



ENLIGHTENED BY  
VINCENT'S SPIRIT

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**LINDA BUCHANAN, M.F.A.**, recently retired, was Associate Dean for Curricular Development at The Theatre School at DePaul University where she was also Head of Scene Design. She received an M.F.A. in Theatre Design from Northwestern University. Buchanan has designed scenery for hundreds of productions at theatres in Chicago, regionally, and in the UK, and environments for corporate and special events. Buchanan has received numerous awards for her theatre and corporate design work, and her work has been published in a broad range of journals in her discipline.

**SISTER SUNG-HAE KIM, S.C.**, is a professor emeritus in the Department of Religious Studies, Sogang University in Seoul, Korea. Sister Sung-Hae presently serves as a General Superior for the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill at the Generalate in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. After entering the Sisters of Charity of Seton Hill in 1965, Sister made her final vows in 1972. She 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).

**DONALD R. MARTIN, Ph.D.**, is a Professor of Communication in the College of Communication at DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. Martin served as Associate Dean and Department Chair during his years of service to the college. Martin teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Communication and Corporate Culture, Communication and Organizational Change, and Qualitative Research Methods. Martin’s published research has appeared in both national and regional journals and explores the challenges faced by immigrants in adjusting to the American health care system, the importance of patient advocacy, and the obstacles to effective team functioning in health care contexts.

*Continued*

**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, and he has recently completed work on the multi-volume series *The Vincentians: A General History of the Congregation of the Mission*.

**CHRISTOPHER WORTHMAN, Ph.D.**, teaches in the Secondary English Education Program at DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois. He has taught in middle schools and high schools in Chicago, and has coordinated and facilitated literacy programs for teenage mothers and pregnant teens in community-based settings across the city. His research interests include in- and out-of-school literacy development, particularly for adolescents and adults who have not been well served by formal education. He is also interested in the role of listening and storytelling in literacy development, and how teachers can facilitate an environment of active empathy. He has published and presented his work nationally and internationally.

**PAUL ZIONTS, Ph.D.**, has served as the Dean of DePaul's College of Education since his appointment in July 2009. Zionts taught students who had emotional and behavioral disorders in a reform school and in an inner-city high school in Hartford, Connecticut, before becoming a faculty member and chairperson at Central Michigan University and Kent State University. He served as Dean of the School of Education at the University of Michigan-Dearborn before joining DePaul University. Zionts has held several national leadership positions, including President of the Council for Children with Behavior Disorders. His research interests include educating children and youth with emotional and behavioral disorders, cognitive behavioral interventions, and classroom management. He is the author, co-author, or editor of five books and numerous articles and chapters.

*Continued*

### *Special Contributing Artist:*

**LAURA WILLIAMS** is a senior studying graphic design in the School of Design at DePaul University. In this issue, she contributed original artwork created to illustrate Rev. Rybolt's article *Vincent de Paul's World of Animals*. Ms. Williams expects to graduate in 2018 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Laura was born in China and raised in the Chicagoland area; she demonstrated an interest in the arts and technology from an early age. She enjoys travel and sports, and looks forward to graduation and a career in her area of study.

# Vincent de Paul's World of Animals

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JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., PH.D.

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The late André Dodin, a Vincentian scholar, began a study on the animal world during the time Vincent de Paul lived. Incomplete and unfinished at Dodin's death, it came to me. The purpose of this study is to expose a single aspect of Vincent's world: animal life. It is amazingly rich, since analysis of Vincent's texts has shown more than 650 animal citations, sometimes with several mentioned in the same passage. In all he referred to more than one hundred animals, either directly by name, or indirectly either by citing their actions (such as bark, bite, gnaw, peck), or where they were kept (such as a stable, barn, or pen). To place some limits on such a large block of passages, it was necessary to omit animal products (such as eggs, honey, milk), along with other agricultural products.

To start with the results of the research, the majority of passages come from the founder's conferences to the Daughters of Charity or the Congregation of the Mission. In those cases, the references to the animal world are used to offer examples for living, much as fables still do, now mostly through children's television. In so doing, Vincent was following his regular practice, which he even urged a confrere to follow in Madagascar: to use "arguments taken from nature."<sup>1</sup> Many passages, often repeated, cite biblical expressions for this same purpose.

Reading these texts reveals Vincent's awareness of the natural world around him, something that certainly had roots in his rural childhood along with his ministry among the country folk of his later life. His care and even respect for the animal world, while not a major theme, is evident in his writings. We likewise see aspects of a scientific knowledge rooted in antiquity, now regarded as folk medicine (see his anxiety over an elk foot). He did not hesitate to cite non-existent animals, like the dragon, basilisk, and monsters, or to cite ancient fables in Aesop's collection.

Interestingly, the papal bull of canonization, *Superna Jerusalem*, alluded to an aspect of his character that shows up in his citation of animals, namely contemplation of the world around him. In paragraph 30, Pope Clement XII linked Vincent's devotional practice of the presence of God to the contemplation of nature: "Whatever he saw with his eyes, with diligence and holy industry he saw to it that they would recall the creator of all to his mind. They sing the glory and praise of God in their own way, and arouse the contemplation of heavenly beauty."<sup>2</sup>

The most frequently cited animals were the most common types found in his era: the horse, cow, sheep, swine, poultry, and even wolves. He mentioned animals generically quite often, usually to draw a distinction between how animals live and how humans should live. He referred to himself in pejorative terms (a worm, a beast), as everyone knew who met him. Some of his expressions grew out of his own observations, in fact, his contemplation of the world around him coupled with his daily meditation. His observations on loaded

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<sup>1</sup> Letter 1020, "To Charles Nacquart, In Richelieu," 22 March 1648, in Pierre Coste, C.M., *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, vols. 1-14 (New York: New City Press, 1985-2014), 3:280. Hereafter cited as *CCD*.

<sup>2</sup> *Acta apostolica. Bullae, brevia et rescripta in gratiam Congregationis Missionis*, Paris, 1876, pp. 118-33, citation, p. 127; French translation in Michel Ulysse Maynard, *Saint Vincent de Paul*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1860), 4:413-37.



The chase.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



pack animals waiting patiently for their owners to arrive are a classic of this type, since he drew a moral lesson about waiting on divine providence from what he saw.

## Domesticated animals

*Horse:* Vincent lived in a world of horses. It is little wonder, then, that references to them are frequent in his writings. These can be divided into two major categories. The first deals with actual mentions of the animals, their use and importance, their effect on his life and health, and their role in the life of the Congregation. These references are often found in his letters. The second category primarily appears in his conferences, either simple mention of horses or references to them for some spiritual or moral lesson.

The earliest mentions come in Vincent's first letter, where he mentions his criminal sale of a hired horse and his treatment in the slave market in Barbary.<sup>3</sup> Two letters also track his accidents involving horses, including a kick from a horse (1631), and falling under a horse (1633).<sup>4</sup> He was quite cautious about allowing houses to own a horse. He knew of cases when a superior with a horse would "go riding, make visits, waste time," something he could not abide. Instead, he wanted houses to hire a horse as needed.<sup>5</sup> He was also generous in proposing suitable (and more expensive) means to transport the furniture needed for the Missioners to conduct a mission.<sup>6</sup> Based on his own experience, he freely allowed those who needed better transport to secure it, mainly for the sake of the individual

<sup>3</sup> Letter 1, "To Monsieur de Comet, In Dax," 24 July 1607, *CCD*, 1:1-11.

<sup>4</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 69, "To Saint Louise," [May 1631], 1:108-09; Letter 137, "To Saint Louise," 1 May [1633], 1:199-200; also, Letter 2513, "To Charles Ozenne," 18 January 1658, 7:67-69; Letter 2518, "To Jean Martin," 25 January 1658, 7:74-76; and Letter 2530, "To Charles Ozenne," 8 February 1658, 7:90-93, a fall from his carriage.

<sup>5</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 1950, "To Donat Crowley," 27 October 1655, 5:462; Letter 1642, "To a Superior," 19 July 1653, 4:599-600; and Conference 43, "How to Act amid Difficulties when far from the Motherhouse," 19 April 1650, 9:391-401.

<sup>6</sup> Letter 461, "To Bernard Codoing," 26 July 1640, *CCD*, 2:87-94.

(including Louise de Marillac). "Hire a stretcher and rent two good strong horses. I would have sent you a litter, but I do not know which you need, a litter or a stretcher. I entreat you, Mademoiselle, to spare nothing and, whatever it may cost, to get what will be the most comfortable for you."<sup>7</sup>

In his younger life, Vincent was an accomplished rider. As Antoine de Gramont related to Antoine Durand, Vincentian pastor of Fontainebleau, he and some friends had chased Vincent, riding a white horse, from Saint-Denis to Paris, shooting their pistols and shouting after him as if they were robbers. He outrode them and entered the first church he saw, thanking God for his miraculous escape.<sup>8</sup>

In Vincent's later life, he appreciated the contradiction and bad example between his having a carriage and houses not being allowed even to own a horse. "I am well aware that you can say to me, 'Physician, heal yourself,' because I used a horse in the past and now I use a carriage. This is true, to my great shame, but it is true also that necessity has obliged me to do so. However, if you advise me to act otherwise, Monsieur, I shall do so."<sup>9</sup> Later on, he had horses and a coachman at Saint-Lazare, used often for his own trips in the city and for Louise's.<sup>10</sup> He also recommended use of a carriage for Missioners who needed one.<sup>11</sup>

During his conferences, Vincent continued to refer to horses, such as comparing their obedience to their rider to the obedience expected of a Daughter of Charity to Divine Providence or to her superiors.<sup>12</sup> He recommended to both the Sisters and his confreres the practices of three saints that involved horses. St. Charles Borromeo often meditated and even went to confession to his chaplain while riding.<sup>13</sup> St. Isidore the Farmer regularly left his plow horses in the field so that he could attend Mass, an action pleasing to God.<sup>14</sup> Even before his baptism, St. Martin of Tours, also while riding, performed an act of charity to a poor man, another action pleasing to God.<sup>15</sup> More than once Vincent told the story of the

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<sup>7</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 420, "To Saint Louise," 22 January 1640, 2:11-12; and 422, "To Saint Louise," 31 January 1640, 2:14-17; also Letter 1427, "To Jean-Baptiste Gilles," 28 November 1651, 4:279-81.

<sup>8</sup> *Journal de Antoine Durand*, ed. Abbé Estournet (Fontainebleau, 1899), pp. 152-53.

<sup>9</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 1427, "To Jean-Baptiste Gilles," 28 November 1651, 4:280-81; see also Letter 1967, "To a Priest of the Mission," 30 November 1655, 5:480-81; Letter 1950, "To Donat Crowley," 27 October 1655, 5:461-62; Conference 87, "Uniformity, Chastity, and Modesty," 18 November 1657, 10:293-307; and Conference 182, "Detachment from the Goods of This World," 8 June 1658, 12:17-24 (where he calls his carriage an infamy).

<sup>10</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 2663, "To Saint Louise [19 or 20 September 1658], 7:280-81; Letter 2667, "Saint Louise to Saint Vincent," [September 1658], 7:286-87.

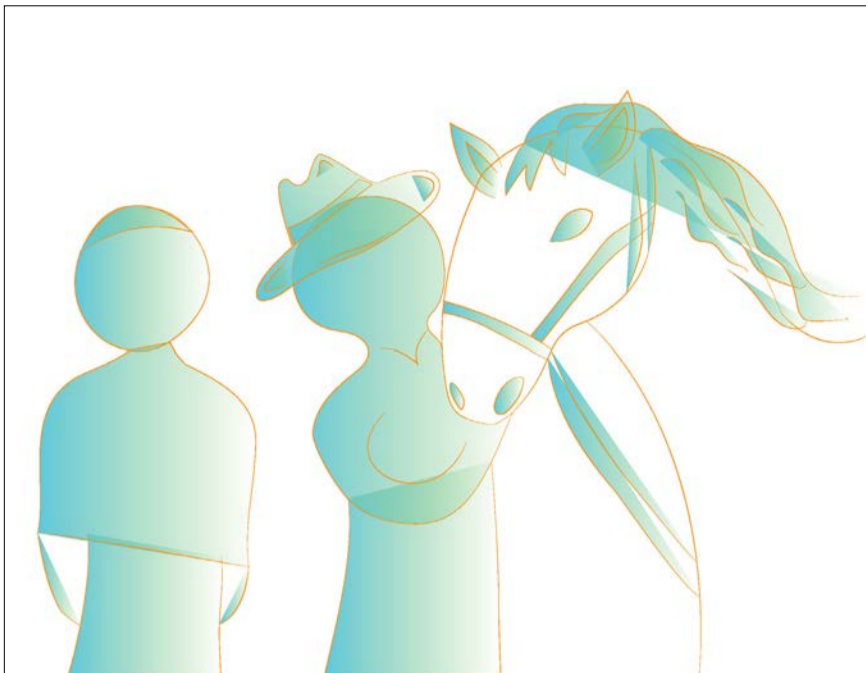
<sup>11</sup> Letter 2947, "To Edme Jolly," 22 August 1659, *CCD*, 8:101-02.

<sup>12</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 13, "Imitating the Virtues of Village Girls," 25 January 1643, 9:66-78; Conference 16, "The Foundlings," 7 December 1643, 9:104-15; Conference 116, "Indifference," 8 December 1659, 10:556-61.

<sup>13</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 105, "Rising, Prayer, Examination of Conscience, etc.," 17 November 1658, 10:468-88; and Conference 78, "Recommendations for Conduct while Traveling," 11:85-86.

<sup>14</sup> Conference 143, "Repetition of Prayer: Conformity to the Will of God," 17 October 1655, *CCD*, 11:284-88.

<sup>15</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 158, "Repetition of Prayer: Various Topics," 11 November 1656, 11:330-34; and Conference 193, "Repetition of Prayer: Various Topics," 11 November 1658, 12:61-63.



"How are your horses getting along?"

Courtesy of Laura Williams



Count of Rougemont's conversion, riding his horse, meditating on his life, and deciding to break his attachment to his sword.<sup>16</sup>

In one particularly charming and revealing incident, he suggested to his confreres how they could open a conversation with simple and uneducated persons, leading them from ordinary matters to more important and spiritual ones. He recommended a practice surely his own in asking: "How are your horses getting along? How's this? How's that? How are you doing?"<sup>17</sup>

He recommended the holy indifference practiced by the saints, such as Paul the Apostle. Although the biblical text does not support the affirmation, Vincent claimed that "God knocked him off his horse," and Paul sought only to do the divine will.<sup>18</sup> Vincent reflected on the same indifference by interpreting Ps 73:23 ("I was like a brute beast in your presence") as referring to Jesus speaking through the prophet (the psalmist). If Jesus was like an indifferent brute beast, a *jument* or mare, so should the members of the Congregation be.<sup>19</sup>

Plow horses could also symbolize the coordinated activities required of the confreres at times, the necessity of pulling in the same direction.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, there could

<sup>16</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 73, "Indifference," 6 June 1656, 10:126-46; Conference 89, "Trials and Attachments," 19 February 1642, 11:103-04; and Conference 205, "Indifference," 16 May 1659, 12:187-201.

<sup>17</sup> Conference 161, "Duty of Catechizing Persons Who are Poor," 17 November 1656, *CCD*, 11:344.

<sup>18</sup> Conference 81, "The Practice of Asking For and Refusing Nothing," 17 June 1657, *CCD*, 10:223, referring to Acts 9:1-9; 22:6-11; and 26:12-18.

<sup>19</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 116, "Indifference," 8 December 1659, 10:556-61; and Conference 117, "Indifference," 14 December 1659, 10:561-69; Vulgate Ps 72:23: *ut iumentum factus sum apud te*.

<sup>20</sup> Conference 104a, "Charity and Union," [end of 1646], *CCD*, 11:137; see Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God: Vincent de Paul*, trans. William Quinn, F.S.C., 3 vols. (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1993), 2, ch. 1, sect. 8, pp. 126-34, the missions in Ireland.

also be negative connotations: horse-love or donkey-love being what those Sisters practice in exclusive relationships with one another; and those confreres given to drinking in excess live like horses or pigs, incapable of moderation.<sup>21</sup>

He referred metaphorically to bridles to signify the need to control persons or passions.<sup>22</sup> Many other citations exist, particularly in his correspondence, but they largely refer to ordinary events involving horses, mares, mounts, coaches, saddles, riders, and stables.

*Donkey (ass), mule:* In his letters, Vincent occasionally mentioned the need to hire a donkey, most likely to pull a small cart for Sisters traveling to a mission.<sup>23</sup> Vincent also referred to the biblical account of Balaam and his donkey, who spoke to him in God's name (Nm 22:28-30). He similarly described the Muslim wife of his supposed owner in Tunis although she was not a believer, God still used her to convince her husband to return to his faith. Vincent also referred to himself in this manner: although a donkey, he could still have something to say.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, in another biblical reference, he considered the story of Saul: he sought his she-ass but he found a kingdom.<sup>25</sup>

During the assembly of 1651, to make the point that it is impossible to please everyone, Vincent referred to the classical folk tale from Aesop, concerning the man, the boy, and the donkey.<sup>26</sup>

In his usual contemplative fashion, Vincent returned three times to one experience. "I saw ten or twelve heavily-laden mules halted near the door of a tavern, waiting for the men in charge of them, who very probably were drinking inside this same tavern. I kept thinking about those poor beasts, with their burden on their back, standing there without moving, waiting for their master and leader."<sup>27</sup> The lesson was patience and a readiness to obey. In another conference, he reflected on how the animals were caparisoned, as with gold, feathers, and ornamental carpets. The lesson here was not to become puffed up with

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<sup>21</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 96, "Cordiality, Respect, and Exclusive Friendships," 2 June 1658, 10:390-403; and Conference 187, "Moderation in Eating and Drinking," 23 August 1658, 12:37-44.

<sup>22</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 38, "The Spirit of the World," 28 July 1648, 9:337-44; Conference 204, "Mortification," 2 May 1659, 12:173-87; and Document 198, "Report on the State of the Works," 11 July 1657, 13b:426-41.

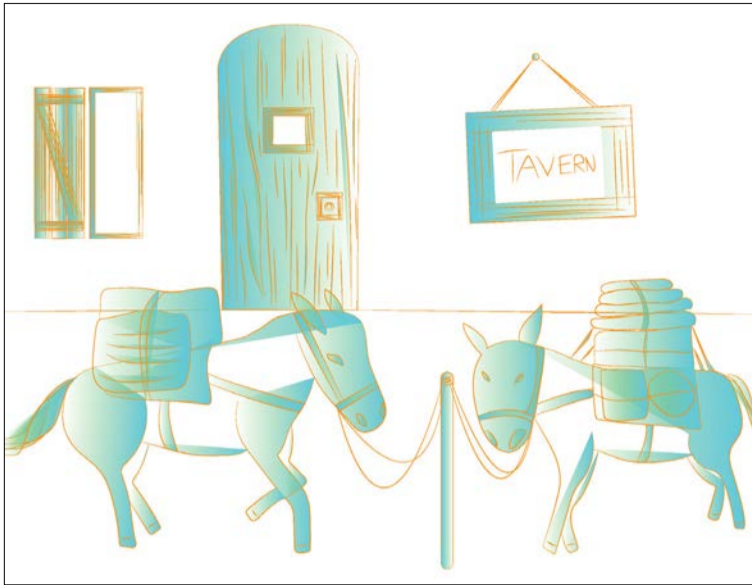
<sup>23</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 351, "To Saint Louise," [1 October 1638], 1:499-500; and Letter 2110, "To Sister Charlotte Royer," 26 July 1656, 6:50-52.

<sup>24</sup> See *CCD*, "To Monsieur de Comet," 24 July 1607, 1:1-11; and Letter 418, "To Louis Abelly," 14 January 1640, 2:3-8.

<sup>25</sup> Letter 71, "To Saint Louise," [Before 1632], *CCD*, 1:110-11, referring to 1 Sm 10:16.

<sup>26</sup> Document 105, "Account of the Assembly at Saint-Lazare," 1651, *CCD*, 13a:374-95.

<sup>27</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 188, "Availability for Any Ministry Assignment," [30 August 1658], 12:46; also Conference 205, "Indifference," 16 May 1659, 12:187-201.



Beasts of burden patiently waiting outside the tavern.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



pride.<sup>28</sup>

Besides these moral lessons, he described the use and value of mules in daily life,<sup>29</sup> and he used a common expression (“shoe the mule”) to refer to profiting from a purchase made for someone else. He hoped that no Sister ever engaged in such a practice.<sup>30</sup>

*Sheep, lamb, shepherd, goat:* Vincent made the standard references to sheep and lambs when citing the scriptures: the sacrifice of a sheep in place of Isaac (Gn 22:13); Jesus sent to the lost sheep (Mt 15:24); the sheep know the Good Shepherd’s voice (Jn 10:27); sent as lambs among wolves (Lk 10:13 and Mt 10:16); sent as a lamb to the slaughter (Isa 53:7, and Acts 8:32); feed my lambs, feed my sheep (Jn 21:15-17); and falling down in worship before the lamb (Rv 5:8). He cited these without any special extraordinary moral lessons, apart from comparing the sheep to the flock of his two congregations.<sup>31</sup>

Several times, Vincent called on his own experience regarding a sheep infected with scabies, a contagious disease capable of destroying a flock. He used the comparison as a justification for ridding his two congregations of unsuitable members.<sup>32</sup> He regarded

<sup>28</sup> Conference 123, “Repetition of Prayer: Praise for Adrien Bourdoise,” 18 July 1655, *CCD*, 11:185-86.

<sup>29</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 243, “To Robert de Sergis,” September 1636, 1:342-43; and Letter 461, “To Bernard Codoing,” 26 July 1640, 2:87-95.

<sup>30</sup> Document 166, “Council of June 11, 1654,” *CCD*, 13b:313-18.

<sup>31</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 942, “To Jean Dehorgny,” 2 May 1647, 3:187-90; Letter 2484, “To Jacques Tholard,” 12 December 1657, 7:20-23; Conference 108, “How to Spend Sundays and Holy Days; Catechism; Acts of Adoration on Leaving and Returning to the House; Fast and Abstinence; Confession; Communion; Communications; Retreats; Conferences,” 16 March 1659, 10:501-11; Letter 1289, “To Claude Dufour,” 26 November 1650, 4:118-19; Letter 1453, “To Balthazar Grangier de Liverdi, 28 January 1652, 4:313-14; Letter 1747, “To François Adhémar de Monteil de Grignan,” [29 May 1654], 5:150-51; Conference 82, “Death of a Person Close to the Company,” 11:89-90; Letter 158, “To Jacques Perdu,” February 1634, 1:226-230; Conference 75, “To Two Sisters Being Sent to La Fère,” 29 July 1656, 10:160-66; Conference 104, “To Two Sisters Being Sent to Cahors,” 4 November 1658, 10:464-68; Conference 222, “Obedience,” [19 December 1659], 12:345-52; and Conference 213, “Praying the Divine Office,” 26 September 1659, 12:264-77.

<sup>32</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 76, “Poverty,” 20 August 1656, 10:166-81; also Conference 215, “Informing Superiors of the Serious Faults and Temptations of the Neighbor,” [24 October 1659], 12:289-97.

Huguenots as black sheep to be drawn back into the fold through good living and virtues.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, he summarized the vocation of the Congregation as “to lead the lost sheep back into the fold.”<sup>34</sup> Vincentian fundamentalism might latch onto these words as justification for the Congregation’s not being concerned about the materially poor, but this would be misplaced.

He also used the example of a wolf in the sheepfold to show that Jansenism must be opposed:

This, Monsieur, is what has come into my mind to make you see our reasons for declaring ourselves on this occasion opposed to these new opinions. I see no objections to them, except for two. First, there is the reason to fear that, by attempting to stem this flood of new opinions, we may stir people up more. My reply to this is that, if this were the case, heresies should not be opposed nor should those who are determined to rob people of life or property, and the shepherd would do wrong to cry “Wolf!” when he sees one about to enter the sheepfold.<sup>35</sup>

Since shepherds were often poor and neglected, Vincent showed his respect for them. He praised the simplicity of the shepherds in Bethlehem at the birth of Jesus, the shepherds living in remote areas who needed catechizing, and those shepherds in the fields around Rome in whom the Missioners took a special interest.<sup>36</sup>

Vincent also took care to assure that the members of the Confraternities of Charity would serve good food to the sick and to soldiers, often mutton, with sufficient bread and wine.<sup>37</sup> He also used goats, very likely as a source of milk for the foundlings.<sup>38</sup> For some reason, these animals occur only in his early letters, except for the story of a poor goatherd in the mountains of the Auvergne whose prayer was so intense that neither a bishop nor theologian could speak of God as he did.<sup>39</sup>

*Cattle:* Vincent constantly referred to his youth to humble himself in the presence

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<sup>33</sup> Letter 667a, “To Guillaume Gallais,” [Around 1643], *CCD*, 2:441-42.

<sup>34</sup> Conference 86, “Perseverance in Vocation,” 29 October 1638, *CCD*, 11:98.

<sup>35</sup> Letter 1043, “To Jean Dehorgny,” 25 June 1648, *CCD*, 3:326.

<sup>36</sup> See *CCD*, Document 16, “Sermon on Holy Communion,” 13a:38-42; Letter 202, “To Antoine Portail,” 10 August 1635, 1:289-90; and Letter 496, “To Louis Lebreton,” 14 November 1640, 2:154-57.

<sup>37</sup> See *CCD*, Document 125, “General Regulations for Charities of Women – II,” 13b:5-8; Document 126, “Charity of Women - Châtillon-les-Dombes,” November-December 1617, 13a:8-23; and Document 127, “Charity of Women - Joigny,” September 1618, 13a:23-28; et al.

<sup>38</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 290, “To Saint Louise,” [January 1638], 1:410-12; Letter 295, “To Saint Louise,” [February 1638], 1:423-25; Letter 349, “To Saint Louise,” [1638], 1:497-98; and Letter 375, “To Saint Louise,” [between Sept. 1638 and Sept. 1639], 1:537-38.

<sup>39</sup> Conference 36, “The Good Use of Instructions,” 1 May 1648, *CCD*, 9:305-20.

of others. He clearly regarded his adolescent duty of guarding animals (cattle, swine) as humiliating work, as he reminded the Sisters. In their case, the first Daughter of Charity, Marguerite Naseau, pastured animals, as did some of the Sisters before they entered the Company.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, his experience must have served him well, since several references occur in his letters about providing a cow to have milk for the foundlings as well as for sale.<sup>41</sup> He even put the sick confreres in Saint-Lazare on a strict diet of milk and bread in hopes of strengthening them.<sup>42</sup>

Beef also appears in his writings. Vincent sought the advice of the duchess of Aiguillon in the matter of a new tax on animals that was making it prohibitive for butchers to purchase beef. As a result his animals, kept too long in his fields, were destroying them, uprooting trees and the like.<sup>43</sup> He referred occasionally to the food given to confreres and Sisters, generally beef or mutton, just as the poor ate.<sup>44</sup> Jean Le Vacher, ministering to the Christian slaves in North Africa, was praised for purchasing fat cattle for the prisoners.<sup>45</sup> Vincent also left instructions about the amount of meat (beef, veal, and mutton) to be given to the sick and the poor.<sup>46</sup> Relying on a donation he received for his family, Vincent saw to it that one poor farmer would receive a pair of oxen, another would have his house rebuilt, and a third would receive clothes and tools. His instructions served the poor in very concrete ways.<sup>47</sup>

Vincent had very little to say about cattle of any sort based on scriptural passages. He urged the Ladies of Charity to get rid of useless trinkets and jewelry to support the foundlings, just as the women of Israel gave up their jewelry to make the golden calf (Ex 32).<sup>48</sup> He cited Is 1:3 ("An ox knows its owner") to illustrate that their owner fed them. In the same way, the poor would feed the members of the Congregation, to whom they should be devoted.<sup>49</sup> He quoted 1 Cor 9:9 (citing Dt 25:4, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain") to grant liberty to a poor priest who often came to Saint-

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<sup>40</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 40, "To Saint Louise," 19 February 1630, 1:67-68, n.4; Conference 12, "The Virtues of Marguerite Naseau," [July 1642], 9:64-66; Conference 40, "Love of Our Vocation," 25 December 1648, 9:353-65; and Conference 52, "The Spirit of the Company," 24 February 1653, 9:470-79.

<sup>41</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 288, "To Saint Louise," 1 January [1638], 1:407-08; Letter 349, "To Saint Louise," [1638], 1:497-98; Letter 404, "To Louis Lebreton," 12 October 1639, 1:581-86.

<sup>42</sup> Letter 2823, "To Edme Jolly," 12 April 1659, *CCD*, 7:529-31.

<sup>43</sup> Letter 1605, "To the Duchesse d'Aiguillon," 13 April 1653, *CCD*, 4:548-49.

<sup>44</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 58, "Secret Pride," 15 March 1654, 9:528-36; and Conference 89, "Mortification, Correspondence, Meals, and Journeys," 9 December 1657, 10:318-30.

<sup>45</sup> Conference 179, "Devotion of Jean Le Vacher to the Slaves," [1658], *CCD*, 11:393-97.

<sup>46</sup> See *CCD*, Document 125, "General Regulations for Charities of Women – II," 13b:5-8; Document 131, "Charity of Women - Folleville, Paillart, and Serevillers," September-October 1620, 13b:40-48; et al.

<sup>47</sup> Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 3, ch. 19, pp. 254-67.

<sup>48</sup> Document 195, "The Work of the Foundlings," [Between 1640 and 1650], *CCD*, 13b:420-23.

<sup>49</sup> Conference 125, "Repetition of Prayer," 24 July 1655, *CCD*, 11:189-94.

Lazare looking for aid.<sup>50</sup> Finally, he cited the story of the prodigal son (Lk 15:23), in which the father gladly slaughters the fatted calf. Vincent's lesson here was to urge the Sisters to avoid envy if one is shown some special kindness and another is not.<sup>51</sup>

In one interesting passage, Vincent compared the Carthusian hermits of Paris to cattle (probably oxen). "One day, someone said to me, 'Look at the Carthusians, they're like cattle; they walk the same way; and if you see one, you see them all.'" Vincent urged his confreres to imitate them by their solidity and prayerfulness.<sup>52</sup>

*Swine:* Vincent had a low opinion of swine, reflected as humility in his letters and conferences. To this description, he added other terms such as detestable, poor, pitiful, and ignorant.<sup>53</sup> When the queen began to think of having Vincent made a cardinal, he replied, according to Brother Robineau: "Alas, Madame, what is Your Majesty thinking? Does she realize what she would be doing if she did this? *Quoi*, a poor beggar, son of a peasant, a man who herded cows, a swineherd—to make him a cardinal!"<sup>54</sup>

To show how low swine ranked in his thoughts, Vincent recalled that in Canada, pigs were treated as goods or property. He was astonished that people were attached to them and urged the Missioners to break off any attachment to possessions, no matter how low and vile.<sup>55</sup> He seemingly pointed out how worthless human beings were by recalling that pigs have the same internal organs as humans: heart, lungs, liver, etc.<sup>56</sup> As additional proof, he recalled to the Sisters that God ordered Satan to enter a pig (misreading Mt 8:31, which speaks of a herd of pigs), and that the prodigal son in the Gospel was forced to live on pig food.<sup>57</sup> He ranked swine with "beasts," while speaking about moderation: "What is it, brothers, if not an animal state, living like a beast, following one's inclination like an animal, like a horse, like a pig—yes, like a pig—and worse than animals?"<sup>58</sup> He similarly

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<sup>50</sup> Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 3, ch. 11, sect. 5, pp. 139-47.

<sup>51</sup> Conference 60, "Envy," 24 June 1654, *CCD*, 9:548-61.

<sup>52</sup> Conference 206, "Uniformity," 23 May 1659, *CCD*, 12:211.

<sup>53</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 145, "To a Priest of the Mission," 1633, 1:206; Letter 418, "To Louis Abelly," 14 January 1640, 2:3-8; Letter 1372, "To François de Saint-Remy," 21 June 1651, 4:219-20; Conference 182, "Detachment from the Goods of This World," 8 June 1658, 12:17-24; Conference 207, "Charity," 30 May 1659, 12:213-25; Conference 210, "Moral Theology, Preaching, Catechizing, and Administration of the Sacraments," 5 August 1659, 12:234-43; and Document 23, "Commission as Chaplain General of the Galleys," 8 February 1619, 13a:58-59.

