It is not much different from the text we are publishing. See Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Œuvres complètes de Bossuet*, ed. François Lachat, 31 vols. (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1862–1866), 2:275.

25 For more information on the Tuesday Conferences see Coste, *Life*, 1:118–49.

group. All of us found his conduct edifying and felt deeply moved by the example he gave us of his love of God and his zeal for the salvation of souls. We regard him as a saint who practiced in a heroic degree all of the Christian and priestly virtues.²⁶ The late Monseigneur Louis Abelly, the bishop of Rodez, who belonged to the same Tuesday Conferences, has given a full account of all this in the biography he wrote of the venerable servant of God.²⁷ In addition, Monseigneur Henri de Maupas du Tour, the bishop of Puy, who was also a member of this company, gave the same testimony in his *Funeral Oration*, which we heard him deliver on 23 November 1660 in the Church of Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois, and which he later published. We were a witness to many of the events mentioned in this *Funeral Oration*, as well as in the aforementioned biography or *Life*.

To sum up, we can say God gifted the late Monsieur Vincent with an excellent and pure faith that he put into practice his entire life. He used all of his strength to spread this faith through the example of his own actions,²⁸ by his many acts of charity, and by the compassion he always showed in raising up all those who had fallen or who had experienced any of life's misfortunes.²⁹ He founded the Congregation of the Mission in this same spirit to instruct the ignorant, convince unbelievers, and gain them for God.³⁰

We testify that the servant of God firmly believed all the truths of the faith, and he demonstrated a marvelous care to teach this faith to others.³¹ He urged the ecclesiastics of

26 Maupas du Tour, for his part, said something very similar: "To have observed the gestures, speech, room, food, clothing, and everything else that surrounded the eminent Vincent de Paul (who called himself a beggar, whom I esteem as a saint and whom you have so often admired), was to have encountered an example of perfect humility." See Edward R. Udovic, C.M., *Henri de Maupas du Tour: The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul, 23 November 1660* (Chicago: Vincentian Studies Institute, 2015), 93. Book is available free to download here: [Maupas du Tour: The Funeral Oration for Vincent de Paul](#).

27 Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God Vincent de Paul*, ed. John E. Rybolt, C.M., trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1993). Hereinafter cited as Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*. For more information on Abelly and his biography see in the above the essay by John E. Rybolt, C.M., "Louis Abelly his Life and Works," 1:9–16. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/abelly_english/

28 Abelly quotes Vincent as saying: "Let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be in the strength of our arms and in the sweat of our brows. Sentiments of love of God, of kindness, of good will, good as these may be, are often suspect if they do not result in good deeds." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:106. See also Pierre Coste, C.M., *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and translated by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et. al., 14 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1985–2014), 11:32–33. Hereinafter cited as CCD. See: https://via.library.depaul.edu/coste_en/

29 Maupas du Tour put it this way: "Here Messieurs, is the example of a charitable heart dedicated in the highest degree to a perfect charity (and prodigious generosity) toward the neighbor in imitation of the heart of God, which is to say that he embraced everyone and refused no one." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 113.

30 Urban VIII approved the Congregation of the Mission on 12 January 1633 in the bull *Salvatoris Nostri*. Speaking of the members of the Congregation, the pontiff noted, "In those places to which they are sent, (the underserved countryside) they teach the uninstructed the commandments of God and the rudiments of Catholic doctrine, hear general confessions, administer the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, preach simple sermons that are easily understood by the people, and teach catechism." See Document 84a, "*Salvatoris Nostri*, Bull of Erection of the Congregation of the Mission" (12 January 1633), CCD, 13a:299.

31 For a discussion of Vincent's faith see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:15–20.



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***Vincent de Paul, seated, speaking to the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences.
Framed oil on canvas; original in Collegio Leoniano, Rome, Italy.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

his congregation and of the Tuesday Conferences to teach people the sacred mysteries with a great simplicity.³² He gave us an example himself by preaching simply but always with great force, using examples he took from Sacred Scripture which he knew so well.³³ We testify he had such an esteem for this virtue that he always said he feared the emergence of a new heresy that might cause him to fall into error.³⁴ In order to avoid this fate, he had recourse to prayer, and he wrote the profession of faith on a piece of paper he kept close to his heart. He promised God that whenever he might feel these temptations, he would renew his faith by the simple act of placing his hand over his heart.³⁵

32 For Vincent's approach to simplicity in preaching see for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:219–21. For Vincent's own in-depth commentary on this topic, see Conference 134, "Method to be Followed in Preaching," 20 August 1655, *CCD*, 11:237–60.

33 On this topic, Maupas du Tour noted, "He rescued many people from a most profound ignorance of the mysteries of our faith. He taught many worthy ecclesiastics and great religious how to teach the faithful effectively. He wanted them to preach and administer the sacraments in a simple and familiar, yet strong and powerful manner that would be respectful of the Word of God." See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 124.

34 Abelly quotes Vincent in this way: "All my life I've been afraid of finding myself at the start of some heresy. I saw the great havoc wrought by that of Luther and Calvin and how many persons of all kinds and conditions had sucked in its poisonous venom by wanting to taste the false sweetness of their so-called Reformation. I have always been afraid of finding myself enveloped in the errors of some new doctrine before realizing it. Yes, I've feared that all my life." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:346.

35 See *ibid.*, 3:15: "One of his most extreme remedies against temptations against faith was to write out and sign a profession of faith, and to carry this over his heart. He begged our Lord to accept his gesture, so that every time he was tempted he placed his hand over his heart, as a sign that he rejected the temptation, and that he was once again resolved to live until his least breath in the faith of the Church and to believe firmly all the truths that she taught."

We testify that he strenuously opposed the followers of Jansenius (the bishop of Ypres),³⁶ who tried to win him over to their opinions.³⁷ When they persisted in their efforts, despite his negative response, he kept silent, raising his heart toward God as he quietly recited the Apostles' Creed. He firmly believed his faith was the faith of the Holy See, for which he had an inviolable devotion.³⁸ We testify that he inspired the same spirit among his followers and among the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences urging them to avoid even having conversations with these sorts of persons.³⁹ He also strengthened his listeners by exhorting them to preserve their faith and their submission to the Holy See, asserting this was the only means to preserve themselves from error.⁴⁰ When he saw some of his followers adopting these new opinions, he dismissed them from his congregation.⁴¹ He used

36 For Abelly's account of "The Efforts of Monsieur Vincent to combat Jansenism," see *ibid.*, 3:346–71. For Maupas du Tour's discussion of this issue see Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 125–27. See also Pierre Coste's lengthy treatment in *Life*, 3:113–81.

37 Abelly gives this account: "A person given to Jansenism once spoke to him in an effort to persuade him to come over to that party. When he finished speaking, but with little to show for his efforts, he became angry. He reproached Monsieur Vincent, saying that he was a true ignoramus, and he was astonished that his congregation would tolerate him as superior general. Monsieur Vincent replied that he himself was astonished at the same thing, because, he said, "I am even more ignorant than you know." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:185–86.

38 Maupas du Tour says the following with respect to Monsieur's Vincent respect for the Holy See: "Didn't he also have respect for the authority of our holy Father? ... He always submitted himself in perfect obedience to the orders of the Holy See. He recognized with a sincere submission of spirit the authority of the Vicar of Jesus Christ in the person of him who is the successor of Saint Peter." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 126.

39 For a succinct summary of Vincent's views on Jansenism see Letter 1043, "To Jean Dehorgny, in Rome," 25 June 1648, *CCD*, 3:318–30. See also Document 48, "Study on Grace," n.d., *ibid.*, 13a:164–72.

40 For example, Vincent wrote: "By the mercy of God, our Company is resisting all the new opinions and ... I am doing what I can against them, especially with regard to all those contrary to the authority of the common Father of all Christians." Letter 704, "To Bernard Codoing, Superior in Rome," 16 March 1644, *ibid.*, 2:500.

41 Vincent had forbidden the discussion of this controversy within the community. He certainly silenced and punished at least two members for violating this rule, although it is unclear whether they violated the proscription by arguing for or against Jansenism. See Letter 1482, "Vincent de Paul to Lambert aux Couteaux, Superior, in Warsaw," 12 April 1652, *ibid.*, 4:352–53. According to Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:367:

As charity demanded, he used his energy to keep the members of his own Congregation in the purity of the faith and the doctrine of the Church. He spoke several times to his community to impress upon them how much they were obliged to the goodness of God for having preserved them from these novelties, which were capable of corrupting and ruining their Congregation. He recommended that they pray for the peace of the Church, for the removal of these new errors, and for the conversion of those infected. He forbade them to read the books of Jansenius or to support either directly or indirectly their doctrine, nor any of the opinions likely to favor them. After all this, if he knew of anyone who belonged to the sect in any manner whatsoever, he removed him from the community as a gangrenous member, one likely to infect and corrupt the rest of the body.

Brother Robineau notes: "Not only did Monsieur Vincent not let himself be drawn into Jansenius' unfortunate five propositions condemned by the Holy See but also he never permitted anyone who might be tainted with them to remain in his Company. He offered such men two options: either renounce these opinions, or leave his Company. The proof of this is a certain very capable young man, who, as I learned in these past years, was never able to decide to abandon these opinions, despite all Monsieur Vincent's urging. Finally, Monsieur Vincent had to send him away and dismiss him from the Company." See the draft unpublished English translation, "Notebooks of Brother Louis Robineau: Notes concerning the actions and words of the late Monsieur Vincent de Paul our Most Honored Father and Founder," trans. John E. Rybolt, C.M., originally published as *Louis Robineau, André Dodin, C.M., présente Louis Robineau. Monsieur Vincent: Raconté par son secrétaire; Remarques sur les actes et paroles de feu Monsieur Vincent de Paul, notre Très Honoré Père et Fondateur* (Paris: O.E.I.L., 1991), 94. Hereafter the English translation is cited as *Robineau*. Citations to manuscript texts in the draft English translation maintain the same numbering as in the Dodin edition.

the same diligence with respect to religious. He urged them not to have contact with persons who were suspected of holding erroneous opinions, and not to read any books containing suspect teaching.⁴²

We testify that he worked zealously to convince the bishops of France to submit the disputed propositions to the Holy See, so it would judge these opinions and use its authority to quiet the controversy.⁴³

We testify that he also used all his influence to convince the king to take strong actions against heretics, and to prevent them from holding public office.⁴⁴ We ourselves heard this message from this holy man, when we were the dean of the cathedral of Metz. In this city, many heretics had abused the liberty of conscience the king had granted them by his grace.⁴⁵

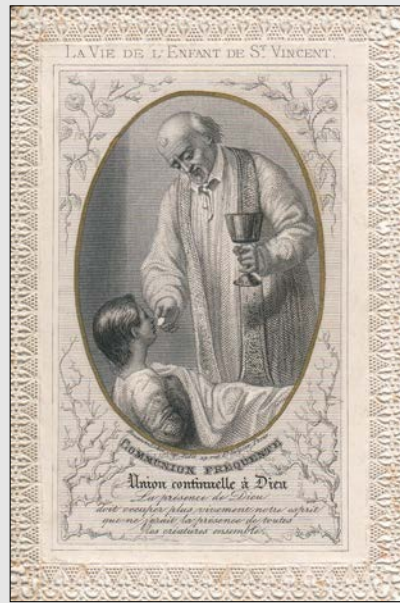
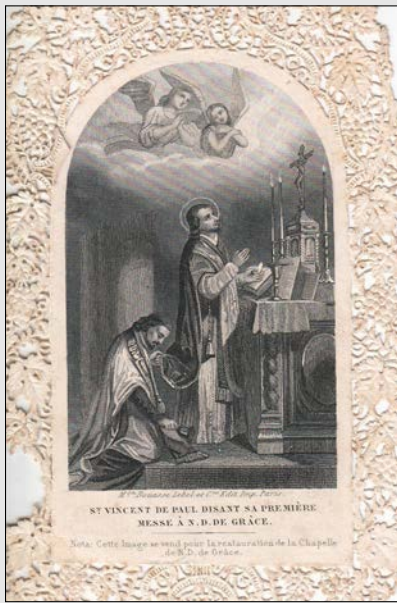
We testify that Monsieur Vincent was zealous and took great care to maintain

42 Abelly has this to say: "His vigilance and charity extended to other sectors of the Church which he saw needed help or at least warning against these new errors. He was aware that those who were of this mind would try to insinuate themselves and their doctrines into monasteries and communities of women under the guise of the greater good. He knew also that these false prophets (as Jesus Christ warned us in the Gospel) would use every artifice to disguise their pernicious doctrines. Consequently, he did his utmost to protect these religious men and women. He saw to it that these wolves in sheep's clothing would make no inroads into this privileged portion of the flock of Jesus Christ. He forbade them to have any access to the monasteries or convents, especially those under his direct care." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:222.

43 For Abelly's account of Vincent's efforts with the French bishops see *ibid.*, 3:353–61. See also Vincent's letter 1320, "To Some French Bishops," February 1651, *CCD*, 4:156–57.

44 According to Abelly: "Since this false doctrine influenced many to follow these novelties, and since Monsieur Vincent had been invited into the queen's council from the very beginning of the regency, he explained to Her Majesty and to Cardinal Mazarin the importance to religion and to the state of not offering benefices or positions to any suspected of these novelties. Knowing that the professorships and pulpits were the sources from which saving waters of doctrine and morality were drawn, he did all in his power to assure that those appointed were well grounded in the common teachings of the Church. He had prayers offered for this intention, and used other means for this purpose as his charity dictated." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:353.

45 Here Bossuet is referring to contemporary controversies in Metz. Local Huguenots were appealing to the queen in defense of their liberties guaranteed by the Edict of Nantes. Bossuet wrote to Vincent de Paul on 1 February 1658, giving him the details of these situations and asking him to use his influence at court: "I am not telling you now, Monsieur, what you have to do in this matter; it is enough for you to be aware of it. God will inspire you for the rest." Vincent's intervention was successful and a month later Bossuet wrote to Vincent: "My most humble thanks to you for your charity in informing the Queen of the affair about which I had the honor of writing you. From the letters Her Majesty has had written about it in this area, I see that your recommendation was most effective." See Letter 2526, "Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet to Saint Vincent," 1 February 1658, *CCD*, 7:85–86; and Letter 2544, "Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet to Saint Vincent," 2 March 1658, *ibid.*, 7:112.



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Holy cards which read: “Vincent celebrates his first mass at Notre Dame de Grace, near Buzet”; and “Frequent communion. Continual union with God. The presence of God should more completely occupy our spirit than the presence of all creatures together.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

ecclesiastical discipline, especially the prescriptions ordained by the Council of Trent.⁴⁶ We testify that the grandeur of his faith in God was evident in his words and his actions.⁴⁷ He had a great faith and devotion toward the most holy sacrament of our altars,⁴⁸ the Holy Virgin Mother of God, and the other saints.⁴⁹ He celebrated Holy Mass nearly every day. If he could not celebrate it, he attended and took communion.⁵⁰

46 According to Abelly: “Monsieur Vincent’s zeal moved him to work for the revival of the priestly spirit among the clergy. He instituted the ordination retreats, the clergy conferences and retreats to further this ideal. Although all these were helpful, they still did not bring about in the clergy all the change desirable. He felt the remedy must go to the source of the clerical state, to the formation of young men, who showed signs of a true vocation, in the seminaries envisioned by the holy Council of Trent.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:164. Also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 124 (“A pious and holy work.”): “In establishing Seminaries to form a clergy capable of carrying the weight and dignity of their sacred ministry, he participated in this great work that the holy Council of Trent called “*Opus... tam pium, et tam sanctum*.”

47 Abelly notes: “... his main and nearly universal method was to conform himself entirely to the example of Jesus Christ. He knew very well that he could not walk nor lead others on a surer path than that traveled by the Word and Wisdom of God. He had engraved his words and actions upon his own mind, modeling himself in all he did and said upon the prototype of all virtue and sanctity.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:293.

48 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:77–78.

49 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:92–96.

50 *Ibid.*, 1:39; 1:243; 3:75–78.

To overcome temptations against the faith, he counselled others to follow his practice of doing the opposite of what the temptation suggested, and to practice the virtues supporting the belief contrary to these temptations.⁵¹

We testify that he had a singular respect for Holy Scripture, and he read it with great devotion.⁵² He established the rule for his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences of reading a chapter of the New Testament daily, kneeling in devotion, with their heads uncovered.⁵³ He taught them to adore the truths contained in what they were reading, and to enter into the spirit behind these truths to practice what they taught.⁵⁴

The above comments, with respect to the faith of the servant of God, are well known and attested to publicly by everyone.

It was evident in his words and in his actions that Monsieur Vincent possessed the gift of the firm hope of one day possessing the glory of Paradise. He hoped to obtain from God all the means that would lead him to this destination.⁵⁵

We testify that he undertook many great works in God's service, but only after he had discerned it was the will of the Divine Majesty that he should undertake them.⁵⁶ He never felt overwhelmed by any difficulties he encountered. He believed that Divine Providence would provide him with everything he needed, if he submitted to its guidance.⁵⁷

51 *Ibid.*, 3:115:

...he had recourse to two remedies. The first was to write out a profession of faith which he placed over his heart as an antidote to his trials. He specifically repudiated any thoughts contrary to faith, and entered into a sort of pact with the Savior that every time he placed his hand over his heart and upon this paper, as he often did, he intended by the gesture to renounce temptation, all without saying a single word. At the same time, he raised his mind to God and easily diverted it from the thoughts troubling him. In this way, he confounded the devil without directly confronting him. The second remedy he used was to do the exact opposite of what the tempter suggested, striving to act by faith in rendering honor and service to Jesus Christ.

52 See for example, "His talks were founded on principles derived from Holy Scripture, particularly the examples and words of the Son of God found in the Gospels, whose intent he penetrated in a way all his own." *Ibid.*, 2:213. See also Warren Dicharry, C.M., "Saint Vincent and Sacred Scripture," *Vincentian Heritage* vol. 10, no. 2 (1989): 136–48. Also, André Dodin, C.M., "M. Vincent de Paul et la Bible," under the direction of Jean-Robert Armogathe, *Le Grand Siècle et la Bible. La Collection Bible de Tous les Temps*, 8 vols. (Paris: Éditions Beauchesne, 1989), 6:627–42.

53 See Document 35, "Regulations for the Members of the Tuesday Conferences," n.d., *CCD*, 13a:141.

54 See chapter 10 of the Common Rules: "The priests and all the students are to read a chapter of the New Testament, reverencing this book as the norm of Christian holiness. For greater benefit this reading should be done kneeling, with head uncovered, and praying, at least at the end, on these three themes: (1) reverence for the truths contained in the chapter; (2) desire to have the same spirit in which Christ or the saints taught them; (3) determination to put into practice the advice or commands contained in it, as well as the examples of virtues." Document 117a, "Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission," (17 May 1658), *ibid.*, 13a:457.

55 For example, "He often spoke to his confreres about death as a salutary thought, and exhorted them to prepare for it by their good deeds. He assured them that this was the best and surest means to ensure a happy death. He wanted this thought of death to be joined to a great confidence in the goodness of God, far from any anxiety or worry." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:258.

56 Maupas du Tour noted, "What can you say about a man who ... decided nothing without consulting the will of God, and who accepted no work without an extraordinary indication from the Spirit of God?" Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 131.

57 See Abelly throughout, for example: "His spiritual viewpoint was that we must never anticipate divine Providence. He had a most sensitive conscience on this point. He was convinced that God could accomplish what he wished just as well with him as without him. What God does of his own accord is done better and with greater assurance." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:102. See also the quote in footnote 64.

We know the expenses of his charitable works were so great they often left his own house of Saint-Lazare with no money to take care of its needs.⁵⁸ This servant of God, far from being upset by this situation, thanked God for this opportunity and used it to increase his confidence in Our Lord Jesus Christ, knowing he would lack for nothing. He stated over, and over again, that his congregation had more to fear from riches than it did from poverty.⁵⁹

We testify that the servant of God told his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to possess a perfect abandonment to God's Providence, no matter what the circumstances. They were to exercise a continual recourse to His Divine Majesty to receive direction about what path they must take.⁶⁰ In this regard, he gave them his own example of never undertaking anything without seeking God's guidance and wanting in all things to follow only His directions.⁶¹

We testify that he was not at all bothered when he found himself in the face of adversity, nor was he led to doubt, nor did he allow himself to become upset or sad.⁶² Rather, he remained steadfast, believing the scriptural maxim of Our Lord that "those who hope in me will never be disappointed."⁶³

We testify that this servant of God undertook great works seemingly without any difficulty.⁶⁴ He regarded these tasks as being light to bear when compared to the reward he

58 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 111–12. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:188.

59 See for example, Letter 718, "To Bernard Codoing, in Rome," 29 July 1644, *CCD*, 2:517–19; Conference 148, "Repetition of Prayer," 16 March 1656, *ibid.* 11:297.

60 See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:25: "Monsieur Vincent's confidence in God was great in the pressing needs which he and his community experienced, it was no less firm in the reverses, difficulties, and other annoying and threatening things that happened to him. It was noticed that no matter what occurred, or in what difficulties he found himself, he was never beaten down or discouraged, but was always full of trust in God. He enjoyed a constant evenness of spirit and a perfect abandonment to his divine Providence."

61 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, *CCD*, and Udovic, *Maupas du Tour* throughout.

62 For example, "Whatever God does, He does for the best; therefore, we must hope that this loss will be to our advantage, since it comes from God. All things work together for the good of the just, and we have the assurance that when adversities are received from the hand of God, they are converted into joy and blessings." Letter 2653, "To the Community of Saint-Lazare," [September 1658], *CCD*, 7:265–66.

63 Isaiah 49:23.

64 Maupas du Tour noted in this vein:

"I know it is easy to be astonished by the success of all the activities he undertook in ways that were so totally contrary to the means which ordinarily would have been suggested by mere human prudence. This great success came about because he carefully worked to strip himself of his human spirit, and to search for guidance only from the inspirations provided by God's spirit. God, for his part, draws near to those who search for him and he fills them with the light of his wisdom. He then brings about favorable conclusions to even the most difficult affairs having but the gloomiest prospects of success, which would ordinarily make even the most prudent spirits grow faint." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100.



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“If the love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame; if it is a sun, zeal is a ray. Zeal is what is purest in the love for God.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

expected to receive in heaven.⁶⁵ The above comments with respect to the hope of the servant of God are well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.⁶⁶

Monsieur Vincent loved God and His goodness with all of his heart and soul. He sought to please and glorify Him in all his actions. One could hear in his holy conferences, and see in his virtuous actions, a constant reminder of his love of these divine perfections.⁶⁷

We testify that he also was very exact in his observance of all of God’s and the Church’s commandments, and in his charity gave everyone a model of perfect obedience.⁶⁸

We testify that he possessed a very pure soul and an admirable uprightness of heart, and everyone with whom he conversed never observed the least evidence of any considerable sin in his words or actions.⁶⁹

65 For example, Vincent de Paul commented: “So then, my dear confreres, poor persons are our portion, the poor; *pauperibus evangelizare misit me*. What happiness, Messieurs, what happiness! To do what Our Lord came from heaven to earth to do, and by means of which we’ll go from earth to heaven to continue the work of God” Conference 180, “Observance of the Rule,” 17 May 1658, *CCD*, 12:4.

66 For Vincent de Paul’s comments on hope, see for example, Conference 97, “Trust in Divine Providence (Common Rules, Art. 41),” 9 June 1658, *ibid.*, 10:403, or this passage from Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:33: “We have the seed of the all-powerful God within us. This should be the source of our hope, encouraging us to place all our confidence in him, despite our own poverty.”

67 According to Vincent de Paul: “Now, we must never love anything but God or, if we do, it must be for the love of God; and it’s not lawful to love anything but God or for God.” Conference 199, “Conformity to the Will of God. Common Rules, (Chap. 2, Art. 3),” 7 March 1659, *CCD*, 12:129. For a discussion of Vincent de Paul’s love of God, see also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:37–39.

68 According to Vincent de Paul: “We must do God’s Will in its entirety by observing God’s Commandments and those of Holy Church, obeying our Superiors, observing our Regulations, and preserving uniformity.” Conference 2, “On the Vocation of a Daughter of Charity,” 5 July 1640, *CCD*, 9:14.

69 Abelly notes in his dedication of his biography to the queen mother: “The innocence and sanctity of him whose life we write, Madame, assure us that he is in heaven with his God.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:23. At Vincent’s death, one of his confessors noted: “I had the consolation of serving as his confessor while I was in Paris. I was able to see at first hand the sanctity and purity of his soul, which could not entertain even the appearance of sin.” *Ibid.*, 3:75.

We testify that he was not content just to reject all love contrary to charity. He went beyond this in all things to love nothing that was not of God, for the love of God.

We testify that his zeal for the salvation of souls, and for God's glory was ardent.⁷⁰ He always wished, above all, never to offend God in any way. He avoided this with all his strength, and he tried to remedy any such offenses by any means available to him.⁷¹

We testify that he undertook great works in God's service, and in carrying out God's will.⁷² He always possessed a heartfelt desire to undertake even greater things for God's glory, saying, "O Lord, when will I give all to you, and when will I love nothing else but you?"⁷³

When he judged that one of his followers had done something solely out of human motives, the servant of God would tell him that it would be better to be burned alive than to try in any way to do something just to please men.⁷⁴ He held himself at a great distance from the world and its pomp.⁷⁵ He had no esteem for wealth except in the sense he knew he could use it well to serve the poor.⁷⁶ He paid no attention either to praise, or to criticism.⁷⁷

We testify that he took every opportunity to elevate his soul to God and remain united with Him. This was the source of the equanimity of spirit characterizing his conduct and his great desire to accomplish God's will in all things. We heard him speak of this often. His words came from the abundance of what filled his heart.

70 In his introduction to Abelly's biography, Henri de Maupas du Tour noted: "The Sovereign Pastor who watches over his Church has raised up for us in the person of Monsieur Vincent a faithful servant, filled with zeal for his glory and burning with love for the salvation of souls. We have only to read this story of his life, written by the bishop of Rodez, to be convinced of this." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:26–27.

71 As Abelly notes: "To speak more specifically, the zeal of this great servant of God made him feel very keenly the offenses committed against the divine majesty. We cannot adequately express how much he was moved by this, or what efforts he made to prevent these offenses, and what penances he did as reparation for the sins committed." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:97.

72 As Maupas du Tour noted, "For this was a man who had no other support for his cares, his conduct, and for all of the great works of God's Providence that were confided to him than the pure teachings of the Gospel which are incapable of either being evaded or defeated, by any earthly Crown or Empire." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100.

73 This quotation attributed by Bossuet to Vincent de Paul appears nowhere else.

74 Vincent was quoted as saying: "So you see that everything we do or suffer, if we don't do it or suffer it for love of God, is useless for us; even should we be burned alive or give all our possessions to the poor, says Saint Paul, if we don't have charity and don't do or suffer for love of God, then all that is useless for us." Conference 176, "Repetition of Prayer," 11 November 1657, *CCD*, 11:385.

75 According to Abelly, Vincent de Paul had a "great and perfect detachment from the things of this world...." Abelly also writes, "he therefore closed his eyes to all natural influences, to all worldly prospects, so that he could give himself more perfectly to God." See *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:37 and 63.

76 As Abelly noted: "All this did not hinder him from being prodigal when it was a question of doing something for the glory of God or for the salvation of souls. In these cases, he spared nothing. Money was of no significance for him. He even went deeply into debt when he found it necessary to do so for the interests of the service of God, or for the spiritual good of the neighbor." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:244.

77 See this passage for example: "Sisters: in serving the sick, you must have God alone in view. What a great thing that is—to have God alone in view in all that we do. Some praise you. Others despise you. In all these circumstances pay no attention either to praise or blame; have God alone in view. If you're praised, say, 'My God, I'm not the one doing this; You are'; humble yourselves interiorly and accept insults when they're given to you, considering the disgrace heaped on the Son of God and seeing how He acted." Conference 114, "Rules for the Sisters in Parishes. (Arts. 6–11)," 11 November 1659, *CCD*, 10:541.

Once, when six of his best missionaries in Genoa died serving the plague-stricken, he shared this news with his community. He urged them to place their confidence in Divine Providence and to believe this loss would somehow be a gain.⁷⁸ He said the same thing when he learned of the shipwreck and loss of those whom he had sent to Madagascar, and on many other occasions.⁷⁹

We testify that Monsieur Vincent's words were so forceful that he touched the hearts of all those who listened to him, enkindling within them the fire of divine love. We experienced this in his spiritual conferences where his listeners felt a singular pleasure in hearing him speak of God. They feared forgetting his words.⁸⁰ To avoid this, some of them would write down what he said.⁸¹ There are many examples of great sinners converted by his preaching.⁸²

We testify above all that he urged his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to exercise a love that was both practical and effective. He assured them it was through these holy works that one publicly testified to one's faith.⁸³

The above with respect to the charity of the servant of God is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.⁸⁴

In his zeal, this servant of God always testified to his willingness even to lose his life in order to procure God's glory.⁸⁵ In addition, he also taught this to his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences. He said that, despite his advanced age, he possessed the desire to travel as far as the Indies and willingly die there as a martyr, thus honoring God and his holy faith.⁸⁶

78 See Conference 174, "Repetition of Prayer," 23 September 1657, *ibid.*, 11:378–81.

79 See for example, Letter 2366, "To Étienne Blatiron, Superior, Rome," 7 September 1657, *ibid.*, 6:462–63.

80 Maupas du Tour describes the impact of Vincent de Paul's preaching in this way: "Oh what a beautiful sight! The conversion of sinners gives birth to the joy of the Angels. You have seen Monsieur Vincent in the pulpit completely filled with zeal for the salvation of souls. He preached with a holy vehemence, filled with God's spirit. He brought tears to the eyes, and touched the hearts, of all those who heard him. You have seen a deluge of tears come both from the preacher and from his listeners." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 124. See also for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:100–101; 2:213; and 3:96.

81 For a discussion of Vincent's conferences, and the preservation of these texts see *CCD*, 11:xiii–xxxii.

82 See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:65: "He applied himself with his usual zeal to instructing the people and converting sinners by his effective preaching and exhortations in both public and private."

83 See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:101–02.

84 See also *ibid.*, 3:106ff, and Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 106–33.

85 See for example, Conference 17a, "Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission." 17 May 1658, *CCD*, 13a:433: "Christ said: *Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things which you need will be given to you as well.* That is the basis for each of us having the following set of priorities: matters involving our relationship with God are more important than temporal affairs; spiritual health is more important than physical; God's glory is more important than human approval. Each one should, moreover, be determined to prefer, like Saint Paul, to do without necessities, to be slandered or tortured, or even killed, rather than lose Christ's love."

86 See Conference 167, "Repetition of Prayer," 17 June 1657, *ibid.*, 11:357: "We should desire to be so disposed, if we aren't already, we should be ready and willing to come and go wherever God pleases, whether to the Indies or elsewhere; lastly, to devote ourselves willingly to the service of our neighbor and to extend the empire of Jesus Christ in souls; and I myself, old and infirm as I am, must, nonetheless, have this disposition, even to go to the Indies to win souls to God there, although I were to die on the way or on board ship ..."



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***Vincent de Paul, standing, with ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences.
Oil on canvas; originally in Toul seminary,
now in Crézilles.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

We testify that he was not content just to preach, but he always put his preaching into action through the work of the Missions. Even though he was nearly eighty years of age and weighed down by his infirmities,⁸⁷ he hoped to have the grace of dying while at work in the Missions whether near or far.⁸⁸

We testify that the servant of God, filled with this same zeal, contributed much to the reform of numerous Orders of Regulars. He used his influence in the king's council on behalf of these reforms.⁸⁹

We testify that, as he traveled through the streets, he made sure to correct anyone blaspheming the holy name of God or offending it in any manner, but he always did so with humility and meekness. He instructed his followers and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to do the same.⁹⁰

We testify that he was profoundly saddened when he learned of incidents where heretics, thieves, or others profaned churches or sacred objects. On these occasions, he

87 According to Abelly: "This faithful servant of God did not let any opportunity pass to serve the Church or work for the good of his neighbor. Despite his advancing years and the infirmities ordinarily accompanying old age, he still bore the principal burden of the many pious works he had established. Notwithstanding this he was always ready, even anxious, to begin new ventures for the glory of God. Rather than being overwhelmed by the burdens of new projects, on these occasions his vigor and strength seemed to increase." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:224.

88 Vincent said: "...what reason we have to tremble, if we're stay-at-home people, or, if, because of our age or under pretext of some infirmity, we slow down and let our fervor diminish!...Someone may also make excuses for himself because of his age. As for me, despite my age, before God I don't feel excused from the obligation I have to work for the salvation of those poor people; for what could prevent me from doing so? If I couldn't preach every day, *eh bien*, I'd do it twice a week! If I couldn't give long sermons; I'd try to give short ones, if, again, people didn't understand me at these short ones, what would prevent me from speaking plainly and simply to those good people in the way I'm speaking to you right now, gathering them around me, as you are?" Conference 100, "Repetition of Prayer," 25 October 1643, *CCD*, 11:122–123. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:16.

89 See *ibid.*, 2:385–390.

90 See *ibid.*, 3:395 for example.

would increase his usual prayers and penances. When he heard of holy places that had been profaned, he had his confreres and the members of the Tuesday Conferences perform penances in reparation to the Blessed Sacrament, thus remedying as much as possible this offense.⁹¹ He often could be seen shedding tears over the faults of his priests and others who were under his authority. He blamed himself before God for their offenses, and imposed penances on himself.⁹²

We testify that he formed ambitious plans for God's glory to procure the salvation of infidels, without any fear as to the expense, amount of labor, or the possibility of death.⁹³

The above with respect to the servant of God's zeal for the glory of God is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

We testify that the servant of God conducted himself with great care and diligence with respect to all those things concerning the worship of God.⁹⁴ He knew the ceremonies of the Church thoroughly, and he observed them perfectly. If he overlooked some small liturgical detail, he would humble himself. If he had committed this fault in public, he would kneel in the presence of the community and kiss the floor.⁹⁵ When he noticed others make similar mistakes, he recommended that they too humble themselves.