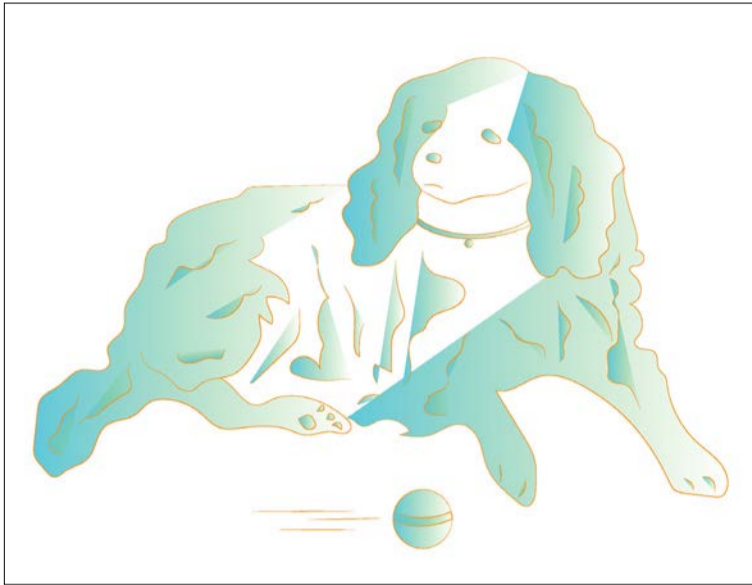
<sup>54</sup> Louis Robineau, *Remarques sur les actes et paroles de feu Monsieur Vincent de Paul notre très Honoré Père et Fondateur*, ed. André Dodin (Paris, 1991), art. 339, p.151.

<sup>55</sup> Conference 216, "The Vows," [7 November 1659], *CCD*, 12:297-307.

<sup>56</sup> Conference 65, "Mortification of the Senses and Passions," 3 January 1655, *CCD*, 10:44-52.

<sup>57</sup> Conference 60, "Envy," 24 June 1654, *CCD*, 9:548-61.

<sup>58</sup> Conference 187, "Moderation in Eating and Drinking," 23 August 1658, *CCD*, 12:37.



A dog and his ball.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



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compared them with venom, dogs, and even Antichrists.<sup>59</sup>

Finally, as if this were not bad enough, Vincent never mentioned or even suggested eating pork.

*Dog, cat:* A dog is often depicted in paintings of young Vincent caring for his father's flocks. In his later life, however, few mentions occur. A little dog destined to be sent to the queen of Poland appears three times in his correspondence. When Louise brought him over to Saint-Lazare, the dog missed a Sister and kept whining. Vincent followed his usual pattern of contemplating the situation: "This little creature has made me very much ashamed, when I see his singlehearted affection for the Sister who feeds him but see myself so little attached to my Sovereign Benefactor and so little detached from all other things."<sup>60</sup>

He drew a similar lesson from the case of a woman very devoted to her dog. When the animal died, she was inconsolable and even feared that, in her grief, she was losing her mind. Vincent mentioned this in two conferences to the Sisters.<sup>61</sup>

John Chrysostom, archbishop of Constantinople, offered another lesson. Vincent referred to it in two separate conferences to his confreres on speaking about prayer. Chrysostom believed that a cleric who said the Divine Office negligently was like a dog barking. The comparison changed in the second mention, where the archbishop said that God prefers the barking of dogs to the praises of someone who does not utter them as he should. "God prefers the barking of a dog! Of a dog!"<sup>62</sup>

Vincent also cited two common phrases: fighting like cats and dogs (even the Sisters

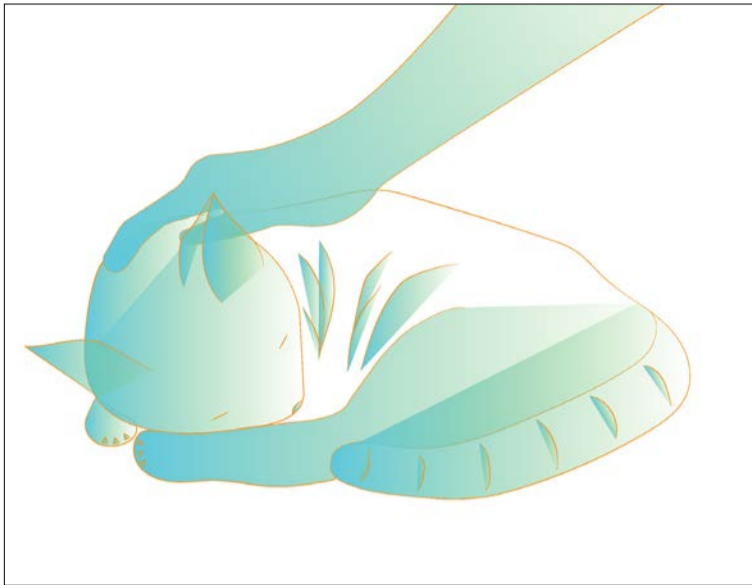
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<sup>59</sup> Letter 1064, "To Jean Dehorgny," 10 September 1648, *CCD*, 3:358-67.

<sup>60</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 1861, "To Charles Ozenne," 9 April 1655, 5:364; see also Letter 1810, "To Charles Ozenne," 4 December 1654, 5:238-40 (translated puppy).

<sup>61</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 73, "Indifference," 6 June 1656, 10:126-46; and Conference 89, "Mortification, Correspondence, Meals, and Journeys," 9 December 1657, 10:318-30.

<sup>62</sup> Conference 213, "Praying the Divine Office," 26 September 1659, *CCD*, 12:267.



Attachment to a cat.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



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could do this), and the enemy (the demon) can bark but not bite if God is at one's side.<sup>63</sup>

Vincent refers to cats only twice. The first becomes a lesson for Sisters in a rational detachment from worldly possessions: "they attach themselves to anything that gives them some satisfaction—to a cat, for instance, to having the house keys, or to any number of things that really don't deserve to occupy a mind that's the least bit rational."<sup>64</sup> The second is a peculiar and obsolete word, *rechignechat*, which could be paraphrased in English as "grumpy cat": someone who is sullen or quarrelsome.<sup>65</sup>

*Poultry:* Vincent referred only to chickens, never to ducks or geese. He was interested in having the Charities raise hens for the poor to eat (either their meat or their eggs, which could also be sold to bring in some income).<sup>66</sup>

After the death of Louise, plucking a chicken symbolized the possibility of Sisters who might tear "the Company to pieces.... Daughters tearing their mother to pieces."<sup>67</sup> A hen constantly pecking in the same area became a symbol of the constant need to wash one's hands, and to read and reread the rules.<sup>68</sup>

He also used the expression "wet hen" to refer not to someone who was angry (as in English) but to Missioners who were timid or weaklings, unwilling to take risks. For him,

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<sup>63</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 386, "To Saint Louise," [1639], 1:560-61; and Letter 903, "To Jacques Tholard, 8 [December 1646], 3:138-40.

<sup>64</sup> See Conference 73, "Indifference," 6 June 1656, *CCD*, 10:135-36.

<sup>65</sup> Document 156, "Council of June 28, 1646," *CCD*, 13b:240-51.

<sup>66</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 180, "To Saint Louise," [around 1634], 1:258-59; Document 130, "Charity of Women - Montmirail - II," 13b:35-40; Document 131, "Charity of Women - Folleville, Paillart, and Sérévillers," September-October 1620, 13b:40-48; et al.

<sup>67</sup> Conference 119, "The Virtues of Louise de Marillac," 24 July 1660, *CCD*, 10:587.

<sup>68</sup> Document 105, "Account of the Assembly at Saint-Lazare," 1651, *CCD*, 13a:374-95.

such behavior was not “reasonable,” an adjective he uses several times.<sup>69</sup>

## **Birds and invertebrates**

*Ant:* In a conference to the Sisters, Vincent speaks about sloth in community life and cites the example of ants:

[God] refers the slothful to the ants: “Go, you sluggard” He says, “and learn from the ant what you should do.” [Prv 6:6] The ant, dear Sisters, is a little creature to which God has given such foresight that it brings to the community all it can amass during the summer and harvest time, to be used during the winter. You see, dear Sisters, the ant doesn’t appropriate it to his personal use but brings it to the little community storehouse for the others.<sup>70</sup>

He also used ants and mites in his contemplative fashion to teach the meaning of God as creator of all things: “Yes, it is true that he created the mite that scurries between the flesh and the skin, and those little ants you see running around; God created all that.”<sup>71</sup>

*Bee:* Vincent’s treatment of bees is complex. His belief that bees gathered honey from flowers to feed others mirrored the need for Sisters to bring their surplus to the community. Another product, the “honey of the sacred words she has heard at a conference,” was to be shared with others. Bees were also provident, operating with foresight, and given to us by God as an example. Vincent urged his confreres to adopt his contemplative behavior to draw lessons from nature around them: “Take, for example, the pigeons<sup>72</sup> of a dove cote: they look alike, they all have the same little ways of acting, they do the same things, and what one does, the other does; they all have the same characteristics. And look at the bees in a hive; they’re like a little community; they have the same form, the same activity, the same purpose.” From this examination, his men would learn a lesson on the importance of uniformity of thought and action in the Congregation.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, in a letter to Etienne Blatiron, the superior in Genoa (1648), Vincent refers again to honey by praising him for his efforts with the mission and in the house. In praising him publicly at Saint-Lazare, he notes “the honey from your hive flows even into this house

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<sup>69</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 99, “Repetition of Prayer: Penance,” 21 October 1643, 11:117-20; and Conference 170, “Illness of Nicolas Duperroy,” [Around 24 August 1657], 11:364-67.

<sup>70</sup> Conference 42, “Love of Work,” 28 November 1649, *CCD*, 9:383.

<sup>71</sup> Document 49, “Instruction to the Residents of the Nom-de-Jésus, (Summer 1653), *CCD*, 13:177.

<sup>72</sup> See Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 1, ch. 50, p. 252, on Vincent’s care in not killing a pigeon to use its blood to cure his eye infection.

<sup>73</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 41, “The Love of God,” 19 September 1649, 9:365-79; Conference 42, “Love of Work,” 28 November 1649, 9:379-91; Conference 36, “The Good Use of Instructions,” 1 May 1648, 9:305-20; and Conference 206, “Uniformity,” 23 May 1659, 12:201-13.

and serves as food for its children.”<sup>74</sup>

*Capon, partridge, woodcock:* These three rare and expensive birds appear in Vincent’s commentary too. In general, he wanted the Sisters and the Missioners to avoid them as special treatment, or “singularities.” “[Superiors] must never allow any individual to have special food, like capon or partridge, etc., at his meals.” In the case of the Sisters, it was a matter of life style, since in their illnesses they should be treated like the sick poor. They were to have meat and bread, but as he stated regarding one Sister who had refined taste and special needs: “[she] would like to be treated to partridge, woodcock, and other fine food! That’s not for you.”<sup>75</sup>

*Eagle, quail, swan:* Vincent refers to each of these three birds with a classical story attached to it. Although the references are brief, they show the quality of his knowledge of animal life in the seventeenth century. Vincent cited an ancient fable from Aesop about the tortoise and eagle, one that spread through the world in various forms. “To escape the prediction that had been made to him that a house would fall on his head, a man went off to the country. A tortoise being carried off by an eagle fell on his head and killed him. So much for being in a safe place, Sisters!” One wonders if they laughed at his remarks.

He used the popular belief that “mother quails... allow themselves to be captured by hunters in order to save their chicks,” to urge the Sisters to show similar care to the foundlings.

In a circular letter on the death of Jean Pillé (1643), Vincent compared his vigor on his deathbed to the song of a dying swan, an ancient story, also found in Aesop. “What is most admirable is that often he spoke and prayed with more vivacity and vigor than before, especially when he was told that it was by this illness that God intended to put an end to his temporal sufferings so that he could go and delight in eternal joys. It was then that, like a swan, he began to sing more sweetly than before.”

Discussing spiritual illusions in a conference based on the *Common Rules* (2:16), Vincent explained that the devil can twist reality around. He spoke in the name of a questioner: “You’re saying that what’s as white as a swan is as black as a crow, and what’s black as a crow is as white as a swan!”<sup>76</sup>

*Crow, owl:* Vincent linked these two birds together as representatives of ugly animals. His purpose was to show that, just as a formerly fine castle can collapse and become the

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<sup>74</sup> Letter 1017, “To Etienne Blatiron,” 14 February 1648, *CCD*, 3:275.

<sup>75</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 220, “Poverty,” [5 December 1659], 12:328-36; and Conference 85, “Service of the Sick and Care of One’s Own Health,” 11 November 1657, 10:274.

<sup>76</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 24, “Love of Vocation and Assistance to the Poor,” 13 February 1646, 9:190-201; Conference 16, “The Foundlings,” 7 December 1643, 9:104-15; Letter 634, “To Pierre du Chesne,” 1 January 1643, 2:363-89; Conference 214, “Illusions and Genuine Inspirations,” 17 October 1659, 12:280.

haunt of unpleasant animals, such as the owl, a harbinger of death, so the Community's houses can collapse morally and become the haunt of pitiful persons. "Formerly [the castle] was seen to be inhabited by virtuous, God-fearing persons of quality; and who do you think inhabits it today? Toads, crows, owls, and other ugly animals."<sup>77</sup>

*Birds:* Vincent referred to birds in both biblical and natural terms. He felt divine providence was evident in its care of birds (Mt 6:25) and with the ease with which they created nests, and yet Jesus had no place to lay his head. This example called the Sisters and Missioners to appreciate and experience poverty (Lk 9:58; Mt 8:20). Observing birds also taught other important lessons: birds eating the grain sown on the road were like distractions in the moral life (Mt 13:4); just as birds have wings, so the Sisters had their rules, like wings with which to fly to God; a bird finds air everywhere just as the soul will always find God; birds pick up only enough food to satisfy their need, a moral lesson about temperance; and although their call is beautiful, Sisters should mortify themselves to sight and sound, turning away even from bird song.<sup>78</sup> He also referred to the seasonal migration of birds, applying it to the order of God's creation. For the Sisters to ignore their rules, they would have replaced order with disorder.<sup>79</sup> He once compared grace to water for a bird: it drinks only enough, just as God gives only sufficient grace to one who needs it.<sup>80</sup>

Although Vincent did not mention birds specifically in the following passage, he applied their ability to fly to contrast a free person with one enslaved to worldly possessions. "Those are the persons who are free, brothers, who have no laws, who fly, who go to the right and to the left; once again, who fly, who can't be stopped, and who are never slaves of the devil or of their passions."<sup>81</sup>

Another important reference is found in this example of a bird trapped in a snare. It should remind the Sisters of their need to struggle to escape undue attachments. This surely came from his own experience ("Isn't it pitiful to watch"), which he reflected on and drew spiritual meaning:

Sisters, a little bird caught in a trap struggles day and night, without flagging, to escape from it and, as long as it's alive, will keep struggling to get free. And shall we be caught up in a bad attachment without bothering to escape from it?

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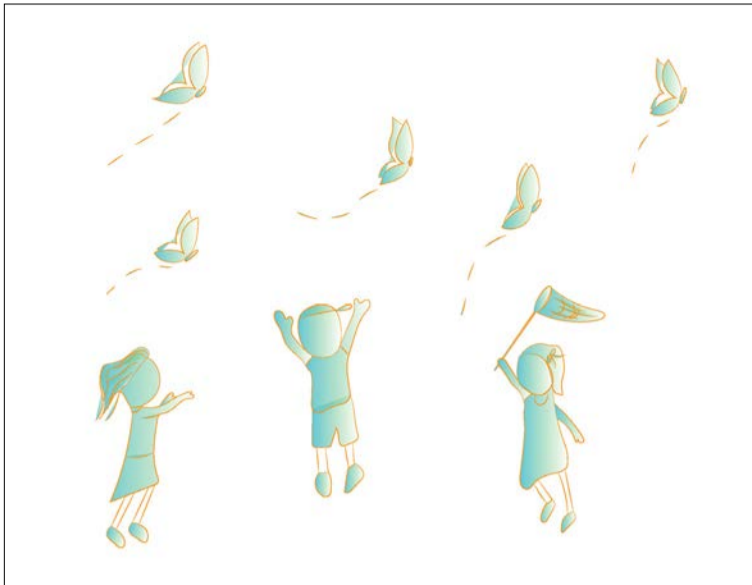
<sup>77</sup> Conference 162, "Repetition of Prayer: Various Topics," 19 November 1656, *CCD*, 11:348-49.

<sup>78</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 2591, "To Antoine Durand," [Around May 1658], 7:171-72; Conference 36, "The Good Use of Instructions," 1 May 1648, 9:305-20; Conference 38, "The Spirit of the World," 28 July 1648, 9:337-44; Conference 72, "The Maxims of Jesus Christ and Those of the World," 2 November 1655, 10:112-26; Conference 105, "Rising, Prayer, Examination of Conscience, etc.," 17 November 1658, 10:468-88; Conference 118, "The Virtues of Louise de Marillac," 3 July 1660, 10:569-82; Conference 25, "Love of God," 11:32-34; Conference 198, "Seeking the Kingdom of God," 21 February 1659, 12:110-26.

<sup>79</sup> Conference 4, "Fidelity to Rising and Mental Prayer," 2 August 1640, *CCD*, 9:23-30.

<sup>80</sup> Conference 88, "Recommendations at Chapter," 19 January 1642, *CCD*, 11:102-03.

<sup>81</sup> Conference 211, "The Five Characteristic Virtues," 22 August 1659, *CCD*, 12:245.



Chasing butterflies.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



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We'll be guilty before God and left without any excuse if we don't make use of this example. *Quoi*, Sisters! Isn't it pitiful to watch a bird doing all in its power to escape from a snare, while a Daughter of Charity who sees that she has an attachment for something does nothing to free herself of it!<sup>82</sup>

A similar example came from his own experience, which he used, he said, "to inject a little humor" in a meeting:

Sisters, sometimes there are passing temptations, as in the case of a good Capuchin I used to know. Once, while he was still a novice, he was attending Vespers. Since he had been a famous hunter, the pleasures of the chase came to his mind. All he did was think about horses, hounds, and birds; he was pursuing a hare. In a word, that's how he spent the time of Vespers. When he came to himself, he was really amazed. "What's this?" he said. "You want to be a Capuchin and here you are, returning from the chase. You're not fit to be a Capuchin; you should leave." And off he went to find his Prior saying, "Father, have them give me my clothes; I want to leave." "What's wrong, Brother?" said the Prior. "O Father, I'm not fit to be a Capuchin; I just came back from Vespers; and all through the Office I never left the hunt." "What, Brother? You went hunting during Vespers? And were you in the choir?" "Yes, Father, but all I could think about was the chase. That's why I beg you to have them give me my own clothes, for I'm not fit to be a Capuchin." "Well, tell me, Brother," said the Prior, "when you were hunting like that, when you were pursuing the hare, did you cry out, 'Oh! greyhound!

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<sup>82</sup> Conference 73, "Indifference," 6 June 1656, *CCD*, 10:137.



The spider's web.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



Oh! greyhound!"" "Oh no! Father; I didn't say a word." "Well then, it's nothing, Brother. You'll make a fine Capuchin." And so he remained, lived to a ripe old age, and attained great perfection.<sup>83</sup>

*Butterfly:* Vincent referred twice to butterflies, using the same experience in two conferences to his confreres. He warned them against desiring honors as "the greatest of all follies. Chasing butterflies!" His later conference returned to the same theme, that those who chase after benefices are often frustrated, a laughing stock, "like children who have run after butterflies." His observation of children at play must have led him to contemplate an inner meaning of what he perceived exteriorly.<sup>84</sup>

*Sparrow, dove:* These two birds figure in the Gospels (the simplicity of the dove, Mt 10:16; caring for the sparrow, Mt 10:29), and Vincent cited them as models of behavior for his men. He also considered the dove as a good provider for its young, thus the confreres should work diligently to show that they love God.<sup>85</sup>

*Pheasant:* This account of Vincent and the pheasant chicks appears only in Abelly, which he characterizes as "an incident so insignificant that few persons would ever have bothered themselves about it." A brother at Saint-Lazare found some pheasant eggs on the property, had them hatched by a hen, and when they had grown brought them in a cage to Vincent, thinking that he would enjoy them. However, the founder looked at them differently. He explained that the king had forbidden pheasant hunting, and consequently

<sup>83</sup> Document 160, "Council of June 20, 1647," *CCD*, 13b:283-84.

<sup>84</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 212, "Teachings Contrary to Those of the Gospel," 29 August 1659, 12:262; Conference 219, "The Desire for Benefices," [28 November 1659], 12:326.

<sup>85</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 1478, "To Achille Le Vazeux," 29 March 1652, 4:346-47; Conference 201, "Simplicity and Prudence," 14 March 1659, 12:139-51; Conference 25, "Love of God," 11:32-34.

he and the brother set them free. Vincent's lesson was that one could not disobey the king without displeasing God.<sup>86</sup> The brother was greatly disappointed.

*Insect, spider:* Vincent's contemplative gaze included insects. While in a room lined with mirrors, he realized that not even a fly could escape notice. He concluded, in Abelly's version: "If men have found a way to see everything that happens, even to the smallest movement of a tiny insect, how much more must we believe that we are always in the sight of the divine mirror of God's all-seeing vision."<sup>87</sup>

Vincent's hearing must have been acute, inasmuch as the *Common Rules*, as well as his primitive rules, referred several times to maintaining quiet in the house. In his conferences, he reflected on silence and noise: in the Louvre, packed with people, it was so silent that one could hear a fly buzzing from one end of the hall to the other; at the Bons-Enfants, for ordination retreats, it was the same in the early days.<sup>88</sup>

Vincent also reflected on spiders, but in different ways. While spiders can draw poison from flowers, the Sisters should not take badly the good behavior of others. Similarly, his reflection on seeing a spider's web on a crucifix in the room of Michel de Marillac, St. Louise's uncle, was not that Marillac was a poor housekeeper, but rather that he would not dare set his eyes on the crucified Jesus out of respect and reverence. Even midges (or gnats), mites, and grubs (or vermin) entered Vincent's consciousness; his perspective being that divine providence extends even to the smallest creatures. As God provides for mites, so superiors should provide for their confreres.<sup>89</sup>

*Snail:* Vincent restricted his reflections on snails to a moral lesson, that of withdrawing into one's shell in the face of difficulties. He used this idea in three of his letters, as well as conferences to the Missioners.<sup>90</sup> The confreres recording his conferences thought it important to preserve the following note about their lazy and fearful brethren, like snails in their shells. "Note: In saying this, he made certain gestures with his hands, moving his head around and speaking in a certain contemptuous tone of voice, which conveyed even better what he was trying to express than what he was actually saying." He then mentioned similar weaknesses in himself: "Yes, Messieurs, just getting up in the morning

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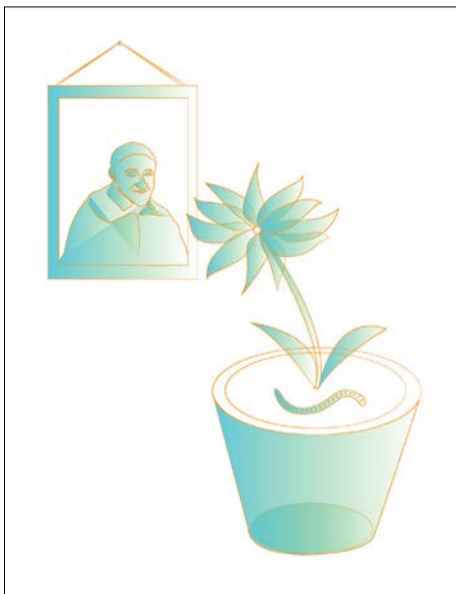
<sup>86</sup> Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 3, ch. 14, pp. 205-13.

<sup>87</sup> Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 3, ch. 6, p. 57; Coste's version mentions the motion of a finger instead, see Conference 169, "Repetition of Prayer: Various Topics," 24 August 1657, *CCD*, 11:362-64.

<sup>88</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 128, "Repetition of Prayer: Various Topics," 1 August 1655, 11:199-203; and Conference 190, "Silence," 20 September 1658, 12:56; the English translation offers the metaphor "heard a pin drop."

<sup>89</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 153, "Advice to Antoine Durand," [1656], 11:310-17; Letter 322, "To Antoine Portail," 28 April 1638, 1:463-64; Letter 602, "To Bernard Codoing," 11 July 1642, 2:303-11; Letter 2399, "To Abbé de Saint-Just," 5 October 1657, 6:516-20; Conference 196, "Members of the Congregation and Their Ministries," 13 December 1658, 12:83-98; Conference 198, "Seeking the Kingdom of God," 21 February 1659, 12:110-26.

<sup>90</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 716, "To Bernard Codoing," 15 July 1644, 2:514-15; Letter 2824, "To Guillaume Desdames," 25 April 1659, 7:531-32; and Letter 2898, "To Edme Menestrier," 9 July 1659, 8:17 (although he recommends the practice: "Just leave things as they are," or, to figuratively: "Just stay in your shell").



"We are only earthworms..."

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



seems a great affair to me."<sup>91</sup> Again, perhaps smiles or laughter.

*Worm:* One of Vincent's classic comparisons derives from Psalm 22, which the Gospels cite as part of the Passion of Jesus. Vincent used "I am a worm and no man" (Ps 22:6) in various forms to show the greatness of God and the smallness of humans. In his early sermon on communion, he attains rhetorical heights, "we are only earthworms, a puff of smoke, a sack of rubbish, and the cave of a thousand bad thoughts."<sup>92</sup> Vincent also used the earthworm to characterize himself. In addition, he used the worm as a symbol of conscience, as bad thoughts, temptations, or envy gnawing at the heart.<sup>93</sup>

Speaking in a more natural sense, he used the worms found during the autopsy performed on Louis XIII to draw the lesson that people try to please kings, who are merely human, but they should strive harder to please God.<sup>94</sup>

*Others:* A single mention of scorpion oil comes as a surprise. It was the product of European scorpions, much less dangerous than those found in the tropics. Brother Alexandre Veronne, the community pharmacist, wanted some to concoct his medicines.<sup>95</sup> Vincent is recorded as using what was a common and ancient expression, a "flea in the ear." In this case, he meant that this distraction was the source of new ideas, sometimes less than moral

<sup>91</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 211, "The Five Characteristic Virtues," 22 August 1659, 12:243-53; and Conference 195, "Purpose of the Congregation of the Mission," 6 December 1658, 12:82.

<sup>92</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 72, "The Maxims of Jesus Christ and Those of the World," 2 November 1655, 10:112-26; Conference 26, "Love of God," 11:34 (man is an atom); Document 16, "Sermon on Holy Communion," 13a:41; see also Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 3, ch. 13, p.180.

<sup>93</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 2854, "To a Coadjutor Brother," 28 May 1659, 7:589-91; and Conference 60, "Envy," 24 June 1654, 9:548-61.

<sup>94</sup> Conference 15, "Explanation of the Regulations," 14 June 1643, *CCD*, 9:92-104.

<sup>95</sup> Letter 1125, "To Antoine Portail," 6 August 1649, *CCD*, 3:464-67.

ones.<sup>96</sup> Vincent also cites a comparison taken from Francis de Sales. He mentioned the apodes (literally, footless), birds (perhaps the sea swallow) with rudimentary feet. Francis de Sales and Vincent see in them a comparison with an individual who refuses to be moved by grace.<sup>97</sup>

### Aquatic creatures

*Herring, cod:* These two types of fish were quite desirable, and Vincent recommended them, along with butter, fruit, and the “four beggars” (a dessert with four types of dried fruits and nuts), to strengthen hardworking missionaries. He also told the Sisters that a fisherman whom he had met returning from whale hunting told him that Turks were generally healthy. He judged that the reason was that they avoided alcohol, and their diet was primarily cod cooked in milk. The Sisters should learn from this that they should avoid wine.<sup>98</sup>

*Whale, dolphin:* Vincent engaged in a popular retelling of the Jonah story for the sake of the Sisters. In so doing, Vincent reversed some of the incidents: Jonah knowing in advance what he is to preach in Nineveh, then thrown into the sea and carried away by a whale. The saint sees here a parable of sin and forgiveness. “It’s greatly to be feared that those as unfortunate as Jonah may, like him, fall to the bottom of the sea, into the belly of a whale—I mean, into sin and the incapacity to escape from it except by a remarkable miracle. And God doesn’t do that every day.”<sup>99</sup> He returned to the same theme in a later conference, this time using Jonah’s reluctance to go to Nineveh as a lesson for Sisters. Those who do not want to go on mission will be like Jonah, “not in the belly of a whale, but in herself, in a cadaver, or perhaps in a place where she’ll be lost.”<sup>100</sup>

Dolphins appear only once in his writings, wherein he admitted to his confreres that seeing dolphins playing in the water gives pleasure. For someone who suffered from seasickness, this must have been the only positive memory of a voyage. Which one and where are unknown.

*Fish:* Fish in general appear several times: simply as food, especially for the sick,<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Conference 35, “The Good Use of Admonitions,” 15 March 1648, *CCD*, 9:295-305.

<sup>97</sup> Document 48, “A Study on Grace,” *CCD*, 13a:164-73.

<sup>98</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 428, “To Antoine Lucas,” 21 February 1640, 2:27-29; and Conference 86, “Uniformity,” 15 November 1657, 10:280-93.

<sup>99</sup> Conference 43a, “Indifference,” 14 July [1650], *CCD*, 9:409.

<sup>100</sup> Conference 97, “Trust in Divine Providence,” 9 June 1658, *CCD*, 10:416.

<sup>101</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 96, “To Saint Louise,” 1:145-46; Document 126, “Charity of Women - Châtillon-les-Dombes,” November-December 1617, 13b:8-23; Document 129, “Charity of Women - Montmirail - I,” 1 October 1618, 13b:29-35; Document 131, “Charity of Women - Folleville, Paillart, and Sérévillers,” September-October 1620, 13b:40-48; Document 132a, “Combined Charity - Joigny,” May 1621, 13b:54-67; and Document 149b, “Particular Rules of the Daughters of Charity,” 13b:169-225, where the emphasis is on fresh, not salted, fish for the sick.

or being like a fish out of water, that needs water to survive, which parallels the need for prayer in a soul.<sup>102</sup> Vincent turned to the Gospel parable concerning the net that catches both good and bad fish (Mt 13:47-48), to provide another lesson from fishing. God's goal is not for the person to catch the fish (that is God's responsibility), but rather to cast the net in the first place.<sup>103</sup>

In a remarkable piece of exegesis, Vincent claimed that Jesus ate meat only once, the Paschal Lamb at the last supper. He ate fish only once, too, at the shore after the Resurrection. The basis for these readings was that Jesus was not shown to be eating meat or fish apart from these two occasions. However, that did not move Vincent into asking the Missioners, devoted to doing what Jesus did, to become vegetarians.<sup>104</sup>

### Other animals, real and mythical

*Basilisk, dragon, ape, monster:* Vincent used a mythological creature, the basilisk, to speak to the Daughters of Charity about temptations. Traditionally, the basilisk could harm humans in various ways, such as a poisonous breath or a killing glance. Instead, Vincent said: "They're basilisks that put up lovely pretenses in order to seduce you." He must have been thinking of the passage from Ps 91:13 (Vulgate, 90:13): "*super aspidem et basiliscum calcabis*," in modern translation: "You can tread upon the asp and the viper."<sup>105</sup>

Similarly, for his confreres he cited the dragon's stinking breath to symbolize a proud person who raises himself up through his search for worldly honors.<sup>106</sup> He also compared such a person to an ape, whom he also called a monster.<sup>107</sup>

A common comparison for him was monster, usually a misshapen and evil creature. He called Jansenism a monster, as he did ignorance and sin, since they were all destructive of the Church.<sup>108</sup> "Oh, Sisters! slay those monsters by abstaining from even legitimate contacts," a reference to tendencies to self-gratification, even through legitimate means.<sup>109</sup> He made the same comparison for the Sisters as he did for his confreres in search of honors

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<sup>102</sup> See CCD, Letter 634, "To Pierre du Chesne," 1 January 1643, 363-89; Conference 43, "How to Act amid Difficulties when far from the Motherhouse," 19 April 1650, 9:391-401; and Conference 105, "Rising, Prayer, Examination of Conscience, etc.," 17 November 1658, 10:468-88.

<sup>103</sup> See CCD, Letter 2130, "To Guillaume Delville," 28 August 1656, 6:79-84; Conference 13, "Imitating the Virtues of Village Girls," 25 January 1643, 9:66-78; Conference 131, "Repetition of Prayer: Retreat Ministry," 10 August 1655, 11:214-17; and Letter 2710, "To Antoine Fleury," 6 November 1658, 7:355-58.

<sup>104</sup> Conference 13, "Imitating the Virtues of Village Girls," 25 January 1643, CCD, 9:66-78.

<sup>105</sup> Conference 59, "The Preservation of the Company," 25 May 1654, CCD, 9:540.

<sup>106</sup> See CCD, Conference 196, "Members of the Congregation and Their Ministries," 13 December 1658, 12:83-98; see also Conference 182, "Detachment from the Goods of This World," 8 June 1658, 12:21, where the confrere became a monster through prideful desires.

<sup>107</sup> Conference 182, "Detachment from the Goods of This World," 8 June 1658, CCD, 12:21, translated as "ugly person."

<sup>108</sup> See CCD, Letter 1345, "To Pierre Nivelles," 23 April 1651, 4:182-87; and Letter 2657, "To Jean Martin," 6 September 1658, 7:270-72.