We testify that he possessed a singular devotion to the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Blessed Sacrament.⁹⁶ To the best of his abilities, he inspired this same devotion in his followers by placing it in their Rules.⁹⁷ He very much wanted to establish this devotion among the members of the Tuesday Conferences⁹⁸ and other persons who were under his direction.⁹⁹ He also tried to instill this devotion among the country

91 See *ibid.*, 3:82.

92 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 122 and Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:266.

93 For information on the failed attempts to evangelize Madagascar during the saint's lifetime see Coste, *Life*, 2:51–117. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:134–163. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 120–121. See also Robineau, 74.

94 According to Abelly, "... there is no doubt he was gifted with a sincere and perfect devotion for all that concerned the worship and honor of God." *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:72ff. 81–82.

95 *Ibid.*

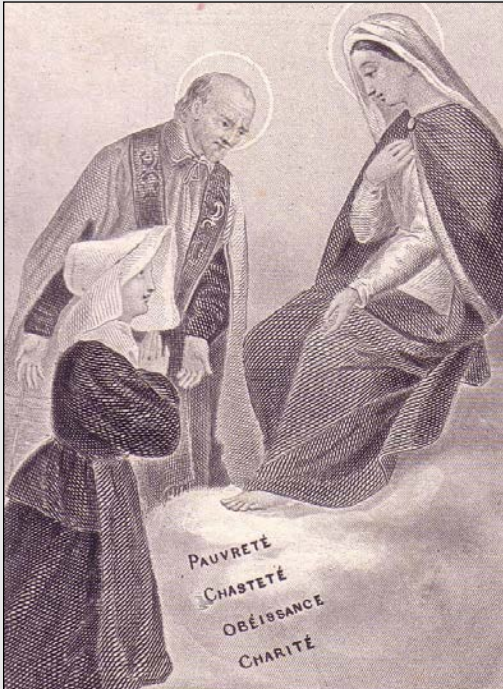
96 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:74, 77ff: "God had given him a great devotion for all the mysteries of our holy religion, particularly those of the most holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and that of the blessed sacrament of the altar. Since the most holy Trinity is the first and principal of the truths to be believed and adored, he was anxious to have it known and loved among souls, and taught on all the missions." See also Coste, *Life*, 3:304.

97 See Document 117a, "Common Rules (Chap. 10, Arts. 2–3)," (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:454–55:

According to the Bull which established our Congregation, we are bound to honor in a special way the Most Holy Trinity and the Incarnation, mysteries beyond words There can be no better way of paying the best honor possible to these mysteries than proper devotion to, and use of, the Blessed Eucharist, sacrament and sacrifice. It includes, as it were, all the other mysteries of faith and, by itself, leads those who receive Communion respectfully or celebrate Mass properly, to holiness and ultimately to everlasting glory. In this way God, Unity and Trinity, and the Incarnate Word, are paid the greatest honor.

98 Strictly speaking, no specific mention of these mysteries of the faith is present in Document 35, "Regulation for the Members of the Tuesday Conferences," n.d., *ibid.*, 13a:140–43.

99 *Ibid.*, 13a:141.



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“Lord, behold her who has sacrificed herself for you. Come good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Master.”

Holy card depicting the Blessed Virgin, Vincent, and a Daughter of Charity, probably distributed for the annual renewal of vows.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

people through the means of catechisms and sermons.¹⁰⁰

We testify that he possessed an ardent love for the mystery of Our Lord’s Passion. During the divine services of Holy Week, he could not hold back his tears.¹⁰¹ In this, he seemed to have a great sorrow for his sins in light of what Our Lord had to endure in expiation.¹⁰² Whether at home or abroad, others often observed him tenderly contemplating a crucifix so he could more closely identify with this spirit.¹⁰³

We testify that his love of Our Lord crucified led to the devotion he had for the Lord’s memorial in the Blessed Sacrament of our altars. He often could be seen spending long hours in prayer in church before the Most Holy Sacrament. He went there whenever he had to consider an affair of any consequence, in order to receive the guidance he needed from the Lord of lights.

We testify he never left, or reentered, his house without stopping to visit Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. He observed this practice whenever the place he visited had a church. When he could no longer genuflect in Church because of his old age and the weakness of his legs, he humbled himself and asked pardon from his followers for the scandal he believed he had given them.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ “We are also to make a great effort to get everyone else to pay it similar honor and reverence. We should try, to the best of our ability, to achieve this by preventing, as far as we can, any lack of reverence in word or act, and by carefully teaching others what to believe about so great a mystery, and how they should honor it.” *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Brother Louis Robineau recalled, “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. He used to do this on both knees.” *Robineau*, 12. There does not seem to be an extant reference to Vincent’s reaction to the Good Friday Passion.

¹⁰² This interpretation is unique to Bossuet, and is not present in other early accounts or testimonies.

¹⁰³ A moving personal detail not found in other early accounts or testimonies.

¹⁰⁴ Abelly notes: “He had a special devotion of praying in the presence of the blessed sacrament, where he was in such a devout posture and where he seemed so recollected that he edified all who saw him.” *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:59–60, 3:77ff. See also *Robineau*, 33–34.

We testify that he celebrated the Holy Mass daily, except for the first three days of his annual retreat. He celebrated it with such devotion that those who witnessed him at the altar could not help but be touched.¹⁰⁵ By rule, he instructed his followers,¹⁰⁶ and the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences to celebrate mass every day.¹⁰⁷

We testify that this same devotion led him, even in his old age, to serve at masses said by other priests of his community.¹⁰⁸ When he spoke to others about this mystery, it was always with great unction.

We testify that he encouraged frequent and devout communion.¹⁰⁹ He took great care, and had his followers take great care, to prepare children for their first communion.¹¹⁰

We testify that his devotion to the Holy Virgin was great, and he took particular care to recommend this devotion to others.¹¹¹ He established many works of piety in her honor, including the Confraternities of Charity. He had a singular devotion to the Holy Angels¹¹² and the Holy Apostles, our fathers in faith.¹¹³ He had a particular devotion toward Saint Peter whom he regarded as being the patron saint for the priests of his Congregation, and for those who belonged to the Tuesday Conferences.¹¹⁴

When he was in choir praying the Divine Office, he appeared so recollected that everyone could see his sole occupation was union with God.¹¹⁵

We testify that he was very faithful to the exercise of meditation and never missed it even in the midst of all of the business to which he had to attend. If he had any spare time, he used it to contemplate God.¹¹⁶ He always recommended this practice to others.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁵ Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:77ff.

¹⁰⁶ Document 117a, "Common Rules (Chap. 10, Art. 6)," (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:456–57.

¹⁰⁷ Document 35, "Regulations for the Members of the Tuesday Conferences," n.d., *ibid.*, 13a:141.

¹⁰⁸ See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:76.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 3:80–81.

¹¹⁰ See for example, Letter 897, "To a Priest of the Mission," 27 November 1646, *CCD*, 3:129–30.

¹¹¹ See for example, *Robineau*, 33. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:92–94. See also Letter 1, "To Monsieur de Comet, in Dax," 24 July 1607, *CCD*, 1:6; Letter 36, "To Saint Louise," [around 1629], *ibid.*, 1:62; Letter 49, "To Saint Louise," [around 1630], *ibid.*, 1:81; Letter 249, "To Robert de Sergis, in Amiens," November 1636, 1:350; and Conference 88, "Obedience," 2 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:311.

¹¹² See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:75.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 3:94.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ According to Abelly: "To the edification of all, the devotion of the great servant of God was most evident, in his public celebration of the divine office. When he came to the choir to chant the psalms, he did so with much recollection, and appeared to be totally taken up with the presence of God." *Ibid.*, 3:73.

¹¹⁶ See for example, *Robineau*, 41. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 21.

¹¹⁷ See for example, Conference 102, "Order of the Day," 6 October 1658, *CCD*, 10:456–59; Conference 103, "Order of the Day," 13 October 1658, *ibid.*, 10:459–64; Conference 105, "Order of the Day," 17 November 1658, *ibid.*, 10:470–75; Conference 66a, "Dispositions to Be Brought to Meditation," n.d., 11:75–76; Conference 67, "Meditation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11: 76; Conference 68, "Meditation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11:76–77; Conference 69 "Meditation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11:77–78; Conference 70, "Meditation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11:79–80; Conference 71, "Mediation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11:80–81; Conference 72, "Meditation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11:81–82; Conference 73, "Meditation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11:82; Conference 74, "Meditation," n.d., *ibid.*, 11:83; Conference 133, "Repetition of Prayer," 16 August 1655, *ibid.*, 11:232–36; and Conference 168, "Repetition of Prayer," 10 August 1657, 11:358–61.

The above, with respect to Monsieur Vincent's is well known and attested to publicly by everyone.

We testify that the servant of God perfectly fulfilled the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself by serving his neighbors through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.¹¹⁸

We testify that he fervently desired the salvation of all people.¹¹⁹ For his part he contributed all he could to this end without omitting any effort nor fearing any peril.¹²⁰ He desired even to give his life to this effort.¹²¹

We testify that he very much loved to instruct poor persons and children.¹²² We testify that he received with kindness all those who approached him. He assisted them with his advice and served them with all his strength. When he could not personally assist them, he recruited others to help.

We testify that we often heard him say, "There is no better use of temporal goods than to use them in works of charity."¹²³ He also said there was nothing greater a missionary could do than to give all he had to the poor, even if this reduced him to such poverty that he was in danger of dying from famine.¹²⁴ With regard to the clergy and all those who were elevated to ecclesiastical dignities and to the priesthood, he gladly used all his influence with the king and queen to defend their rights.¹²⁵

We recall that once a priest of his community fell ill, and feared his needs were too

118 "Here Messieurs is the example of a charitable heart dedicated in the highest degree to a perfect charity towards the neighbor in imitation of the heart of God, which is to say that he embraced everyone, and refused no one." Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 113. See also *ibid.*, 108, 121–22, 128. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:106.

119 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 96, 99, 124.

120 "Do merchants fail to put out to sea because of the perils they might face? Do soldiers not go to war for fear of scars, or the death they may meet? Should we fail in our duty as helpers and saviors of souls because of the troubles and persecutions we may encounter?" Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:101.

121 See for example, *ibid.*, 2:36 and 3:98.

122 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:16. "Monsieur Vincent did not hold his faith locked up in his mind, for his perfect charity made his beliefs evident to everyone. We have earlier seen the zeal with which he catechized and preached, especially in places where the people were most in need of instruction, such as in the villages and among the poor." See also 1:201 and 3:283.

123 A quotation from Vincent de Paul not found in any other source. See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:126 for similar sentiments.

124 For example, Vincent de Paul said: "You should not fear this poverty, never doubting the goodness of our Lord and the truth of his word. Even if you were forced to go to work for the pastors to support yourselves, or had to beg your bread, or sleep in barns, exposed to the rigors of the weather, suppose someone were to ask you: Poor priest of the Mission, what has brought you to this extremity? What happiness, Gentlemen, if you could respond: Charity. How blessed this poor priest would be, before God and his angels." Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:107–08.

125 There is in reality little evidence to support this particular claim.



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Vincent de Paul at the door of Saint-Lazare kneeling in respect before the waiting poor.

Engraving in Arthur Loth, *Saint Vincent de Paul et Sa Mission Sociale* (1880); by M. Gaillard.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

much for the house to bear. The servant of God visited him and told him to ask for anything he needed, and if necessary, he would even go so far as to sell the house's chalices to raise the funds to care for him.¹²⁶

Another time a priest who was not a member of the community fell ill while making his retreat at Saint-Lazare. The servant of God supported this priest during his long illness, and after he returned to health even gave him a breviary, a set of clothes, and ten ecus to pay for his journey home.¹²⁷

When many of his followers fell ill after serving those with contagious diseases, the servant of God felt consoled and blessed God for this situation, seeing it as a great grace.¹²⁸ When Monsieur the sub-prior of the Canons Regular of the Priory of Saint-Lazare fell victim to a contagious illness, the servant of God visited him without fear and served him during his illness, even though his followers tried to stop him.¹²⁹

We testify that he established the practice of distributing bread and soup several times a week at Saint-Lazare, and he tried to assist the honest poor in many other ways.¹³⁰ At Saint-Lazare, he introduced the daily custom of feeding two poor persons at the community's dinner. He had them seated next to him, so he could see they lacked nothing.¹³¹

We testify that he was very indulgent with respect to those who were in his debt. He never went to court to force payment. He often forgave the entire debt, seeing this as a form

¹²⁶ See Letter 366, "To Pierre Du Chesne, in Sancey," 8 January 1639, *CCD*, 1:521.

¹²⁷ Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:42.

¹²⁸ See for example, *ibid.*, 3:54–55.

¹²⁹ See Letter 131, "To Saint Louise de Marillac," [between January 1632 and February 1633], *CCD*, 1:186.

¹³⁰ See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:126–27. See also Robineau, 65–66, and Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 112.

¹³¹ See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:126. See also Robineau, 11.

of almsgiving.¹³²

We testify that he showed a particular love for those he knew opposed him. He was always careful to go out of his way to help them in any way he could.¹³³ He very much wanted his followers to imitate this practice, and he gave them an express rule to do so.¹³⁴

We testify that once a noble at court attacked his honor. The Queen Mother¹³⁵ heard of this offense, and wanted to exile this noble. Monsieur Vincent told the queen he would abstain from coming to the council of His Majesty if this happened, and she granted his request for the noble's pardon.¹³⁶

We testify he very carefully covered his neighbor's faults with the cloak of charity. He preferred to harm his own reputation, rather than to talk about the faults of his neighbor. This often caused him a loss of reputation, and other damages as well.¹³⁷

We testify the servant of God never asked for anything for himself, or for his congregation.¹³⁸ However, he frequently asked the wealthy and the queen for funds to assist the poor. He had no fear of rejection, or scorn for making these requests.¹³⁹

The above with respect to Monsieur Vincent's charity toward his neighbor is well known and attested to publicly by everyone.

This venerable servant of God possessed the blessing of a rare prudence,¹⁴⁰ so much so that he acquired a public reputation for this virtue, and many people came to him to ask his advice on important matters.¹⁴¹

We testify he never undertook anything too quickly, but only after taking the time to carefully examine all of the possible difficulties, and the means available to address these issues. If someone urged him to make a decision, he would reply nothing was more likely to

¹³² See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:129.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 3:156–62.

¹³⁴ See Document 117a, “Common Rules (Chap. 2, Art. 12),” (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:437.

¹³⁵ Anne of Austria.

¹³⁶ See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 116–117. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:157.

¹³⁷ See *ibid.*, 3:110, 283–284. See also Robineau, 68–69.

¹³⁸ See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:26–27, 110, 247. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 114.

¹³⁹ See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:121–122, 282. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 108, 112.

¹⁴⁰ See Robineau, 23–31. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:108; 3:274–75, 400; 3:222 ff; and 3:295ff. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:326, 369–73.

¹⁴¹ See Coste, *Life*, 3:342:

A great part of his time was spent in attending meetings. There were ordinary and extraordinary meetings, weekly and monthly, at Saint-Lazare, at the house of the Daughters of Charity, at the Visitation convents and elsewhere; he had to attend meetings of the Council of Conscience or of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, and to preside as Superior of the Daughters of Providence. He might have been seen sitting in the midst of professors of theology seeking for means to stem the tide of Jansenism; bishops turned to him for help in their diocesan affairs, superiors in those of their communities, and even private families entrusted him with the care of their interests. His advice was listened to as that of a sage; it always threw light on a subject and helped to establish harmony during deliberations.

ruin things than by acting too quickly.¹⁴²

We testify that he rooted his holy prudence in the teachings of the Gospel, and with God's assistance.¹⁴³ He always asked for God's assistance whenever he was in doubt.¹⁴⁴

He had a horror of anything that smacked of human self-interest, deceit, disingenuousness, artificiality, or lies.¹⁴⁵ He knew all these were contrary to true prudence, which always accompanies the virtue of simplicity.¹⁴⁶ He would never allow his followers, or anyone under his direction, to conduct themselves according to mere human interests or other artifices.¹⁴⁷ He always severely corrected this manner of judging.¹⁴⁸

In order to proceed more confidently, he always consulted others, including his followers and even peasants. He believed one person alone could not fully understand the complexity of any given situation.¹⁴⁹

142 "His practice was not to do anything in a hurry, but only after thinking it through. This is another great sign of his prudence. If it were a matter of some importance, he never made a decision about it without first praying and having others pray to beseech God's enlightenment for him in what he was to decide. He never acted without consulting the most qualified and holy people then in Paris." See *Robineau*, 27. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:100ff; 1:172; 2:104; 3:31–32.

143 See, for example, the quote in footnote 72.

144 See *Robineau*, 34. Somewhat strangely, Bossuet does not link Vincent's prudence with his desire to always do God's will by abandoning himself and the Congregation to Divine Providence. According to Abelly, Vincent did not want to anticipate providence. This was his usual way of acting in his affairs. *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:102. Again, according to Abelly, Vincent was always ready to do God's will. God found in him a man after his own heart. *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:207.

145 "One day one of his confreres was accused before the community of having done something through a desire for human respect. Moved by his love of God, Monsieur Vincent said: 'It would be better to be tied hand and foot and thrown into a raging fire than to do anything merely to please others.'" *Ibid.*, 3:39, 217–19.

146 According to Robineau, "He knew quite well and even taught us this: that the virtue of simplicity and that of prudence were like two sisters who should never walk one without the other." 22–23. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:105.

147 "Jesus the Lord expects us to have the simplicity of a dove. This means saying things quite simply in the way we see them, without needless reservations. It also means doing things without any double-dealing or manipulation, our attention being focused solely on God." Conference 201, "Simplicity and Prudence, (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Arts. 4 and 5)," 14 March 1659, *CCD*, 12:139–40. See also *ibid.*, 12:142–43.

148 "One day while he was holding Chapter, he reproved quite severely a member of the Company, who had accused himself of not having acting simply but having used equivocal language during some meeting.... I once heard Monsieur Vincent say that 'he who does not act simply, but who on the contrary uses equivocal expressions, is imitating the devil.' He sometimes told us: 'You have to avoid equivocations like the devil, since they ruin the spirit of simplicity that should shine forth in this Company.'" *Robineau*, 21.

149 "According to Brother Robineau: 'As for me, I heard him say several times on this matter that four eyes are better than two, and six better than four. He told us one day: 'Don't you see that even when physicians are sick, they always consult other doctors, follow their advice, and order the medications that they should take?'" *Robineau*, 13. See also *ibid.*, 39; 49; and 63. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:100; 2:274–275; 3:226, 232, 293–296, 343. See also Letter 1231, "To Marc Coglée, Superior, in Sedan," 9 July 1650, *CCD*, 4:41; Conference 97, "Trust in Divine Providence," *ibid.*, 10:406; and Conference 153, "Advice to Antoine Durand, Named Superior of the Agde Seminary," [1656], *ibid.*, 11:314.



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Vincent de Paul, notary at right, giving the rule for the first Confraternity of Charity in Châtillon. Lacquer panel; original in Vincentian General Curia, Rome, Italy.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

We testify that he worked hard to give fraternal correction,¹⁵⁰ to give peace of soul to the scrupulous,¹⁵¹ to give consolation to the afflicted,¹⁵² and to help those who were tempted

¹⁵⁰ According to Robineau: “One time he wanted to correct me, and he disposed me to profit from it by asking me if I would mind his giving me a correction. I answered no, and he did so. And I can assure you that since then, this manner of offering a correction has remained so strongly with me and touched my heart so deeply that only rarely have I fallen back into this fault whenever I recall Monsieur Vincent’s correction.” *Robineau*, 26. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:166ff, 302–03. See also Letter 70, “To Antoine Portail, in the Cevennes,” 21 June 1631, *CCD*, 1:110; Letter 383, “To Saint Jane Frances, in Annecy,” 14 July 1639, *ibid.*, 1:555; Letter 1149, “To Mathurin Gentil, in Le Mans,” 9 November 1649, *ibid.*, 3:501; Letter 1243, “To a Priest of the Mission,” n.d., *ibid.*, 4:58–59; Letter 1641, “To a Superior,” 19 July 1653, *ibid.*, 4:599; Letter 1690 “To Mark Cogley, Superior, in Sedan,” 10 December 1653, *ibid.*, 5:63; Letter 1760, “To Charles Ozenne, Superior, in Warsaw,” 10 July 1654, *ibid.*, 5:167; Letter 2330, “To Honoré Bélart,” 6 August 1657, *ibid.*, 6:406–08; Letter 2463, “To Pierre Cabel, Superior, in Sedan,” 17 November 1657, *ibid.*, 6:623; Letter 2521, “To a Superior,” February 1658, *ibid.*, 7:79; Conference 21, “Observance of the Rule,” n.d., *ibid.*, 9:178; Conference 22, “Reconciliation,” [between 1634 and 1646], *ibid.*, 9:180–81; Conference 45, “To Some Sisters Being Sent to the Country,” 22 October 1650, *ibid.*, 9:433; Conference 47, “Confession,” 5 March 1651, *ibid.*, 9:443; Conference 49, “The Good Use of Admonitions,” 25 April 1652, *ibid.*, 9:452; Conference 90, “Visits and the Duty of Informing Superiors (Common Rules, Arts. 28–29),” 23 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:335 ff; Conference 91, “Relations with Outsiders, Murmuring, Detraction (Common Rules, Arts. 30–32),” 30 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:354; Conference 93, “Mutual Charity and the Duty of Reconciliation (Common Rules, Arts. 36, 37),” 4 March 1658, *ibid.*, 10:369; Conference 83, “Retreat Recommendations,” 1632, *ibid.*, 11:93; Conference 84, “Retreat Recommendations,” 1635, *ibid.*, 11:95; Conference 101, “Responsibilities and Positions of Authority,” 1644, *ibid.*, 11:126; Conference 151, “Admonitions,” 9 June 1656, *ibid.*, 11:304; Conference 194, “Repetition of Prayer,” 17 November 1658, *ibid.*, 12:65; Conference 202, “Gentleness (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 6),” 28 March 1659, *ibid.*, 12:155–56; and Supplement 23, “Maxims of Saint Vincent,” n.d., *ibid.*, 12:393.

¹⁵¹ According to Robineau: “One day I heard him say these words to a priest of the Company who was greatly tormented by scrupulosity. This caused him to appeal quite frequently to Monsieur Vincent. ‘Father, although I am unaccustomed to using words of command, this is the occasion when I have to use them. I beg you please, Father, for the love of God, do what we tell you.’” See *Robineau*, 16. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:174.

¹⁵² See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:98; 3:148, 155.

to conquer their temptations.¹⁵³ He was everything to everyone.¹⁵⁴

We testify that the Rules, advice, and direction he gave to the Congregation and to many other works of charity that he founded and which still exist, give testimony to his rare prudence, and that this is well known and attested to publicly by everyone.¹⁵⁵

We testify that the servant of God was a member of the king's council where he took great care to support justice, see benefices went only to the most worthy candidates, and ensure the great did not oppress the lowly and small.¹⁵⁶

We testify that he was very exact in paying his debts even before they came due.¹⁵⁷ When, of necessity, he was involved in a lawsuit, he asked the judges to provide justice to both parties.¹⁵⁸

We testify that the servant of God even sometimes waived the legal rights of houses of his Congregation when they were involved in lawsuits, out of fear of causing losses to their opponents.¹⁵⁹

153 See for example, *ibid.*, 3:41, 113ff, 151ff, 225, 237, 269, 287–288, 295. See also Letter 879, “To a Priest of the Mission,” October 1646, *CCD*, 3:97–99; Letter 1113, “To Brother Jacques Rivet,” 27 June 1649, *ibid.*, 3:452; Letter 1152, “To Brother Jacques Rivet, in La Rose,” 13 November 1649, *ibid.*, 3:503; Letter 1619, “To a Coadjutor Brother,” 29 May 1653, *ibid.*, 4:566; Letter 1709, “To Nicolas Guillot, in Warsaw,” 27 February 1654, *ibid.*, 5:93; Letter 1721, “To Stanislaw Zelazewski, in Warsaw,” 27 March 1654, *ibid.*, 5:110; Letter 1824, “To a Priest of the Mission,” 2 January 1655, *ibid.*, 5:256; Letter 1858, “Saint Louise to Saint Vincent,” 4 April 1655, *ibid.*, 5:356; Letter 1948, “To Edme Jolly, Superior, in Rome,” 22 October 1655, *ibid.*, 5:460; Letter 1977, “To Étienne Blatiron, Superior, in Genoa,” 17 December 1655, *ibid.*, 5:492; Letter 2003, “To a Priest of the Mission,” 1 February 1656, *ibid.*, 5:539; Letter 2067, “To a Priest of the Mission, in Saint-Meén,” 17 May 1656, *ibid.*, 5:613; and Letter 2682, “To Jacques de La Fosse, in Troyes,” 16 October 1658, *ibid.*, 7:308.

154 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 46, 113, 115. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:108–11, 150.

155 For further reading, see *CCD*, 13a:430–470; 13b:1–66, 73–113, 123–26, 147–225, 441–47.

156 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:192ff; 2:374ff; 3:156–57, 191, 227–28, 247, 280. See also Letter 701, “To Guillaume Gallais, Superior, in Sedan,” 13 February 1644, *CCD*, 2:495.

157 Robineau notes: “He took great care that we promptly paid our debts, especially loans or letters of credit. He took care that those to whom it was due should not have to return two or three times to ask for their repayment. If by chance these creditors came to see him, he told them that they had should not have taken the trouble to return, and that he would send the money to their home. If he did not know where they lived, which happened quite often for bankers with letters of credit on his accounts, he would have someone find out where they lived and send them someone from the house to repay their money. When I once talked to him about this, I told him that he should just let them come to ask for their money and not take the trouble of sending it to them. He told me that this was wrong, thinking that he was unjustly causing people the trouble of returning three or four times to get what was legitimately due them. As for the salary or wages of the servants and domestics, he carefully made sure that they were paid.” *Robineau*, 31. *Ibid.*, 64. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:233–34.

158 *Ibid.*, 3:234–35.

159 Strictly speaking, this is not an accurate statement. Vincent de Paul was always adverse to lawsuits and avoided them as much as possible. When embroiled in lawsuits, he was content with relying on justice and Divine Providence. On several occasions, he certainly considered not entering into a lawsuit to defend the Congregation's rights, but his advisors usually persuaded him to do so. He did not appeal the great loss of the Orsigny farm even though the case would have been strong. See Letter 2752, “To Monsieur Desbordes, Counselor in the Parlement,” 21 December 1658, *CCD*, 7:422–23. Vincent also said “... we will never engage in a lawsuit with our benefactors, nor with the noblemen on whose estates we are established.” See also Letter 2134, “To the Duc De Noirmoutiers,” September 1656, *ibid.*, 6:88–89.

We testify that no one could ever accuse him of the vice of ingratitude,¹⁶⁰ since he always acknowledged even the smallest services anyone did for him. With great affection, he thanked those who assisted him while he travelled. Later, when he could no longer walk, he always thanked those who carried him to and from the chapel.¹⁶¹

We testify that above all he demonstrated gratitude toward the founders of the houses of his congregation.¹⁶² If any of these donors fell into any hardship by a reversal of fortune, he not only offered to return their original gift but also offered to aid them with all the assistance his congregation could.¹⁶³ He did this without any regret, and with great pleasure and joy. The above is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

This servant of God possessed an eminent degree of strength that enabled him to undertake so many difficult tasks for the glory of God,¹⁶⁴ while at the same time enduring temptations and unfortunate persecutions.¹⁶⁵ He showed an equanimity of spirit whether his affairs turned out well or badly, and he never seemed more joyful than when he was working in the face of adversity.¹⁶⁶

We testify that when he was employed on the king's council, he often attracted the resentment of nobles by refusing the benefices they requested for their children when he did not believe they were worthy of the honor. He also paid no attention to the magnificent promises often made to him by these men.¹⁶⁷

We testify that once M. (Adrien) Le Bon the prior of Saint-Lazare had asked the servant of God to intercede with the queen to free an abbess imprisoned for her scandalous conduct. He refused the prior's request since he knew in this case that justice had been done, and that there was good reason for her imprisonment. When the said prior reproached him for his ingratitude, the servant of God asked him to take back everything he had given him, since he had proven himself unworthy of the gift. The prior did not accept this offer.¹⁶⁸

160 On Vincent's gratitude see Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 117–118. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:233–41; Coste, *Life*, 3:315–17 and Robineau, 71.

161 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:237.

162 *Ibid.*, 3:239.

163 *Ibid.*, 3:239–40. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 117.

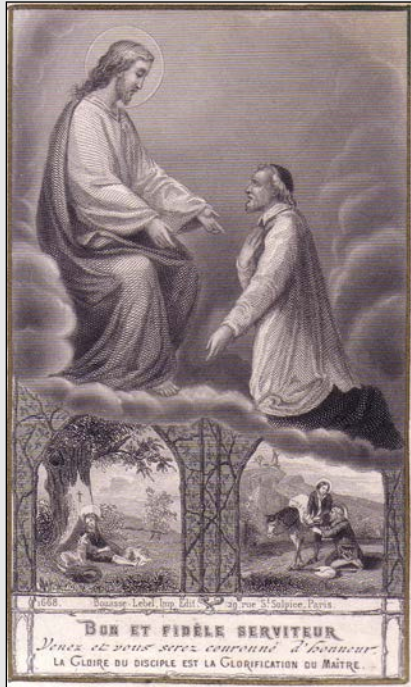
164 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100.

165 According to Abelly, "If Monsieur Vincent showed his ardent zeal in so many ways, he also showed his strength and constancy. He persevered in the holy enterprises which God had inspired him to undertake, despite the difficulties, opposition, losses, and all the other grievous situations which he encountered." See *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:102. See also Letter 1890, "To Étienne Blatiron, in Rome," 9 July 1655, *CCD*, 5:400 and Robineau, 38–39.

166 For Vincent's indifference, see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:24, 45, 47ff. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:370–71.

167 See for example, Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100. See also Robineau, 25, 44. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:156–57, 191, 280–81.

168 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:281–82. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:343.



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***“Good and faithful servant come and you will be crowned with honor.
The glory of the disciple is the glorification of his master.”
Of note, scenes picturing Vincent’s holiness as a child.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

The above with respect to strength of Monsieur Vincent is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

The servant of God was so temperate he refused any superfluous personal comforts, accepting only what he felt was necessary. He told me that he customarily left the table without fully satisfying his hunger. He ate nothing special, and only what the rest of the community ate, sometimes satisfying himself with the leftovers.¹⁶⁹

These things with respect to the temperance of the servant of God are true, public, and well known.

We testify that he took pleasure in living a life of obedience, submission, and dependence.¹⁷⁰ For a long time Cardinal de Bérulle served as his spiritual director, and he would undertake nothing without first seeking his advice.¹⁷¹

We testify that he was very submissive to Our Holy Father the Pope, blindly obeying all of the decisions of the Holy See.¹⁷² He acted with the same submission with regard to bishops and pastors. He never undertook a mission without first receiving their permission and publicly receiving their blessing.¹⁷³ He also made this a rule for his followers.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:254, 3:244, 265–66.

¹⁷⁰ See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:205ff.

¹⁷¹ See *ibid.*, 1:50ff, 164ff; 3:207. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:254–55, 367.

¹⁷² See Robineau, 19, 50. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 126. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:107, 222; 2:355.

¹⁷³ See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 100. For a discussion of Vincent’s respect for bishops see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:192–94; 2:373–84; 3:130–39. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:226–36. Also, Robineau, 53, 68.

¹⁷⁴ See Document 117a, “Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission, (Chap. 11., Art. 5),” (17 May 1658), *CCD*, 13a:461–62.

We testify that he was very exact in the observance of the rules of his congregation,¹⁷⁵ and he taught his subjects not only to submit to their superiors,¹⁷⁶ but also to submit themselves to everyone for the love of God.¹⁷⁷

These things with respect to the obedience practiced by the servant of God are true, public, and well known.

Monsieur Vincent rejoiced at his own abjection, so much so that it was his joy to receive scorn.¹⁷⁸ This is why he always claimed to be an ignorant person without much learning.¹⁷⁹ This is why he never defended himself when others unjustly accused him.¹⁸⁰ He would ask for a pardon on his knees from those whom he thought he had offended.¹⁸¹

With regard to his successes, he was always very faithful to give glory to God for each of them.¹⁸² He fled from praise like the plague.¹⁸³ He always pointed out the lowliness of his birth, saying he was the son of a laborer, that he had minded pigs in his youth,¹⁸⁴ and that

175 See Robineau, 54, 55.

176 See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:205ff.

177 See *Ibid.*, 3:210. "Our obedience ought to go beyond those who have the right to give us orders ... We should submit ourselves to all human creatures for the love of God. Do this then and look upon all others as our superiors, and place yourself below all, smaller than even the least. Make this evident by the deference, condescension, and all sorts of services for others. What a fine thing it would be if God would confirm us in this practice."

178 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 92, 95, 101, 128.