<sup>109</sup> See CCD, Conference 39, "The Spirit of the World," 25 August 1648, 9:353; and Conference 63, "Scandal," 9 October 1654, 10:20-31.

or offices: “exorcise that demon, censure that monster.” Later in the same conference, he labeled as a monster a Sister who was externally but not internally “a monster that horrifies God and your Guardian Angels!” For his men, he saw greed as “that horrible monster, the most terrifying that hell can produce,” and continued by relating the story of two confreres who stole funds from the house, victims of this monster.<sup>110</sup>

*Lion:* A more common reference was the lion. Vincent cited biblical passages mentioning them. He provided two comparisons of the devil with a roaring lion, citing 1 Pt 5:8, and in one case locating the devil as prowling around the bed in the morning to keep his confreres from attending morning prayer.<sup>111</sup> In another citation, he compared St. Paul with a roaring lion, persecuting Christians. Although he began badly, he ended well.<sup>112</sup> The founder twisted the biblical text to his own use more than once, as mentioned above. Here he used the ancient idea of lions among lambs, not coexisting peacefully as in Is 11:6 or Rv 5:5-6, but as devouring the lambs. He tried to console the superior of St. Méen, a former Benedictine abbey, in this manner, whose difficulties there were devouring him.<sup>113</sup>

Vincent also added a strange twist to the story of Daniel in the lions’ den by remarking that the prophet Habakkuk, taken there by an angel to feed Daniel, was returned to his place but thought that the whole event was a dream. The biblical text does not support this.<sup>114</sup>

Other citations were based on a common understanding of a lion’s behavior. A lion will not attack a person, or another animal, that humbles itself before it: “When a ferocious lion, ready to devour another animal that might try to resist him, sees it... humbled at his feet, he immediately calms down.”<sup>115</sup> In a passing reference, he mentions how a lion cub grows imperceptibly. This reflected for him the indiscernible growth of the desire for the finer things of life.<sup>116</sup>

Finally, he cited instances in Church history, for example, wherein a bishop of Rome, Pope Marcellus, was condemned to care for “lions, leopards, and other similar beasts that would serve as entertainment for those infidel Princes.” In this same way, the confreres assigned to serve the mentally ill or depraved boarders confined at Saint-Lazare could take comfort in sharing a similar duty.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Conference 132, “Poverty,” 13 August 1655, *CCD*, 11:224.

<sup>111</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 1176, “To the Local Superiors,” 15 January 1650, 3:530-37; and Letter 2611, “To Mademoiselle Champagne,” 25 June 1658, 7:201-04.

<sup>112</sup> Conference 54, “Fidelity to God,” 3 June 1653, *CCD*, 9:490-505.

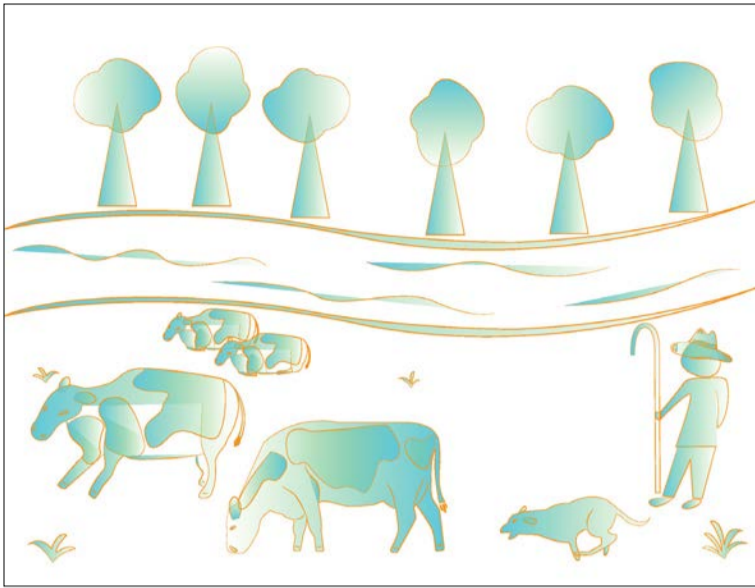
<sup>113</sup> Letter 850, “To Jean Bourdet,” 1 September 1646, *CCD*, 3:41-45.

<sup>114</sup> Conference 180, “Observance of the Rules,” 17 May 1658, *CCD*, 12:1-13, citing Dn 14:31-39.

<sup>115</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 105, “Ministry with the Ordinands,” [1647 or 1648], 11:137-138; and Conference 207, “Charity,” 30 May 1659, 12:223.

<sup>116</sup> Conference 132, “Poverty,” 13 August 1655, *CCD*, 11:217-32.

<sup>117</sup> Conference 13, “The Mentally Ill or Depraved Boarders Confined at Saint-Lazare,” *CCD*, 11:18.



Shepherding the herd.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



*Wolf:* Vincent was clearly concerned about wolves, literally and figuratively. They were widely found in France and often preyed on livestock. Vincent mentioned this danger several times to draw moral lessons, with the wolf serving as the evil figure. He believed that as Jesus sent the disciples as sheep (or lambs) amongst the wolves, so should the Sisters and the Missioners bear up under their difficulties.<sup>118</sup> Another biblical reference was the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15). Vincent used this narrative to warn the Sisters against those who would endanger them in matters of poverty, and against outsiders who did not support their commitments.<sup>119</sup> Crying "Wolf!" should be the practice if a wolf enters the sheep pen; in the same way, heresies should be identified and extirpated.<sup>120</sup> Vincent explained how problems can arise in houses, noting as when the shepherd is away, the wolf can easily enter; so too when the superior is absent, little quarrels can erupt among the confreres.<sup>121</sup>

More characteristically, he pointed to aggressors as wolves. Clement VIII admitted that he dreamt that God had condemned him for entrusting the care of the flock, the Church, to the wolf, Henry IV of France, whom the pope had reconciled.<sup>122</sup> Vincent likewise asserted that he would never abandon the twenty or thirty thousand Christians in Tunis by throwing

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<sup>118</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 158, "To Jacques Perdu," February 1634, 1:226-30; Conference 75, "The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass," 11:83-84; Conference 104, "To Two Sisters Being Sent to Cahors," 4 November 1658, 10:464-68; Conference 198, "Seeking the Kingdom of God," 21 February 1659, 12:110-26; and Conference 201, "Simplicity and Prudence," 14 March 1659, 12:139-51.

<sup>119</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 118, "The Virtues of Louise de Marillac," 3 July 1660, 10:569-82; Conference 91, "Relations with Outsiders; Murmuring, Detraction," 30 December 1657, 10:342-55; and Conference 132, "Poverty," 13 August 1655, 11:217-32, concerning the desire for riches.

<sup>120</sup> Letter 1043, "To Jean Dehorgny," 25 June 1648, *CCD*, 3:318-30.

<sup>121</sup> Letter 1537, "To a Coadjutor Brother in Genoa," 16 August 1652, *CCD*, 4:440-43.

<sup>122</sup> Letter 1842, "To Étienne Blatiron," 19 February 1655, *CCD*, 5:314-22.

them to the wolves (their Muslim captors).<sup>123</sup> He cited St. Paul in Acts 20:29, who believed that “ravenous wolves” would arrive in the Congregation, preaching falsehoods.<sup>124</sup>

Wolves also symbolized problems for the Sisters (one who wanders away from her vocation can become prey to a wolf), and for his men (the desire for riches). Vincent also referred to two other sayings. The first is attributed to John Chrysostom: “as long as we remain sheep by a genuine, sincere humility, not only will we not be devoured by wolves but we’ll even convert them into sheep.”<sup>125</sup> The second is an ancient proverb: “The person who makes himself a sheep will be eaten by the wolf,” a stance he rejects.<sup>126</sup>

*Snake, serpent, viper, asp, venom:* One of the saint’s common allusions dealt with snakes/serpents and their poison. Vincent employed various biblical references for this purpose, such as the serpent in the Garden of Eden (while referring to temptations), as well as the prudence of the serpent (in connection with the simplicity of the dove, in the Vincentian *Common Rules*, II:5).<sup>127</sup> For the Sisters’ rules, he had a more menacing view regarding participation in conversations that reveal the faults of others: “they will do their best to prevent this, or else leave quickly, as if they heard the hissing of a serpent.” In this, he was perhaps recalling a passage from Sirach: “Flee from sin as from a serpent” (Sir 21:2).<sup>128</sup> He used the poisonous serpent in many ways. It was a symbol of an attachment to some person, its poison keeping one from paying attention to teachings heard in conferences. Or, it could be a Sister who, like Judas, sets out to ruin the Company.<sup>129</sup> The figure of Judas also let him reflect dramatically on the traitor’s death (Acts 1:18), which he attributed in some way to a serpent. The lesson being that a confrere who begins to fill his life with small pleasures will eventually die of this, through the bursting of “the entrails of the one who raised and hatched it in its womb.”<sup>130</sup> He also referred to a tapeworm, literally a serpent, as a symbol of growing envy in a person.<sup>131</sup>

Vincent mentioned the scandal of people being driven in their poverty to skin and eat snakes, yet he somehow heard that while eating a viper is deadly, it can be prepared correctly and could be very delicious. His lesson was that temptations can and should

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<sup>123</sup> Letter 2467, “To Edme Jolly,” 23 November 1657, *CCD*, 6:629-32.

<sup>124</sup> Conference 195, “Purpose of the Congregation of the Mission,” 6 December 1658, *CCD*, 12:80.

<sup>125</sup> See Homily 33, on Mt 10:16.

<sup>126</sup> Conference 197, “Gospel Teachings,” 14 February 1659, *CCD*, 12:103.

<sup>127</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 62, “Temptations,” 24 August 1654, 10:7-20; Conference 67, “Obedience,” 23 May 1655, 10:62-76; and Conference 201, “Simplicity and Prudence,” 14 March 1659, 12:139-51, referring to Mt 10:16; also, Letter 1595, “François Charles to Saint Vincent,” 14 March 1653, 4:532-36.

<sup>128</sup> See *CCD*, Document 149a, “Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity,” 13b:158; and Conference 87, “Uniformity, Chastity, and Modesty,” 18 November 1657, 10:293-307.

<sup>129</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 24, “Love of Vocation and Assistance to the Poor,” 13 February 1646, 9:190-201; and Conference 70, “Explanation of the Common Rules,” 29 September 1655, 10:86-100.

<sup>130</sup> Conference 132, “Poverty,” 13 August 1655, *CCD*, 11:225.

<sup>131</sup> Conference 60, “Envy,” 24 June 1654, *CCD*, 9:548-60.

be endured, properly prepared.<sup>132</sup> He also heard that those bitten by an asp, a venomous snake, could kill it and use it to heal the wound. In this case, his point was that Huguenots use a catechism (the bite of the asp), but Catholics should use their catechism to heal the wound.<sup>133</sup>

Vincent made use of the terms venom and poison in many ways that reveal an astute awareness of psychology. He often linked them with the activity of the demon.<sup>134</sup> In one instance, he said to the Sisters: “there’s a poison between the sexes that’s imperceptibly conveyed from one to the other.” The lesson was to avoid conversations with men.<sup>135</sup> He also urged the Sisters to avoid one of their members who was damaging others by the poison in her heart. For him, various defects were a sign of venom in a person: treating the word of God by focusing on personal moods or whims; nursing vain complacency or a desire for possessions; spreading bad feelings and detraction in a community; and several other cases.<sup>136</sup> He was particularly harsh on the “pernicious venom” of Luther and Calvin, sucked in by those wanting “to taste the false sweetness of their so-called Reformation.”<sup>137</sup>

*Others:* Foxes occasionally appear, mainly as part of Gospel passages (Lk 9:58; Mt 8:20). Vincent refers to the animals in connection with the observance of poverty. The slyness of foxes appears both in a reference to the person who swindled him out of his inheritance, and in a French figure of speech, “like foxes” (*en renards*).<sup>138</sup>

“Better fifty deer led by a lion than fifty lions led by a deer” is an old maxim which Vincent used to justify the appointment of candidates as bishops who had “competence, virtue and other necessary dispositions.”<sup>139</sup>

A virtually unknown reference to hedgehogs appears in a manuscript memoir drawn up in 1662 by Michel Alix, the diocesan pastor of Saint-Ouen-l’Aumone, not far from Paris.

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<sup>132</sup> See CCD, Letter 461, “To Bernard Codoing, 26 July 1640, 2:87-95 (referring to Letter 454, “Jean Dehorgny to Saint Vincent [June or July 1640], 2:72-73); and Conference 62, “Temptations,” 24 August 1654, 10:7-20.

<sup>133</sup> Document 14, “Sermon on the Catechism,” CCD, 13a:3111-36.

<sup>134</sup> See CCD, Letter 1064, “To Jean Dehorgny,” 10 September 1648, 3:358-67; and Conference 196, “Members of the Congregation and Their Ministries,” 13 December 1658, 12:83-98.

<sup>135</sup> Conference 87, “Uniformity, Chastity, and Modesty,” 18 November 1657, CCD, 10:304.

<sup>136</sup> See CCD, Letter 959, “To Antoine Portail,” 14 June 1647, 3:204; Letter 1367, “To Nicolas Pavillon and Étienne Caulet,” [June 1651], 4:209-14; Letter 2091, “To Jean Martin,” 7 July 1656, 6:1-5; Conference 32, “Perseverance in Our Vocation,” 22 September 1647, 9:272-84; Conference 66, “Secretiveness,” 2 February 1655, 10:52-62; Conference 69, “Fidelity to the Rules,” 8 August 1655, 10:79-86; Conference 76, “Poverty,” 20 August 1656, 10:166-81; Document 175, “Council of July 27, 1656,” 13b:348-53.

<sup>137</sup> See CCD, Conference 22, “Monsieur Vincent’s Fear for His Faith,” 11:30; see also his comments on a “sweet venom that kills,” a reference to holding on to the property at Orsigny (Conference 189, “Loss of the Orsigny Farm,” [September 1658], 12:51).

<sup>138</sup> See Conference 38, “The Spirit of the World,” 28 July 1648, 9:337-44; Conference 118, “The Virtues of Louise de Marillac,” 3 July 1660, 10:569-82; Letter 1, “To Monsieur de Comet,” 24 July 1607, 1:1-11; Document 47, “The Difference between the Spirit of the World and That of Jesus Christ,” 13a:163-64 (in which vengeance is taken “on the sly”).

<sup>139</sup> Abelly, *Life of the Venerable Servant*, vol. 2, ch. 13, sect. 2, p. 375.



Divine Providence, evident in its care of birds.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



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He undoubtedly offered these few recollections, drawn up in 1662, for Abelly's biography. He wrote:

Speaking one day on the charter of the Mission and on its spirit, he [Vincent] said to me: "We are by no means to be compared to any of the religious communities in the Church; we are but poor hedgehogs to run through the fields to seek poor misguided souls. This is the core of the preservation of the charter to remain in its spirit."

Whether the saint was joking in his reference is unclear, but his close friendship with Alix makes this likely.<sup>140</sup>

Vincent cites Mt 19:24 ("It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle...") to illustrate the means that Jesus used in his preaching style of nature-motives-means, Vincent's Little Method.<sup>141</sup> A strange elk foot also makes its appearance. The duchess of Aiguillon was searching for one to use as a remedy, and Vincent's correspondence with the superior in Warsaw, Poland, reflects upon the search for it. "According to a legend widely prevalent at the time, the Scandinavian elk, hunted especially in Poland and in the North, was very susceptible to epilepsy. It was said that it stopped the seizures immediately if it could put its left foot in its ear; hence the belief that elk's foot was a specific cure for this illness."<sup>142</sup>

"Vermin" was a figure of speech used in Vincent's time to refer to a "good-for-nothing," an expression he used to describe a superior living above the standards of community

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<sup>140</sup> "Mémoire de Monsieur Alix ...Mémoire de ce que j'ai peu remarqué sur la vie de Monsieur Vincent," original manuscript in the Vincentian Archives, Paris, *Contemporaries of St. Vincent*, I, p. 149.

<sup>141</sup> Conference 134, "Method to be Followed in Preaching," 20 August 1655, *CCD*, 11:237-60.

<sup>142</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 1482, "To Lambert aux Couteaux," 12 April 1652, 4:354 (see note 4); also Letter 1494, "To Lambert aux Couteaux," 3 May 1652, 4:370-73; and Letter 1516, "To Lambert aux Couteaux," 5 July 1652, 4:410-13.

poverty.<sup>143</sup>

In the famous letter announcing his captivity, Vincent described his captors as “criminals worse than tigers.” He continued in his Gascon exaggerations by claiming that the captors had hacked his ship’s pilot into a hundred thousand pieces.<sup>144</sup>

## Generic references

*Animals:* There are far too many generic mentions of animals to list each one here. In general, however, it should be said that Vincent regularly referred to animals in his conferences to the Sisters and to the Missioners. In so doing, he urged his listeners to reject the lower, or animal, nature that each one has, and to aspire towards the life of Christ. This life, the chief focus of much of his comparison, is especially rational and controlled. During a conference, he prayed: “Grant, Lord, that we may no longer live like animals but like rational creatures.” Persons without a vital principle are like dead animals, to be thrown on a dump. Sisters without charity are like animals. Living without mortification and for the sake of gratification is to live like animals. Someone who does not keep his or her word is like an animal, undeserving of human society. Drunkenness is an animal state, as is living enslaved to oneself and for oneself.<sup>145</sup> These comparisons are only a selection of his moral observations.

Vincent’s other observations arose from daily life or his spiritual reflections: prisoners being treated like animals; a nun who died with small coins in her possession being buried with the animals instead of in consecrated ground; and God’s providence caring for animals and making them talk.<sup>146</sup>

*Beasts:* A similar observation can be made about the term beast, which Vincent used quite often in his conferences, basically as a synonym for animal, and sometimes in the same phrase or sentence. As above, he contrasted the life of beasts with rational human life or being reasonable, a principal goal of his formation program.<sup>147</sup> At the same time,

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<sup>143</sup> Conference 110, “Poverty,” 16 and 23 October 1654, *CCD*, 11:152-59.

<sup>144</sup> Letter 1, “To Monsieur de Comet,” 24 July 1607, *CCD*, 1:4.

<sup>145</sup> See *CCD*, Letter 602, “To Bernard Codoing,” 11 July 1642, 2:303-11; Conference 16, “The Foundlings,” 7 December 1643, 9:104-15; Conference 50, “The Spirit of the Company,” 2 February 1653, 9:456-65; Conference 52, “The Spirit of the Company,” 24 February 1653, 9:470-79; Conference 54, “Fidelity to God,” 3 June 1653, 9:490-505; Conference 65, “Mortification of the Senses and Passions,” 3 January 1655, 10:52; Conference 79, “The Obligation of Striving for Perfection,” 6 January 1657, 10:197-210; Conference 81, “The Practice of Asking For and Refusing Nothing,” 17 June 1657, 10:219-32 (quoting 2:20); Conference 85, “Service of the Sick and Care of One’s Own Health,” 11 November 1657, 10:267-80; Conference 87, “Uniformity, Chastity, and Modesty,” 18 November 1657, 10:293-307; Conference 93, “Mutual Charity and the Duty of Reconciliation,” 4 March 1658, 10:368-81; Conference 96, “Cordiality, Respect, and Exclusive Friendships,” 2 June 1658, 10:390-403; Conference 134, “Method to be Followed in Preaching,” 20 August 1655, 11:237-60; Conference 151, “Admonitions,” 9 June 1656, 11:304-08; Conference 181, “Repetition of Prayer: Ministry to the Ordinands,” [1658], 12:13-17; Conference 187, “Moderation in Eating and Drinking,” 23 August 1658, 12:37-44; Conference 199, “Conformity to the Will of God,” 7 March 1659, 12:126-38; and Conference 204, “Mortification,” 2 May 1659, 12:173-87.

<sup>146</sup> See *CCD* 10, confs. 71, 76 (referring to Balaam’s ass, Nm 22:28-30).

<sup>147</sup> Conference 116, “Indifference,” 8 December 1659, *CCD*, 10:556-61.

he admired certain qualities in animals, such as their obedience and indifference to the wishes of their masters, or their readiness to suffer. One difference is that Vincent referred to himself as a beast (*bête*), even as a big fat beast, a means for him to practice humility.<sup>148</sup> The saint also used the related term *bêtise*, stupidity or ignorance, to describe himself.<sup>149</sup>

*Carrion:* Vincent must have taken a liking to comparing the human body to carrion, the stinking flesh of dead animals. Three times he urged the Sisters to be confident and patient, since their bodies would someday be carrion, the food of worms.<sup>150</sup> In a particularly disgusting reference, he reported that he knew from his own experience that the Carmelites — undoubtedly those in Paris founded by his mentor Pierre de Bérulle — had soup to eat, made with rotten eggs that stank like carrion.<sup>151</sup> This may well be one of his exaggerations, since such eggs would make the Sisters gravely ill.

*Unused terms:* One might expect to see references in his writings to several other common animals, but they are not there. For example, rabbits, sparrows, fleas, squirrels, rats, and mice lived in the cities and towns, and boars, bears, bulls, weasels, and beavers were found in rural and wooded areas. Yet, these animals were never mentioned.

## Conclusion

Besides Vincent's letters, the Sisters and his confreres loved the conferences enough to write them out as best they could. One of their reasons was the holiness shining through his words, and the example his life provided. Another must have been the quality of his message, often sparkling with stories and these examples drawn from nature. In making use of the *exemplum* characteristic of classical rhetoric, and in relating his words to the world of animals, he must have drawn smiles and the nodding of heads from his listeners. The stories still do.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Conference 134, "Method to be Followed in Preaching," 20 August 1655, *CCD*, 11:250, translated as "a coarse brute."

<sup>149</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 119, "Repetition of Prayer: Various Topics," 27 May 1655, 11:175-78; and Conference 134, "Method to be Followed in Preaching," 20 August 1655, 11:237-60.

<sup>150</sup> See *CCD*, Conference 97, "Trust in Divine Providence," 9 June 1658, 10:403-18; and Conference 101, "To Four Sisters Being Sent to Metz," 26 August 1658, 10:447-54.

<sup>151</sup> Conference 65, "Mortification of the Senses and Passions," 3 January 1655, *CCD*, 10:44-52.

<sup>152</sup> A more detailed study of his style is found in Luigi Chierotti, *Antologia poetica vincenziana* (Chieri, Italy: Vita Vincenziana, 1965), 226 pp.

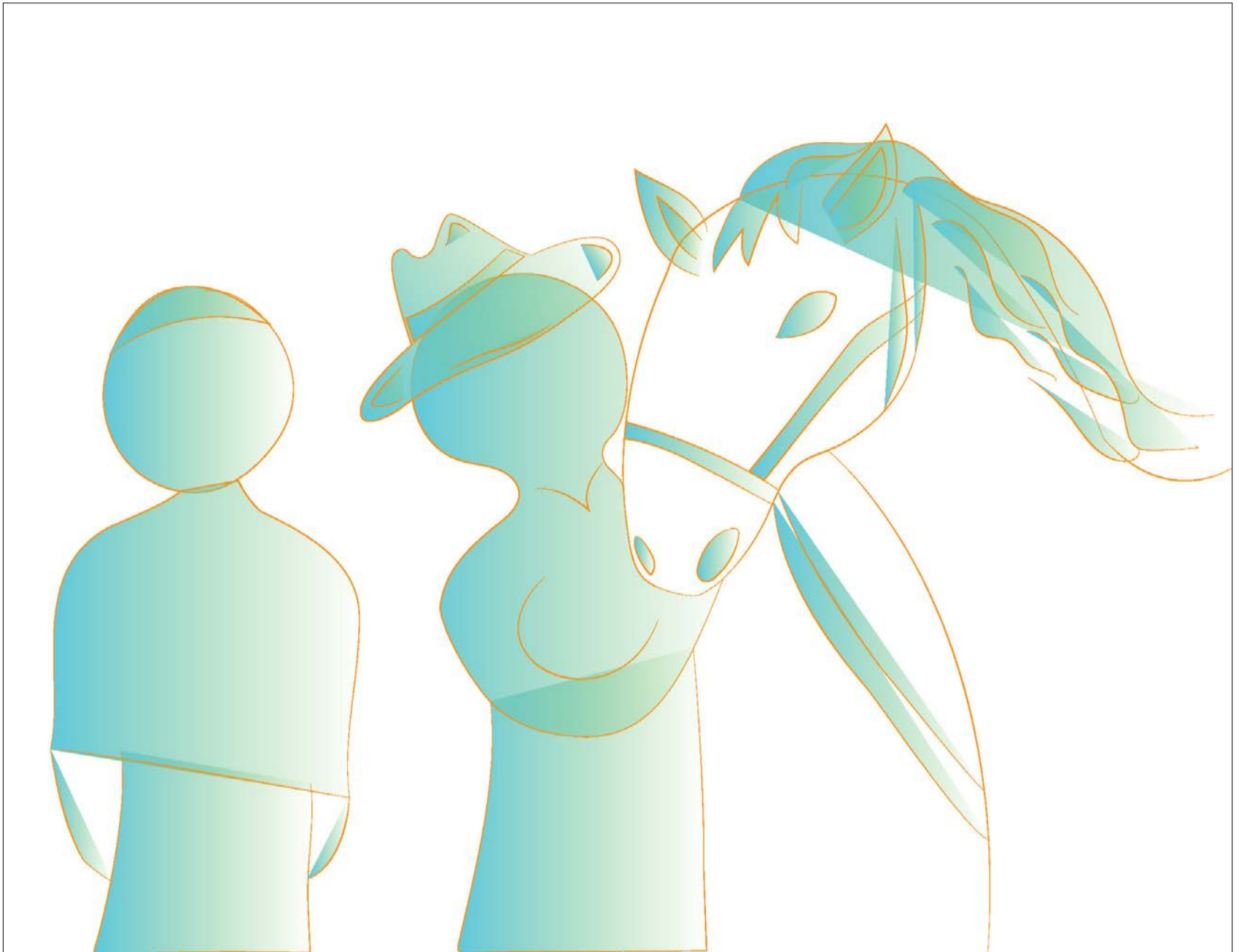




The chase.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*

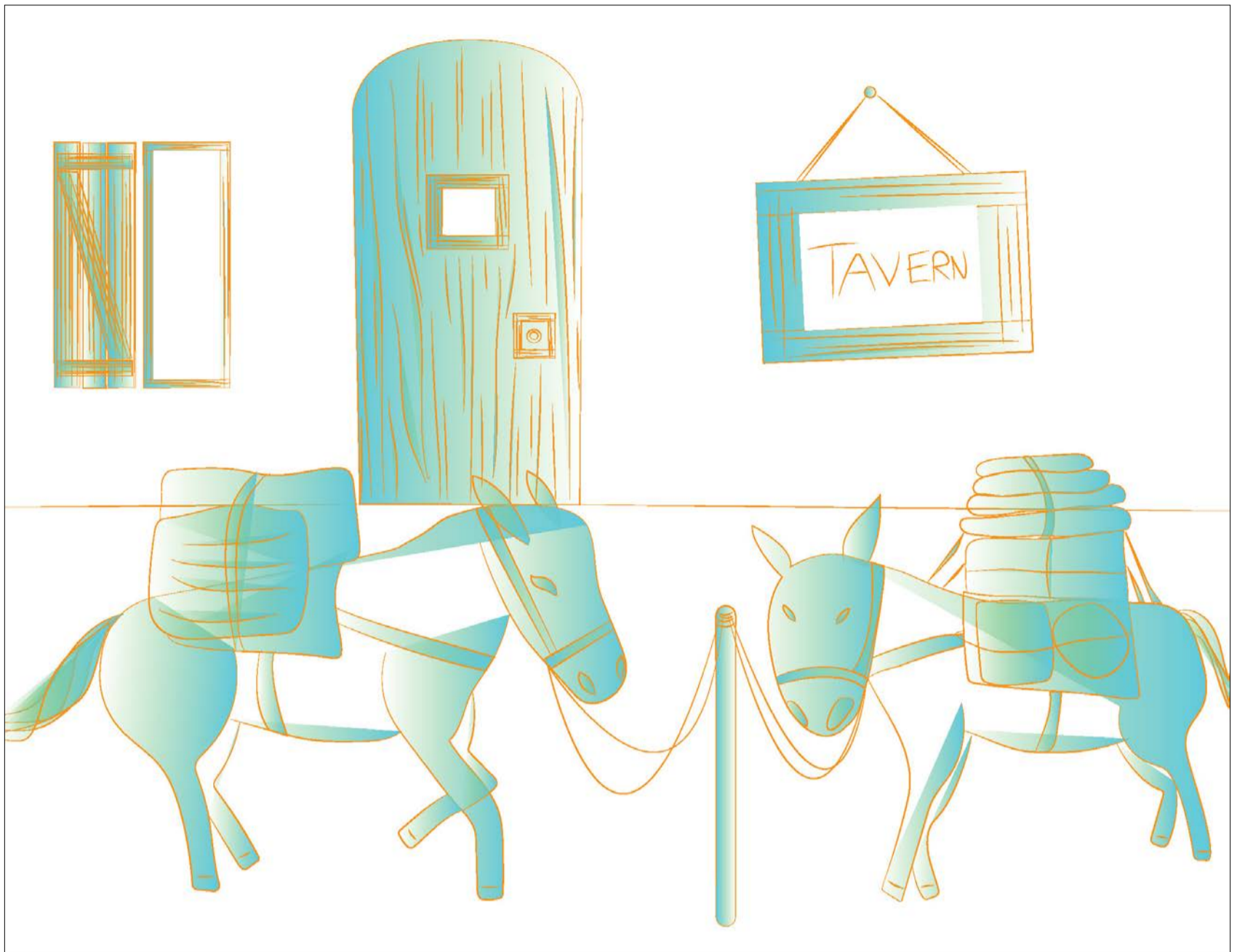




"How are your horses getting along?"