179 See *ibid.*, 125: "Vincent de Paul you told us that you were only a 'weak fourth.' You hid your studies. You hid the brilliance of your learning, and your spirit, with an unparalleled exercise of humility." See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:84, 182, 186. See also Conference 198, "Seeking the Kingdom of God (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 2)," 21 February 1659, *CCD*, 12:114; Conference 210, "Moral Theology, Preaching, Catechizing, and Administration of the Sacraments," 5 August 1659, *ibid.*, 12:238; and Conference 215, "Informing Superiors of the Serious Faults and Temptations of the Neighbor (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Arts. 16 and 17)," [24 October 1659], *ibid.*, 12:394. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 37.

180 See Conference 151, "Admonitions," *CCD*, 11:304–05. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:49–51; 3:157–58, 160, 162, 189ff.

181 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 6–7, 28, 30. See also Conference 27, "The Practice of Mutual Respect and Gentleness," 19 August 1646, *CCD*, 9:218; Conference 49, "Good Use of Admonitions," *ibid.*, 9:451–52; Conference 75, "To Two Sisters Being Sent to La Fère," 29 July 1656, *ibid.*, 10:164; Conference 93, "Mutual Charity," *ibid.*, 10:376; Conference 151, "Admonitions," *ibid.*, 11:306–07; Conference 156, "Behavior When Going into Town," 27 October 1656, *ibid.*, 11:326; and Conference 202, "Gentleness," 28 March 1659, *ibid.*, 12:154–55. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:46; 2:223, 360; 3:70, 80, 128, 158, 160, 163, 185, 188–89, 191, 305–06.

182 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:13, 38, 73.

183 "He avoided honors and praise like the plague." See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:181–82. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 92–93, 101–02.

184 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 95–96, 101. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:35–36; 3:257, 326. See also Letter 145, "To a Priest of the Mission," 1633, *CCD*, 1:206; Letter 418, "To Louis Abelly, Vicar General of Bayonne," 14 January 1640, *ibid.*, 2:5; Letter 467, "Charles de Montchal, Archbishop of Toulouse, to Saint Vincent," 1640, *ibid.*, 2:103; Letter 1372, "To François de Saint-Remy, in Châlons," 21 June 1651, *ibid.*, 4:219; Letter 2874, "To the Comte d'Obidos," 17 June 1659, *ibid.*, 7:617; Letter 2993, "To a Young Man from Dax," 29 September 1659, *ibid.*, 8:159; Letter 3153, "To François Fouquet, Archbishop of Narbonne," [1660], *ibid.*, 8:383; Appendix 1, "Brother Ducournau to Canon de Saint-Martin," August 1658, *ibid.*, 8:600; Conference 2, "The Vocation of a Daughter of Charity," 5 July 1640, *ibid.*, 9:14; Conference 14, "Union within the Community," 26 April 1643, *ibid.*, 9:89; Conference 115, "Rules for the Sisters in Parishes (Arts. 12–18 and Appendix)," 25 November 1659, *ibid.*, 10:547; Conference 182, "Detachment from the Goods of This World," 8 June 1658, *ibid.*, 12:19; Conference 207, "Charity (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 12)," 30 May 1659, *ibid.*, 12:220; Conference 210, "Moral Theology," *ibid.*, 12:242; Conference 218, "Poverty, (Common Rules, Chap. 3, Arts. 3–10)," [21 November 1659], *ibid.*, 12:318; Supplement 23, "Maxims," *ibid.*, 12:395.

he was just a poor “fourth form scholar.”

Once during a conference in the house of Saint-Lazare, a member of his Congregation “accused himself of being ashamed because he had not profited from the examples of virtue he had seen in the servant of God.” Hearing this, Monsieur Vincent immediately noted the rule of his Congregation to “never praise another person in that person’s presence.” Furthermore, he said his only claim to public notoriety was for being a marvel of malice and corruption, so much so that he felt himself to be worse than a demon, meriting eternal punishment even more than a demon did.¹⁸⁵

We testify that he often told his followers the Congregation would be justified in throwing him out because of the scandals he had given.¹⁸⁶ He also said he was unworthy to eat the bread put before him because he felt had not earned it by his labor.¹⁸⁷

We testify that once when the Prince de Condé complimented him, the servant of God demurred and pointed out the lowliness of his birth, repeating that he was only the son of a country laborer.¹⁸⁸ He took on the lowest tasks; he would clean the boots of those who came in from the country, carry the baggage of the ordinands arriving at the house for their retreat, and wait at table. He would also take the most uncomfortable place to hear confessions and choose the worst of clothing and nourishment.¹⁸⁹

We testify that he asked pardon for the smallest faults he believed he had committed, such as talking a little too rudely to a lay brother, a fault that he admitted publicly on his knees.¹⁹⁰ He did the same for a cleric who had served his mass, and whom he believed he had offended.

When he began the Congregation and lived at the College des Bons–Enfants, he often prostrated himself at the feet of his followers and asked their pardon, publicly accusing himself of all the most humiliating faults of his past life.¹⁹¹

We testify that once when he was informed of the arrival of one of his nephews, he was embarrassed by the thought of the young peasant’s rude dress. He considered having him shown to his room secretly. However, he immediately thought better of this, and he went to the door to welcome his nephew and then introduced him to the community, all the while praising him as being the most worthy member of his family. Later he accused

185 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:185. See also Conference 93, “Reflections of a Confrere from Repetition of Payer,” 26 June 1646, *CCD*, 11:108.

186 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:193. See also Conference 29, “Relations among the Sisters and with Persons outside the Company,” 2 February 1647, *CCD*, 9:240.

187 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 17. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:214; 3:239, 243.

188 Louis II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé (1621–1686). See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:190.

189 See Robineau, 22. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:93, 266. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 121–22.

190 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 30.

191 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:188–89.



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Vincent de Paul welcomes his nephew to Saint-Lazare. From a series on Vincent's life by Vignola.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

himself of the shame he felt about his behavior toward his nephew.¹⁹²

In 1641, he convoked a general assembly of the principal members of his congregation, and he pleaded with them to relieve him of the office of superior general.¹⁹³ After having offered his resignation, he left the meeting. It was only with difficulty that his confreres' requests and prayers persuaded him to continue governing the Congregation.¹⁹⁴

When he had learned that a princess had sent two of her children to receive his blessing, he told the porter who brought him this news that this embarrassed him. He felt it would be source of horror, rather than a consolation for them, to receive his blessing.¹⁹⁵ He regarded his congregation as being the most useless in the Church, and he instructed his followers always to give precedence to members from other communities.¹⁹⁶

We testify that Cardinal de La Rochefoucault was accustomed to say that if one wanted to find an example of true humility, one needed only to study the conduct of the servant of God.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² See *ibid.*, 3:189, 259.

¹⁹³ Bossuet is incorrect here. The actual date of the assembly was 1642.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:192. See also Document 89, "Minutes of the Assembly at Saint-Lazare," October 1642, *CCD*, 13a:329. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:293.

¹⁹⁵ See Letter 3245, "M. Aubert to Saint Vincent," 31 August 1659, *CCD*, 8:498.

¹⁹⁶ See for example Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:102, 147, 182, 187. See also Letter 575, "To Bernard Codoing, in Rome," 17 March 1642, *CCD*, 2:265; Conference 90, "Repetition of Prayer," 18 March 1642, *ibid.*, 11:104; Conference 203, "Humility (Common Rules, Chap. 2, Art. 7)," 18 April 1659, *ibid.*, 12:167; Supplement 23, "Maxims," *ibid.*, 12:395.

¹⁹⁷ François de La Rochefoucauld, (1558–1648). Bishop of Clermont, then Senlis. Created a cardinal in 1607 by Pope Paul V, he was one of the key figures promoting the reform of the French religious orders. He served on the king's council and as Grand Almoner of France. He entered the Jesuit order on his deathbed. See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 125. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:385; 3:265.

These things with respect to his humility are true, public, and well known.

The servant of God had a great love of poverty. He always requested or chose for himself the most vile nourishment, furnishings, lodging, and clothing. Until his old age, a few years from his death, he never would accept a heated room, and his room was very small. He would allow neither a rug nor tapestry. The only furniture he had was a table with some wicker chairs. He had a poor bed, without covering, and with only one pillow.¹⁹⁸

We testify that he never asked anything for himself,¹⁹⁹ nor for his family,²⁰⁰ nor for his Congregation,²⁰¹ and that he had given so much of the wealth of Saint-Lazare to the poor that he left his house almost without any resources.²⁰² The above is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

We testify that the servant of God lived a life characterized by extreme mortification. He treated his body with great rigor, refusing it as much as he could. He also was an enemy of his own will, and he voluntarily submitted himself to the will of others.²⁰³

We testify that he took the discipline every morning,²⁰⁴ and wore a hair shirt for many years.²⁰⁵ He sprinkled a bitter powder on his meat.²⁰⁶

We testify that he incessantly urged his followers to possess a spirit of mortification. He regarded this virtue as the one most necessary for nurturing one's spiritual life and acquiring all the other virtues.²⁰⁷

We testify that he frequently suffered from fevers, and used a very painful remedy. Even during hot weather, he took to bed with two hot water bottles, and then covered himself with many blankets so he would sweat. He would sweat so profusely that he would look like he had just emerged from a bath.²⁰⁸ However, even in the midst of these illnesses, he never missed community prayer.²⁰⁹ The above is well known, and attested to publicly by everyone.

198 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:242ff.

199 *Ibid.*

200 *Ibid.*, 3:257ff.

201 *Ibid.*, 3:246–247.

202 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 111–13. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:123–30.

203 On Vincent's mortification see *ibid.*, 3:254–67. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:360–64. See also Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 121–22.

204 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour*, 121. See also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:266.

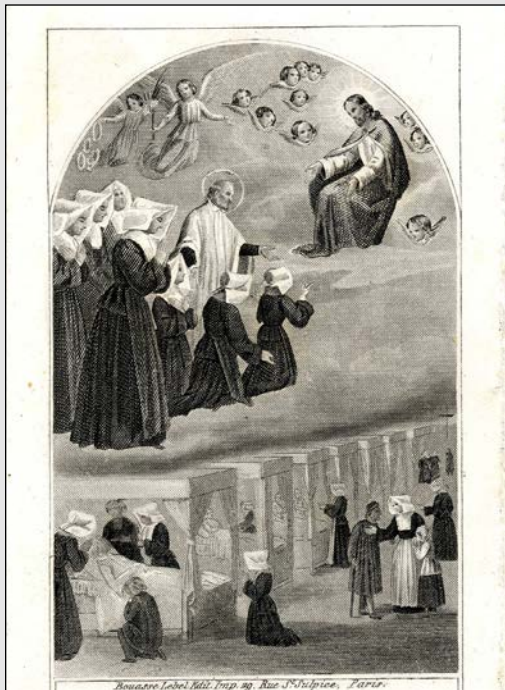
205 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 3:266.

206 *Ibid.*

207 See Conference 65, "Mortification of the Senses and Passions," 3 January 1655, *CCD*, 10:44ff; Conference 66, "Secretiveness," 2 February 1644, *ibid.*, 10:53ff; Conference 72, "The Maxims of Jesus Christ and Those of the World (Common Rules, Art. 4)," 2 November 1655, *ibid.*, 10:123ff; Conference 89, "Mortification, Correspondence, Meals, and Journeys (Common Rules, Arts. 24–27)," 9 December 1657, *ibid.*, 10:318ff; Conference 204, "Mortification," 2 May 1659, *ibid.*, 12:173ff; and Conference 211, "The Five Characteristic Virtues," 22 August 1659, *ibid.*, 12:243ff.

208 For Vincent's illnesses see Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:250ff. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:385–400.

209 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:252–53.



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***Holy card, the text of which reads:
“Christian Charity. I was ill and you cared for me.”***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

We testify that the servant of God had a singular love for chastity so that he always used every means to preserve it.²¹⁰ If he was obliged to speak with women or girls, he did so with his eyes lowered. If his charity or civility obliged him to visit them, he always did so with a companion. On one of these visits, his companion left the room, and the servant of God recalled him and reprimanded him severely.²¹¹

We testify that he avoided using any words that might give even the least impression of being contrary to chastity. He especially used this caution when he was obliged to speak to women with bad reputations, thus avoiding even the appearance of approving of vice. He encouraged his followers to follow the same conduct. He commanded that when they wrote to persons of the opposite sex they should avoid using any terms that were too tender.²¹²

He also instructed them never to touch a woman, even to refrain from taking the pulse of a sick woman in need of the last rites.²¹³

These things are true, public, and well known.

We testify that the servant of God practiced a heroic patience to the point of even thanking those persons who had injured him. He believed singular graces came from enduring these affronts for the sake of God.²¹⁴

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:268–73.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3:271.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 3:269–70.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 3:268–69.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3:156–62.

We testify that he never gave any sign of impatience or sadness during his frequent illnesses. We testify he showed the same equanimity with regard to the persecutions he experienced. He never uttered a word of complaint, nor attacked those who had offended him.

We testify that the venerable servant of God had long suffered from swelling in his legs. Eventually he was afflicted with an ulcer, making his sufferings more acute. This situation did nothing to alter the serenity of his countenance, or the meekness and affability of his conversations. He always ate only what the community ate, and refused any delicacies people tried to give him.

His illness worsened as the ulcers increased, making his life a martyrdom of pain. He endured this suffering with a marvelous tranquility of spirit, and he never said anything to betray his patience and his resignation to God's will. He welcomed every visitor, and bore his pain as penitence for his sins. He continued to live an austere life.

When he sensed death was approaching, he regarded this prospect with pleasure, and made it the object of his desires and the subject of his teachings to his followers. He said, "Soon the corpse of this old sinner will be put in the earth and reduced to dust underfoot." Sometimes in the midst of his old age he wrote, "*Heu mihi, quia incolatus meus prolongatus est.*" ("Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged."²¹⁵) He prayed God would release him from the prison of his body so that he could sing his praises in heaven, but as always he resigned himself totally to God's will.

When he was dying, the members of his community who were assisting him prayed the verse from the psalm of David, "*Deus in adiutorium meum intende.*" The servant of God completed the verse by saying, "*Domine ad adiuvandum me festina.*"²¹⁶ In his last days, when he heard this prayer, he would always awaken to reply. This continued until Monday, 27 September 1660 at 4:30 in the morning, when his soul very peacefully and quietly separated from his body. The expression on his face was serene, and his body remained flexible.

His funeral attracted a large number of people and was graced by the presence of the Prince de Conti,²¹⁷ and the papal nuncio Piccolomini,²¹⁸ many prelates and ladies of the highest nobility, particularly those who assembled each Wednesday to serve the sick poor at Hôtel-Dieu and the poor of the countryside who suffered from public disasters.²¹⁹ One saw solemn services held to honor his memory in various other places, and at various times. Our assembly of the Tuesday Conferences organized a magnificent service in Paris

²¹⁵ Psalm 119:5 from the Vulgate.

²¹⁶ Psalm 69:2 from the Vulgate. "O God. Come to my assistance." "O Lord. Make haste to help me."

²¹⁷ Armand de Bourbon-Conti, a prince of the blood (1629–1666).

²¹⁸ Celio Piccolomini served as nuncio to France from 1656 to 1662.

²¹⁹ The Ladies of Charity of the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris. See for example, Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:152–56.

at the parish of Saint-Germain de l'Auxerrois. The bishop of Puy gave the funeral oration at this service held on 23 November 1660. It lasted for two hours. The personal knowledge the bishop had of the servant of God, joined to his own illustrious qualities, attracted a large and celebrated audience who listened with great attention. Those present shed many tears, particularly upon hearing about Monsieur Vincent's extraordinary humility and his incomparable charity toward the poor. The speaker described how the venerable servant of God had practiced the virtues of constancy and perseverance in all his actions with promptness, joy, and ease.²²⁰ These things are true, public, and well known.

We also testify he was responsible for the great works conducted by the Congregation of the Mission he founded.²²¹ We have worked in these missions alongside the spiritual children of this venerable servant of God.²²² There are also the spiritual retreats offered for all sorts of persons²²³ and the retreats for ordinands.²²⁴ I have assisted with these on four occasions.²²⁵ There are also the spiritual conferences for ecclesiastics²²⁶ and the diocesan seminaries.²²⁷ There are also the Confraternities of Charity²²⁸ that led to the foundation of the community of the Daughters of Charity, servants of the sick poor who have accomplished inconceivable good through their more than 250 establishments, including many in our diocese.²²⁹ There is also the establishment of the company of the Ladies of Charity, which serves the sick at the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris,²³⁰ and assists the provinces desolated by public miseries.²³¹ There is the Hospital for the foundlings²³² and the hospice of the Name of Jesus for service of the elderly poor.²³³ These gave rise to the establishment of the General Hospital of Paris²³⁴ and many other hospitals, as well as many other diverse works of piety done by Monsieur Vincent.²³⁵ We find all this information in his biography, and in his funeral

220 See Udovic, *Maupas du Tour* throughout.

221 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:109–12, 19–26; 2:11, 9–182. See also Coste, *Life*, 1:144–76, 469–530; 2:1–117; 3:20–64.