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*

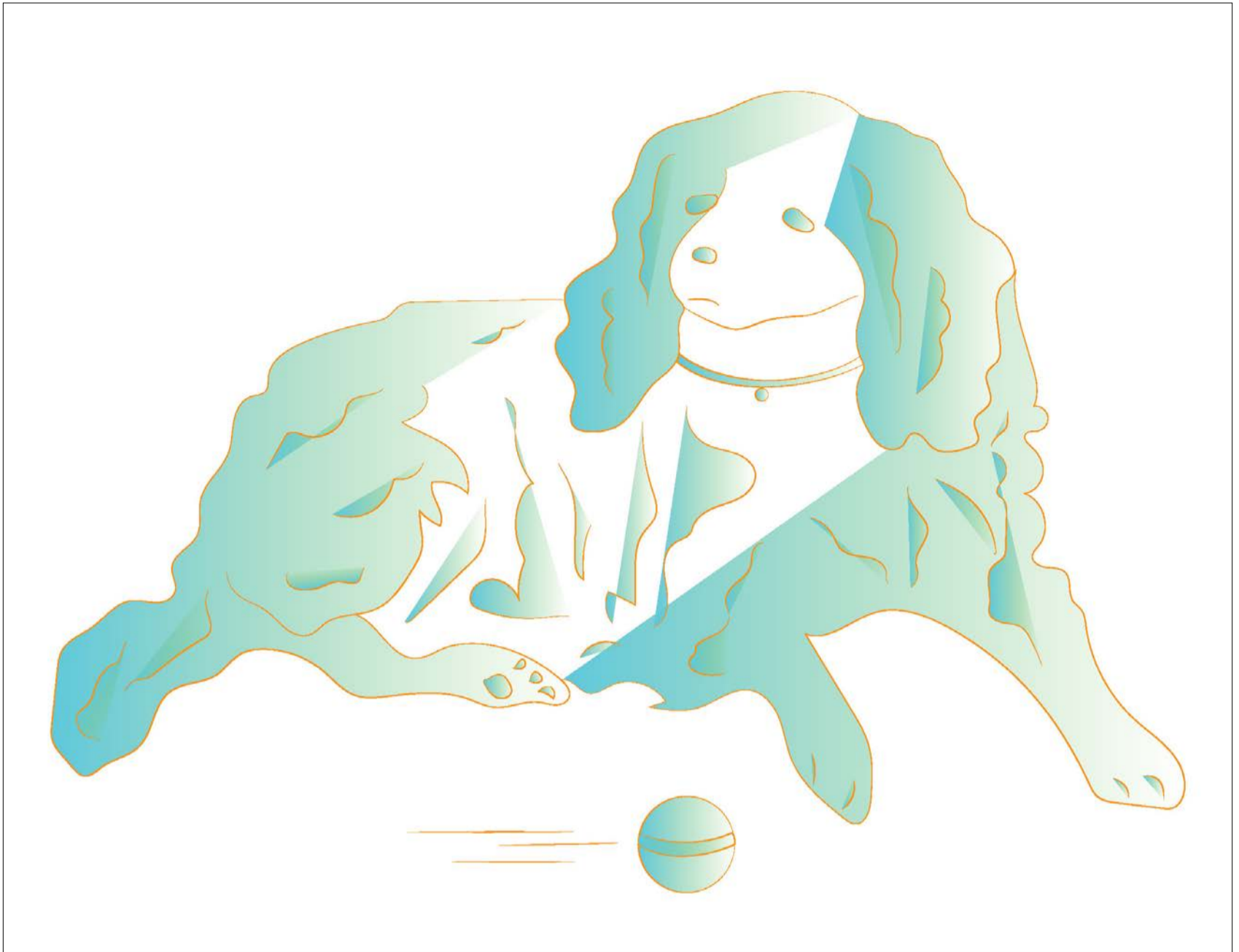




Beasts of burden patiently waiting outside the tavern.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*

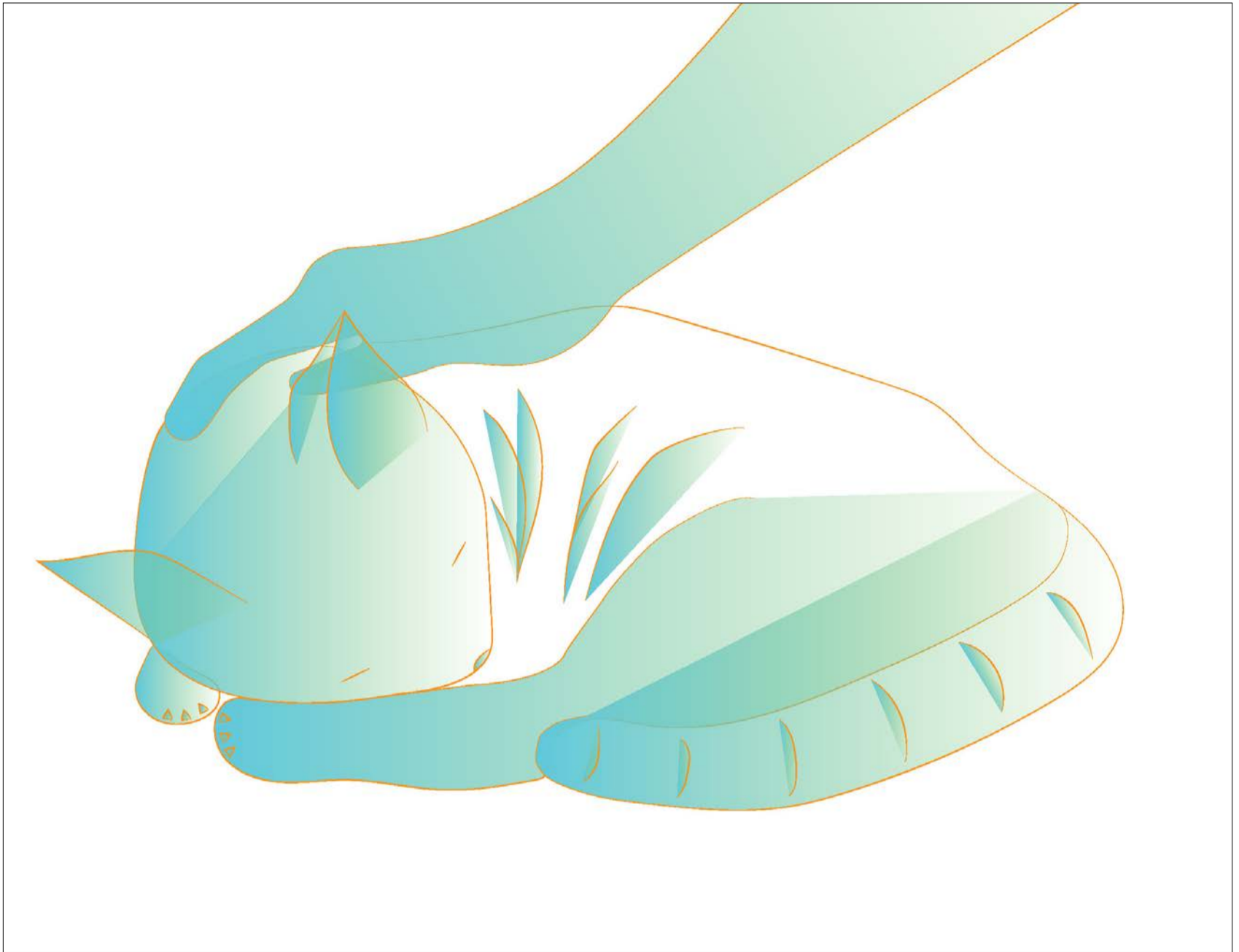




A dog and his ball.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*

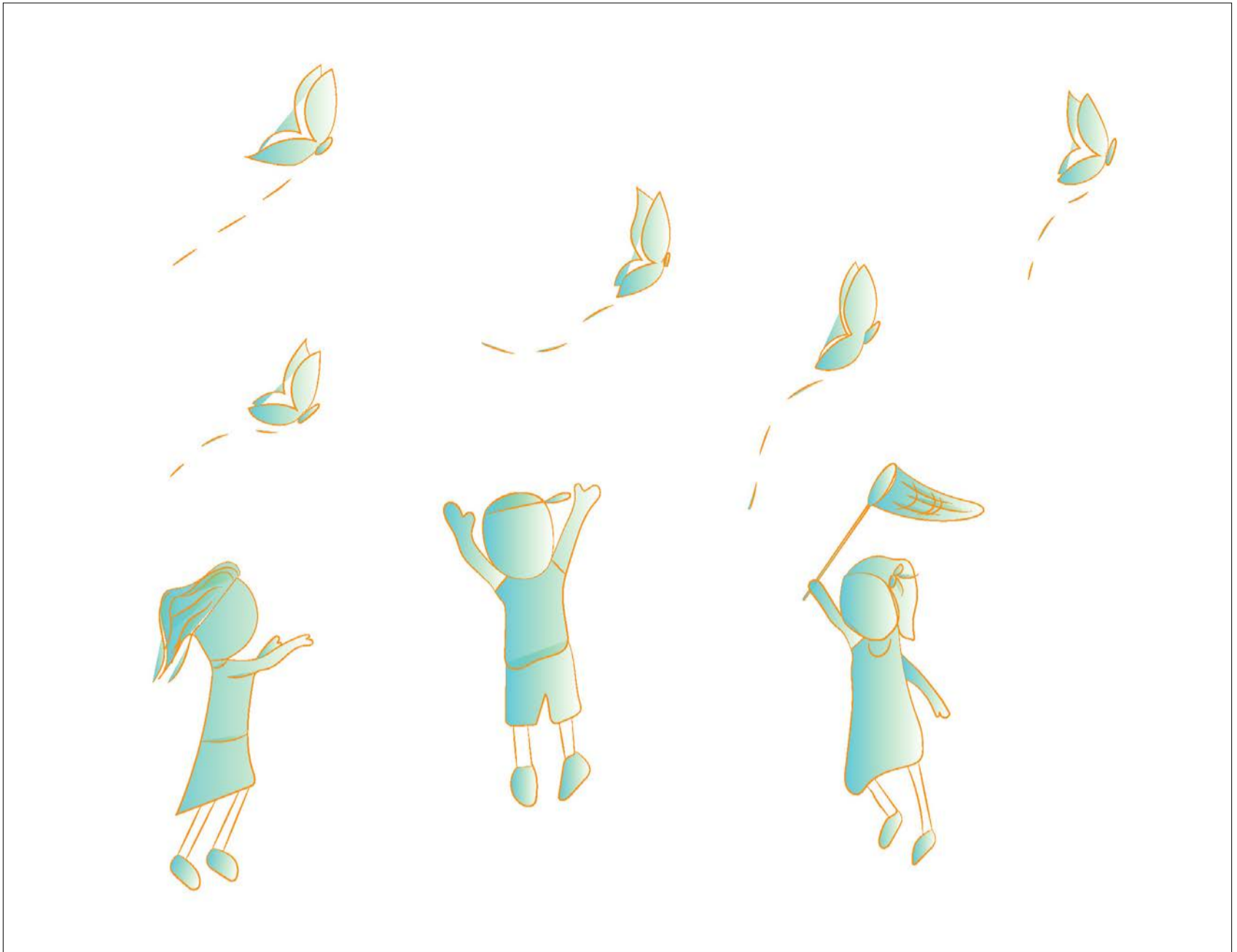




Attachment to a cat.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*





Chasing butterflies.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*

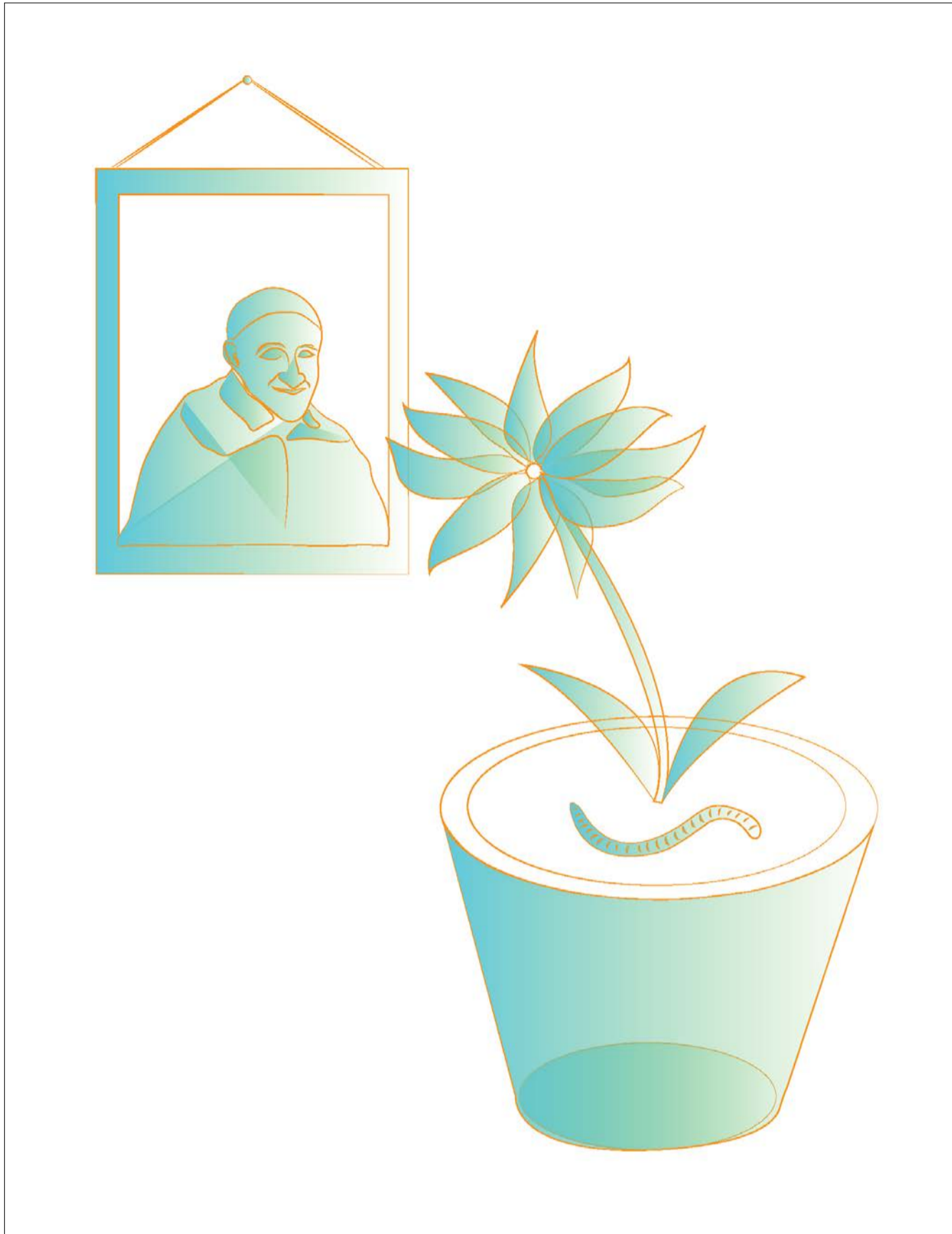




The spider's web.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*

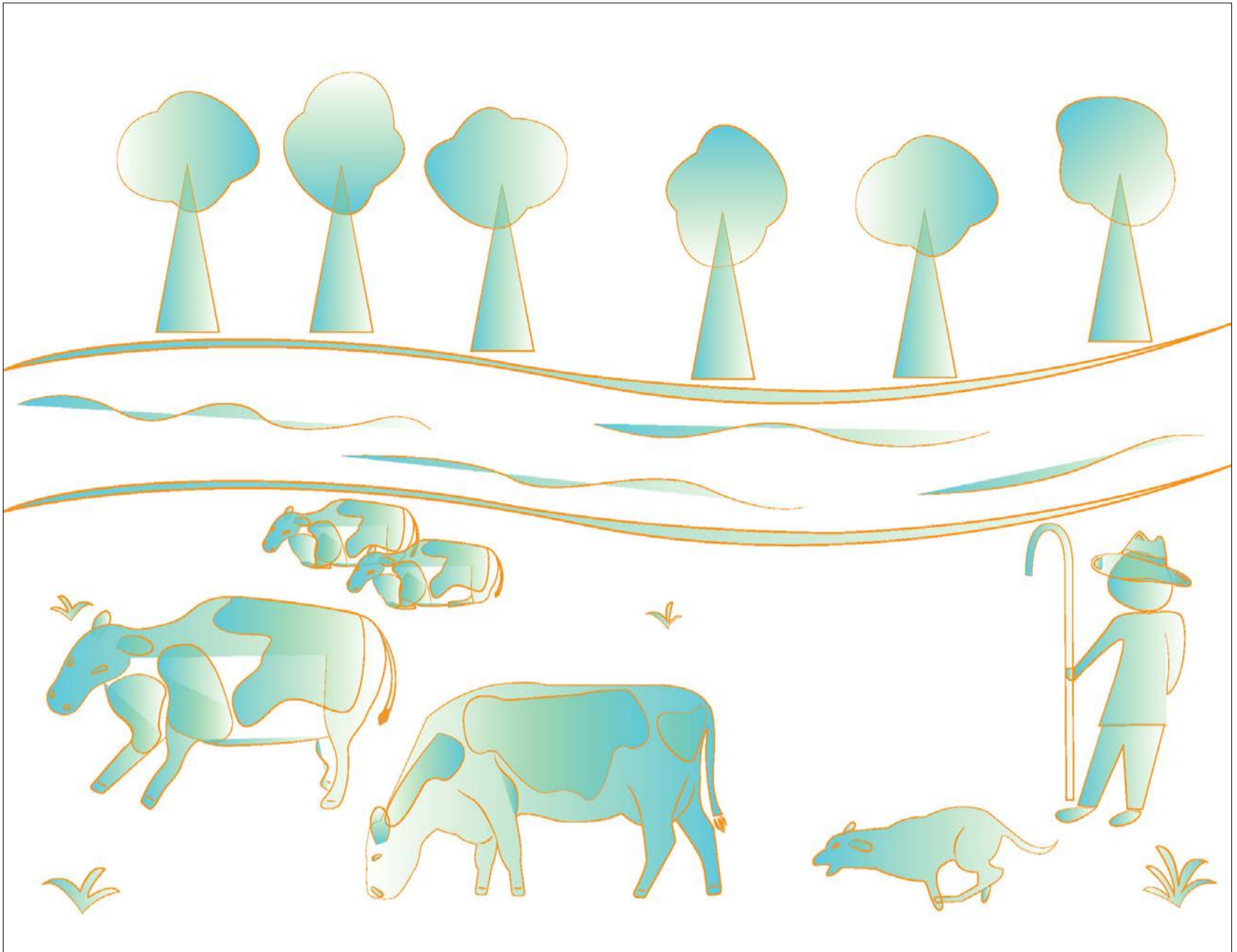




"We are only earthworms..."

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*

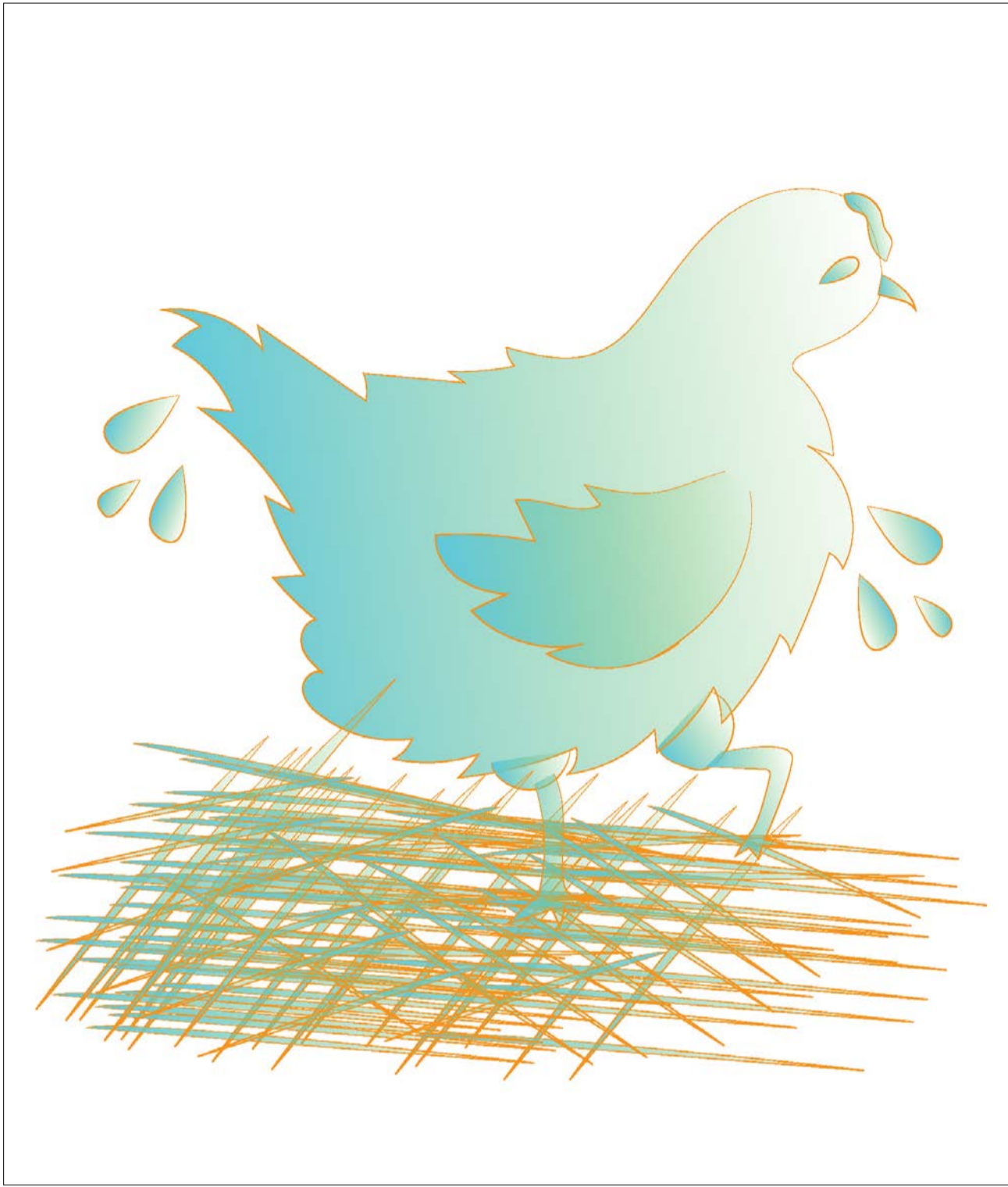




Shepherding the herd.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*





Divine Providence, evident in its care of birds.

*Courtesy of Laura Williams*



# The Virtue of Holy Indifference: The Fruit of Saint Vincent de Paul's Spiritual Journey

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SUNG HAE KIM, S.C.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to John E. Rybolt, C.M., who read this article and offered valuable suggestions.



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## Introduction

While reading Saint Vincent de Paul, I was struck by his repeated emphasis on the virtue of Holy Indifference. I wanted to find out what ‘Holy Indifference’ meant to him and how it can transform us today, individually and communally. Some five years ago I wrote an article, “Indifference as the Freedom of the Heart: The Spiritual Fruit of Apostolic Mysticism – Christian, Confucian, and Daoist Cases.”<sup>2</sup> As my resource for the Christian case, I used only five conferences of Vincent de Paul to the Daughters of Charity, which focused on indifference as their theme. Since then, in 2014 the *Index to Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, and Documents* was published.<sup>3</sup> Because of this, I am now able to update my work utilizing all the occurrences of indifference provided in a vast number of Vincent’s letters, as well as in his conferences to the priests and brothers of the Congregation of the Mission.<sup>4</sup> In other words, this article completes the former article, while focusing anew on the Christian spirituality of indifference through the example of Vincent de Paul. This new research provided me joy in offering a deeper look into the unique life’s pilgrimage of Saint Vincent de Paul.

It has been a challenge in how to best translate the French term *indifférence* into contemporary English. The word does not mean ordinary indifference, with its negative connotation that one is so self-centered that s/he is not interested in anything or anyone else. Sister Marie Poole, D.C., the chief English translator of *CCD*, attempted to convey the original meaning of *indifférence* using a variety of English words, such as transcendence, detachment, freedom of heart, a state of openness to God’s Will, etc. according to the context. These various translated words, however, forced me to go back to the original French text in order to confirm instances when Vincent actually used the term *indifférence*.

Recently Pope Francis warned us about the attitude of indifference, which he considers the root cause of human sins against our neighbors and against nature, such as the rich man in the Gospel story uninterested in the plight of the beggar in front of his own house (Luke 16: 20). The Pope’s concern for the ‘globalization of indifference,’ which includes indifference to God, indifference to neighbor, and indifference to environment, has been notably expressed in his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel* (#54, 61, etc.), and in his message on the World Day of Peace on 1 January 2016. Interestingly enough, however, if we do not stop at the verbal level but delve more deeply into content, Pope Francis’s appeal to overcome our attitude of indifference through solidarity and compassion is connected to Vincent’s Holy Indifference, which frees a person and a community from egoism. Vincent recommended that we cultivate this virtue, that is, a habitual capacity to see things as they are, offering the freedom of heart to love all things through the eyes of God. Vincent was convinced that Jesus Christ practiced this virtue on earth: emptying himself and faithfully

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<sup>2</sup> See *Vincentian Heritage* 30:2 (2011), 27-46.

<sup>3</sup> Pierre Coste, C.M., *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, vols. 1-14 (New York: New City Press, 1985-2014). Hereafter cited as *CCD*.

<sup>4</sup> I will primarily focus upon 24 letters written by Vincent that appear throughout eight volumes of *CCD*. These include three Conferences to the Missioners and five conferences to the Daughters of Charity, all of which feature indifference as their title/theme.



Vincent writing letters at his desk.

Original in Vincentian provincial house, Stradom, Krakow; signed by G. Lewandowska.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



following the will of God. Holy Indifference was, for Vincent, the source of all virtues from which freedom and love flow.

Finally, in order to provide some additional context, it would also be of value to compare the virtue of Holy Indifference in Vincent de Paul with that of Ignatius Loyola; this is worth discussion as it was Loyola whom introduced the concept into the Catholic spiritual tradition.

### **The Virtue of Holy Indifference in the Letters of Vincent de Paul**

In twenty-four letters, Vincent presented the state of Holy Indifference as the ideal to which every disciple of Jesus should aspire. For thirty years, beginning with his letters to Louise de Marillac in the 1630s, to a letter to a seminarian of the Congregation of the Mission in 1660 just months before his death, the virtue of Holy Indifference was central to Vincent's vision of imitating the true freedom of Jesus Christ. Consider how Vincent, as the superior general of the Congregation of the Mission, described the virtue to his priests and brothers missioned outside of Paris. He wrote to a priest of the Mission:

O Monsieur, what a beautiful adornment for a Missionary is holy indifference, since it makes him so pleasing to God that God will always prefer him to all other workers in whom He does not see this disposition for indifference in carrying out His plans! If we divested ourselves, once and for all, of all self-will, we would then be in a position of being sure of doing the Will of God, in which the angels find all their delight and men all their happiness.<sup>5</sup>

Vincent assured the priest that God sees our mind, the root of all our actions, and believes it more important than all our great achievements. This statement is striking when

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<sup>5</sup> Letter 1472, "To a Priest of the Mission," *CCD*, 4:339.

we consider Vincent's extraordinary lifetime of accomplishment. He worked tirelessly for the poor and for victims of wars; but what he really wanted to teach his companions was their need to be emptied of desires thereby filling their hearts with God. Vincent was convinced that only when we preserve this freedom of heart, doing whatever God asks of us, will heaven and earth rejoice with us.

Vincent wrote comfortingly to one of his priests who was experiencing difficulty accepting a change of ministry. He pointed out that the priest's patience was being tested, that he should let go of his repugnance to change and bear the temptation to move to another place: "...well aware that without peace of mind it is difficult to succeed in any duty. But since it depends mainly on God and our own indifference, those two principles must be established in us and sought in these two sources."<sup>6</sup> Here Vincent made it clear that two principles from which we can draw energy are trust in God and Holy Indifference. These two sources are intimately tied together, for only when our mind is in the state of indifference can we truly trust God and let divine grace freely work within us.

Reading Vincent's letters, I received a special consolation as I could see that he also experienced all the communal conflicts we experience today. Consequently, I read his letters with much interest and curiosity about how he faced these perennial human problems, and how he solved them. Once Vincent received a letter from a rector telling of a seminarian who was persistent in his desire to move to Paris because the courses he wished to take were not offered in the seminary at Rome. Vincent advised the rector to persuade the seminarian that it was not advisable to move between semesters, and that it would be beneficial for him to serve as a companion to a new seminarian in Rome. Then Vincent offered the fundamental principle of how to discern our motivations, the source of our desires:

Desires that come from God are gentle and leave the soul at peace; whereas inspirations of the evil spirit are, on the contrary, harsh and troubling to the person who has them.... It is up to the Company to assign individual members either to studying or to the works, at the time and in the manner it deems appropriate; otherwise, if each person were at liberty to choose, it would no longer be a body composed of parts which constitute that beautiful harmony of well-regulated Communities, but rather a division of persons following their own inclinations.<sup>7</sup>

Vincent suggested the same principle of discernment to Brother Pierre Leclerc, who had threatened to leave the community if his request was not accepted. "I feel that your desire does not come from God because it is too vehement. Those given by God are gentle

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<sup>6</sup> Letter 1897, "To a Priest of the Mission," 1 August 1655, *Ibid.*, 5:410-11.

<sup>7</sup> Letter 2760, "To Edme Jolly," 27 December 1658, *Ibid.*, 7:434-435.

and peaceful; they in no way trouble the mind as yours does, causing you anxiety.... Where is that holy indifference to places and duties that made you say so frequently that you were ready to go and ready to remain in order to follow Our Lord?"<sup>8</sup> To another Brother who repeatedly asked to move his mission Vincent answered that God was trying to teach him, for the Brother wanted to go where he was now. Then Vincent ordered the Brother to stay, thinking it was God's will that he bear the hardships he was experiencing in order to learn patience:

You have encountered a few difficulties there, and I told you that there were some everywhere.... Dear Brother, if you want to have peace of heart and a thousand blessings from God, do not listen any longer either to your own judgment or your will. You have already made sacrifice of them to God; be very careful not to take back the use of them. Allow yourself to be guided, and rest assured that God will be the one who guides you; but where? To the freedom of His children, to a superabundance of consolations, to great progress in virtue, and to your eternal happiness.... I ask Our Lord to animate you with His own Spirit. He was so submissive that He compared Himself to a beast of burden, which is so indifferent that people do to it whatever they want — anywhere, any time. If we were in this disposition, God would soon lead us to our perfection.<sup>9</sup>

We should pay special attention to the concept of freedom Vincent portrayed here. The freedom that the children of God are enjoying is mentioned in Rom 8:21: "the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God." For Vincent the journey to freedom was the process of cultivating the virtue of Holy Indifference. Freedom meant a state of mind liberated from any attachment or bondage outside of God. Just like the donkey Jesus rode on his entrance to Jerusalem (Mt 21:5), the disciples of Jesus should preserve freedom of heart and be ready to leave any time and go to any place as the Lord directed. This image of the mule/donkey also appears several times in Vincent's conferences to the Daughters of Charity.

It is noteworthy that freedom of heart enables us not only to willingly accept the decisions of superiors, but also offers us creativity and the courage to take initiatives in responding to events without fear of failure.<sup>10</sup> A person who walks through life with inner freedom makes decisions consistently and courageously without fear of criticism

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<sup>8</sup> Letter 2168, "To Pierre Leclerc," 12 November 1656, *Ibid.*, 6:143.

<sup>9</sup> Letter 2854, "To a Coadjutor Brother," 28 May 1659, *Ibid.*, 7:589-590.

<sup>10</sup> Robert P. Maloney, C.M., quoted André Dodin in his article, "The Freedom of the Children of God: The Fruit of Indifference." See *Vincentiana* 60:2 (April-June 2016).



Vincent receives the offer of Saint-Lazare.

From a series of etchings on his life by Vignola.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



or adverse consequences.<sup>11</sup> This creative and freeing aspect of Holy Indifference for an individual should be emphasized and developed further, and we should even consider an external element of decision-making, an awareness that others play a role in accordance to their talents and ability. Indeed, our contemporary understanding of systemic change calls for this greater understanding of Holy Indifference, the inner freedom of heart.

In the first volume of the *Correspondence*, we find Vincent's letters to Louise de Marillac in the 1630s. In 1633, when young women began to gather in Louise's house to serve the poor in the parishes of Paris, Vincent not only suggested qualifications for their acceptance, but also emphasized the importance of inner preparation. He believed virtues to be the foundation of all the apostolic ministries: "Permit me to add to this the recommendation of holy indifference, although nature grumbles against it. I tell you that everything is to be feared until we succeed in this, since our inclinations are so wicked that they seek themselves in all things."<sup>12</sup> Vincent encouraged Louise and the early Daughters of Charity to cultivate the virtue. He felt it was important to train young women aspiring to religious life to learn it in their initial formation period: "It will be good, meanwhile, to have them understand that they must remain in a spirit of indifference. Indeed! They must be trained in the knowledge of solid virtues before we can make use of them."<sup>13</sup>

When he was writing the draft of the rules for the Daughters of Charity, Vincent advised Louise to teach them to learn mortification and to attain the virtues of obedience and indifference:

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* Maloney illustrates nine major initiatives Vincent took in his lifetime: the Ladies of Charity; Congregation of the Mission; 20 seminaries; 60 houses of the Daughters of Charity; 30,000 letters; 13 houses for foundlings; organizing relief campaigns for victims of war, plague, and famine; massive relief programs at Saint-Lazare; and the houses of Daughters of Charity and the Council of Conscience.

<sup>12</sup> Letter 148, "To Saint Louise," *CCD*, 1:212.

<sup>13</sup> Letter 152, "To Saint Louise," [September or October 1633], *Ibid.*, 1:217.

It would be well for you to tell them what constitutes solid virtue, especially that of interior and exterior mortification of our judgment, our will, memories, sight, hearing, speech, and other senses, of the attachments we have to bad, useless, and even to good things; all this for the love of Our Lord Who acted in this way. You will have to strengthen them a great deal in all these matters, especially in the virtue of obedience and in that of indifference.<sup>14</sup>

Vincent recommended the virtue to not only Louise and those preparing to be Daughters of Charity, but also to himself no matter the situation: “I am like you, Mademoiselle; there is nothing that bothers me more than uncertainty. But I do indeed greatly desire that God may be pleased to grant me the grace of making everything indifferent to me, and to you as well. Come now, we shall make every effort, please God, to acquire this holy virtue.”<sup>15</sup>

We know how much Vincent trusted God’s providence in moving the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission to Saint-Lazare, a vast property with great possibilities for expansion. Their possession of the property faced an uncertain future due to a lawsuit concerning whether missionaries would be allowed to remain. The following is a candid letter of Vincent’s:

You are well aware that the religious of [Saint-Victor] are contesting our possession of Saint-Lazare. You could hardly believe the acts of submission I have rendered to them as the Gospel prescribes, although truly they are not called for. M. Duval has assured me of this, as has everyone who knows what this affair involves. Things will be as Our Lord wishes. He knows that His goodness has made me as truly indifferent on this occasion as during any other difficulty I have had. Please help me to thank Him for this.<sup>16</sup>

The Congregation of the Mission began in 1625 with six priests and an endowment of 45,000 livres from Phillipe Emmanuel de Gondi and his wife. Recognizing this new community’s vitality and vision Adrien Le Bon, the superior of Saint-Lazare, asked Vincent to take over his huge priory just outside of Paris, on the condition that the Congregation of the Mission would take care of the remaining members of his monastery until their deaths. Initially Vincent was hesitant to accept this vast property, but André Duval, his spiritual

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<sup>14</sup> Letter 156a, “To Saint Louise,” [January 1634], *Ibid.*, 1:223.

<sup>15</sup> Letter 175, “To Saint Louise,” [between 1632 and 1636], *Ibid.*, 1:240-241.

<sup>16</sup> Letter 102, “To N.,” [1632], *Ibid.*, 1:151. For more on the Religious of St. Victor’s dispute over Saint-Lazare with the Congregation of the Mission, see José María Román, C.M., *St. Vincent de Paul: A Biography*, trans. by Joyce Howard (Melisende, UK Ltd: 1999), 231-234. André Dodin commented on the influence André Duval had on Vincent, both in enabling him to recognize his call to establish a community, and later in accepting the huge priory of Saint-Lazare. See *Vincent de Paul and Charity: A Contemporary Portrait of His Life and Apostolic Spirit*, trans. by Jean Marie Smith and Dennis Saunders (New York: New City Press, 1993), 27.

director and a professor of theology at the Sorbonne, persuaded him to accept it and use it for the poor and the renewal of the Church. After Saint-Lazare became the Motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission in 1632, the Augustinians of Ste. Geneviève and St. Victor filed a lawsuit claiming Saint-Lazare should stay in the Augustinian union. Vincent felt tempted to give up the property, but Duval dissuaded him and assured him he was in the right. Therefore, Vincent went to court, keenly aware of his duties as head of a congregation. Yet, as we read in the letter above, Vincent was able to maintain his freedom of heart or state of indifference in the midst of this unsure situation.

In a separate instance, Vincent proposed to practice the virtue of indifference when members of the community were experiencing conflicts among themselves. When the superior of the Le Mans seminary wrote to Vincent that priests in his house had diverging opinions on liturgy, some very critical of what he was trying to do, Vincent responded that he would send someone soon to establish a common liturgy as in the Motherhouse. But he also used this occasion to teach his company to practice the virtue: “In God’s name, Monsieur, let us remain indifferent; let us strive to be equally attached to whatever obedience marks out for us, be it agreeable or disagreeable.... For some petty contradiction should we stop doing good, and a good such as glorifying God?”<sup>17</sup>

Around the same time, Vincent heard from the superior of Saintes that he did not know what to do because a young priest refused to obey him. Vincent responded that while the superior should advise the young priest to learn the virtue, the superior should also maintain the heart of indifference:

I will also try to give him a hint that he should show a little more submission and indifference than he now does. However, since this is the work of the Holy Spirit rather than that of men, who can say things but not move the person, we shall pray to God for that.... I know well, Monsieur, how much you have to endure in your present duty, and I ask Our Lord to strengthen you in your difficulties. It is in such circumstances that we acquire virtue; where there is no suffering, there is little merit. My wish is that God may grant us great indifference with regard to duties.... I beg you to ask Him earnestly for this grace for me and for the whole Company.<sup>18</sup>

It is clear that Vincent thought the virtue of indifference should be practiced by all members of the Congregation of the Mission and, in the end, by all disciples of Jesus.

To a priest of the Congregation of the Mission wanting to go on foreign missions, Vincent responded thus: “Holy indifference in all things is the state of the perfect, and yours gives me hope that God will be glorified in and by you.... We must serve Him as

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<sup>17</sup> Letter 1157, “To Jean Gicquel,” 5 December 1649, *CCD*, 3:509.

<sup>18</sup> Letter 1158, “To Louis Rivet,” 8 December 1649, *Ibid.*, 3:510.

He wishes and renounce our own choice, with regard both to places and employments.”<sup>19</sup> To a seminarian in Genoa suffering spiritual dryness and hesitant to give a lecture on philosophy, Vincent offered the following advice: “I praise God for the indifference He has given you regarding the place where you live and, I venture to say, regarding all the works.... Your lowly sentiments concerning yourself are good, and I ask Our Lord to give you enough of them to enable you to follow Him always in the practice of holy humility. They should not, however, prevent you from being submissive, if holy obedience requires that you teach philosophy.”<sup>20</sup> Vincent sympathized with the student’s suffering, his distaste for prayer and spiritual reading, etc., but he encouraged him to be faithful to his spiritual exercises — to remember that our Lord is faithful and tests His best servant, now in one way, then in another.

In another instance, an Irish priest entered the Congregation of the Mission in order to serve the poor in the countryside, but he was missioned to a seminary to teach music and liturgy to seminarians. He was so upset that he did not participate in the community’s morning or evening prayers. Upon hearing this news, Vincent wrote him that the formation of the clergy was as important as ministering to the poor in the countryside. Then Vincent pointed out a practical matter too; the priest should wait until he became more fluent in French in order to preach to people in the village. “In the name of Our Lord, Monsieur, humble yourself, ask His pardon for the bad example you give the seminary and your confreres, and rest assured that the Company will be indulgent enough to forget the past and to give you the satisfaction you desire, when it sees that you are indifferent to duties and very exact to the things recommended to you.”<sup>21</sup> Vincent’s advice to those not satisfied with their ministry would be the same, whether in 1659 or now; one must be patient and wait for God’s time, cultivating the virtue of Holy Indifference.

When the superior of the Annecy seminary insisted that Missioners should go to the cities to find success, Vincent wrote the following letter three years before his own death:

Because that [a new community established in Lyons] has given you reason to tell me that there is no hope that our Company will ever progress and be provided with good subjects unless we take the trouble to establish ourselves in large cities,.... Up to this point, His Providence has called us to the places where we are, without our seeking this either directly or indirectly.... Indeed, if we were really convinced of our own uselessness, we would be wary of entering someone else’s vineyard before being invited there...<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Letter 2047, “To a Priest of the Mission,” *Ibid.*, 5:593.

<sup>20</sup> Letter 2082, “To a Student of the Mission,” 16 June 1656, *Ibid.*, 5:630.

<sup>21</sup> Letter 2847, “To Luke Plunket,” 21 May 1659, *Ibid.*, 7:578.

<sup>22</sup> Letter 2274, “To Achille Le Vazeux,” 1 June 1657, *Ibid.*, 6:331. Historical information concerning Achille Le Vazeux, the superior of the Annecy Seminary (1653-58), is from footnote 1.



A holy card picturing Louise with the Daughters and persons in need.

The text reads: "Blessed be God for all things, may His holy will be preferred to everything."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



The superior at Annecy was not only success driven, but also hasty and obstinate in his decisions and found it hard to take advice from others. He once tried to merge with another congregation in the region without permission of the superior general. In the end, he was not able to complete his term of office, was recalled to Paris, and then left the Congregation a few days before Vincent's death. Vincent regarded his withdrawal as a blessing from God.

Although it was not common for a Daughter of Charity to write Vincent directly, as Louise was their direct superior, we find several interesting letters between Vincent and Sister Anne Hardemont, the sister servant in Ussel. She wrote to Vincent, complaining she was angry with Louise for missioning her to a remote country village where she could not find anything worthwhile to do. She even confessed to Vincent that she was so displeased with Louise that she no longer wished to write to her. Vincent's answer to her was gentle, but firm:

I received two letters from you which have distressed me deeply and with good reason, seeing how you are behaving there. Who, indeed, would not be distressed at seeing a Daughter of Charity — one of the oldest in the Company — brought to Limousin by Divine Providence to do the works of mercy, no sooner arrive on the spot than she wants to return out of sheer caprice and constantly complains of being left there, although she has no difficulties to endure other than the ones she makes for herself? ...Now, I ask you to consider the scandal you are giving and the insult which Our Lord, who has called you to His service, receives from it. Look at the harm that you are doing to the Duchess, who brought you to her estates for the relief of the poor and the edification of her subjects.... No one likes being in a strange place; yet, they go there and they stay. How many young

women who have married far away are unhappy with their homes and their husbands as well! But they do not return to their parent's house because of that. They have to mortify their preference.... Furthermore, you should not always stay in your room, but take turns with your Sister — or go with her — visiting and serving the poor. That is one way of not getting bored.<sup>23</sup>

Vincent concluded his letter with warm advice on how to comply graciously with another's wishes; she should be humble, gentle, and wise in her leadership, and never lose confidence in the leadership of Louise who had received graces from God to give instructions to others.

Vincent rejoiced when he saw people living with the spirit of indifference. When he heard from a priest of the Congregation that in his heart he accepted the change of superior, Vincent answered thus: "*Mon Dieu*, how consoled I am by the share Our Lord has given you of His humility, in the change of Superiors that has taken place, and likewise your indifference in submitting yourself to anyone whomsoever. That is, indeed, a mark of the sovereign dominion Our Lord has over your dear heart, which I love more than my own, in the heart of Our Lord in whose love I am your most humble and obedient servant."<sup>24</sup> Vincent praised yet another priest of the Mission and encouraged him to maintain this spirit: "God be praised that you are ready to do His Will in all things and everywhere and to go to live and die wherever He chooses to call you! This is the disposition of good servants of God and of truly apostolic men, who are attached to nothing."<sup>25</sup>

About one year before his death, a seminarian wrote to Vincent that he wished to be missioned to a distant place to administer sacraments to the people. Vincent's response warrants our attention because he includes a recommendation to cultivate different virtues through which one can attain the virtue of indifference:

It was a joy for me to receive your letter, and I was grateful to God in His goodness when I saw your readiness to go to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments to people in distant lands. This holy seed that Our Lord has sown in your heart will be able to bear fruit in due time, and fruits of eternal life. Cultivate it carefully but without departing from the holy indifference you must have for places and works. And since you are now engaged in studying, make it your principal concern, after that of pleasing God and making yourself ever more pleasing in His sight by the practice of the virtues.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Letter 2768, "To Sister Anne Hardemont," 4 January 1659, *Ibid.*, 7:447-449. Volume 7 contains four letters of Vincent to Sister Anne beginning in August 1658, three months after her arrival at Ussel. See also, Letters 2641, 2734, and 2786. This is the third letter and the strongest admonition. The last letter is of a more consoling nature as Sister Anne was enduring difficulties in starting the hospital, and in community life.

<sup>24</sup> Letter 642, "To Pierre Escart," 11 February 1643, *Ibid.*, 2:401-402.

<sup>25</sup> Letter 1534, "To a Priest of the Mission," *Ibid.*, 4:437.

<sup>26</sup> Letter 2886, "To a Seminarian of the Mission," 28 June 1659, *Ibid.*, 7:636.

The Conferences of Vincent to the priests and brothers of the Mission frequently mentioned five virtues: simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification, and zeal.<sup>27</sup> In Conference 211, which he gave on 22 August 1659, Vincent expressed that these five virtues are the spirit and life of the Congregation of the Mission. He explained each of these five virtues as they applied to the *Common Rules*, chapter II, article 14:

We should follow, as far as possible, all the Gospel teaching already mentioned, since it is so holy and very practical. But some of it, in fact, has more application to us, particularly when it emphasizes simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification and zeal for souls. The Congregation should pay special attention to developing and living up to these five virtues so that they may be, as it were, the faculties of the soul of the whole congregation, and that everything each one of us does may always be inspired by them.<sup>28</sup>

It is worth noting that Vincent connected this part of the *Common Rules* to the freedom of the children of God. He was convinced that those detached from a love for worldly possessions, from the greedy desire for pleasures, and from their own will, become the children of God and enjoy perfect freedom. “Is there anything as useful as freedom? The teaching states that freedom should be bought at the price of gold and silver and that we should sacrifice everything to possess it.”<sup>29</sup> Vincent then explained how this freedom from the charms of the world, the pleasures of the flesh, and the illusions of the devil, will lead one to attain the five virtues of simplicity, humility, gentleness, mortification, and zeal. After further clarifying each virtue, Vincent concluded “to put it in a nutshell, everything God asks of us in the Gospel teachings is found in these five virtues.”<sup>30</sup>

Vincent advised cultivating these five virtues with Holy Indifference to a seminarian aspiring to join the foreign missions. To a priest suffering from a disease, he focused on indifference’s value: “A perfect abandonment to Providence such as yours is far more valuable than any other establishment. I ask Our Lord to strengthen you in it so that you may honor by your poverty the state in which He found Himself on earth, when He said that the birds had nests and the foxes had holes, but He had no place in which to withdraw.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Volume 11 of *CCD*, Conferences 33 and 34, pp. 40-41 for simplicity, Conferences 36 to 40, pp. 44-50, for humility, Conferences 44 to 47, pp. 53-55, for gentleness, Conferences 52 and 53, p. 59, for mortification, and Conferences 56 and 57, p. 62, for Zeal. In the last two years of Vincent’s life conferences to the Missioners became longer — however, while Conferences 201, pp. 139-50, and 204, pp. 173-86, in Volume 12 mention four of the virtues, only Conference 211, pp. 243-52, cites all five.

<sup>28</sup> Conference 211, “The Five Characteristic Virtues,” 22 August 1659, *Ibid.*, 12:243.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:245.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:251.

<sup>31</sup> Letter 3075, “To Jean Martin,” 5 February 1660, *Ibid.*, 8:271-272.

## Holy Indifference in Vincent's Conferences to the Missioners

Ordinarily, on every Friday evening from 8 to 9 PM Vincent gave a conference to the priests and brothers at Saint-Lazare. Since he opposed having his talks written down, most of these early conferences were not preserved. Although we have 224 conferences in Books eleven and twelve of *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, those in Book eleven are usually from one to six pages and preserve only the skeleton of a longer talk. On the other hand, the conferences in Book twelve are talks given from 1658 to 1660, the last two years of his life, and are usually longer than 10 pages as the Missioners were consciously preserving Vincent's remarks as their spiritual heritage. Though three conferences to the Missioners take the virtue as their theme, the first two, Conferences 62a and 188, are summaries, while only the third one, Conference 205, contains a full text.

First, Conference 62a is an abstract from the earliest biography of Vincent by Louis Abelly, but it denotes quite well how the virtue of indifference is closely connected with resignation or trust in the providence of God:

As for myself, I know nothing more holy or more perfect than this resignation, when it leads to a total stripping of self and true indifference for all sorts of states, in whatever manner we may be placed in them, except sin. So then, let's be steadfast in that and ask God to grant us the grace of remaining constantly in this indifference.<sup>32</sup>

Here Vincent used an analogy of taking off the clothes of self-centered attachment and ambition. In another conference on detachment, Vincent warned the priests not to embellish their homilies with flowery words, for doing so revealed a hidden desire for success, fame and self-satisfaction. Vincent pointed out that such homilies do not move the hearts of people, nor meet the need of each person according to God's design. Detachment requires not only detachment from property, and detachment from an inordinate love of family and friends, but also detachment from self-gratification, "such as wanting others to adapt themselves to us, wanting to be successful in all we do and have everything smile on us."<sup>33</sup> In order to be freed from all these thirsts for interior or exterior satisfactions, we have to learn to "annihilate ourselves in His presence."<sup>34</sup> Annihilation of self is an important term in mystical theology, which signifies the ultimate point wherein a person becomes united with God by emptying him/herself.<sup>35</sup> The fact that Vincent advised his companions

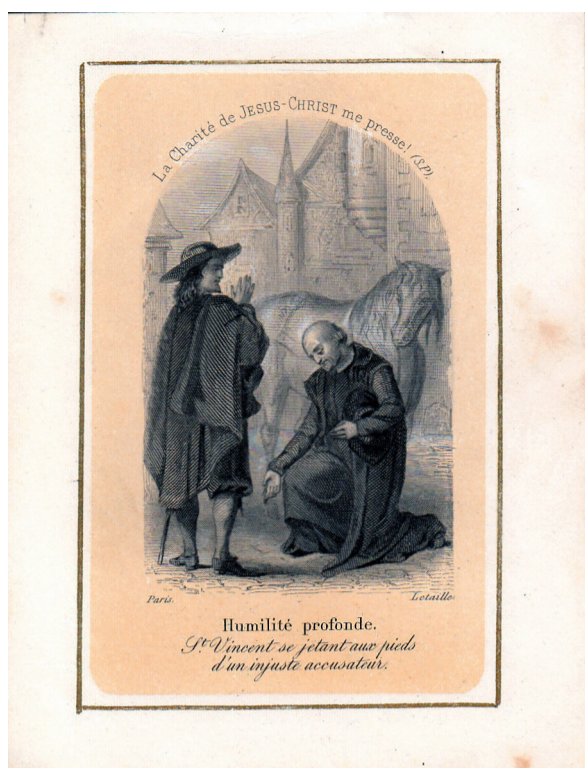
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<sup>32</sup> Conference 62a, "Indifference," *Ibid.*, 11:70. Conference 62a is not found in the original French edition of *CCD*; it is an excerpt from Louis Abelly, *The Life of the Venerable Servant of God: Vincent de Paul*, trans. by William Quinn, F.S.C., 3 vols. (New York: New City Press, 1993), 3:47-55.

<sup>33</sup> Conference 196, "Members of the Congregation and Their Ministries," 13 December 1658, *CCD*, 12:95.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (The New American Library, 1958), 99, 170.



Holy card with the theme of Vincent and humility, in which the saint throws himself at the feet of an unjust accuser.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



to annihilate themselves in God's presence reveals that his spirituality was not only concerned with charitable activities, but also with a mystical depth rooted in love. Because of this mystical depth, the authenticity of apostolic spirituality could be maintained.

Conference 188 to the Missioners is titled "Availability [Indifference] for Any Ministry Assignment," and records that, for Vincent, the virtue can be applied to the act of accepting assignments. In order to maintain the universal application of indifference towards all members, Vincent appealed to his companions to abandon any sense of privilege they felt entitled to because of their advanced age, higher education, or holiness:

The man who is not in this state of availability [indifference], but in the contrary one, is in a devilish state. In order to keep the vow of obedience we've taken, we must be in a state of openness to God's will [indifference] regarding all things.... "Oh, but I'm an old man!" someone may say. You're an old man! *Eh bien!* Should you on that account be less available, less virtuous? "Oh, but I'm an educated man!" Think about that a little. He's an educated man! And because he's educated, he doesn't have to be available or ready and willing to do what the Superior or an Officer of the house will ask of him. Consider whether that objection is reasonable, and if it ought to come from the mouth of someone who professes to serve God. "Oh, he's a holy man, Monsieur!" I'm glad he's a holy man. *Quoi!* Is that any reason why he should be exempt from doing what will be asked of him, what he'll be ordered to do, from obeying this Superior, who is, if you like, less perfect than he is, less educated and, if you like again, whose faults

and failings are obvious?<sup>36</sup>

Vincent explained that we need humility and self-abjection in order to preserve this state of indifference. However, he also allowed for the possibility of dialogue with a superior should some obstacle in carrying out the ministry be found. “Go before Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and there ask Him for the grace to let us know whether we should make this known to the Superior; and once He’s let us know that it’s His Will that we mention it, to do so, and then do whatever the Superior tells us.”<sup>37</sup> In essence, Vincent tried to balance personal discernment with intellectual reasoning and obedience to the superior, all within the state of Holy Indifference.

Worthy of note too are the qualities Vincent thought most important for a superior: “Some men are holy and lead a saintly life; however, they don’t always have the gift of leadership. Holiness is a continual disposition and total conformity to God’s Will, and leadership resides in the judgment. That is, a sound judgment is needed to guide and organize.”<sup>38</sup> Vincent knew by experience that sound judgment and humility were necessary requirements for good leadership, while being learned was not an absolute necessity, although it could help.

In conference 205 to the Missioners, commenting on the *Common Rules*, chapter II, article 10, Vincent explored the virtue:

Each one should show great eagerness in that sort of openness to God’s Will [indifference] which Jesus Christ and the saints developed so carefully. This means that we should not have a disproportionate liking for any ministry, person, or place, especially our native land, or anything of that sort. We should even be ready and willing to leave all these things gladly if our Superior asks it, or even hints at it, and to put up with any disappointment or disruption this causes, without complaint, accepting that, in all this, the Superior has done well in the Lord.<sup>39</sup>

Vincent began his talk with a simple rhetorical question, “How could the Company attain holiness, if it doesn’t acquire openness to God’s Will [indifference] and detachment from all things? ....If we’re attached to the world and ourselves, to our pleasures and self-esteem, how, I repeat, could we work for the sanctification of the clergy, which consists in

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<sup>36</sup> Conference 188, “Availability for Any Ministry Assignment,” [30 August 1658], *CCD*, 12:44-45. Sister Poole translated the French word ‘Indifference’ using a variety of suitable contemporary words and phrases, such as ‘availability’ or ‘state of openness’ to God’s will. I have placed the original term in [ ], in order to better convey Vincent’s emphasis on the virtue of indifference.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:47.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:45.

<sup>39</sup> Conference 205, “Indifference,” 16 May 1659, *Ibid.*, 12:187.



The Baptism of Saul (Paul) at Ananias. Mosaic, circa 1150.

Located in the Palatine Chapel, Palazzo Reale, Palermo, Italy.

*Public Domain*



turning away from these things? No one can give what he doesn't have."<sup>40</sup> It was crucial for the Missioners to attain this virtue:

Openness to God's Will [indifference] must set the captive free; this virtue alone draws us away from the tyranny of the senses and the love of creatures.... Openness to God's Will [indifference] must necessarily be akin to the nature of perfect love, for it's an activity of love, inclining the heart to all that's better and destroying everything that keeps it from this, like fire, which not only aims at its center, but consumes anything that holds it back. So, my dear confreres, if openness to God's Will [indifference] detaches your hearts from earth, they'll be afire with the practice of the Will of God. When they stop loving other things, they will necessarily be filled with God's love. It is in this sense that openness to God's Will [indifference] is the source of all virtues and the death of all vices.<sup>41</sup>

To better understand Holy Indifference as the source and mother of all virtues, consider that Vincent makes a distinction between 'indifferent action' and the 'state of indifference.' An indifferent action is a voluntary, moral act, which is neither good nor bad, such as eating, walking, sitting, standing, or taking one road. Since they are neutral actions, they are neither meritorious nor blameworthy. However, Vincent said the state of indifference is "a state in which a virtue is found whereby a person detaches himself from creatures in order to be united to the Creator. It's not only a virtue; it is, in some way, a state that encompasses it and in which it acts; it's a state, but in which this virtue must be active, by which the heart detaches itself from the things that hold it captive."<sup>42</sup> Holy Indifference, therefore, frees our hearts from all attachments, all captivity, and in being free, it leads us to happiness: "It's characteristic of openness to God's Will [indifference] to take from us any resentment and desire, detaching us from ourselves and from every creature; that's its

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* This conference was given a little more than a year before Vincent's death.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:188.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:188-189.

purpose. That's the happiness in which it places us — provided it's active and working."<sup>43</sup>

Vincent valued freedom of heart not only for himself but also for his companions. He appealed to them to pray and cut the bonds tying them to self-love and misery as soon as they became aware of them. He even prayed for the assembly listening to him: "O Savior, You've opened freedom's gate for us; teach us to find it; make known to us the importance of our freedom; help us to have recourse to You in order to reach it; enlighten us, my Savior, to see to what we're attached, and please place us in *libertatem filiorum Dei*."<sup>44</sup>

Jesus and the Apostle Paul were two examples for Vincent, both of whom enjoyed a true freedom filled with God. Interestingly, Vincent used an analogy of a master's submissive beast of burden to understand Jesus' complete submission to the Father. "You do what you want with it; it's always ready to set off and go, to take on a saddle or a pack, to be hitched to the plow or to stand still; it's indifferent to everything, allowing itself to be led around, without the slightest attachment to its stall, and with no inclination to go to one side or another. It isn't attached to anything."<sup>45</sup> It was Jesus' total surrender, total flexibility, and constant readiness to do anything God asked of him, which impressed Vincent. He offered Jesus as the model of a life of indifference, the source and fruit of all virtues.

Similarly, Vincent believed the Apostle Paul to be another example of perfect Holy Indifference. Vincent focused on St. Paul's question to Jesus upon his conversion, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' "What admirable words! They indicate a detachment as complete as it is astonishing. What an abundance of graces suddenly poured into this vessel of election! What a wonderful moment, which changed a persecutor into an Apostle! Oh, what great insight was then given him! By cutting him off from the law, his commission, his fortune, and his opinions, it causes him to say all at once, *Domine, quid me vis facere?*"<sup>46</sup> Vincent appealed to his companions to equip themselves with this virtue. The Company of Charity did not belong to them, just as with Jesus and the Apostle Paul, but as a vessel to be used by God to spread His reign.

The conference concludes beautifully with a prayer safeguarding the bliss that comes from freedom of heart flowing from the virtue/state of indifference:

*O Sauveur!* How happy we'd be if we were as detached as beasts of burden, like you, Lord, who compared yourself to a beast of burden, in order to adapt yourself to the greatest flexibility imaginable! We entreat you, our Liberator, to grant us at least the grace of sharing in this disposition, confident that we'll never again lose our freedom or abandon the practice of holy openness to God's Will [indifference]!<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:189.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:192.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:195.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:199.



Vincent de Paul gives a conference to the Sisters.

From a series of illustrations on his life by Bernal.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



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It is clear according to Vincent that if we maintain this disposition of Holy Indifference, we will be the true disciples of Jesus and enjoy happiness both on this earth and in eternity.

### **The Virtue of Indifference in Vincent's Conferences to the Daughters of Charity**

By starting an active religious community with the official recognition of Church authorities, Vincent not only provided an opportunity for ordinary village women without dowry to serve the poor, but also to deepen their spirituality so that their service would be authentic and effective. The best means to deepen the spirituality of the Daughters of Charity was through monthly conferences held by Vincent, which Louise de Marillac preserved and put to good use.

In November 1633, when several "country girls" gathered at Louise's house with the intent to serve the poor for life, a little community was formed. On 31 July 1634, Vincent gave his first recorded conference encouraging them to live a life of community according to the rule. In this conference, documented by Louise, Vincent reminded their community how the providence of God gathered twelve of them to honor the life of Jesus on earth. His emphasis of the eternal significance of an ordinary daily schedule is succinct, but very memorable: "So, dear Sisters, let's see how you should spend the twenty-four hours that make up the day, as the days make up the months, and the months the years that will lead you to eternity."<sup>48</sup> Vincent compared the lives of the sisters to gold being purified in the furnace. He assured them they would become treasures of the community if they overcame difficulties and cultivated virtues daily, and thereby became persons of wisdom and humility. Vincent's language was direct and colorful, mixed with humor. He used more stories of saints, and his own experiences, to the Daughters than he had to the priests, so that those women with a less formal education could grasp what he was trying to convey.

Among the 120 conferences that Vincent gave to the Daughters of Charity, five

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<sup>48</sup> Conference 1, "Explanation of the Regulations," 31 July 1634, *Ibid.*, 9:2.

conferences are titled “Indifference.”<sup>49</sup> Conference 25 was given to sisters missioned to a new place, to whom Vincent recommended it: “We will begin with the first point, which is indifference, and so necessary to your Company that when it is no longer found in it, that will be a sure sign of its downfall. That’s why those who want to be true Daughters of Charity, must be totally indifferent to whatever God wills to ordain in their regard: to be sent to this region or to another, to minister in this duty or in that, to be given orders by this person, or by someone else; in a word, to be indifferent to everything.”<sup>50</sup> Before the Daughters of Charity were founded, almost all women religious were cloistered and once individuals entered a monastery, they stayed there for life. However, with the beginning of apostolic religious formation, it became crucial to possess the freedom of heart to move whenever need arose. In other words, the mobility and flexibility of this new lifestyle demanded the virtue of Holy Indifference.

Conference 48 conveyed a similar message with an added emphasis that founding such a new religious community was within God’s eternal plan. Louise stated, “As the first reason we have for being always and at all times disposed to go everywhere and with any of our Sisters, I thought that this disposition was absolutely necessary in order to be faithful to God’s plan in establishing this Company.”<sup>51</sup> Vincent confirmed Louise’s remark: “You should have no doubt, Sisters, that this is the Will of God; and, as has been so well remarked, that it’s what He has willed for the Company from the time when, in His infinite goodness, He first brought it into existence.”<sup>52</sup> Vincent added that whenever he found himself getting weak he invoked the presence of God and prayed to His mercy to send him the strength of the Holy Spirit. He knew well that without the grace of God it was impossible to preserve a state of indifference.

Conference 73 expounds on the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity*. “They will have no attachment, especially to places, duties, and persons, even their relatives and confessors, but will always be prepared to leave everything willingly when they are instructed to do so, reflecting that Our Lord says we are not worthy of Him if we do not renounce ourselves and if we do not leave father, mother, brothers, and sisters to follow Him.”<sup>53</sup> Vincent singled out three types of attachment: attachment to vanity, fastidiousness, and esteem; attachment to our own judgment; and attachment to money. He also warned against spiritual attachment to particular devotions such as excessive fasting, mortification,

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<sup>49</sup> Among the 120 conferences Vincent gave to the Daughters of Charity, five from the years 1646 to 1660 featured the theme of indifference: Conferences 25, 48, 73, 116, and 117. While the first three were given every five years, the last two conferences were given on December 8 and 14, 1659, about nine months before Vincent’s death. The Conferences which followed, numbers 118 and 119, were given after the death of Louise de Marillac and concerned her virtue as well as the election of her successor. Conferences 116 and 117, then, might be read as Vincent’s last words directly to the Daughters.

<sup>50</sup> Conference 25, “Indifference,” 1 May 1646, *CCD*, 9:201-202.

<sup>51</sup> Conference 48, “Indifference (now 43a),” *Ibid.*, 9:402; upon realizing an error, Sister Marie Poole changed the number of this conference from 48 in the original French edition to 43a (thereby reordering it) after confirming its date as 14 July 1650.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 9:405.

<sup>53</sup> Conference 73, “Indifference,” 6 June 1656, *Ibid.*, 10:126-127.

and pilgrimage. As Vincent appealed to the Missioners, he also reminded the Daughters about the happiness that comes from keeping a state of indifference. “Look at the happiness of Sisters who aren’t attached to anything; they’re always satisfied, fear nothing, and always walk with head uplifted along the highway of virtue; if they encounter some difficulty, they don’t lose courage, since they trust in God and say, ‘God is my all; God is my Creator and all my hope; He won’t allow me to have greater suffering than I can bear.’ That’s a great happiness for a soul that’s attached to nothing but God alone.”<sup>54</sup>

Conferences 116 and 117 read as the last words of Vincent to the Daughters of Charity. He urges them to imitate the life of Jesus who became like a mare, mule or carriage horse, totally compliant to the will of the master:

And since this virtue is repugnant to nature, which always tries to do its own will, ask Our Lord for it and say to Him, “Lord, grant me the grace to be as you were.” And in what state was our Lord? He tells us himself: He was like a mare, like a mule or a carriage horse. Just reflect how carriage horses allow themselves to be driven and led wherever people want, for no one has ever heard that they resisted the will of their masters. And Our Lord, to show that He was indifferent, said, “I have been like the horse and the mule, which allow themselves to be led wherever anyone pleases.” Isn’t it a great pity that senseless animals teach us this lesson of indifference, and we have such trouble practicing it! Sisters, let’s keep firmly in mind this lesson of Our Lord, who submitted in all things to the Will of His Father; remember that well and ask Him fervently in your prayers for the grace of being always indifferent to all sorts of ministries, in one place or another, be they important or lowly, ready for whatever pleases Him.<sup>55</sup>

In thirteen more conferences to the Daughters of Charity, Vincent also recommended the virtue.<sup>56</sup> These conferences offer similar content, but Conference 81 is noteworthy as in it Vincent expressed a deep sense of the equality of all people before God:

“But, Monsieur,” someone will say, “do you think that a poor village girl like me can reach that point?” Yes, I do, Sister, and those who serve persons who are poor without being attached to this place or that, who seek only to please God, who ask for nothing and refuse nothing, and are always the same whether they’re sent here or left in a place, I tell you I know no one happier, and I know of no more perfect state than that. Sisters, when you begin to reflect and ask yourselves. “What do I want?” and you see that you want only what God wants,

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 10:141.

<sup>55</sup> Conference 116, “Indifference,” 8 December 1659, *Ibid.*, 10:560.

<sup>56</sup> See *CCD*: Volume 9, Conferences 1, 6, 15, 47, and 52; also Volume 10, Conferences 70, 71, 78, 81, 82, 97, 104, and 115.



Portrait of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556).

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isn't it true that you experience a joy, an interior peace, and a certain inexpressible serenity of mind?<sup>57</sup>

Vincent understood that praying for and practicing indifference was the best way to follow Jesus. It was the joyful fruit of the journey, for both himself and his Company of Charity.

### **'Indifference' in Saint Ignatius Loyola and Saint Vincent de Paul**

In the thirteen volumes of *Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, Vincent mentions Ignatius Loyola twelve times, and in all instances as the founder of the Society of Jesus. Vincent used Ignatius as an example when making decisions on direction of the Congregation of the Mission. In 1642 when several Missioners left the congregation, Vincent wrote his companions saying it was better to have fewer members who were truly devoted rather than a large number fearful of hardship and attached to their families. Vincent reminded his missioners that although a few thousand initially followed Jesus, many disciples left him when commitment was required; also, he pointed out, Ignatius Loyola had even sent away twelve people during the founding period of the Society of Jesus.<sup>58</sup> In 1647, responding to a letter from the superior of Rome asking for more personnel, Vincent again illustrated the example of Ignatius. "Did not Saint Ignatius make a hundred foundations before his death, with two or three men in each? This was not done without great inconvenience, since he sent some novices and was obliged at times to make them Superiors, but neither

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<sup>57</sup> Conference 81, "The Practice of Asking For and Refusing Nothing," 17 June 1657, *Ibid.*, 10:223.