222 See Coste *Life*, 2:136–144.

223 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:141–43, 2:229–48. See also Coste, *Life*, 3:1–19.

224 See Coste, *Life*, 2:150–69, and Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:138–40; 2:183–203.

225 See *ibid.*, 2:153.

226 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:144–47; 2:210–228. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:118–49.

227 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 2:249–258. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:170–91.

228 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:72–73; 2:285–90. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:268–77, 336–462.

229 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:133–38; 2:291–302.

230 See *ibid.*, 1:152–59; 2:303–15; See also Coste, *Life*, 1:232–42; 278–335.

231 See also Coste, *Life*, 2:366–482.

232 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:160–63. See also Coste, *Life*, 2:255–79.

233 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, 1:224–27.

234 *Ibid.*, 1:227–30.

235 See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant* and Coste, *Life* throughout.



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“An authentic portrait of the Venerable Servant of God. Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, endowed with numerous virtues, especially charity, humility, a true father of the poor, dedicated his life to young persons receiving Holy Orders, still done today. Died Paris, Saint-Lazare, in 1660, aged 85.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

oration. These things are true, public, and well known.

We testify that during the life of the servant of God, and after his death, all of France and all of Paris held him in esteem as a very holy man. We testify that everyone, whatever their station in life gives him praise, most particularly the clergy and the bishops. The bishops know this fact very well, and they also testify that his renown continues to grow.

We testify that the late Duchess d’Aiguillon,²³⁶ whom we remember for her rare virtues, and most notably for her great charity, donated a silver reliquary to hold the heart of the servant of God.²³⁷

We testify that many people belonging to his congregation and even externs have desired to obtain linen stained with the blood of the servant of God, or some other small piece of his clothing or belongings. The faithful preserve these items with great piety, and they already have brought extraordinary favors to those who have sought his intercession in their prayers.²³⁸ Many of these accounts are recorded and notarized.

We testify that twice a year the Daughters of Charity visit his tomb, where they recommend themselves to his intercession with great devotion and humility. The sisters very often receive the favors they have requested.

We testify there are always many other persons who come to Saint-Lazare to visit the tomb of the servant of God, addressing their prayers to him. They have been attracted by reading his biography, and by their own opinions with respect to his sanctity.

²³⁶ Cardinal Richelieu’s niece, Marie Madeleine de Vignerot du Pont de Courlay, Duchesse d’Aiguillon (1604–1675).

²³⁷ See Coste, *Life*, 3:399.

²³⁸ For an account of Vincent’s relics see *ibid.*, 3:433–61.

Finally, we attest before God, who knows we are speaking the truth, that we have regarded and still regard the venerable Monsieur Vincent de Paul to be a saint. We judge him to be worthy of public veneration, whenever it will please Our Holy Father the Pope to undertake such an examination, make such a determination, and issue such an order.

We have faithfully related all of the above, and have signed this statement which our Secretary has co-signed, and to which we have affixed our seal.

Given at Paris, where we are at present in residence for the affairs of our Church,
1702.

J.B. Bishop of Meaux

By Monsignor.



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***Turn of the twentieth-century postcard
featuring Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, and a view
of Notre Dame, Paris.***

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Appendix

Letter from Bossuet to Pope Clement XI

2 August 1702

Letter LXXXIII. BOSSUET TO CLEMENT XI

On the virtues of the venerable Vincent de Paul.

Most Holy Father,

In all the diverse matters that daily come to the Holy See for its consideration, it is the duty of bishops to lend you their assistance to assure that truth triumphs. I am aware that Your Holiness' tribunal is now examining the life and sanctity of the Venerable priest Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission.

We have the advantage of having known him in the years of our youth. His pious teachings, and his wise advice, helped develop in us a taste for a true and solid piety, and a love for ecclesiastical discipline. At our advanced age, we recall these memories with great joy. After our elevation to the priesthood, we had the honor of becoming a member of the company of virtuous ecclesiastics that assembled weekly to discuss spiritual matters.²³⁹ Monsieur Vincent was the founder of these assemblies, and was their soul. There was never a time when he spoke to us that we did not hang on his every word, and feel in our hearts that he was an example of one of those men about whom the Apostle speaks: “whoever preaches let it be with the words of God.”²⁴⁰

²³⁹ See previous footnote on the Tuesday Conferences.

²⁴⁰ 1 Peter 4:11.

This holy man's reputation and piety often attracted prelates of great distinction to attend these conferences. Besides benefitting personally, these men also benefitted by finding in his students who attended this assembly a group of excellent ecclesiastics who shared their pastoral solicitude, and who were ready to assist them in their apostolic ministry. These worthy ministers, whose actions proved to be no less eloquent than their words, helped carry the light of the Gospel throughout their dioceses. We, ourselves, had the honor of being associated with this work by virtue of our leadership position among the clergy of Metz when we participated in a mission he arranged to take place there.²⁴¹ However, to be honest, Monsieur Vincent ensured the success of this effort through his prayers, advice, and the care he took to inspire all those who participated.

When it was time for us to be ordained to the priesthood, we sought out the assistance of Monsieur Vincent and his followers to help us prepare. He first established the practice of offering ordination retreats.²⁴² Later, we ourselves often conducted these ordination exercises, supported by this holy man's prayers and guided by his advice. Thus, over time, I was able to study his virtues carefully, above all his sincere and truly apostolic charity. I saw how his seriousness and prudence were joined with an admirable personal simplicity. He also had an ardent zeal for the re-establishment of ecclesiastical discipline, and a zeal for the salvation of souls. Finally, he exhibited an invincible constancy in strongly opposing anything that would corrupt the purity of faith, or the innocence of morals. He was an unforgettable person. As for me, I recall with an indescribable pleasure the example of his pure faith, his profound respect for the Holy See, and his sincere and unreserved submission to its decrees. I recall how he served God with such a heartfelt personal humility that was unaffected even by his position and responsibilities at court.

Each day, new luster is added to the reputation of this holy person. He is honored everywhere for his imitation of Jesus Christ. Everyone, everywhere, has expressed their desire that a holy pontiff will one day include him in the ranks of the saints.

Most Holy Father, it is easy for us to preserve our cherished memories of the venerable Monsieur Vincent since he lives on in his Congregation, and since the worthy children of his Congregation labor successfully in our diocese, joyfully joining with us to serve the flock confided to our care.

We also cannot forget the company of virtuous Daughters founded by the pious Monsieur Vincent. The Daughters follow the wise rules that he gave them as they serve the poor and, above all, the sick. They do this with a humility, charity, and purity that always reminds us of their holy founder, whose spirit still fills and inspires their holy Institute.

²⁴¹ See previous footnote on the mission held in Metz

²⁴² See previous footnote on the ordination retreats at Saint-Lazare.

It is our tender memories of these great works that we wish to present for your paternal consideration. We have shared our testimony about Monsieur Vincent because we believe that it gives pleasure to a holy person to hear about someone who was a saint. Because of the profound respect we have for Your Holiness, and because of the knowledge we have of the many matters that always demand your attention, we will not delay you any longer. We know, however, that nothing can ever really distract someone who possesses such a superior spirit and a talent for simultaneously examining so many different affairs, a soul that heaven has favored with its sweetest consolations and that guides and inspires him with wisdom, and strength. May God long preserve such a head for His Church. This is our most ardent and sincere wish. As to the rest, Most Holy Father, I stand here before God in Jesus Christ as I say to Your Holiness in all sincerity, fidelity and truth that I remain your most devoted and most obedient servant.

Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet
Bishop of Meaux

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**Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, Bishop of Meaux.
Engraving by Pierre-Imbert Drevet after Hyacinthe Rigaud. 1723.
Collection of the Art Institute of Chicago.**

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***Portrait of Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet.
Oil on canvas. 1698.
Uffizi Museum, Florence, Italy.***

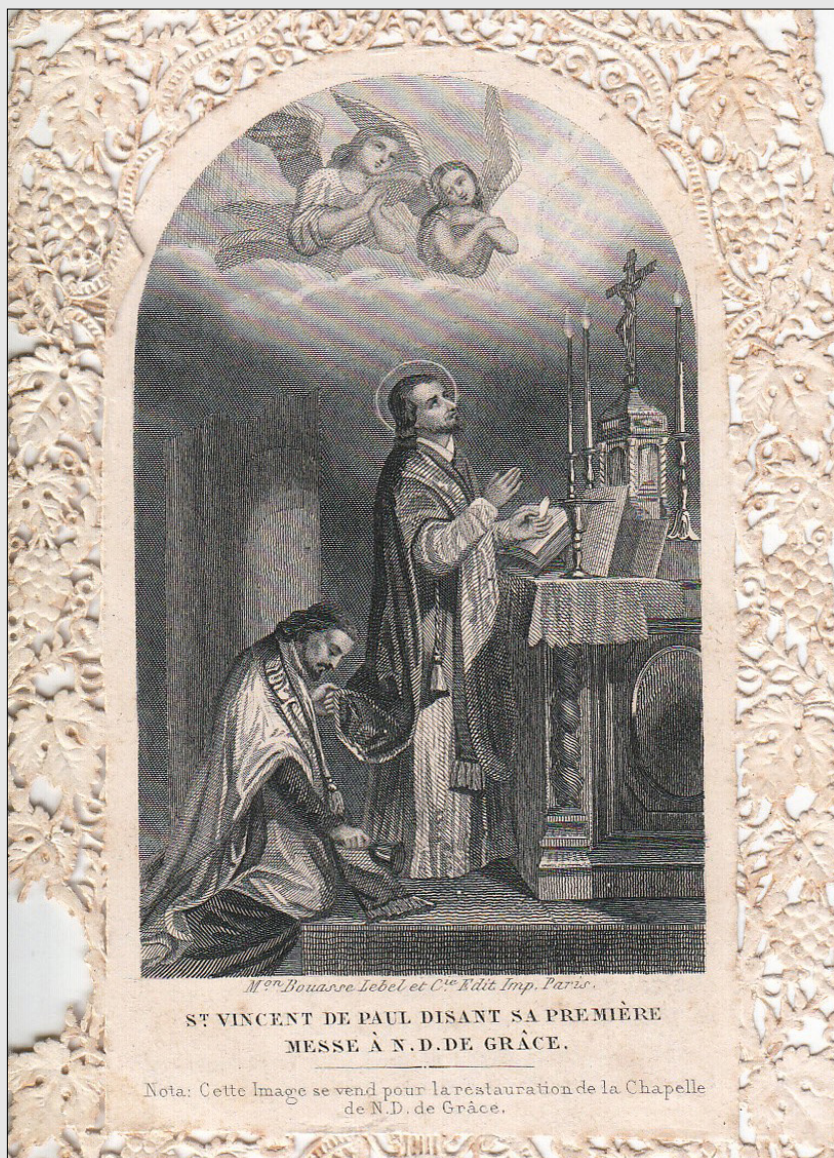
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***Vincent de Paul, seated, speaking to the ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences.
Framed oil on canvas; original in Collegio Leoniano, Rome, Italy.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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Holy cards which read: “Vincent celebrates his first mass at Notre Dame de Grace, near Buzet”; and “Frequent communion. Continual union with God. The presence of God should more completely occupy our spirit than the presence of all creatures together.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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“If the love of God is a fire, zeal is its flame; if it is a sun, zeal is a ray. Zeal is what is purest in the love for God.”

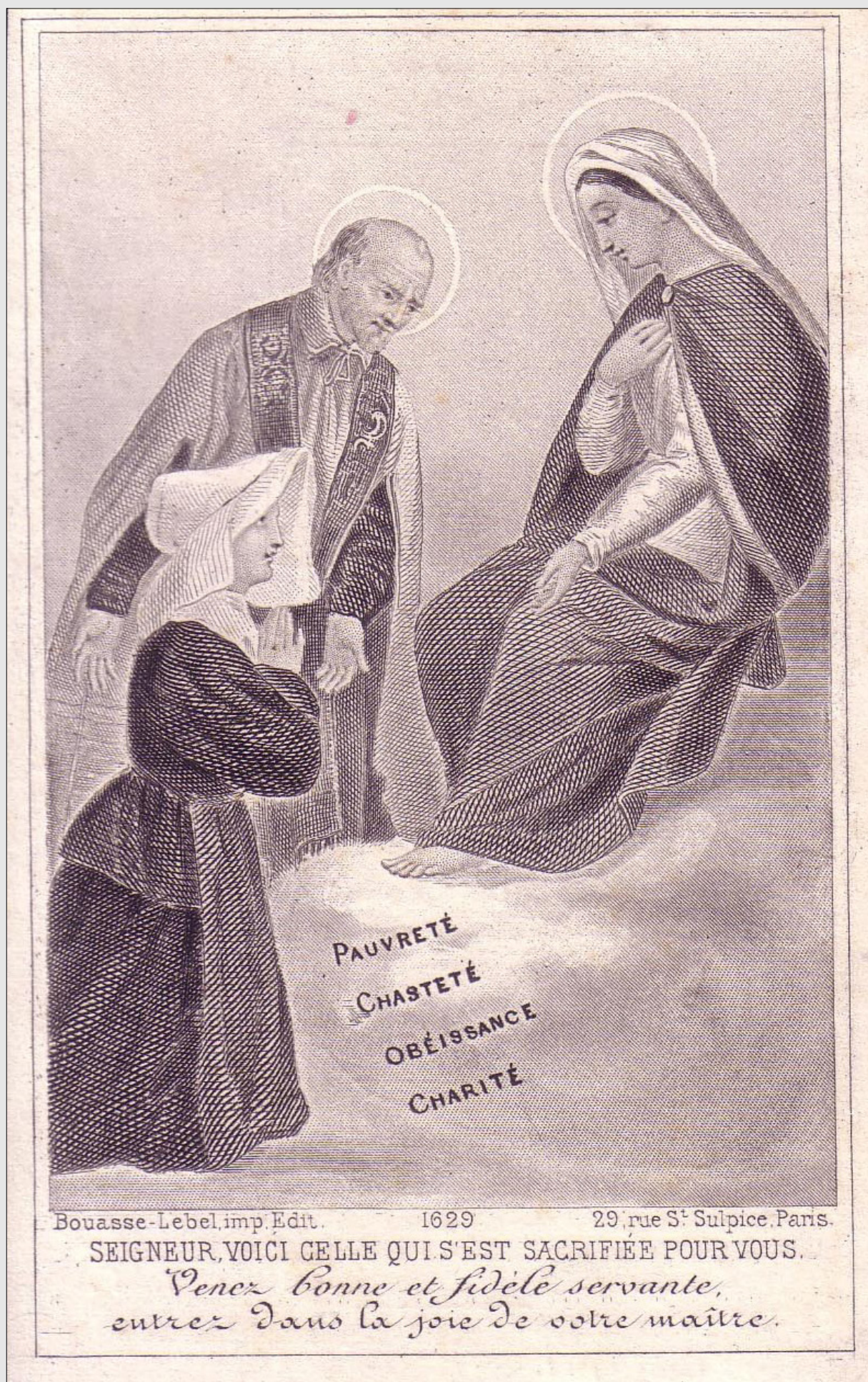
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***Vincent de Paul, standing, with ecclesiastics of the Tuesday Conferences.
Oil on canvas; originally in Toul seminary, now in Crézilles.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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**“Lord, behold her who has sacrificed herself for you.
Come good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Master.”
Holy card depicting the Blessed Virgin, Vincent, and a Daughter of
Charity, probably distributed for the annual renewal of vows.**

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



LE RESPECT DE SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL POUR LES PAUVRES

Le saint se jette à genoux, à la porte de Saint-Lazare, devant des pauvresses à qui il avait promis l'aumône, et leur demande pardon de les avoir fait attendre. — Composition et dessin de M. Gaillard, à Paris; dix-neuvième siècle.

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Vincent de Paul at the door of Saint-Lazare kneeling in respect before the waiting poor. Engraving in Arthur Loth, *Saint Vincent de Paul et Sa Mission Sociale* (1880); by M. Gaillard.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

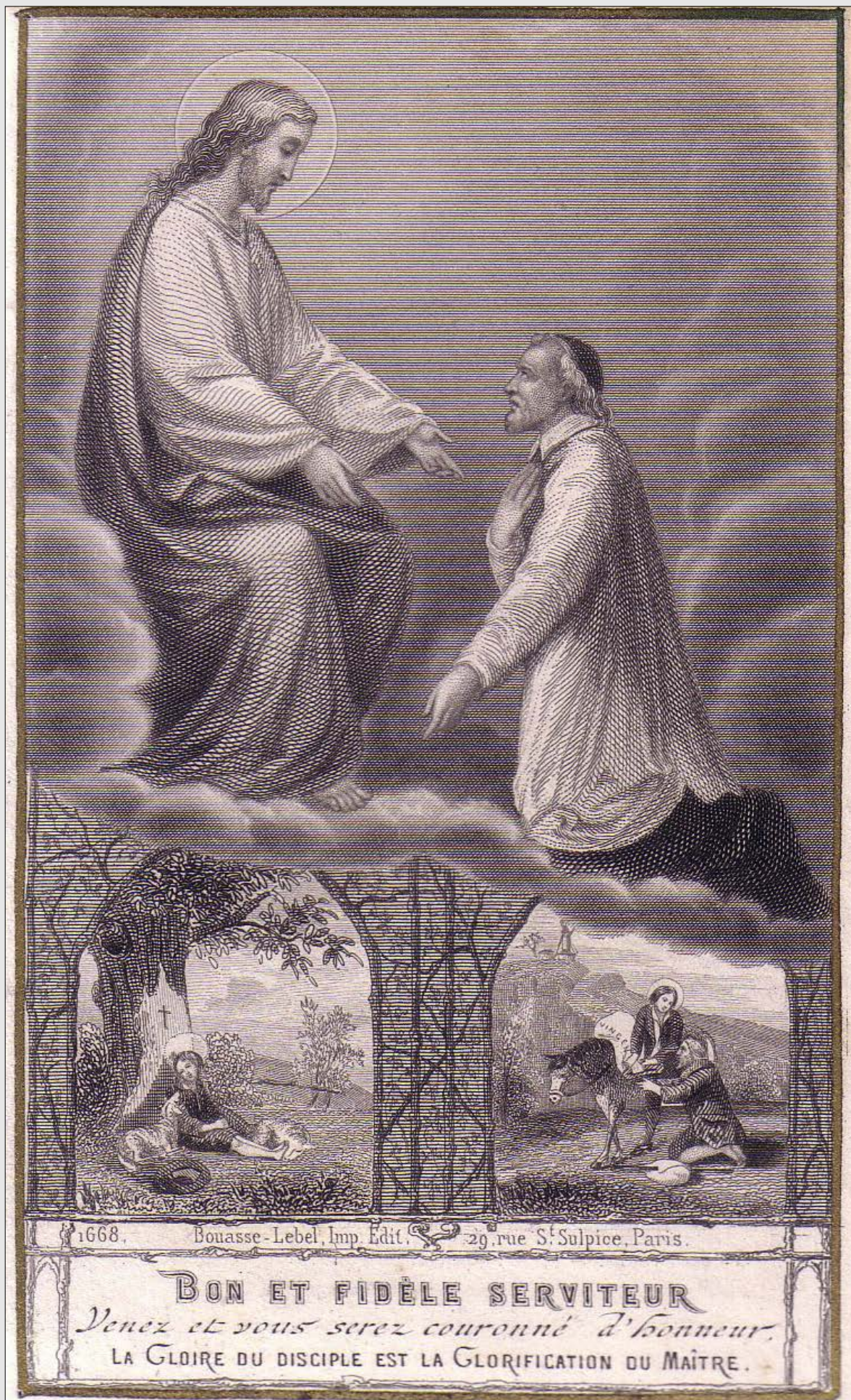


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Vincent de Paul, notary at right, giving the rule for the first Confraternity of Charity in Châtillon.

Lacquer panel; original in Vincentian General Curia, Rome, Italy.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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***“Good and faithful servant come and you will be crowned with honor.
The glory of the disciple is the glorification of his master.”
Of note, scenes picturing Vincent’s holiness as a child.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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***Vincent de Paul welcomes his nephew to Saint-Lazare.
From a series on Vincent's life by Vignola.***

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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**Holy card, the text of which reads:
"Christian Charity. I was ill and you cared for me."**

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online

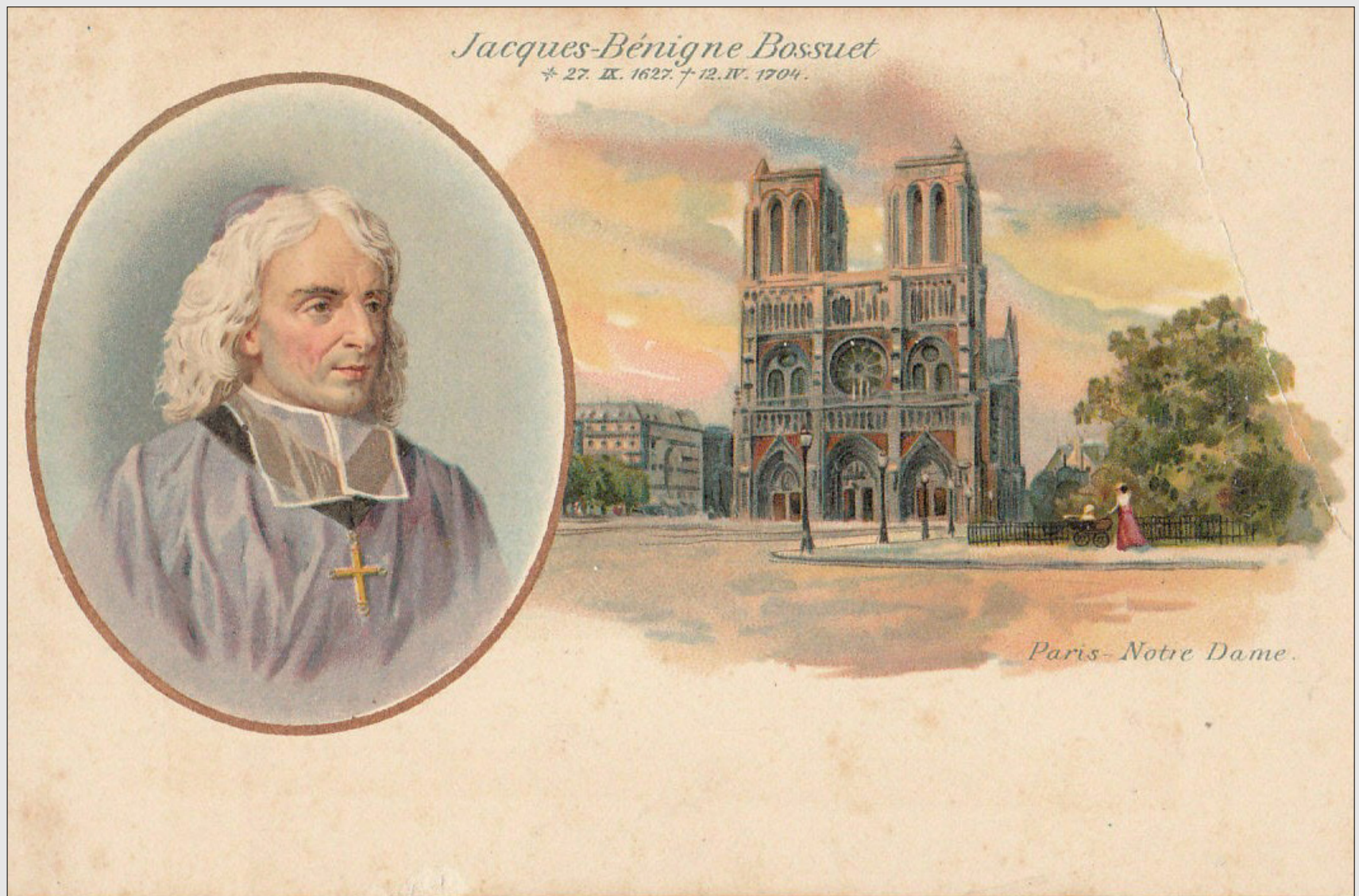


Le vray Portrait du venerable Seruiteur de Dieu, Vincent de Paul, instituteur et premier Superieur general de la Congregation de la mission, doué de plusieurs Vertus, principalement de la Charité, de l'humilité, Vray Pere des pauvres et s'est en son vivant addonné a recevoir des jeunes personnes pour rescevoir les Ordres, ce qui se voit encore aujourd'hui et est mort à Paris dans la maison de s.^t Lazare l'an 1660, aagé de 85. ans.

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“An authentic portrait of the Venerable Servant of God. Vincent de Paul, founder and first superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, endowed with numerous virtues, especially charity, humility, a true father of the poor, dedicated his life to young persons receiving Holy Orders, still done today. Died Paris, Saint-Lazare, in 1660, aged 85.”

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online



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Turn of the twentieth-century postcard featuring Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, and a view of Notre Dame, Paris.

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Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, professor and Holtschneider Chair of Vincentian Studies (center); Salma Ghanem, interim provost (left); and Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; celebrate the Vincentian Studies Institute's 40th anniversary.

Courtesy DePaul University/Randall Spriggs

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NEWSNOTES

NEWS

V.S.I. Celebrates 40th Anniversary and Inaugurates the Holtschneider Chair in Vincentian Studies at DePaul University

From DePaul University's *Newsline*, written by Rachel Marciano: "On Thursday, September 24th, 2019, the university celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Vincentian Studies Institute. Founded in 1979 and sponsored by DePaul as part of the Division of Mission and Ministry, the Vincentian Studies Institute promotes a living interest in the heritage of the Vincentian Family, established by St. Vincent de Paul and St. Louise de Marillac.

"In its 40 years of existence, the Vincentian Studies Institute has contributed extensively to our understanding of St. Vincent, St. Louise and the history of the Congregation of the Mission," says A. Gabriel Esteban, Ph.D., president of DePaul. "No other institution has the scholars, professional and academic expertise or the technological capacity to accomplish what the Vincentian Studies Institute has done. That is indeed something to celebrate," he says.

During the commemoration, DePaul welcomed its inaugural Holtschneider Chair in Vincentian Studies, Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, Ph.D. Joining the university from the Sorbonne in Paris, France, Dr. Brejon de Lavergnée will serve as a full professor, in addition to his role as the first HCVS. Dr. Brejon de Lavergnée has research interests and experience

in nineteenth-century France and Europe, charity, philanthropy and service to the poor, Vincentian history and spirituality—many of which overlap with DePaul’s Vincentian mission and the purpose behind the HCVS.

“This position is an important contribution to DePaul’s investment in Vincentian Studies and fulfillment of the first goal in Grounded in Mission, ‘to ensure DePaul remains the premiere international center for the studies of Vincentian history and spirituality,’” says Scott Kelley, the [now former] associate vice president for mission integration in the Division of Mission and Ministry. “Matthieu is an exceptional scholar who will make important contributions to these efforts and to our campus.”

Housed in the Department of Catholic Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences and named for past university president, the Rev. Dennis H. Holtschneider, C.M., the HCVS reflects DePaul’s continual investment in understanding Vincentian heritage from a scholarly perspective. “Because the VSI is embedded in our Division of Mission and Ministry, Vincentian heritage is one of the pillars of leadership development for mission among students, faculty and staff,” Kelley says. “It makes sense for us to have a chair in Vincentian Studies. As a university sponsored by the Congregation of the Mission, we have developed a much fuller picture of Vincent, Louise and our heritage thanks to the critical research of historians, theologians, and ethicists.”

Beyond conducting research for the VSI, Dr. Brejon de Lavergnée will also teach courses, offer lectures to the campus community, and serve on the board of the Vincentian Studies Institute.” See: [Newsline October 17, 2019](#)

VSI 40th Anniversary Video

In this DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute 40th anniversary video, we celebrate decades of accomplishment in our mission to promote a living interest in the historical, spiritual, and charitable heritage of the Vincentian Family under the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac. Through interviews with its foundational members, we learn how the VSI came about, how it evolved to become the premier international resource for Vincentian studies, and the impact it has had and continues to have on the world today. Watch here: [VSI 40th Anniversary Video on YouTube](#)

V.S.I. Announces New Additional Texts of Vincent de Paul Now Available to Download

The DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute in the Division of Mission & Ministry is pleased to announce the online publication of four volumes of additional Vincent de Paul texts. These supplement the fourteen volumes of *Correspondence, Conferences,*

and Documents of Saint Vincent de Paul, published in French a century ago by Pierre Coste, C.M. The translator and editor of these new works is John E. Rybolt, C.M.

These fully searchable, free to download pdf e-Books offer more than 650 additional texts compiled by Fr. Rybolt since the final translated volume of Coste's collection of Vincent's writings was published in 2014. They represent over 4,000 pages of letters, conferences, and documents which are largely unknown, at least in translation. Gathered over several years thanks to the contributions of many scholars, they appear here in their original languages of French, Latin, and Italian, followed by an English translation.

The four new volumes comprise one each of correspondence and conferences, and two volumes of documents. The Vincentian Studies Institute presents them as an open-ended collection, allowing for additional texts to be added as they come to light, as well as corrections and updates. Finally, it is anticipated that translations of these new materials will become available in other languages and thus further facilitate their use throughout the worldwide Vincentian Family.

We are making these new texts available to download for free on *Via Sapientiae*, the institutional repository of DePaul University. This repository hosts a wide variety of the V.S.I.'s publications and collected works and is utilized by thousands of scholars and interested readers around the world each year. Click through to access each new volume of the collection:

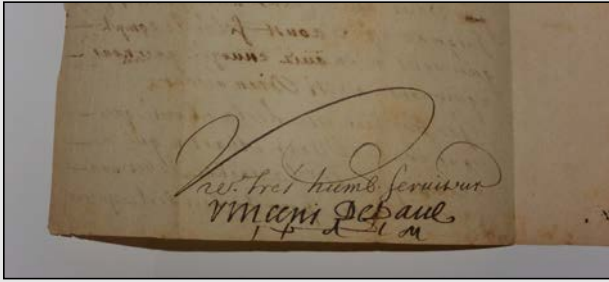
- [Correspondence: CCD Additional Texts](#)
- [Conferences: CCD Additional Texts](#)
- [Documents, part one: CCD Additional Texts](#)
- [Documents, part two: CCD Additional Texts](#)

It is hoped that these new texts will further our understanding and appreciation of the great saint of charity, Vincent de Paul.

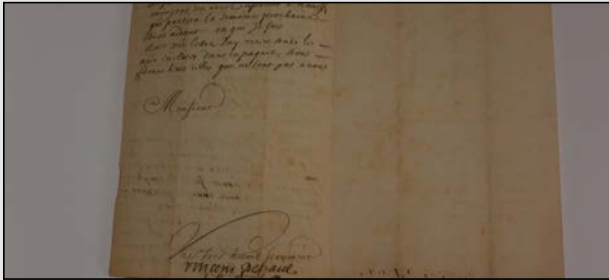
COVID-19: Some Wisdom from the Past. The Experience of St. Vincent de Paul

In light of the pandemic that has swept the world this year, we invite you to read a remarkable new essay by Reverend Robert P. Maloney, C.M., 23rd Superior General of the Congregation of the Mission, on how Vincent de Paul approached the challenges of mass sickness and plague during his era, and what these words might mean for us. The work is published on the DePaul University [Division of Mission and Ministry blog](#) and is also available for download as a pdf.

This notable piece has also been recorded as a podcast, the audio of which can be heard on the blog or by visiting the [Vincentian Heritage Podcast page](#). We hope that you will share this work with family, friends, and colleagues.



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DePaul University Acquires Two More Letters of Vincent de Paul

Rev. Edward Udovic, C.M., on behalf of the Vincentian Studies Institute, and in coordination with the Division of Mission & Ministry, is happy to announce the recent acquisitions of two Vincent de Paul manuscript letters.

The first [pictured here] was purchased in February of 2020. The letter is number 2656 in volume 7 of Pierre Coste's *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, and was originally part of the Hains Family Collection. The collection was put up for auction on 28 October 1989 by French bookseller Xavier Charmoy and included thirty-two letters to Firmin Get, one to Philippe Le Vacher, and one to Dominique Lhuillier. This letter was written by St. Vincent's secretary Bertrand Ducournau (1614-1686) and signed by Vincent de Paul at the bottom. 2 pages. 18 x 12cm.

The second, purchased several weeks later, is another previously known Vincent letter. This letter is number 3011 in volume 8 of Coste. It was also originally part of the Hains Family Collection. The letter was written by St. Vincent's secretary Bertrand Ducournau and signed by Vincent de Paul at the bottom. The postscript is also in the saint's handwriting. 1 page. 18 x 12cm.

Both letters will join our growing Vincentiana manuscript collection at DePaul University's Archives and Special Collections, the repository for the Vincentiana Collections of the Vincentian Studies Institute of the United States.

In Memoriam: Sister Josephine Burns, D.C., Coauthor of “Praying with Elizabeth Seton”

Josephine Burns and her twin sister, Mary, were born 18 January 1930 in Watertown, New York. Even though their paths diverged greatly, they remained close. In later years, Sr. Josephine resided at Labouré Residence in Los Altos Hills, and Mary resided at the Daughters-sponsored Villa Siena in Mountain View.

Sr. Josephine valued education, writing, teaching, and devoting her life to the mission of the Daughters of Charity. She entered Postulatum in 1949 at St. Patrick School in San Francisco, and finished in 1950 at St. Philomena’s in St. Louis, Missouri. She received the Holy Habit on 30 December 1950 and made vows for the first time on 2 February 1955. Her many talents including singing, playing the piano and organ, and directing choir.