<sup>58</sup> Letter 631, "To François Dufestel," 28 November 1642, *Ibid.*, 2:355-356.

was it fruitless nor without providence.”<sup>59</sup>

Vincent was convinced the best way to follow the will of God was to trust in Providence instead of relying on our own plans or choices, and to wait for such direction with Holy Indifference. In fact, Vincent was remarkably open to the idea that in future the center of the Church would move away from Europe. “How do we know, I say, whether God does not wish to transfer the Church to the lands of unbelievers, who perhaps preserve greater innocence in their morals than the majority of Christians, who have nothing less at heart than the holy Mysteries of our religion? On my part, I am aware that this feeling has been with me for a long time.”<sup>60</sup> Vincent also shared examples of how Ignatius wrote *The Constitutions for the Society of Jesus*, how he sent Jesuits to care for wounded soldiers, how he lived a life of perfect poverty and chastity, and how he chose every opportunity to give greater glory to God.<sup>61</sup>

It is interesting that Vincent never mentioned Ignatius in connection with the idea or practice of Holy Indifference. In other words, Vincent was not thinking about Ignatius when he appealed to his Missioners and the Daughters of Charity to cultivate the virtue. Indeed, there seems to be no direct, conscious influence of the Ignatian concept upon the spirituality of Vincent. It would be worthwhile, however, to compare both saints’ conceptions of it, especially as Ignatius of Loyola is whom introduced the idea into Catholic spirituality. Moreover, the very word indifference is regarded as characteristic of Ignatian spirituality.

In his article “Indiferencia,” in the *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana*, Pierre Emonet, S.J., wrote that the term indifference does not generally appear in the writings of Church Fathers or other spiritual writers until it was developed by Ignatius Loyola.<sup>62</sup> Ignatian indifference is rooted in several of Ignatius’ spiritual experiences: the illumination on the bank of the Cardoner River; and a series of events, which taught him not to confuse his own projects with the will of God. Through discernment he gave up excessive mortification to imitate the life of the desert Fathers. Eventually he began to realize that imitation of Christ is not only in following in the footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land, but in pursuing theological studies for the salvation of souls. In other words, he had to discern between his self-made plans and the Will of God, and he grasped that we have to recognize this difference and choose anew for the greater glory of God. Through this experience, Ignatius realized the importance of it as a prerequisite of good discernment in responsible decisions. Consider, for example, his metaphor of the well-balanced scale. The scale, representing indifference, should not be weighted one way or another, but should preserve the dynamic to move

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<sup>59</sup> Letter 922, “To Jean Dehorgny,” March 1647, *Ibid.*, 3:163-164.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:164.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, *CCD*: Volume 3, Letters 1016, pp. 272-73, and 1064, pp. 358-66; Volume 5, Letter 2017, pp. 557-61; Volume 10, Conference 100, pp. 440-46; Volume 11, Conferences 40a, p.49, 79, p.86, and 127, pp. 197-98; Volume 12, Conferences 198, pp. 110-25, and 219, pp. 324-27; and Volume 13b, Document 181, pp. 366-69.

<sup>62</sup> “Indiferencia,” in Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (G-Z)*, José García de Castro, Director (Madrid: Ediciones Mensajero, Sal Terrae, 2007), 1016.

toward the greater glory of God and salvation of souls. At the beginning of each chapter of his “Spiritual Exercises,” Ignatius asked retreatants to pray to the Lord for the grace to keep this scale in perfect balance.<sup>63</sup>

In the Exercises Ignatius used the term indifference four times, in *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* eight times, and in his Spiritual Journal twice. For instance, in the “Spiritual Exercises,” First Week, article 23, Principle and Foundation, we read:

To do this we need to make ourselves indifferent to all created things, provided the matter is subject to our free choice and there is no prohibition. Thus as far as we are concerned, we should not want health more than illness, wealth more than poverty, fame more than disgrace, a long life more than a short one, and similarly for all the rest, but we should desire and choose only what helps us more toward the end for which we are created.<sup>64</sup>

Here Ignatius presents the fundamental principle that we have to be indifferent to all worldly values including health, wealth, and long life, in order to have the freedom to choose what God wants of us.

Article 157 further develops the concept to safeguard freedom of heart:

It is to be noted that when we feel attachment [to riches] or repugnance with regard to actual poverty, when we are not indifferent towards poverty or riches, it is a great help towards extinguishing such a disordered attachment to ask in the colloquies (even though it goes against our natural inclination) that Our Lord should choose us for actual poverty, and to desire, request, indeed beg of this, provided it be for the service and praise of His Divine Majesty.<sup>65</sup>

In Memo 17 of the *Directories*, written in Ignatius’ own hand for directors of his spiritual exercises, he states:

First of all, it should be insisted that whoever faces a choice for a state in life, must enter it with an entire resignation of will; and if possible, should reach the third degree of humility... Whoever has not reached the second degree of indifference, should not be allowed to make a choice; it is better to encourage him to cultivate his virtues until he reaches the second degree of indifference.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1017.

<sup>64</sup> Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings: Reminiscences, Spiritual Diary, Select Letters including the Text of The Spiritual Exercises*, Translated with introductions and notes by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (Penguin Books, 1996), 289.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>66</sup> Miguel Lop, *Ejercicios Espirituales y Directorios* (Barcelona: Balmes, 1964), 101. The English translation provided is my own.



Stained glass depicts Vincent de Paul with foundling.  
An image of food being distributed below.

Original in chapel, Loyola University, Chicago.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
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In order to understand what these first, second, and third degrees of humility or indifference are, consider how they are explained in the “Spiritual Exercises,” of Loyola’s *Personal Writings*, articles 165 to 167. To paraphrase from Loyola’s own words on the subject: The first kind of humility is obedience to the law of God in everything and avoidance of deliberately breaking any law that obliges me under pain of mortal sin. The second kind of humility, more perfect than the first, is attained when I do not desire to be rich rather than poor, to seek fame rather than disgrace, to seek a long rather than a short life, provided it is the same for the service of God and the good of my soul; and along with this I would not deliberately set about committing a venial sin, even for the whole of creation or under threat to my own life. The third kind of humility is the most perfect humility. In order to imitate Christ and to become like him, I want and choose poverty with Christ poor rather than wealth, and ignominy with Christ in great ignominy rather than fame, and I desire more to be thought a fool and an idiot for Christ.<sup>67</sup> Thus, in Memo 17 of the *Directories*, we understand that Ignatius believed that the mind has to be like a well-balanced scale in order to make good choices.

In article 179 of his “Spiritual Exercises” Ignatius again introduced the image of the scale:

It is necessary to keep as my objective the end for which I was created, viz. to praise God Our Lord and save my soul, and at the same time to be in an

<sup>67</sup> Loyola, *Personal Writings*, 315.

attitude of indifference, free from any disordered attachment, so that I am not more inclined or attracted to accepting what is put before me than to refusing it, nor to refusing it rather than to accepting it. Rather I should be as though at the center of a pair of scales, ready to follow in any direction that I sense to be more to the glory and praise of God Our Lord and the salvation of my soul.<sup>68</sup>

For Ignatius Loyola indifference was like a well-balanced scale, which always tips towards the Will of God forsaking private attachment and personal preference or desires.

*The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus* written in Ignatius' own hand also mention an adjectival form of indifference eight times in relation to the act of discernment. *Constitutions*, article 132, requires of a candidate: "After he has been thus instructed, he will be asked whether he finds himself entirely indifferent, content, and ready to serve his Creator and Lord in whatever office or ministry to which the Society or its superior will assign him."<sup>69</sup> *Constitutions*, article 633, stipulates, "those professed members who live under obedience to the Society not to scheme, directly or indirectly, to be sent here or there. Nevertheless one who is sent to an extensive region such as the Indies.... while praying and keeping his will indifferent, may travel about wherever he judges this to be more expedient for the glory of God our Lord."<sup>70</sup>

Even though an attitude of indifference, or availability, is required, "the motions or thoughts which occur to him contrary to an order received" (article 627) may be humbly shared with a superior.<sup>71</sup> However, one should not be inclined to one way over another, so that afterwards he can follow the path shown to him with peace of mind. Here then is a commonality between Ignatius and Vincent, that total availability/indifference and a dialogue with the superior, given the situation and based upon personal discernment, are two dynamic elements necessary for fulfillment of the Will of God.

## **Conclusion: Characteristics of the Vincentian Virtue of Indifference from the Perspective of Ignatian Indifference**

For Ignatius Loyola, in practicing discernment to make the right choice, preserving a state of indifference was crucial. It meant not only waiting for and listening to God, but the capacity to commit to God's will and remain ready to act.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps this is the reason Ignatius advised directors of his spiritual exercises that until a person reaches its second

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 318.

<sup>69</sup> Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Translated with introduction and commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970), 117.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>71</sup> Antonio M. de Aldama, S.J., *An Introductory Commentary on The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*, Translated by Aloysius J. Owen, S.J. (St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1989), 256.

<sup>72</sup> Michael Ivens, S.J., distinguished indifference as capacity and as act. The act of indifference should be practiced in times of uncertainty as to God's word to oneself, a doubt that makes possible the discovery leading oneself to commitment. Capacity is to be found within the commitment. See *Keeping in Touch: Posthumous Papers on Ignatian Topics*, ed. by Joseph A. Munitiz, S.J. (Leominster: Gracewing, 2007), 139.

degree they should postpone their decision on a life choice. In this sense, Pierre Emonet rightly pointed out the most typical characteristic of Ignatian indifference: “Ignatius never talks of indifference itself in the way of a philosopher but always in an existential way in the perspective of a choice to make.”<sup>73</sup>

Indifference unites the early life of Ignatius as a pilgrim, his middle age as founder of the Society of Jesus, and his maturity as writer of *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. The virtue of indifference in the *Constitutions* is connected with obedience, in that a Jesuit should accept whatever he is given and wherever he is sent. In this practical emphasis on availability, or openness, to any ministry assigned, both Ignatian and Vincentian indifference converge. However, the primary characteristic of Ignatian indifference is centered upon a discerning heart leading to the right and responsible choice, while the Vincentian virtue of indifference emphasizes a concrete openness to the Will of God concerning ministries, places, and persons.

The spirituality of Saint Vincent and Saint Ignatius share common ground found in Holy Indifference: complete self-surrender; true humility; and abandonment of self-will and self-satisfaction in order to imitate Christ in solely seeking the Will of God. However, while the indifference of Saint Ignatius focused on an interior freedom for discernment as with a well-balanced scale, Saint Vincent’s focused on the concrete action of joyfully accepting where one is missioned as with a beast of burden following the master. For Vincent, a practical mystic and the organizer of the Company of Charity, in serving Jesus the evangelizer of the poor it was crucial to nurture a community whose members freely move wherever and whenever the need was apparent. That may be the reason Vincent depended upon Ignatius’ example as the founder of the Society of Jesus spreading his resources to respond to the calls of Providence. We might conclude, then, that in the cultivation of the virtue, Ignatius focused on the initial point of discernment in making an election/choice, while Vincent focused on the fruit of Holy Indifference in actively moving forward with joy and happiness. It remains intriguing that Vincent did not mention Ignatius Loyola when he preached the virtue, in spite of the close connection forged between these two traditions of apostolic spirituality.

Saint Vincent de Paul was convinced that the virtue of Holy Indifference should be practiced and perfected in our daily lives and ministries, for this is the only way we can fully proclaim the reign of God. He sang this song of bliss, which Holy Indifference brings to us. He taught us this song so that it might continue through generations to eternity.



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<sup>73</sup> *Diccionario de Espiritualidad Ignaciana (G-Z)*, 1015.



Vincent writing letters at his desk.

Original in Vincentian provincial house, Stradom, Krakow; signed by G. Lewandowska.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Vincent receives the offer of Saint-Lazare.

From a series of etchings on his life by Vignola.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



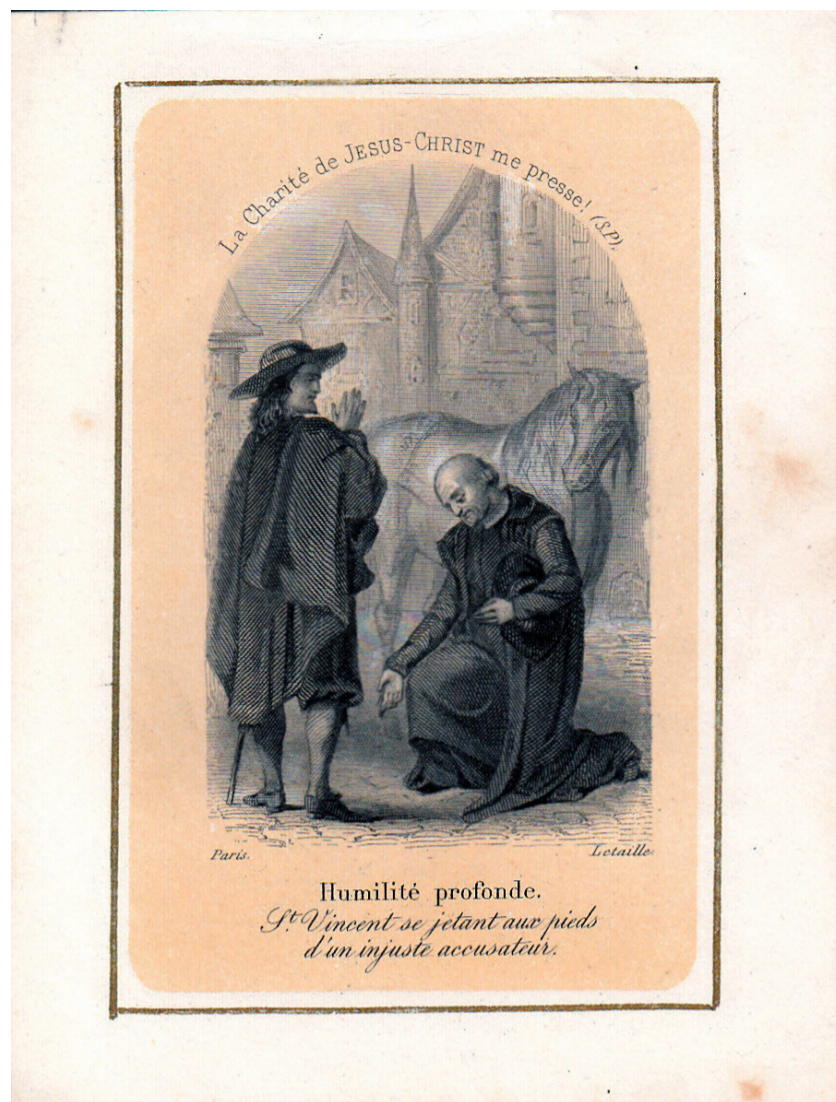


A holy card picturing Louise with the Daughters and persons in need.

The text reads: "Blessed be God for all things, may His holy will be preferred to everything."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Holy card with the theme of Vincent and humility, in which the saint throws himself at the feet of an unjust accuser.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>

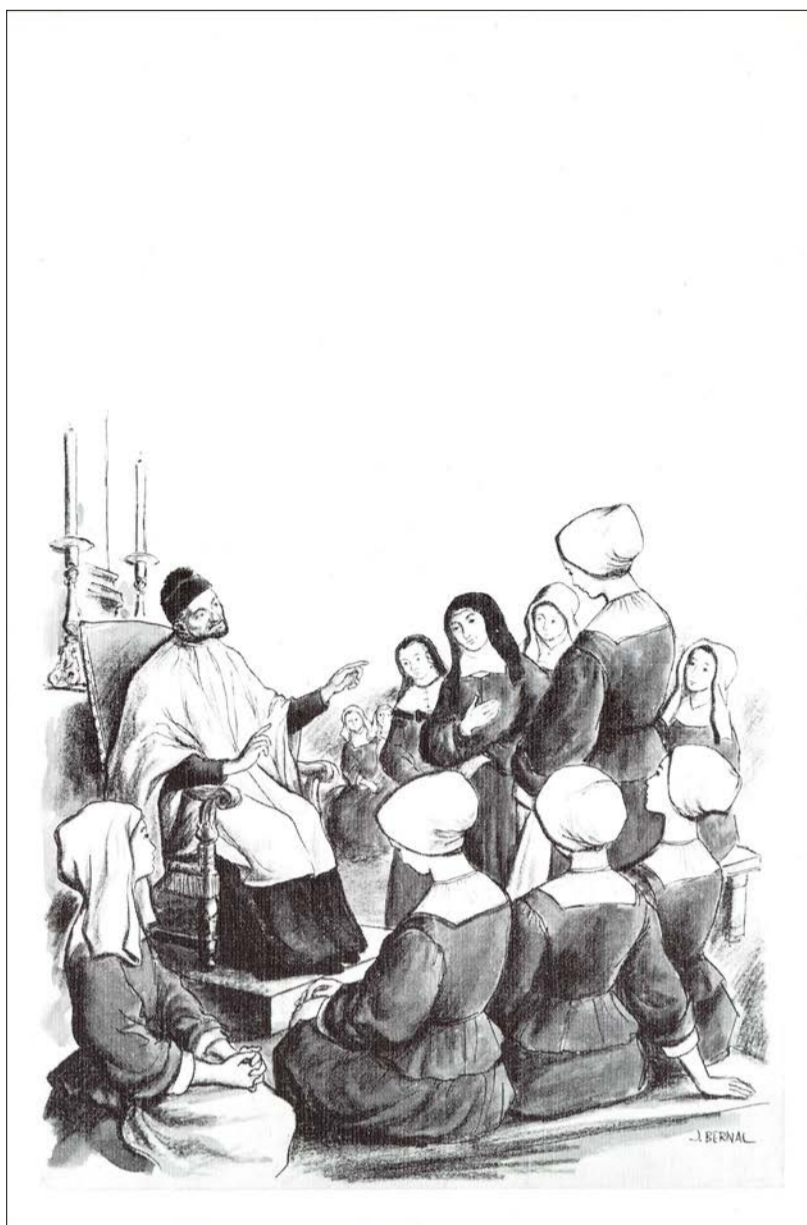




The Baptism of Saul (Paul) at Ananias. Mosaic, circa 1150.  
Located in the Palatine Chapel, Palazzo Reale, Palermo, Italy.

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Vincent de Paul gives a conference to the Sisters.

From a series of illustrations on his life by Bernal.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*  
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Portrait of Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556).

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Stained glass depicts Vincent de Paul with foundling. An image of food being distributed below.

Original in chapel, Loyola University, Chicago.

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# “What Must Be Done?”: Vincentian Teacher Preparation in the 21st Century

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CHRISTOPHER WORTHMAN, PH.D.



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**A**s a teacher educator at a Vincentian university, I began wondering a few years ago what *Vincentianism* could contribute to pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade teacher preparation. I wondered, in part, because public debate about education seldom considers inherently complex and complicated societal problems such as poverty, oppression, and inequality, problems that have mobilized Vincentians for nearly 400 years. Like Rev. Craig B. Mousin, I asked: “What can be culled from Vincent and those who followed that provide particular substance for this mission without reducing it to generalities lacking power and vision?”<sup>1</sup> In this article, I take up this question with a focus on how to define Vincentianism teacher preparation, and what it can contribute to preparing pre-K-through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade teachers in the twenty-first century. I draw on Vincentian history to identify principles for preparing teachers of all faiths who will work in all types of schools with religiously, culturally, socially, and economically diverse populations. As noted by Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., the Vincentian charism is secular in nature. It moves the religious outside the cloister to serve others, to be a part of the world, as a way of responding to the needs of others.<sup>2</sup> As such, it speaks to the needs of the world and thus must not only be responsive but also accessible to all. The principles defined in this article are designed to facilitate this movement.

### **Education Today: The Effect of Accountability and Standardization**

Present-day debates about education focus almost exclusively on questions about student learning and teacher quality. These are, no doubt, important, legitimate questions. For the past twenty-five years, however, the questions have been answered most strenuously with calls for more accountability and stricter standards of performance, and they have been directed most visibly at schools that serve nonmainstream and socio-economically disadvantaged students. For these students, this has meant increasingly standardized curriculum and assessment. It has also meant increased focus on skills development, notably skills believed relevant for employment, such as communication and technology. For teachers, this has meant increased accountability for student learning. Standardization and accountability have led to a range of responses among school districts that serve these students, including adopting standardized, fabricated curricula, eliminating coursework thought unrelated to skills development, such as art and physical education, and instituting stringent disciplinary policies to control student behavior.

Although emphasis on standardized testing has begun to wane, with the U.S. Department of Education calling for less testing,<sup>3</sup> state funding and school status are still often tied to test scores, as are increasingly more teacher evaluation processes. Tests scores

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<sup>1</sup> Reverend Craig B. Mousin, “The Most Important Question,” *Vincentian Heritage* 28:2 (2008), 38. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol28/iss2/3/>

<sup>2</sup> See Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., “The Role of Women and the Vincentian Culturescape,” *Vincentian Heritage* 26:1 (2005), 143-77. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol26/iss1/10>

<sup>3</sup> Lauren Camera, “Education Department to School Districts: Test Less,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 24 October 2015. See: [www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/10/24/education-department-recommends-less-testing](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/10/24/education-department-recommends-less-testing)

are used to determine the *value added* to students' education by a teacher.<sup>4</sup> That is, scores are compared to expected student gains across an academic year to determine teaching efficacy. Other learning effects, as well as mitigating factors beyond teacher control such as poverty and students' previous experience, are inconsequential and subsumed by an emphasis on personal responsibility. The importance of student-teacher relationships and factors not easily quantifiable such as students' psychological and emotional well-being, moral development, and broader thinking skills related to concept development and creative and critical thinking are minimized.

Similarly, standardized assessments propagate standardized curriculum. In its most outrageous form, this curriculum consists of pre-fabricated materials distilled down to an overt and repetitious focus on those skills tested. More assiduous varieties go as far as dictating teacher pacing and instructional sequencing, including scripting teacher instruction. Again, what these types of materials — materials described as teacher-proof — ignore is the integral role of human relationships to learning.<sup>5</sup>

My experience working with teachers and students over the past twenty years suggests that standardization and accountability, even as they often arise from good intentions, diminish teacher-student relationships. They minimize the complexity and richness of student lives to a set of categories related to skills and performances that can be aggregated and disseminated to stakeholders.

I realize, however, that many people can probably name schools that have *not* been affected by increased accountability and standardization. Schools that serve predominantly middle- or upper-class students, regardless of location, tend to be quite different, with starkly higher student learning outcomes in comparison with schools that serve low-socio-economic and nonmainstream students. Comparatively, schools with predominantly middle- and upper-class students outperform schools from nations worldwide, while those that serve poor students are some of the lowest performing schools in the industrialized world.<sup>6</sup> Clearly, standardization and accountability are issues of social justice by bent of how they manifest themselves unevenly across school districts depending on the students served.

Thus, our struggle in the United States, and where our standardized test scores take a huge hit when compared with those of other nations, is our futility in meeting the educational needs of poor children. Standardization and accountability have not alleviated the struggles of teachers and students in low-socio-economic schools, and in many ways

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<sup>4</sup> Linda Darling-Hammond, "Can Value Added Add Value to Teacher Evaluation?" in *Educational Researcher*, 44:2 (2015), 132-137.

<sup>5</sup> Lev S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Also, Lev S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia McCabe, "The Economics Behind International Education Rankings," *NEA Today*, 9 December 2010. At: <http://neatoday.org/2010/12/09/a-look-at-the-economic-numbers-on-international-education-rankings/>; Mel Riddile, "PISA: It's Poverty Not Stupid," *NASSP Blogs*, 15 December 2010. See: [http://nasspblogs.org/principaldifference/2010/12/pisa\\_its\\_poverty\\_not\\_stupid\\_1.html](http://nasspblogs.org/principaldifference/2010/12/pisa_its_poverty_not_stupid_1.html)



Vincent de Paul with clergy members at a Tuesday Conference.

Oil on canvas. Originally in seminary of Toul, now in Crézilles.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



have exacerbated those struggles. Educational disparity is greater today than it was twenty-five years ago.<sup>7</sup> One could say, in fact, that we do not have an education problem; what we have is a poverty problem that adversely affects educational opportunity. Standardization and accountability, and their manifestation in teacher preparation as Teacher Preparation Assessments (TPAs)<sup>8</sup> or as long lists of state standards and indicators, have failed to account for the role human relationships play in making any endeavor relevant, meaningful, and achievable for people. Within this educational context, then, Vincentian teacher preparation is most needed, especially as a model which strives to define itself as distinct from other teacher preparation programs.

### Vincentian Education: Some Examples

Anthony J. Dosen, C.M., wrote that it is hard to define what makes an education Vincentian.<sup>9</sup> However, beginning with Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, Vincentian education initiatives and practices have been omnipresent throughout Vincentian history. One reason, however, why it might be difficult to identify these practices as Vincentian is that much of what can be associated with and traced historically as part of Vincentian education is regarded as educational best practices today. For example, these practices include an emphasis among many educators, and most teacher preparation programs, on teaching for social justice. The challenge is to frame these practices in ways that are uniquely Vincentian and identify how the framing defines and enhances practice. Before doing this, however, let us consider several examples of Vincentian education initiatives across

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<sup>7</sup> Sean F. Reardon, "The Widening Achievement Gap Between the Rich and the Poor: New Evidence and Possible Explanations," *Whither Opportunity? Rising Inequality and the Uncertain Life Chances of Low-Income Children*, ed. by R. Murnane & G. Duncan (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press, 2011), 91-116.

<sup>8</sup> Alison G. Dover & Brian D. Schultz, "Troubling the edTPA: Illusions of Objectivity and Rigor," *The Educational Forum* 80:1 (2016), 95-106.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony J. Dosen, C.M., "Vincentian Education and the Charism of St. Vincent de Paul," *Catholic Education: A Journal of Inquiry and Practice* 9:1 (September 2005), 47-57.

the centuries which might be used to establish historical reference points for introducing Vincentian principles.

### *The Formation of the Clergy*

During his lifetime, Vincent introduced a number of educational initiatives that taken together reveal essential characteristics of Vincentian education. Emerging from his experience with Madame de Gondi at Folleville in 1617 and in response to her question, “What must be done?”, Vincent began to focus his work on the spiritual needs of the rural poor by evangelizing in rural areas.<sup>10</sup> This first mission service evolved to include the formation of clergy. As Stanislaus Wypych, C.M., noted, Vincent became “convinced that the renewal of religious life in the Church had to begin with the reform of the clergy.”<sup>11</sup>

These early reform efforts took a decidedly educational turn in 1628 when, in response to the Bishop of Beauvais concerns about the preparation of priests, Vincent began to organize what we would call today professional development opportunities. He instituted retreats for ordinands to develop their “ecclesial spirit” to serve the rural poor.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, he started Tuesday Conferences and retreats for practicing priests to hone skills and to reflect on mission.<sup>13</sup> Never satisfied with the *status quo*, Vincentians continued to refine professional development efforts. Distinct among these efforts was the seminary of renewal, or an additional year of seminary that was completed six or seven years after ordination as a way of honing skills and reinvigorating the priesthood.<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, at the same time Vincent was directing professional development for priests, Vincentian Seminary education spread across France and throughout Europe. In the nineteenth century, seminary education began in the United States. As a response to societal needs, Vincentian-led seminaries emphasized spirituality and preparation for the priesthood, an intricate combination of self-development and service that is a Vincentian trademark to this day.<sup>15</sup>

### *Education in the Service of the Poor*

In the 1630s, Louise de Marillac and the Daughters of Charity began “little schools” for poor, rural girls in France.<sup>16</sup> Like most of Vincent and Louise’s initiatives, these schools

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<sup>10</sup> Robert P. Maloney, C.M., “Our Ministry to Help Form the Diocesan Clergy: Yesterday and Today,” *Vincentiana* 41:1 (1997). Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol41/iss1/4>

<sup>11</sup> Stanislaus Wypych, C.M., “St. Vincent de Paul, Formator of Priests,” *Vincentiana* 44:3 (2000), 2-3. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentiana/vol44/iss3/5>

<sup>12</sup> Luigi Mezzadri, C.M., & José María Román, C.M., *The Vincentians: A General History of the Congregation of the Mission*, ed. by John E. Rybolt, C.M., vols. 1-6b (Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 2009-2015), 1:14.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Luigi Mezzadri, C.M., & Francesca Onnis, *Ibid.*, Vol. 2.

<sup>15</sup> Mezzadri & Román, *The Vincentians*, Vol. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Louise Sullivan, D.C., “The Core Values of Vincentian Education,” *Vincentian Heritage* 16:2 (1995), 149-79. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol16/iss2/3>



Marguerite Naseau learns to read while tending to her flock in Suresnes, France.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



grew from their experiences among the poor and from the immediate needs they identified. In the case of the little schools, Marguerite Naseau's tenacious efforts to teach reading to and serve the needs of the poor were the seeds for what Jean Delemeau called "the considerable role that the Daughters of Charity played in overcoming illiteracy among the female population of France."<sup>17</sup> From their understanding of this young woman's experience and her efforts to educate others, Vincent and Louise systematically sought to address the needs of poor French girls, first in rural areas and then in cities.<sup>18</sup> For them, Marguerite personified the capacity of the poor not only to transform their own lives, but also collectively to transform the conditions in which they lived through concerted, practical initiatives.

The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, under the leadership of Frédéric Ozanam, would later build its mantra upon collective action that drew on all segments of society in the service of the destitute and working poor. The Society became one of the first and probably most effective social activist organizations in France and later in the world.<sup>19</sup> Education, in the form of preparing Society members for activism and encouraging literacy and skills development among those with whom they worked, was a part of the Society's earliest endeavors.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Jean Delemeau, *Le Christianisme va-t-il mourir?* (Paris: Hachette, 1977), 98, in Sullivan, "Core Values."

<sup>18</sup> John Freund, C.M., "Marguerite Naseau – Pointing to Cyberspace?," *Vincentian Heritage* 21:1 (2000), see: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol21/iss1/2>; Margaret J. Kelly, D.C., "Louise de Marillac: The 'Gentle Power' of Liberation," *Vincentian Heritage* 10:1 (1989), at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol10/iss1/2>; and McNeil, "Women and the Vincentian Culturescape."

<sup>19</sup> Reverend Craig B. Mousin, "Frédéric Ozanam – Beneficent Deserter: Mediating the Chasm of Income Inequality through Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," *Vincentian Heritage* 30:1 (2010), at <https://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol30/iss1/4/>; Thomas W. O'Brien, "Pioneer and Prophet: Frédéric Ozanam's Influence on Modern Catholic Social Theory," *Vincentian Heritage* 31:1 (2012), at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol31/iss1/1>

<sup>20</sup> Thomas E. Auge, *Frederic Ozanam and His World* (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing Company, 1966).

## *Meeting Diverse Educational Needs*

As the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul demonstrates, Vincentian educational endeavors became woven with other Vincentian activities over time. The formation and growth of Vincentian activities in the United States continued this integration,<sup>21</sup> and, as experienced in the early 1800s, provided challenges related to working among religiously and culturally diverse people. Educational endeavors in this environment required ongoing flexibility and responsiveness. As Stafford Poole, C.M., noted, Vincentians had to adapt to a “frontier situation,” which meant that in their responsiveness to community concerns, they had to broaden their educational reach and integrate a quintessential American ethos with their Vincentian mission.<sup>22</sup>

Educational reach in the United States included lay education at all levels, consisting of primary and secondary education, and ultimately university education. Thus, flexibility extended not only to preparing priests but also to responding to local needs, particularly those of the poor and underserved. With the growth of lay schools, and later with university education, Vincentian personalism was manifested in an emphasis on what education could do for the student and his or her community. These students were increasingly not Catholic and often without access to other educational opportunities because of gender, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status.

Flexibility and responsiveness were also reflected in the work of Elizabeth Ann Seton. Alice O’Neill, S.C., notes that Seton is popularly considered the patron saint of American Catholic education.<sup>23</sup> She established the Sisters of Charity in the United States in 1809 and subsequently opened Saint Joseph’s Academy in Maryland the next year. The school served the children of poor and wealthy families alike by establishing standards of excellence for both students and teachers. Its philosophy was fashioned after Louise de Marillac’s little school, with a focus on meeting students’ spiritual and practical education needs.<sup>24</sup> The teachers’ role was synonymous to Vincent’s vision of the priest’s role as a mentor and guide who recognized the uniqueness of each of his charges. Seton also believed in team teaching and in enlisting students to teach and mentor one another and serve as teacher aides,<sup>25</sup> examples, again, of how Vincentian practices ultimately came to be supported through educational research as effective pedagogical practices.