She graduated from Immaculate Heart Academy in Watertown in 1947 and continued her studies in Spanish at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1956, Sr. Josephine earned a B.S. in Education, Philosophy, English, and Social Psychology from Fontbonne College in St. Louis, and added a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Marquette University, Milwaukee, in 1968.

Sister Josephine began her teaching career in 1951 and she devoted much of her career to education. Her calling took her from St. Patrick School in Chicago, to St. Louise de Marillac School in St. Louis, to Marillac College in St. Louis, to Cathedral High School in San Francisco, and finally a lengthy residence at Cosgriff School in Salt Lake City. Beginning in 1991, she served as Vice President of Mission Services at Seton Provincialate, and, in 1996, Sister Servant at Mount St. Joseph-St Elizabeth in San Francisco, before returning to Seton Provincialate in 1999.

In June of 2011 she was missioned to Labouré Residence as a full-time resident where she continued to share her love of poetry and writing. Over the years her health declined, and on 19 September 2019, she died peacefully surrounded by loved ones. She was 89 years old and 69 years vocation. She was laid to rest at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Los Altos, California.

The V.S.I. would especially like to acknowledge Sister Josephine’s contribution to better understanding Elizabeth Seton. She was coauthor, with Margaret Alderman, of *Companions for the Journey: Praying with Elizabeth Seton* published in 1992. The book continues to be a valuable, popular Seton resource and has been reprinted several times over. We thank her, and celebrate a life devoted to education and service.

In Memoriam: Rev. John W. Carven, C.M., a founding member of the Vincentian Studies Institute and the first editor of Vincentian Heritage

John Winslow Carven was born in 1932. After entering the Congregation of the Mission in 1952, he pursued his theological studies, and was ordained in 1960. His first assignment was at St. John's in Brooklyn, where he taught religion, until his transfer to Niagara University in 1964, where he taught history. He earned an M.A. in History at St. John's University, and in 1971 completed his Ph.D. in History at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In addition, he did graduate work leading to his dissertation: *Napoleon and the Lazarists*, published in 1974.

He was one of two American confreres—the other being Stafford Poole, C.M.—to begin meetings of *Groupe International d'Etudes Vincentiennes* (GIEV) following the 1974 General Assembly. This group was revised into the *Secrétariat International d'Etudes Vincentiennes* (SIEV), in 1980. Their purpose, to promote Vincentian studies, led to the formation of a national organization, still in existence, the DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute (VSI). At first, the membership was limited to members of the Congregation of the Mission, but gradually it expanded to include the Daughters of Charity, and then others with scholarly interest in the field of Vincentian studies. Fr. Carven served as the first editor of the VSI's journal, *Vincentian Heritage*. It began publication in 1979.

Through these years, besides authoring other studies of Vincentian interest, Fr. Carven devoted himself increasingly to collaboration with a team of translators and editors charged with producing the first comprehensive English translation of Pierre Coste's monumental French publication of *Saint Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, and Documents* [CCD]. For this purpose, in 1985 he moved to Emmitsburg, Maryland, where the translation project was headquartered with editor and translator Sr. Marie Poole, D.C. In 1994, he received a new assignment, St. Joseph's Seminary, in Princeton, N.J., where he continued the translation work and took charge of the archives of the Eastern Province. Renamed the Ducournau Archives, it moved from St. John's University, Jamaica, N.Y., to St. Vincent's Seminary, Philadelphia, the headquarters of the Eastern Province.

In addition to his expert annotations for all thirteen volumes, Fr. Carven's most significant work was the one-volume Index to the English translation of CCD published in 2014. It is a complex work of more than 600 pages. This guide to the saint's texts reveals his relationship to the Daughters of Charity and other religious communities, as well as the leaders and reformers of the Church in his time. Paging through this dense index, one can pull out aspects of the founder's thinking, theology, and spirituality. Fr. Carven's attention to detail and meticulous research are evident on every page.

Rev. John W. Carven, C.M., passed away on 11 September 2020. We wish to especially recognize his life of scholarship and his immense contributions to the VSI, to *Vincentian Heritage*, and the greater field of Vincentian studies.

A Congratulations to Dr. Edward Gray

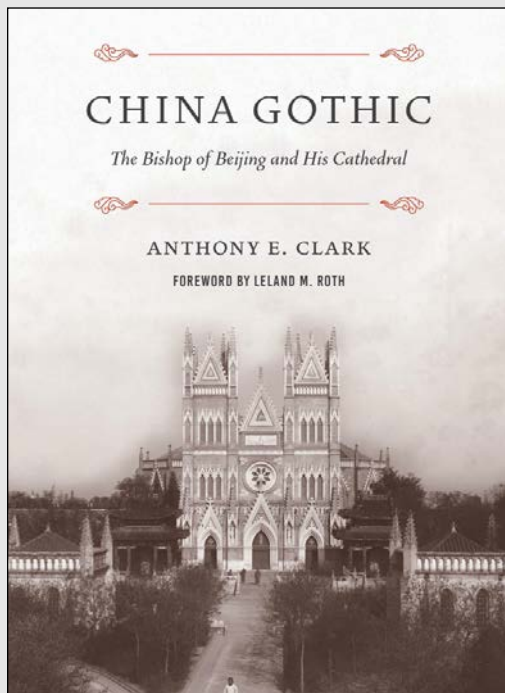
We would like to extend a congratulations to former V.S.I. research grant recipient Dr. Edward Gray of Purdue University for the recent successful defense of his dissertation entitled “The Marillac: Family Strategy, Religion, and Diplomacy in the Making of the French State during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.” A major grant provided by the V.S.I. allowed Dr. Gray to begin his research in France in 2016. He is now planning to continue work on the manuscript with a goal of presenting it to an academic publisher for consideration.

News on the Seton Writings Project

[The Seton Writings Project](#) announces the completion of Phase Two of its multiyear research into documents written to and about Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, her family, friends, community, and advisers. This digital material, available in the Vincentian Heritage Collections of DePaul University Library, includes seven chronological charts listing over 1,000 documents from 1767 through 1821 (the latest addition), including undated material, and their archival locations. Researchers will find these digital charts helpful in locating materials relevant to early American Church history. In particular, these materials shed light on Seton’s early life and conversion, the struggles and growth of Catholicism in the early republic, and the spread of the Vincentian charism in the United States as embraced by Mother Seton for her 1809 foundation of the Sisters of Charity in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Digital transcripts of selected documents are posted for each chart, by permission from their respective archives. Transcripts of additional documents may be posted in the future, pending archival permissions. We gratefully acknowledge the support of DePaul University’s Division of Mission and Ministry, Vincentian Studies Institute, and University Library. Seton Writings Project scholars include Regina Bechtle, S.C., and Judith Metz, S.C. (project co-editors), Vivien Linkhauer, S.C., and Betty Ann McNeil, D.C.

Contact us at: Judith.metz@srcharitycinti.org or rbechtle@scny.org



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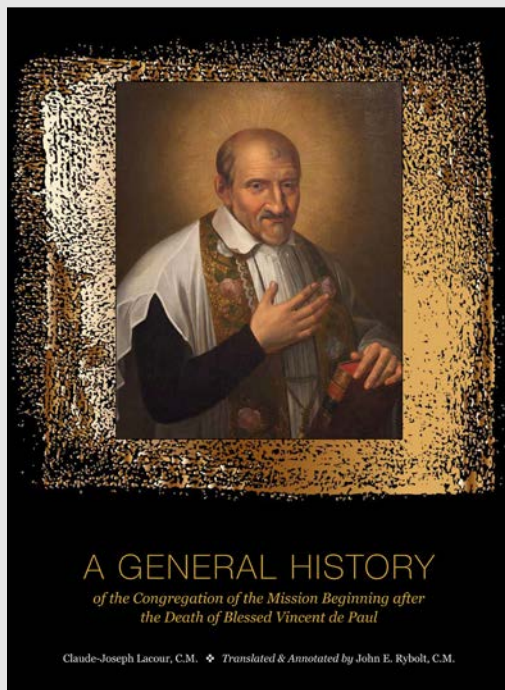
PUBLICATIONS

NOTABLE BOOKS

Anthony E. Clark, *China Gothic: The Bishop of Beijing and His Cathedral* (University of Washington Press, 2020), 240 pp. ISBN: 9780295746678. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/China-Gothic-Bishop-Beijing-Cathedral/dp/9780295746678)

We are pleased to announce the release of Dr. Clark's new book. Research completed for this publication was funded in part by the V.S.I.'s [research grant program](#). From University of Washington Press: "As China struggled to redefine itself at the turn of the twentieth century, nationalism, religion, and material culture intertwined in revealing ways. This phenomenon is evident in the twin biographies of North China's leading Catholic bishop of the time, Alphonse Favier, C.M. (1837–1905), and the Beitang cathedral, epicenter of the Roman Catholic mission in China through incarnations that began in 1701. After its relocation and reconstruction under Favier's supervision, the cathedral—and Favier—miraculously survived a two-month siege in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion. Featuring a French Gothic Revival design augmented by Chinese dragon-shaped gargoyles, marble balustrades in the style of Daoist and Buddhist temples, and other Chinese aesthetic flourishes, Beitang remains an icon of Sino-Western interaction.

Anthony Clark draws on archival materials from the Vatican and collections in France, Italy, China, Poland, and the United States to trace the prominent role of French architecture in introducing Western culture and Catholicism to China. A principal device was the aesthetic imagined by the Gothic Revival movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the premier example of this in China being the Beitang cathedral. Bishop Favier's biography is



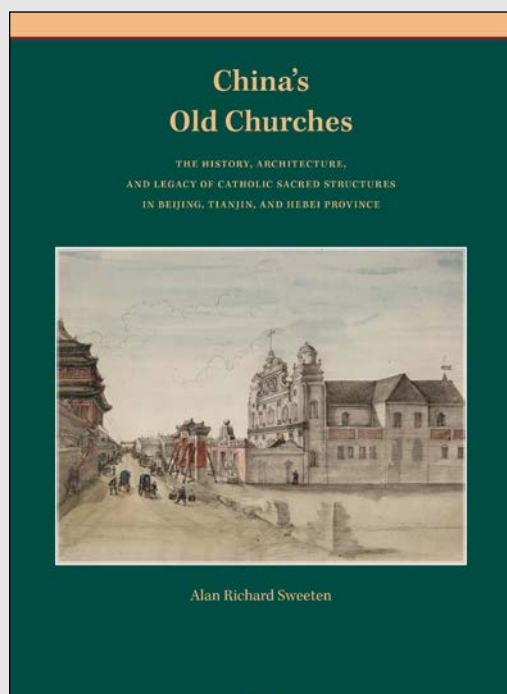
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a lens through which to examine Western missionaries' role in colonial endeavors and their complex relationship with the Chinese communities in which they lived and worked.”

Rose-Marie Peake, *The Power of Religious Societies in Shaping Early Modern Society and Identities* (Amsterdam University Press, 2020), 246 pp. ISBN: 9789462986688. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B085N3N3N3)

From the publisher: “*The Power of Religious Societies in Shaping Early Modern Society and Identities* studies the value system of the French Catholic community the Filles de la Charité, or the Daughters of Charity, in the first half of the seventeenth century. An analysis of the activities aimed at edifying morality in the different strata of society revealed a Christian anthropology with strong links to medieval traditions. The book argues that this was an important survival strategy for the Company with a disconcerting religious identity: the non-cloistered lifestyle of its members engaged in charity work had been made unlawful in the Council of Trent. Moreover, the directors Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul also had to find ways to curtail internal resistance as the sisters rebelled in quest of a more contemplative and enclosed vocation.”

John E. Rybolt, C.M., trans. & annot., Claude-Joseph Lacour, C.M., *A General History of the Congregation of the Mission Beginning after the Death of Blessed Vincent de Paul* (DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, 2020), 306 pp. Available: [Free to download on Via Sapientiae](#)



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The DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute in the Department of Mission & Ministry, Chicago, Illinois, is pleased to announce our English language translation of *A General History of the Congregation of the Mission Beginning after the Death of Blessed Vincent de Paul*, by Claude-Joseph Lacour, C.M. This new title is offered free-of-charge to the public.

This work is the earliest known history of the Congregation of the Mission and dates from about 1730. Vincentian historian John E. Rybolt, C.M., building on the initiative of Stafford Poole, C.M., completed this English translation from the original French. The author, Claude-Joseph Lacour, C.M. (1672-1731), drew from already published materials and his own recollections. While the story he tells may seem familiar, Lacour included materials that are unknown anywhere else and delivers a first-hand account of the Congregation's rapid growth in those early days. The text is essential reading for anyone wishing to better understand Vincent de Paul's society of apostolic life of priests and brothers following his death.

A General History of the Congregation of the Mission is the latest monograph in our continuing series of scholarly, important works published by the V.S.I. It is designed for tablets and computer as a high-res interactive .pdf. The eBook has been rigorously annotated by Fr. Rybolt and is fully illustrated and searchable. We recommend that you utilize Adobe Reader or a similar program to optimize your reading experience.

Alan Richard Sweeten, *China's Old Churches: The History, Architecture, and Legacy of Catholic Sacred Structures in Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei Province* (Brill, 2020), 442 pp. ISBN: 978-9004416123. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

We are pleased to announce the release of Dr. Sweeten's new book. Research completed for this publication was funded in part by the V.S.I.'s [research grant program](#). From Brill: "*China's Old Churches*, by Alan Sweeten, surveys the history of Catholicism in China (1600 to the present) as reflected by the location, style, and details of sacred structures in three crucial areas of north China. Closely examined are the most famous and important churches in the urban settings of Beijing and Tianjin, as well as lesser-known ones in rural Hebei Province. Missionaries built Western-looking churches to make a broad religious statement important to themselves and Chinese worshippers. Non-Catholics, however, tended to see churches as socio-politically foreign and culturally invasive. The physical-visual impact of church buildings is significant. Today, restored old churches and new sacred structures are still mostly of Western style, but often include a sacred grotto dedicated to Our Lady of China—a growing number of Catholics supporting Marian-centered activities."

NOTABLE VIDEOS

Watch Mykhailo Bogdanov's short film which won the DePaul University Division of Mission & Ministry's 2019 Vinny Prize, titled: *Public Action to Deliver Shelter*.

Two years ago, DePaul film student, Mykhailo Bogdanov, volunteered at P.A.D.S. for an overnight shift. He was fascinated by the dedication and love showed by the staff to every person who came in for shelter. That night changed him forever. He described it as "an unbelievable experience to help and most importantly, to give my time to those who were in need of it." It was so marking, in fact, that he decided to create a short film about it which went on to win first place in the 2019 Vinny Prize competition. View online: [Public Action to Deliver Shelter](#)

[Skip Gallery](#)



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Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, professor and Holtschneider Chair of Vincentian Studies (center); Salma Ghanem, interim provost (left); and Guillermo Vásquez de Velasco, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences; celebrate the Vincentian Studies Institute's 40th anniversary.

Courtesy DePaul University/Randall Spriggs

Rev. tres humb. serviteur
Vnami Depaul
14 11 11

onvoyant un auct. Supérieur à l'anné
qui partira la semaine prochaine
Dieu aidant en qui je suis
Avec v're Lettre. J'ay reçu tous les
auct. inclosés dans le paquet. Nous
ferons huir celles qui ne sont pas a nous
Monsieur
Rev. tres humb. serviteur
Vnami Depaul
14 11 11

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CHINA GOTHIC

The Bishop of Beijing and His Cathedral

ANTHONY E. CLARK

FOREWORD BY LELAND M. ROTH



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A GENERAL HISTORY

*of the Congregation of the Mission Beginning after
the Death of Blessed Vincent de Paul*

Claude-Joseph Lacour, C.M. ❖ Translated & Annotated by John E. Rybolt, C.M.

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STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY IN EAST ASIA

China's Old Churches

THE HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE,
AND LEGACY OF CATHOLIC SACRED STRUCTURES
IN BEIJING, TIANJIN, AND HEBEI PROVINCE



Alan Richard Sweeten

BRILL

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Vincentian Heritage is the journal of the Vincentian Studies Institute of the United States. Founded in 1979 the Institute is dedicated to promoting a living interest in the historical and spiritual heritage of Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-660) and Saint Louise de Marillac (1591-1660), the patrons of the wide-ranging Vincentian Family including the Congregation of the Mission, the Daughters of Charity, the Ladies of Charity, the Sisters of Charity, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and a number of other congregations, communities, and lay movements who share a common dedication to serving those in need.

Vincentian Heritage welcomes manuscripts, poetry, and other expressions of Vincentian themes that meet the publication criteria. All articles should relate directly to topics of Vincentian interest, be researched and documented in a scholarly fashion, and directed toward Vincentian-oriented groups in the reading public and the Vincentian family. Ordinarily, articles should not exceed thirty typewritten pages and should be submitted twelve months prior to anticipated publication.

All manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be addressed to:

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Cover image: Oil painting of Vincent de Paul; original in Vincentian house, San Silvestro, Rome, Italy. Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online.

Nathaniel Michaud, editor; Miranda Lukatch contributing.

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