Seton was ahead of her time in a number of other ways, too. She emphasized inclusivity by accepting all children at Saint Joseph’s. She noted that “abilities are not alike in all

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<sup>21</sup> John E. Rybolt, C.M., ed., *The American Vincentians: A Popular History of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States, 1815-1987* (Brooklyn: New City Press, 1988), see: [http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian\\_ebooks/18](http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/18)

<sup>22</sup> Stafford Poole, C.M., “‘A Brave New World’: The Vincentians in Pioneer America,” *Vincentian Heritage* 14:1 (1993), 150. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol14/iss1/8>

<sup>23</sup> Alice Ann M. O’Neill, S.C., Ph.D., “Elizabeth Bayley Seton, Teacher: A Legacy of Charity Education,” *Vincentian Heritage* 29:2 (2009), 7-19. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol29/iss2/1>

<sup>24</sup> Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., “Elizabeth Seton – Mission of Education: Faith and Willingness to Risk,” *Vincentian Heritage* 17:3 (1996), 185-99. Available at <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol17/iss3/3>; See also, O’Neill, “Elizabeth Bayley Seton.”

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



A statue commemorating Seton on the grounds of The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

*Public Domain*



children,”<sup>26</sup> and thus teachers had to be patient with and attentive to students, reflecting a level of care and love reminiscent of the love and care Vincent and Louise spoke of for the poor and oppressed. Teachers had to know how to identify and meet diverse student needs. To prepare teachers, Seton started a normal school in 1818. Judith Metz, S.C., wrote that Seton “established standards of excellence, insisted the sisters had time to study, and arranged that the more experienced teachers mentor the new ones.”<sup>27</sup> The Sisters of Charity, guided by their Rules, continued Seton’s work and their leadership of Catholic education spread across the United States.

## Translating Vincentian Education into Principles of Vincentian Teacher Preparation

John E. Rybolt, C.M., in his survey of Vincentian education, identified it as person-oriented and focused on understanding the needs of students and the world as it is.<sup>28</sup> He identified four principles of Vincentian education that, combined with our understanding of Vincentian Family history, can serve as starting points for thinking about teacher preparation: (1) emphasis on evangelization; (2) attention to the poor and neglected; (3) charitable action; (4) and empowerment of others. Citing Daughter of Charity Louise Sullivan’s work,<sup>29</sup> Rybolt concluded that these principles’ core values are that they are holistic, integrated, creative, flexible, excellent, person-oriented, collaborative, and focused.<sup>30</sup> In the three multi-faceted examples of Vincentian education I provided above, these foci and values are evident in the expansive yet focused nature of each example, and in how their design, administration, and goal never wavered from serving the poor and their communities.

<sup>26</sup> McNeil, “Mission of Education,” 196.

<sup>27</sup> Judith Metz, S.C., “A Charity Spirituality for Educators,” *Review for Religious* 67:3 (2008), 251.

<sup>28</sup> John E. Rybolt, C.M., Ph.D., “Vincentian Education: A Survey of its History,” *Vincentian Heritage* 28:2 (2008), 51-67. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol28/iss2/4>

<sup>29</sup> Sullivan, “Core Values.”

<sup>30</sup> Rybolt, “Vincentian Education,” p. 63.

Rybolt's four principles, however, stand, in part, in contrast to present-day educational practice, especially his emphasis on evangelization and charitable action. These two principles reveal a level of religiosity absent from educational practice that is not parochial, and also from teacher preparation programs designed to prepare teachers for all types of settings. The other two principles — attention to the poor and neglected and the empowerment of others — reflect an understanding of the world as it is and of what needs to be done. These two are elemental to missions of social justice, which appears to be a cornerstone of nearly all teacher preparation programs, although what is meant by attention and empowerment is often unclear and always debatable.

Thus, from the three historical examples of Vincentian education I provide above and based on the work of Rybolt and Sullivan, we can discern an underlying commitment to the poor as an essential element of Vincentian education. This commitment has always been guided by a sense of *immediacy* or by the realization that something needed to be done. Related to this is the belief, first honed by Vincent, that what is done must be *affective and effective* — it has to enrich the spiritual and physical existence of participants. That is, it has to empower, and beyond that, I suggest, provide individuals with emancipatory opportunities, or opportunities to take control of their lives physically, intellectually, economically, emotionally, and spiritually.

When considering principles such as immediacy, and affective and effective action, then, there should be an underlying *religiosity* that guides and defines all actions. This religiosity can be traced back to Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac, found in the persons of Ozanam and Seton, and tied to the Catholic evangelical and charitable work that are part of Rybolt's four principles. Together, Vincentian evangelical and charitable works reflect spirituality often referred to as Lucan. It is a spirituality premised on the idea that it is not enough to focus only on one's own spiritual development, we must also act. The historical Vincentian education initiatives I cited reflect actions born of unshakeable spiritual commitment to others. In these examples, faith is revealed through word *and* deed.

These three principles of Vincentian teacher preparation, affective and effective action, a sense of immediacy, and a Lucan spirituality as word and deed, are rooted in Vincentian history and align with Rybolt's and Sullivan's definitions of Vincentian education. In the following sections, I will first define these principles, and then explore how they can be mobilized in a Vincentian teacher preparation program.

## **Principles of Vincentian Education**

### *Lucan Spirituality*

I begin with Lucan spirituality because who we assert to be, and how those assertions affect our actions, define who we are as people and as teachers. Lucan spirituality is revealed in the symmetry between one's relationship with God and one's relationship to

the world and with others, or in what Edward R. Udovic, C.M., refers to as the reciprocity of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.<sup>31</sup> It is contingent on the inseparability of belief from practice. In addition, it is epitomized in the Gospel According to Luke, notably in verses like 4:18<sup>32</sup> and 6:36,<sup>33</sup> where Jesus calls on us to show mercy and bring the good news to the poor, imprisoned, and oppressed.

For Vincentian teacher preparation, the translation of Lucan spirituality into a working principle can be tendentious. Vincent and Louise lived in an overwhelmingly Catholic France, with Catholicism as the common denominator defining interactions with others. Today, to hold solely to a Catholic interpretation of religiosity, or even a Christian one, without recognizing the potentiality of other interpretations fails to account for diverse cultural, social, and religious experiences and values. If one's religiosity fails to be inclusive of others' experiences and perspectives, the spirituality that emanates from it will stymie one's ability to serve others fully or to nurture orthopraxis.

However, interpreted too generally, Lucan spirituality loses the theological foundation that makes it Christian and provides meaning to and direction in serving the poor. It becomes disconnected from belief or orthodoxy, and thus it becomes no different than other ways of making sense of the world that are social-justice-centered. It loses that essential element of a clearly articulated developmental process and way of interacting with others that is fundamental to how Vincentians, religious and lay alike, are called to engage and serve the poor.

### *A Sense of Immediacy*

Vincentian educational initiatives, like all Vincentian initiatives, were born of immediacy. The initiatives arose in response to specific, identifiable needs. Success was measured by how well those needs were alleviated. Often Vincent and Louise identified the needs in consultation with others, which served as catalysts for action. Such was the case with Vincent's commitment to priestly education. Beginning with Vincent's response to de Gondi and the Bishop of Beauvais, Vincentian education has been and is driven by the immediacy of acting now to serve the poor and oppressed.

Vincent and Louise always responded quickly even as the activities and programs initiated might have taken years to be formally structured and institutionalized. Similarly, Vincentian education initiatives focused on issues and concerns that directly and indirectly affected the poor and oppressed, and on how best to address those issues and concerns in a timely manner. They strived to provide for the immediate spiritual and practical needs of the poor, thus establishing the precedent that education is essential to transforming the lives of the poor.

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<sup>31</sup> Edward R. Udovic, C.M., Personal communication, 6 April 2017.

<sup>32</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free...."

<sup>33</sup> "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."



Spanish engraving, circa 1844. The caption reads:

"Youth instructed by the Daughters of Charity in the duties of religion and society."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



### *Affective and Effective Action*

As the third principle of Vincentian education, affective and effective action brings together the sense of immediacy and Lucan spirituality. It defines action as service-oriented, as focused on the whole individual and society *writ large*, and as heart-felt, compassionate, and well thought out and implemented. Vincent said it is important "not only to do good, but to do it well."<sup>34</sup> That is, what is done not only needs to be worth doing and beneficial in the long-term to those in need, but it also needs to arise from and align with the most deeply held convictions of the actor.

Together, these three principles are contingent on one another for definition and relevancy. They continually reinvigorate one another. As principles of teacher preparation, they suggest specific approaches to teaching and learning that, although reflected in many of today's most effective teaching practices, are distinctive in how future teachers can be prepared to think about themselves as teachers, and how they are prepared to interact with students. Knowing this, let us now consider each principle in greater detail and identify teacher preparation activities designed to make ready Vincentian teachers.

<sup>34</sup> Conference 177, "Repetition of Prayer," 25 November 1657, in Pierre Coste, C.M., *Vincent de Paul: Correspondence, Conferences, Documents*, ed. and trans. by Jacqueline Kilar, D.C., Marie Poole, D.C., et al, vols. 1-14 (New York: New City Press, 1985-2014), 11:389.

## Fostering a Vincentian Spirituality in Pre-Service Teachers

In translating Lucan spirituality into specific curricular understandings that can be called Vincentian teacher education, I am translating a Christian perspective grounded in the Biblical record into a secular or nondenominational perspective designed to prepare teachers to forefront Vincentian service to the poor. However, I believe that spirituality, whether called Lucan or some other name (e.g., worldview, life source, philosophy, *etcetera*), is an appropriate term for the inner- or self-development of a teacher who practices Vincentian education. *Spirituality*, defined broadly, connotes a relationship with something or someone (for Christians, that is God) that arises from a contemplation of one's inner being or existential origin. Highly personal in nature, it is, however, universal and available to anyone to the extent it reflects a human yearning and capacity for meaning-making. It receives resonance from more than one's physical presence in the world. Resonance emanates from within a person and reflects one's understanding of what it means to be a human in the world and to interact with others.

Thus, I use the term *spirituality* to suggest that Vincentian teacher preparation should prepare teachers committed to specific understandings about self and one's place in the world and about the nature of human relations that are integral to existence. These understandings, while called Vincentian in this article, need not and should not exclude other cultural, social, or religious traditions that espouse similar understandings and go by different names. Indeed, these similar understandings, and the histories that inform them, are also substance for shaping Vincentian educational practices and facilitating self-reflection on the dynamic and living nature of Vincentianism.

In writing about Vincentian education, Donald Harrington, C.M., said that Vincent's "approach to life and to mission was not based upon any elaborate theoretical or pre-determined system, but rather his writings and his teachings proclaim a dynamic view of spirituality and of reality."<sup>35</sup> He continued: "Vincent's system was experiencing God in life and responding to the needs, the culture, and the challenges around him."<sup>36</sup> Thus, Harrington identified two assumptions that guide Vincentian education: (1) a living spirituality grounded in the day-to-day world, and (2) a love of the poor. These assumptions suggest a way-of-being contingent on the reciprocity of spirituality and reality, or on how they inform each other.

The way-of-being that Vincent espoused begins with the self, or with one's own spiritual development. It moves outward into the world to interact with others based on who one is. It is a way-of-being founded on the relationship of one's interior life (orthodoxy) and one's actions (orthopraxis). Udovic suggests that spirituality is manifested in the

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<sup>35</sup> Donald J. Harrington, C.M., "Vincentian Education: A Call to Mission," *Vincentian Heritage* 17:3 (1996), 130. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol17/iss3/1>

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

reciprocity of orthodoxy and orthopraxis.<sup>37</sup> Vincent's life exemplified this way-of-being for, as Harrington noted, his "interior life gave meaning to action, and action inextricably nourished the interior life."<sup>38</sup> For a teacher, this way-of-being forefronts the need to reflect on one's actions from a personally developed way-of-being a teacher that is, ultimately, rooted in one's understanding of what it means to be human and to be in relationship to others.

Implicated in this way-of-being is how a teacher reconciles who he/she is with what he/she believes and does. That is, how does a teacher draw on their inner, most intimate understandings and aspirations as a human to define their pedagogy and interactions with students? And *vice versa*, how does he/she reflect on and evaluate their practices and interactions so that they grow as a teaching being? These questions should not be understood as philosophical or theoretical questions but as substantive ones about day-to-day ways-of-being and interacting. Generalities and abstractions — educational theories, policy positions, and teaching strategies — can never fully define the relationship between who one is as a teacher and how they act and interact with others, notably with students. Only the exegesis of experience and ongoing self-reflection and discernment of the world and the place of the classroom in that world — that is, only attentiveness to oneself and the world — can define this relationship.

Scott Kelley, Ph.D., identified *open reflection* as a characteristic of this attentiveness. He wrote, "the habit of prayer and critical reflection discloses to us our own deeply held biases which might inhibit further understanding."<sup>39</sup> The internal process of reflection, which informed by different traditions can be called prayer, meditation, self-awareness, *etcetera*, is attuned not only to the self but also to the larger world and to others. Loretto Gettemeier, D.C., characterized the process as "unrestricted readiness," or a willingness to consider all possibilities as a way of nourishing one's inner being and preparing to act.<sup>40</sup> Metz similarly referred to it as openness to the "now."<sup>41</sup> She identified the need for one to slow down and reflect in order to live in the world attentively, asking that we consider "how a quietly graced focus on the present moment" can help us in our interrelationships.<sup>42</sup>

Open reflection leads to greater understanding of who we are, and reveals our own poverty and limitedness, and thus our dependence on others. As already noted, Vincent, Louise, Elizabeth, and Frédéric listened to others and, in many cases their most successful endeavors were derived from what others' said and did. But they did not act without first

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<sup>37</sup> Udovic, Personal communication, 6 April 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Harrington, "Vincentian Education," 131-132.

<sup>39</sup> Scott Kelley, Ph.D., "Vincentian Pragmatism: Toward a Method for Systemic Change," *Vincentian Heritage* 31:2 (2012), 49. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol31/iss2/2>

<sup>40</sup> Loretto Gettemeier, D.C., "Vincentian Discernment and Decision-Making," *Vincentian Heritage* 19:1 (1998), 24. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol19/iss1/2/>

<sup>41</sup> Metz, "Charity Spirituality," 241.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.



Etching. The text reads:

"Care for children. Saint Vincent confides the education of youth to the Daughters of Charity, and blesses their first efforts."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



spending time contemplating what they saw and heard and allowing it to sift through the spiritual cloth in which they had wrapped themselves. They relied on their inner being — those understandings about themselves, their place in the world, their relationship with God — to make sense of what they saw and heard, and to define their actions.

The significance of listening often implicit in the Vincentian mission and in scholarship on Vincentianism reminds me of Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of *aesthetic contemplation* or *active empathy*, which is a particular way-of-being with others.<sup>43</sup> Bakhtin, a twentieth-century Russian literary scholar and philosopher, wrote that the "first step in aesthetic activity is my projecting myself in him [the other] and experiencing his life from within him. I must experience — come to see and to know — what *he* experiences; I must put myself in his place and coincide with him, as it were."<sup>44</sup> However, this contemplative act, according to Bakhtin, is never fully empathetic because of the perspective from which I contemplate the other.

Because the other already occupies a particular place and time, that is, because he or she has their own unique perspective, and because my empathizing is grounded in my own place and time or perspective, I never *really* "stand in another's place." I never can fully know another's experience because the other has a "surplus of self" that can never be fully revealed to me. However, the act of consciously trying to understand, of trying to "stand in another's place and time," facilitates my ability to empathize aesthetically or imaginatively. What makes my empathizing aesthetic is my own "surplus of vision," or my unique perspective from which to respond to the other. Thus, the other and I are always more than what either of us can conceptualize about each other. Because of our unique

<sup>43</sup> Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, trans. by V. Liapunov (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1991); Also, Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. by V. Liapunov (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1993).

<sup>44</sup> Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 25.

perspectives, we offer each other new understanding about the world and ourselves.

Bakhtin's aesthetic contemplation is one way of engaging others' perspectives as substantive and potentially revelatory. This type of engagement has affinity with Vincent's beliefs about human dignity and human responsibility. Human dignity is based on God's presence in us, which eliminates barriers between people when we understand others to reflect God's presence in the world, a presence so expansive that no one person could ever fully understand it. Our responsibility, in light of the dignity that is imbued in all of us and the poverty of each of our perspectives, is to engage the dignity of each human and respond to his or her needs from our own place and time. Kelley identified this as Vincent's *mission-centered horizon*.<sup>45</sup> Aesthetic contemplation makes explicit that personal transformation is intricately woven to our recognizing the other as unique, unconsummable, and essential to our own development as humans.

Aesthetic contemplation, thus, suggests that our engagement with God is manifested in our engagement with others. How we interact with others has much to say about our spirituality and how it is we understand God's presence in our lives. As Mousin wrote, "of critical importance is how Vincent understood his faith in relation to the individuals he assisted."<sup>46</sup> For Vincent, Christ was sent to bring good news to the poor. He understood this as the "other present within the poor."<sup>47</sup> This forefronts the other and his place in the world as not only essential to our understanding or experience of the world, but also as essential to our relationship with God or to our spiritual development. This larger essentiality is the place from which one aesthetically contemplates the lives of others.

Sullivan used the term *servant leader* to describe teachers who recognize and honor the dignity of students as human beings and learn from them how to be effective.<sup>48</sup> Becoming a teacher who is a servant leader begins with exegeting one's reasons for wanting to teach, and for what that means. In teacher preparation, this often happens through assignments such as an education autobiography, which is usually part of introductory coursework. In Vincentian teacher preparation, however, the assignment should be a program-long activity of reflection that integrates pre-service teachers' educational experiences, teacher preparation experiences, and course content. It should culminate for pre-service teachers in a clear, specific statement of teacher interiority or spirituality — of their internalized teacher identity — and of principles of human relations that can guide practice.

Similarly, from a Vincentian perspective, teaching philosophies that only espouse educational jargon and trends in theory and practice serve little purpose in the preparation of Vincentian educators. A pre-service teacher's philosophy of teaching should reflect her

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<sup>45</sup> Kelley, "Vincentian Pragmatism," p.47, and throughout article.

<sup>46</sup> Mousin, "Most Important Question," 38.

<sup>47</sup> Kelley, "Vincentian Pragmatism," 48.

<sup>48</sup> Louise Sullivan, D.C., "'God Wants First the Heart and then the Work:' Louise de Marillac and Leadership in the Vincentian Tradition," *Vincentian Heritage* 19:1 (1998), 161-76. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol19/iss1/11>



An early nineteenth-century etching titled, "The Sisters of Charity instruct young children."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



or his deepest convictions and should draw on experience across their life to give evidence of that identity. Thus, an educational autobiography and teaching philosophy, as integral teacher preparation assignments, should evolve over an entire program of study.

Maybe of greatest importance, however, in developing and articulating spirituality are the opportunities pre-service teachers have to engage others, particularly students but also parents, practicing teachers, and other pre-service teachers, in extended and meaningful interaction. These interactions should go beyond engaging diverse perspectives, important in its own right, to engaging others in their daily lives and understanding whom they are as human beings, including their experiences, aspirations, strengths, and challenges. Opportunities to have these types of engagements come through field experiences and community-based service learning in schools and community-based sites, as well as through collaborative projects inside and outside of the classroom.

The role of the pre-service teacher in these interactions should be one of humble servant and guide, with the pre-service teacher aesthetically contemplating the perspectives of others as legitimate and profound understandings of the world, even as she might disagree with those understandings. As Metz suggested, the pre-service teacher must demonstrate "an openness to the richness and diversity of worldviews, cultures, people, and ideas — a searching for the larger picture, a willingness to communicate, to always be in a stance of readiness to embrace more."<sup>49</sup> The pre-service teacher must identify and confront their biases and aesthetically contemplate the world as it is for those with whom they work. As Metz went on to note, teaching is about being receptive even when it is difficult. Receptiveness as a disposition needs opportunities to develop over the entirety of one's teacher preparation.

The reciprocal process of deep reflection on teacher interiority that is captured in an education autobiography and teaching philosophy, and of project-based service to

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<sup>49</sup> Metz, "Charity Spirituality," 241.

youth during field experience and community-based service learning opportunities, are program-long endeavors designed to prepare and sustain a teacher's career. It is essential, however, that the process of developing teacher spirituality is exploratory and collaborative. Spirituality emanates from the pre-service teacher's experiences and reflections, and not from without and not as a source of assessment. Thus, while Vincentian teacher educators strive to model Lucan spirituality and aspire to facilitate the development of that spirituality in their pre-service teachers, the goal is never to impose spirituality, as if that were even possible. Teacher educators should model the servant leader role and aesthetically contemplate who it is their students are becoming, knowing that ultimately another's spirituality is intricately personal and, as Bakhtin suggested, not something that can be fully or truly understood by others.

### **Developing a Sense of Immediacy in Teachers**

Vincent acted with immediacy after Madame di Gondi posed the question, "What must be done?" His spirituality guided him to take immediate action to support the mission. The question of what I, we, any one of us, individually and collectively, must do is an urgent inquiry, an interrogatory that begs for immediate *and* ongoing consideration. As a principle of Vincentian teacher preparation, immediacy is a way of acting, much as praxis is a way of acting in critical theory, a way defined by ongoing and collaborative reflection.<sup>50</sup> Moreover, as with critical theory, to know what must be done one must understand the disparity between what is and what should be, and be able to define what is needed to eliminate that disparity.

Vincentian immediacy provides a way to discern needs amidst the contingency and ambiguity that is inherent in working with diverse groups of people. The process with which Vincent, Louise, Elizabeth, and Frédéric worked required acting deliberately and collaboratively. They listened closely to others. They began by acting locally within contexts with which they were familiar, and by working with people with whom they knew and trusted. In this regard, they honored their own and others' experiences as sources of knowledge and possibility. They evaluated early efforts and revised based on outcomes, and only then expanded efforts based on continued need. They never worked beyond their means nor promised what they could not deliver. And, it was only after one, two, or more years of effort and evaluation that they codified their activities and programs for replication.

Thus, Vincentian immediacy goes beyond a call to action, a readiness to respond and do good works, to include collaborative, creative, and critical thinking. It is praxis open to the world to the extent that it is contingent on experience and collaboration and *not* on specific theoretical models or worldviews. For example, Vincent learned at Châtillon

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<sup>50</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1970/1990); also, Paulo Freire, *Education for Critical Consciousness* (New York: Continuum, 1973).



Portrait of Frédéric Ozanam.

The frontispiece to the 1862 publication of his *Complete Works*.

*Public Domain*



that immediate action poorly planned could have negative consequences and ultimately undermine effort.<sup>51</sup> The rapid response of the Châtillon women to the needs of a family left the family more food than they could eat. Most of it spoiled. This experience led to the formation of the Daughters of Charity in order to identify needs and services strategically, and to coordinate the day-to-day work that needed to be done.

Developing a sense of immediacy as a teacher disposition has often gone by different names in teacher preparation. Becoming a teacher researcher, advocating for one's students, or grounding one's pedagogy in critical theory implicitly requires a sense of immediacy. It requires working with students, parents, community members, and other educators to evaluate needs and identify courses of action both inside and outside the classroom. In this regard, education and the work of educating youth are part of larger community and societal needs, which reflect much of the educational work accomplished by Vincentians throughout history.

Integrated into a teacher preparation program, a sense of immediacy requires teacher educators to demonstrate the same thoughtful, collaborative planning that they would advocate for pre-service teachers. Effectively preparing teachers requires program-wide emphasis on deliberate and collaborative action as a way-of-being a teacher. Teacher educators need to provide pre-service teachers with opportunities for ongoing reflection and evaluation across a program of study. Three crucial elements of this process are: (1) dialogical engagement grounded in reading or making sense of the world; (2) understanding of diverse perspectives of teaching and learning; and (3) ability to define and evaluate action based on a reading of the world and understanding diverse perspectives.

*Reading the World.* Beginning early in their teacher preparation and continuing through student teaching — the culminating internship — pre-service teachers should have opportunities to read and discuss educational ethnographies and case studies. These readings and discussions should focus on the relationships of teachers and students, and

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<sup>51</sup> Sullivan, "Core Values," p. 161.

of schools and communities, as a way of understanding teaching as inherently about relationship building and schools as sociocultural and historical institutions. Similarly, as defined in the section on Lucan Spirituality, pre-service teachers should have opportunities to do community-based service learning in community and school sites that serve students from families on the lower end of the socio-economic scale. Their work with students should be project-based and focused on addressing an interest or issue identified by the site. As they progress through their programs, and reflect on their readings and experiential learning, pre-service teachers should integrate opportunities for collaborative activities with families and communities in their curriculum development and instructional practice assignments.

*Diverse Perspectives.* Teacher educators should introduce pre-service teachers to diverse perspectives of teaching and learning, including theories of human development, using primary sources and research studies grounded in different theories. Primary sources provide direct, albeit vicarious, access to others' perspectives. Such material offers pre-service teachers with opportunities to interpret and evaluate perspectives on their own merit, and not as distilled, often simplified summaries of research and theory as are typically found in textbooks.

Pre-service teachers also should have an understanding of the evolution of formal education, and its varied roles throughout history. For secondary teachers, this understanding should include their disciplinary areas. As they define their teaching philosophies and form teacher identities, pre-service teachers should contextualize their perspectives within the diverse theories of teaching and learning and the history of formal education. They should do so as a way of thinking not only about what they do in their own classrooms, but also about the role of the school and community in educating youth.

*Defining and Evaluating Actions.* Pre-service teachers should develop clear statements of purpose for curriculum and instructional practices that are grounded in diverse theoretical and philosophical perspectives. In their curriculum and instructional practice assignments, they should strive to account for the practical concerns of teaching, such as space, time, access to resources, and policy mandates. That is, these assignments should explicitly reference educational theory and philosophy *and* they should be contextualized within real-world classroom concerns. They should also include reflections on, and evaluations of, curriculum and pedagogy, including opportunities for peer and instructor feedback.

In development of a sense of immediacy in pre-service teachers, the focus on reading the world, diverse perspectives, and defining and evaluating actions over the entirety of one's teacher preparation is designed to provide ongoing engagement with schools and communities. The question, "What must be done?" should guide this work. Answers to the question arise and evolve from ongoing engagement in reading the world and encouraging diverse perspectives. The evolution of pre-service teachers' answers is a source of reflection that ultimately will acculturate them into not only the contingency and ambiguity of teaching, but also into its richness and innately interpersonal significance.

## Affective and Effective Teaching

Vincent, as Louise Sullivan noted, abhorred theory and ideas that did not lead to concrete action.<sup>52</sup> He eschewed lectures and recitation — common teaching practices of his day — for a more Socratic method to facilitate interaction around parishioners' essential questions. The "little method," a seventeenth-century preaching technique, strived to engage parishioners by honoring their experiences and ways of using language.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, Ozanam believed the only viable way to understand the complexity of poverty was inductively. He wrote:

The knowledge of social well-being and reform is to be learned, not from books, nor from the public platform, but in climbing the stairs to the poor's man garret, sitting at his bedside, feeling the same cold that pierces him, sharing the secret of his lonely heart and troubled mind. When the conditions of the poor have been examined in school, at work, in hospital, in the city, in the country... it is then and then only, that we know the elements of that formidable problem, that we begin to grasp it and may hope to solve it.<sup>54</sup>

For teachers, the "little method" and Ozanam's emphasis on experiential learning have important pedagogical implications for what they suggest about engagement and instructional focus. Student experiences and questions are the foundation on which instruction should be built. These experiences and questions provide relevance and meaning to content, and should guide teachers as they define practice.

Practice premised and built on student experience and questions arises from answering two essential questions. First, what is worthwhile? A subset of this question is: What is worth knowing? What is worth doing? And why? These are questions teachers and students answer together. A teacher must ask what are my options and what do I choose to do in light of who my students are, what they have experienced, and what they are interested in. Answering these questions must be done within a cacophony of competing demands, mandates, and suppositions about education and what students need. Teacher preparation programs should provide pre-service teachers opportunities to design curriculum that prepares them to engage students around these questions, while ensuring content is taught and learning objectives are met.

The second, related question pre-service teachers should be prepared to answer is: Who benefits from their teaching and how? This may seem like an odd question to ask unless someone is familiar with the nature of schooling and current educational debate.

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Mezzadri & Román, *The Vincentians*, Vol. 1, pp. 43-44.

<sup>54</sup> Mgr. Louis Baunard, *Ozanam in His Correspondence* (Dublin: Catholic Truth Society of Ireland, 1925), 279. See also, Raymond L. Sickinger, Ph.D., "Frédéric Ozanam: Systemic Thinking, and Systemic Change," *Vincentian Heritage* 32:1 (2014), 8. Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol32/iss1/4>

Education, as a mainstream institution, is defined by and reflects the values of mainstream society, and includes those ways of thinking, acting, interacting, and using language and texts that mainstream society values.<sup>55</sup> Ways of being and using language that reflect non-mainstream societies and subjugated cultures — that often reflect the experiences of the poor and oppressed — are often minimized and even castigated by schools.

For example, as a mainstream institution, schools value a specific type of language use, usually referred to as Standard English or correct grammar. However, most nonmainstream students enter school having mastered a slightly different grammar. Their nonmainstream grammars are often viewed as inappropriate and incorrect, and understood as evidence of intellectual deficiency. Yet, their use of language is often more structured and rule-driven than mainstream grammar.<sup>56</sup>

Schools typically teach mainstream grammar as a set of distinct skills that need to be mastered before other skills, notably those related to writing, speaking, and concept development, can be taught. The question, then, is who benefits from this type of instruction? Research shows that it is not nonmainstream students, even as researchers and teachers agree that it is important for all students to know how and when to use mainstream grammar.<sup>57</sup> The question of what is worthwhile takes on added pedagogical significance when the issue of who benefits is foregrounded. If not all students are benefiting intellectually, emotionally, psychologically, socially, and spiritually from instruction then it is neither affective nor effective. It is not worthwhile.

Effective and affective teaching begins with teachers knowing how to listen closely to students and to those involved in students' lives, such as parents and community members. Teacher preparation programs should prepare pre-teachers to help students explore their experiences and perspectives, as well as content, as a way of establishing the place and role of content in the lives of students. Teachers should explore with students what should be done, or what is worthwhile and beneficial. Moreover, in identifying the types of experiences they might want students to have, teachers should interpret imaginatively what is possible. They need to ask what type of experiences will be effective and affective and fully engage students' lives.

The extent to which teacher preparation can ready pre-service teachers to foster this type of engagement is limited. Generally, opportunities to work with pre-K through Grade 12 students and their communities to the degree necessary to plan affective and effective action are restricted. There are, however, specific curriculum development and instructional delivery assignments that can support pre-service teachers. These assignments can serve as models for curricular and pedagogical planning. One possibility, as noted in the previous section, is to practice developing curriculum drawing on what pre-service teachers learn

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<sup>55</sup> James Paul Gee, *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideologies in Discourse*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Falmer, 1996).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Patrick Hartwell, "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar," in *College English* 47:2 (1995): 105-127.

through field experiences and community-based service learning opportunities. Using published ethnographies and case studies as examples, pre-service teachers should write their own ethnographic descriptions and case studies based on field experience and community service. These sites can serve as contexts for the curriculum they develop, and be used to demonstrate curriculum relevancy.

Another option is to use published classroom ethnographies and student case studies as contexts for curriculum development. Similarly, one more possibility would be for teacher educators to provide simulated classroom situations and student profiles for pre-service teachers to use to develop curriculum and plan instructional practice. In all cases, pre-service teachers use these descriptions as contexts for curriculum design and instructional practice. In using these materials as contexts, they should also define what makes their practice effective and affective and for whom, or why it is worthwhile and who benefits and how.

Ozanam's admonition to go to the people and experience their lives reflects engagement designed to create relevant efforts to serve the poor. The options described above are designed to emulate his specific call for engagement. They transform curriculum development from a discreet cognitive process of identifying what to teach and how best to teach — an often technocratic concern about content understanding and delivery — to a richly experiential and inherently ambiguous engagement with others' lives as a means of re-imagining content and revealing its relevance.

## **Conclusion**

At the heart of the three principles of Vincentian teacher preparation is a focus on human relationships. In teaching, the relationships of concern are most often those between teachers and students, but can also be relationships among teachers, between teachers and parents, teachers and staff, teachers and community, as well as those among students. For Vincentian teachers, underlying all educational practice and theory is a continuous need to explicate actions for what they mean for the relationships we are developing with others. Thus, the three principles presented in this article serve as a framework for teacher preparation, and thinking about what it means to be a teacher. They foreground human relationships as primary and essential to teaching and learning.

Adhering to these principles requires providing pre-service teachers with three distinct but related foci. First, the principles emphasize the importance of opportunities for pre-service teachers to define who they are as teachers. These opportunities should not begin with theory or practices but with pre-service teachers' experience, as well as their questions of worth and value, and what they want for themselves and for others. Second, in Vincentian teacher preparation there is always a focus on the other. How do we engage the other as a human being and not only as a student or parent or other teacher? In this regard, the emphasis is not only on social justice but also on socially just and loving interaction grounded in Lucan spirituality. Third, Vincentian teacher preparation focuses

on creating practices or ways of being in the classroom that honor and facilitate the types of relationships we think are important for others and us. What is a student ready for? What do they require to develop fully not only academically but also socially, morally, spiritually, psychologically, and emotionally? Practice is ultimately defined by immediate needs.

The types of human relationships that emanate from Vincentian teacher preparation, however, are not unique to Vincentianism. These relationships, although informed by Vincentianism and defined as Vincentian here, are inherently personal considerations of one's place in the world. The best a teacher educator following this example can hope to do is model what it means to be a Vincentian teacher, and to create a Vincentian learning environment that provides pre-service teachers with the types of experiences described in this article. However, because they are not unique, human relationships formed with Vincentian values are open to diverse experiences and perspectives. They are shaped by a living spirituality that is receptive to the times and open to innovation, while steadfast in those principles that are engrained repeatedly in Vincentian practices of the past 400 years.





Vincent de Paul with clergy members at a Tuesday Conference.

Oil on canvas. Originally in seminary of Toul, now in Crézilles.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*

<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Marguerite Naseau learns to read while tending to her flock in Suresnes, France.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





A statue commemorating Seton on the grounds of The National Shrine of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Emmitsburg, Maryland.

*Public Domain*





*La juventud instruida por las Hijas  
de la Caridad en los deberes de la Religion  
y de la sociedad.*

Spanish engraving, circa 1844. The caption reads:  
"Youth instructed by the Daughters of Charity in the  
duties of religion and society."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Etching. The text reads:

"Care for children. Saint Vincent confides the education of youth to the Daughters of Charity, and blesses their first efforts."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





An early nineteenth-century etching titled, "The Sisters of Charity instruct young children."

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>





Portrait of Frédéric Ozanam.

The frontispiece to the 1862 publication of his *Complete Works*.

*Public Domain*



# The Communication of Vincentian Culture: Reflections on the Impact of the Vincentian Heritage Tour on Faculty and Staff Participants at DePaul University

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Vincent de Paul preaching to people from the pulpit.

Oil on canvas. Original in St. Eustache, Paris.

Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online  
<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>



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## Introduction

Organizational cultures are a byproduct of our individual and collective experiences.<sup>1</sup> These experiences rooted in our past often have strong and lasting influences on the roles that we play at present and in the future. Furthermore, institutional cultures are given both cohesion and coherence through the sharing of ideology — referred to by Harrison Trice as a shared way of thinking.<sup>2</sup> Terrence Deal argues that shared ideologies are reinforced by cultural elements including stories, rituals, metaphors, heroes and heroines, as well as values.<sup>3</sup>

Such cultural elements are at the heart of our shared Vincentian Mission. Indeed, the roots of our Vincentian culture may be traced to the individual actions of Saint Vincent de Paul as a young priest in Gannes-Folleville in 1617, beginning when he heard the confession of a poor peasant. By performing this Catholic ritual, Vincent displayed his sensitivity to the needs of the poor in a public forum and he influenced others to reflect upon how these needs might be better met. Later that same year, Saint Vincent's sermon delivered in Châtillon led to the founding of the first Confraternity of Charity devoted to both the corporal and spiritual needs of the sick-poor.<sup>4</sup> These confraternities were among the first systematic efforts to meet the needs of the poor and marginalized in early seventeenth-century France.

During the years 1624 to 1625, Saint Vincent met Louise de Marillac and in 1629 encouraged her to strengthen the Confraternities of Charity that had evolved during the

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Eisenberg and Harold Goodall, Jr., *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 2009), 117-118.

<sup>2</sup> Harrison Trice and Janice Beyer, *The Cultures of Work Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1993), 33-34.

<sup>3</sup> Terrence Deal and Allan Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* (Boston: Addison Wesley, 1982), 21-59.

<sup>4</sup> Louise Sullivan, D.C., *Vincentian Mission in Health Care* (The Daughters of Charity National Health System, 1997), 29-30.

previous seven years. The Congregation of the Mission was subsequently founded. Stories of Saint Vincent's early actions, as well as those of Saint Louise, demonstrate not only how they both inspired collective action, but also how their individual sensitivity to the poor became the guiding metaphor that inspires the enactment of our roles today, known as Vincentian Personalism. Key values are at the heart of strong organizational culture and when shared and communicated from one generation of members to the next they serve to perpetuate an ideology and motivate action. As Lawrence Schein argues, the values that are instilled in organizational members perpetuate a way of life.<sup>5</sup> In Vincentian culture, Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., identifies the value of "Respect" as a cornerstone of Vincentian thinking and argues, "...that respect not only promotes human dignity and enhances self-esteem, but it also carries the obligation of being noticeable in all relationships."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the purpose of this paper is to assess the impact of the Vincentian Heritage Tour (VHT) as a model used at DePaul University for communicating key elements of Vincentian culture and ideology to members of the University Community.

## Literature Review

Organizational scholars have long considered not only the importance of corporate culture but also maintaining those processes that communicate that culture from one generation of employees to the next. Edgar Schein argues that an organizational culture incorporates the underlying assumptions, thoughts, and feelings of its members and provides a basis for individual action.<sup>7</sup> When discussing unique corporate ideologies, Mats Alvesson maintains that corporate ideology is inspirational and serves as a guide directing people to act in a particular manner, indicating what is right, true, sensible, and good. Ideology becomes a force underlying action when internalized by organizational members.<sup>8</sup> Peg Neuhauser underscores the importance of those underlying values that make a particular culture unique, and argues that more time needs to be spent socializing members into understanding the values, rules, and behaviors that constitute the cultural components.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Daniel Denison believes that the communication of culture serves to integrate the individual and the organization, creating a sense of involvement, ownership, and responsibility.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the socialization of organizational members into the sharing of an ideology is key to influencing the attainment of organizational goals as well. Howard

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<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Schein, *A Manager's Guide to Corporate Culture* (Washington, D.C.: The Conference Board, 1989), 9.

<sup>6</sup> Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., "Vincentian Values and Fundraising for the Mission," *Vincentian Heritage* 13:1 (1992), 13-35.

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Schein, *The Corporate Culture Survival Guide: Sense and Nonsense about Culture Change* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1999), 15-17.

<sup>8</sup> Mats Alvesson and Per Olof Berg, *Corporate Culture and Organizational Symbolism* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 110.

<sup>9</sup> Peg Neuhauser, Ray Bender, and Kirk Stromberg, *Culture.com: Building Corporate Culture in the Connected Workplace* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2000), 66.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Denison, *Corporate Culture and Organizational Effectiveness* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1990), 7. See also, Lawrence Schein, *Manager's Guide*, 3.



A Vincentian Heritage Tour group seen visiting the parish church at Folleville; and wandering the narrow streets of Toulouse, France.

*Courtesy Brian Cicirello, Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*



Oden substantiates this position in his argument that innovative cultures are those that link strategic planning to cultural values.<sup>11</sup> Clearly the process of employee socialization involves the communication of corporate ideology, and, furthermore, the internalization of that ideology is thought to inspire patterns of behavior paralleling cultural values.

## Rationale

Key Vincentian values informed the design and purpose of the Vincentian Heritage Tour program.<sup>12</sup> These include: enabling the God given dignity of each person; sensitivity to and care for the needs of each other and of those served with a special concern for the deprived members of society; emphasizing the development of a full range of human capabilities; and appreciation of higher education as a means to engage cultural, social, religious, and ethical values in service to others.

In addition, specific purposes for the VHT were laid out by the program's founders.<sup>13</sup> These include deepening our understanding of the university's patron, deepening our understanding of the university's mission as we live it in our academic and administrative departments, encouraging the growth of Vincentian leadership among faculty and staff members, and integrating this intense study of Vincent de Paul into our daily work-lives. Hence, the VHT is a program designed to influence the socialization of DePaul community members. By participating in this program, mission-engaged trustees, senior leaders, faculty, and staff are immersed in Vincentian history, spirituality, and praxis by studying the life and times, faith, mission, and values of Saint Vincent de Paul, all while taking part

<sup>11</sup> Howard Oden, *Managing Corporate Culture, Innovation, and Intrapreneurship* (Westport, CT: Quorum Books, 1997), 9.

<sup>12</sup> Edward R. Udovic, C.M., Vice President for Mission & Ministry, DePaul University, in discussion with the authors, December of 2014.

<sup>13</sup> Edward R. Udovic, C.M., "Vincentian Pilgrimage Hospitality: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives," *Vincentian Heritage* 33:1 (2016), 16.

in a guided tour of Vincentian sites in Paris and throughout France.<sup>14</sup>

Lectures highlighting points of personal and professional transformation are provided along with a chronological description and assessment of Saint Vincent's achievements. This intellectual frame of reference in turn becomes the foundation for the Vincentian Heritage Tour itself — an experiential learning process whereby participants actually follow in the footsteps of Saint Vincent. The tour itself features visits to: Saint Vincent's humble birthplace; his first parish in Clichy; the ruins of the de Gondi family estate at Folleville where Vincent served as tutor and chaplain; Saint Vincent's parish at Châtillon, where his sermon inspired the founding of the Confraternity of Charity; the few extant remains of Saint-Lazare, once the Congregation of the Mission's home following their move from the Collège-des-Bons-Enfants in 1632; the Hôtel-Dieu, where Vincent along with Louise de Marillac recognized a need for the organized delivery of healthcare in a professional setting; the current Vincentian Motherhouse on rue de Sèvres; and finally the reliquary inside the chapel containing the remains of Saint Vincent de Paul.<sup>15</sup>

Tour members are able to not only see and experience the most significant places in the life of Saint Vincent, but also to better understand his personal and professional journey. The saint evolved from a self-absorbed young man into an other-oriented visionary who spent a lifetime organizing efforts to minister to the needs of the poor and disenfranchised. For participants in the Vincentian Heritage Tour, the physical journey symbolizes, and reinforces, identification with a model of value-driven leadership as well as professional behavior.

Like all organizations with a strong and coherent culture, DePaul University must work not only to maintain its Vincentian culture, but also to manage the communication of that culture. As this program was initiated in 2000, in this investigation we seek to assess the impact of VHT participation on the socialization of members of the DePaul community over the last 17 years. More specifically, how do participants demonstrate their understanding of Vincentian values and ideology and display that understanding in the performance of their roles? The desire to identify these tangible consequences of participation became the impetus for this study.

## Methodology

In order to assess whether the Heritage tour is achieving its desired outcomes, including a heightened commitment to Vincentian values and the impact of participation on an enactment of participant roles at the university and other social contexts, members of the 2013-2015 Vincentian Mission Institute worked on the development of a survey. The survey was developed over a one-month period and was approved by the DePaul

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<sup>14</sup> For more on the Vincentian Heritage Tour see: <https://offices.depaul.edu/mission-ministry/programming-and-services/heritage-tours/Pages/default.aspx>

<sup>15</sup> "Life of St. Vincent de Paul," online at: <http://www.svdp-richboro.org/vincent.htm> (accessed 7 May 2017).



A group stops to listen as tour guide Rev. John Rybolt, C.M., explains the significance of a site.

*Courtesy Brian Cicirello, Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*



University Institutional Review Board as an exempt investigation. The survey was distributed online via Qualtrics and sent to VHT alumni including faculty, staff, and senior leadership. Students were not included among the survey participants. 209 VHT alumni received the survey and 120 responded, providing a 54% response rate. At the time of their participation, the respondents consisted of 49% staff, 33% faculty, 15% administration, and 3% other. In analyzing the objective responses, a hierarchical regression analysis was used. Inputs (or predictors) (a10\_1-a13) were run against four outcomes, measuring (A5-9) Vincentian and Catholic identity, in order to determine levels of correlation between each stated activity, including changes in feelings and actions toward oneself and others, and each outcome (measuring levels of change in sense of identity as Vincentian and being Catholic).

## **Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

### *Quantitative Analysis*

Participation in the VHT program resulted in respondents reporting a significant increase in the following sentiments, which indicated (or revealed) significant correlations with an expressed deepened commitment to and understanding of DePaul's Vincentian and Catholic identity:

- Increased sense of the dignity of each person;
- Increased sensitivity to and care for the needs of others;
- Increased concern for marginalized members of society;
- Increased commitment to higher education as a means for engaging cultural, social, religious and political values in service to others;
- Increased commitment to bringing the light of Catholic faith and the treasures of knowledge into a mutually challenging and supportive relationship;
- Increased awareness that the institution should remain faithful to the Catholic message drawn from authentic religious sources, both traditional and contemporary (e.g. increased my commitment to theological learning and scholarship);
- Increased commitment to engage in and encourage critical moral thinking and scholarship founded on moral principles that embody religious values and the highest ideals of our

society;

- Increased belief that the interplay of diverse value systems are beneficial to intellectual inquiry;
- Increased commitment to academic freedom as an integral part of the university's scholarly and religious heritage and an essential condition of effective inquiry and instruction.

While all were significant (See Table 1), the sensitivity variables (A10-1 to A10-13) tended to be most highly correlated with an increased understanding of and commitment to DePaul's Catholic identity. The items (A10-7 to A10-9) were two times more correlated with an increased understanding of and commitment to DePaul's Catholic identity than to the expressed increase in DePaul's Vincentian identity. These three measures were as follows:

- Increased commitment bringing the light of Catholic faith and the treasures of knowledge into a mutually challenging and supportive relationship;
- Increased awareness that the institution should remain faithful to the Catholic message drawn from authentic religious sources, both traditional and contemporary;
- Increased commitment to encourage theological learning and scholarship.

While respondents tended to be similar with regard to expressing a deepened understanding of and commitment to DePaul's Vincentian identity and support of an institutional commitment, there were wide variances and expressions at opposite ends of the scale in opinion regarding whether tour participation inspired their own commitment to DePaul's Catholic identity. There were also wide variances and bi-modal scaling of opinions with regard to questions about how the program impacted respondents work, relationships with students, and content of classes (A 14-1, A6-4 and A18). Overall, however, the quantitative analysis demonstrates a renewed commitment to key Vincentian Values as well as recognition of its overarching Catholic identity as central to the organizational culture and ideology.

Table 1

Vincenian Identity		Color Codes for Correlations			
Catholic Identity		r <= 0.4		0.4> r <0.5	r >=0.5
Correlations					
<b>Observations:</b> While all of the A10_1 through A10_13 variables show significant levels of correlations with A6 through A9, variables A8 and A9 on the average are more strongly correlated (r = .462 vs. .363) with the A10_1 through A10_13 variables. They are also about 2X more correlated with items 10_7 to 10_9 than A6 and A7.		A6 How much did participation in VHT deepen your understanding of DePaul's Vincenian identity?	A7 How much did participation in VHT deepen your commitment to DePaul's Vincenian identity?	A8 How much did participation in VHT deepen your understanding of DePaul's Catholic identity?	A9 How much did participation in VHT deepen your commitment to DePaul's Catholic identity?
A10_1 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way... -increased my sense of the dignity of each person	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.393 .000 97	.453 .000 97	.453 .000 97	.469 .000 95
A10_2 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-increased my sensitivity to, and care for, the needs of others	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.325 .001 97	.365 .000 97	.354 .000 97	.375 .000 95
A10_3 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my concern for marginalized members of society	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.279 .006 97	.413 .000 97	.390 .000 97	.389 .000 95
A10_4 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my commitment to higher education as a means to engage cultural, social, religious, and political values in service to others	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.261 .010 96	.485 .000 96	.409 .000 96	.436 .000 94
A10_7 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my commitment to bring the light of Catholic faith and the treasures of knowledge into a mutually challenging and supportive relationship.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.294 .004 97	.376 .000 97	.464 .000 97	.662 .000 95
A10_8 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my awareness that the institution should remain faithful to the Catholic message drawn from authentic religious sources both traditional and contemporary.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.286 .004 98	.300 .003 98	.466 .000 98	.666 .000 96
A10_9 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my commitment to encourage theological learning and scholarship.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.353 .000 97	.389 .000 97	.452 .000 97	.672 .000 95
A10_10 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my commitment to engage in, and encourage, critical moral thinking and scholarship founded on moral principles which embody religious values and the highest ideals of our society.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.329 .001 97	.288 .004 97	.363 .000 97	.461 .000 95
A10_11 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my respect for the religiously pluralistic composition of our society.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.366 .000 97	.482 .000 97	.476 .000 97	.486 .000 95
A10_12 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my belief that the interplay of diverse value systems are beneficial to intellectual inquiry.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.388 .000 97	.507 .000 97	.483 .000 97	.467 .000 95
A10_13 How much did participation in VHT affect you, or your work at DePaul, in any of the following way...-Increased my commitment to Academic freedom as an integral part of the university's scholarly and religious heritage, and an essential condition of effective inquiry and instruction.	Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed) N	.315 .002 96	.328 .001 96	.423 .000 96	.353 .000 94
Average correlations =		.363		.462	

These results demonstrate that the VHT experience had a significant impact on many participants. They demonstrate a greater understanding of and commitment to Vincentian ideology in both their professional and personal lives. However, more research would be needed to understand the long-term effects of this program on individual participants.

### *Qualitative Analysis*

In addition to the objective responses, the survey generated 803 narrative responses. In analyzing the narrative data, we followed established qualitative procedures.<sup>16</sup> First the responses were transcribed and grouped initially by the questions. The content of each narrative response was then grouped according to theme, with conceptual labels used to identify unique groupings of thoughts or ideas. The themes were derived inductively from the actual words and phrases used by participants in providing illustrations of their respective experiences. “Constant comparisons” were made between and among categories to ensure discreteness of content.<sup>17</sup> Key qualitative findings were triangulated to support the most significant results described above (A10\_7 to A10\_9 on Table 1). While the quantitative analysis demonstrated a variance of opinion among respondents in terms of impact on teaching course content and work at the university, the qualitative analysis yields insight into both the cognitive and behavioral manifestations of a deepened personal understanding of and commitment to DePaul’s Vincentian identity and support of an institutional commitment. The following thematic categories emerged as a result of the narrative analysis:

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<sup>16</sup> See Thomas Lindlof and Bryan Taylor, *Qualitative Communication Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002), 214. Also, Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin, *Basics of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 101-142.

<sup>17</sup> Strauss and Corbin, *Qualitative Research*, 67.

Table 2

How much did participation in VHT affect you or your work at DePaul? Please provide examples. (N=85)		
<p><i>Vincentian Values: Orientation toward Self</i></p> <p>I have been kinder, and more aware of the impact of exclusion on students, faculty, and staff.</p> <p>Personally, I noticed an increased concern for marginalized persons in our society and actively work to address this.</p> <p>I believe that each new experience I have, such as the VHT, allows me to better listen and appreciate diverse opinions and better tolerate ambiguity.</p> <p>I am more considerate of each individual's needs, assumptions, experiences, and history.</p> <p>I am more accepting of differences in others and focused more on compassion for individuals.</p>	<p><i>Vincentian Values: Orientation toward Other</i></p> <p>I am now much more aware of Vincentian personalism when dealing with colleagues and students.</p> <p>I truly believe I am dealing with my students and fellow faculty with greater respect compassion and generosity.</p> <p>I now routinely acknowledge Vincentian values and behaviors when I note them in my colleagues and students.</p> <p>I have become more interested in finding ways to promote an understanding of Vincentianism among faculty, staff, and students.</p> <p>Communicating Vincentian values with other faculty and students by my words and actions.</p>	<p><i>Vincentian Values: Critical Thinking</i></p> <p>There are days when I find myself asking what Vincent would do in today's economic downturn. There are many tough decision being made related to our students, staff, and faculty which has an effect both short and long term.</p> <p>Walking in the footsteps of Vincent has helped me articulate the meaning of the name above the door. I frequently draw on those images and those stories and that experience... to explain something I often have to do in my role at DePaul.</p> <p>I look more closely at context before I think of the obvious first.</p> <p>It has deepened my ability to listen. To see things from different perspectives.</p> <p>When I make decisions about curriculum, I think about the moral imagination that needs to exist in every DePaul class.</p>
Please share some examples of how participation in the VHT impacted your performance in your role(s) at DePaul. (N=76)		
<p><i>Vincentian Values: Teaching Philosophy</i></p> <p>I now routinely acknowledge our Vincentian heritage and values as they appear in the course materials I am responsible for teaching.</p> <p>I now integrate more of the mission and Saint Vincent's life into my teaching.</p> <p>Reinforced my teaching of ethics being an essential aspect of religious world views and practices.</p> <p>Informed my ability to teach diversity and engagement with commitment, and engagement with communities in need in the classroom and in the field.</p> <p>I devoted a class session to sharing stories I learned about Vincent's and Louise's journeys and the historic work they did together to give students a frame of reference for the study of community service.</p>	<p><i>Vincentian Values: Pedagogical Orientation</i></p> <p>I have incorporated our Vincentian heritage into my classes, particularly climate change. Just this week I talked about how Vincentianism relates to climate change in my final class.</p> <p>I am providing examples of Vincent's writings even for my technology classes — to remind students of how Vincent's examples impact today's DePaul.</p> <p>I use the connection to Saint Vincent as an argument for why we should aspire to create art that speaks to questions of social justice and respect for those neglected and abused by society.</p> <p>I use examples of Vincent and his life works and values in my lectures and required readings. I have a focus on the Christ of Vincent as a way to highlight his worldview and therefore his work.</p> <p>I include mission and values information in my classes.</p>	<p><i>Vincentian Values: Student Orientation</i></p> <p>It made me realize that I could make a difference in student's lives in small ways through my personal contributions, rather than [it being] needed to be a part of a major institutional activity to have an impact.</p> <p>I stop what I am doing to make each student a priority. I catch myself if I make a judgement based on what a person looks like and treat each person with dignity, respect, and courtesy.</p> <p>Participating in VHT has allowed me to build closer relationships with my students and discuss tough systematic issues.</p> <p>I listen to their stories with greater openness rather than with the sometimes cynical ear that has heard every excuse for tardy assignments.</p> <p>I viewed my interactions with them as more teachable moments. I talk to them about Saint Vincent and make sure they know about him and DePaul's mission so that they can carry it forward.</p>

Table 2 Continued

How did participation in the VHT have an impact on your role as a member of the DePaul community? (N=63)		
<i>Vincentian Values: Orientation toward University Service</i>	<i>Vincentian Values: Orientation toward the DePaul Community</i>	<i>Vincentian Values: Orientation toward Community Service</i>
<p>I have continued to seek opportunities for service and participation in the university, which I had not done previously.</p> <p>It affected the quality of my service more than the quantity. I am already very engaged but my purpose with the VHT was to improve and enhance the quality of my service engagements so I can make optimal strategic decisions.</p> <p>Validated my diverse service to the university and provided more knowledge to be effective.</p> <p>I became devoted to service, taking on administrative positions two years later and up to the present.</p> <p>In addition to serving on various committees, the most important thing the trip taught me was to ‘just show up’. Presence can be the most sincere form of service.</p>	<p>I understand my role and how it fits within the mission more effectively. I am able to use the vocabulary of the mission to articulate that role better.</p> <p>I felt more a part of the inner circle and better understand my mission in context to DePaul’s mission.</p> <p>After VHT, I felt like an important member of the DePaul community that can make a difference. I felt empowered and inspired to do more at DePaul and in the community.</p> <p>I appreciate that I am able to play a role in bringing a discussion and consideration of Vincentian values into my work, my unit, and my classroom. I take pride in being able to make that contribution to the mission of the university.</p> <p>I feel a greater responsibility as a member of the DePaul community to be conscious of the many ways that I can help carry the mission in the many roles that I have in the university.</p>	<p>I work with alumni and have grown the volunteer opportunities for alumni to participate within the Chicago Community. I encourage my staff to participate in service and learning opportunities offered at DePaul.</p> <p>Forming deeper relationships with my VHT cohort has been very beneficial in leveraging university resources to better serve students and the inner-city community.</p> <p>Augmented commitment to community based service learning with students — increased commitment to mission.</p> <p>My support to those activities which do reach out to the underserved Chicago area community has been reinforced by VHT.</p> <p>Much more of my service work is mission driven. I have volunteered to do outreach to those in need.</p>

This thematic analysis provides insight into how involvement in the VHT influences how participants viewed themselves, how they viewed others, how they thought about and processed information, how faculty viewed their teaching and the content of courses they taught, as well as how they viewed their students. Through their narrative comments, respondents clearly voiced a renewed commitment to the DePaul community, university service, and community service. Their narratives document a broad range of behavioral commitments to performing roles reflective of the Vincentian values that constitute our shared ideology at DePaul.



A Tour group poses in front of the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris, France.

*Courtesy Brian Cicirello, Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*



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## Concluding Discussion and Recommendations:

### *Implications for Organizational Development*

Earlier we discussed the importance of employee socialization and the communication of institutional ideology. Clearly, the Vincentian Heritage Tour program is an effective model not only for the communication of ideology but also for inspiring patterns of behavior that parallel important cultural values. The utility of this Vincentian Model extends beyond the boundaries of Catholic higher education. Organizational theorists embrace the importance of corporate social responsibility while acknowledging the importance of key cultural elements including ethics, respect for people, trust, openness and the advancement of human welfare. Moreover, not surprisingly, patterns of leadership embracing such values emerge as corporate cultures become stronger through the internal communication of these important cultural elements.<sup>18</sup>

The Vincentian model profiled in this study allows for a better understanding of how organizational socialization can work. The thought of systematically strengthening a corporate culture, or even changing a culture, might at first seem daunting. However, Edgar Schein offers insight into the first steps that could be taken to strengthen an organizational culture, to ensure that the values at the heart of the mission and ideology are communicated systematically to organizational members. Schein emphasizes the importance of the Culture Audit.<sup>19</sup> Surveys, focus groups, and even one-on-one interviews might be used to assess the extent to which organizational members are aware of and influenced by the mission and values at the heart of an institution. The formation of a task force charged with conducting such an audit would be an important first step. Regardless of the instrumentality chosen to collect information from organizational members, fundamental questions will need to be asked and answered: When and under what circumstances is information pertaining to the institution's mission and values communicated? Is this communication an ongoing process

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<sup>18</sup> Denis Leonard and Rodney McAdams, "Corporate Social Responsibility," *Quality Progress* 36 (2003), 27-32.

<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Schein, *Manager's Guide*, 21.

that represents an inclusive effort to reach out to all members of the organization? Is this communication adequate? Where does the communication process break down? What evidence, if any, is there suggesting a relationship between leadership development and corporate social responsibility? Finally, is there evidence to suggest that the communication of mission and values to institutional members is not only successful but also has a substantive impact on the roles they play on a day-to-day basis? Collecting data geared toward answering questions like these would provide insight into both the quality and effectiveness of leadership development efforts and institutional communication efforts, while also serving as a means for gauging member awareness of culture, mission, and ideology.

Those interested in the revitalization of a culture should think incrementally. For example, workshops and orientations for new and existing employees would be a logical place to begin such an initiative. Modules devoted to both mission and values often need to be enlivened with stories drawn from institutional history that are both relevant and interesting to the audience. Who are the cultural heroes unique to a particular organization — those historical role models about whom organizational members should be aware? What are the relevant stories from their lives that mirror how institutional members should be guided by the values that lie at the heart of the organizational mission? Whether a retreat, a tour, a workshop, an orientation, or even a lecture devoted to the communication of mission and values/cultural ideology, an assessment should follow in order to determine both the impact and sufficiency of the effort. Using data to guide one's efforts allows each individual to assess where they are now, and where they ultimately need to be. Moreover, doing so helps each organizational member close that gap, as the Vincentian Heritage Tour demonstrates, in asking that most Vincentian question, "What must be done?"





Vincent de Paul preaching to people from the pulpit.

Oil on canvas. Original in St. Eustache, Paris.

*Courtesy St. Vincent de Paul Image Archive Online*

*<http://stvincentimages.cdm.depaul.edu/>*





A Vincentian Heritage Tour group seen visiting the parish church at Folleville; and wandering the narrow streets of Toulouse, France.

*Courtesy Brian Cicirello, Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*





A group stops to listen as tour guide Rev. John Rybolt, C.M., explains the significance of a site.

*Courtesy Brian Cicirello, Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*





A tour group poses in front of the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris, France.  
*Courtesy Brian Cicirello, Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*



# Pictures of Past and Present: The Folleville Model

## Essay on the history of the church<sup>1</sup>

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JOHN E. RYBOLT, C.M., PH.D.

*For more on DePaul University's new exhibit featuring this fascinating scale model of the historic church at Folleville, see our Newsnotes section.*

*Videos are also available highlighting:*

History of the Church at Folleville

The Architecture of the Church at Folleville

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<sup>1</sup> The following is an edited excerpt from Rev. John E. Rybolt's *In the Footsteps of Vincent de Paul: A Guide to Vincentian France* (Chicago: DePaul University Vincentian Studies Institute, 2007), 450 pp. Part historical overview, part travel guide, the book offers an examination of sites throughout France, both major and minor, related to the Vincentian Family. The book is available free for download at: [http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian\\_ebooks/7/](http://via.library.depaul.edu/vincentian_ebooks/7/)



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Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University



In 1615 and 1617, Vincent resided at Folleville as the tutor of the children of the Gondi family. Antoine Portail, his earliest follower, perhaps joined him, although he was ordained a priest only in 1622. One of the children, Jean-François Paul, became the notorious and worldly Cardinal de Retz, known for his part in a rebellion against Cardinal Mazarin. During a period totaling about eighteen months (divided into three periods: 1615, 1617, 1620), Vincent preached and gave missions in the surrounding parishes. The names of two of these are known, Sérévillers and Paillart, where he established Confraternities of Charity in 1620. Vincent also began to experience sickness here, the ailments of his legs, which he suffered throughout his adult life. After 1655, the Community celebrated the events of the “first sermon of the Mission” on 25 January, and the saint’s recollections (although he is not recorded as mentioning the name Folleville) are preserved in a repetition of prayer on 25 January of that year, as well as in a conference of 17 May 1658.

This sermon, delivered on a Wednesday probably in the course of a longer mission, remained in his mind as a founding moment of his life’s work. He had previously been giving missions, and already had the practice of urging general confessions, as is known from his petition to the archbishop of Sens on the subject, dated 1616. He probably took up the recommendation of Francis de Sales, who in the *Introduction to the Devout Life* (1609) urged the practice. In addition, the experience of Madame de Gondi was crucial. She went to confession to the local pastor, a resident of Folleville for at least the previous fifteen years. He, however, did not know the formula for absolution, and the thought that so many people might die without having made a good confession horrified her. She had Vincent get a copy of the formula from her spiritual director in Amiens and had the priest read it when she made her confession. Having outsiders like Vincent and others hear general confessions would right these wrongs.

At various times in Folleville’s history, Vincentians came to visit. One group gave a mission in 1770 and, on concluding this mission, presented a reliquary and dedicated a side altar to Saint Vincent. During the nineteenth century, many Vincentians and Daughters



*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*



of Charity came on pilgrimage. Many of these also contributed to the restoration of the church.

Bishop Jacques Boudinet of Amiens asked Father Étienne to send some Vincentians to take over the parish, which they did in late 1869. The bishop had other plans as well. A large piece of property was bought in 1874. Like the Berceau, to which it was compared, the bishop believed that Folleville too should have some Vincentian presence. His first plan was to receive orphaned boys. Daughters of Charity came for this purpose in 1875. Further, he negotiated the building of a train station at La Faloise, and it in turn began to attract pilgrims to Folleville. Meanwhile, because of the deaths of superior generals and bishops and, because of both anti-clerical laws in France and the First World War, the orphanage closed and the Daughters left in 1904. Another work then developed: a training school for Vincentian brothers, beginning in earnest in 1926. The Vincentians purchased the castle and worked to maintain it. Other buildings were gradually restored and new ones added. This work was later closed and sold. A large statue of Saint Vincent is still to be seen over the main entrance of the school, located across the road from the castle. Today, the town consists of a few houses and numbers perhaps 70 people.

The present stone *church*, in Gothic style, replaces a church dating from about 1360. It is divided into two parts: the nave, built in the fifteenth century, for the use of the people; and the sanctuary, begun in 1510 and consecrated in 1524, for the family. The nave, built first, was dedicated to the apostle Saint James the Greater. His statue is in the niche behind and to the left of the pulpit. This church was one of the many on the medieval pilgrimage route, the “Route of Paris,” to Compostela, Spain. A modern sign by the door of the church as well as an old statue of Santiago above and to the left of the door recall this. Several elements make it clear that the family spent more funds on decorating their part of the church than the people did. The vaulting of the nave is of oak and has eight beautiful



Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University

carved figures at the base of the ceiling. The vaulting of the sanctuary, however, is carved stone. The windows in the nave are plain, those in the sanctuary more elegant. The floor of the sanctuary is marble, while that of the nave is stone and brick. In both parts of the building there are traces of paint on the columns, and painted crosses recall the bishop's consecration of the church.

The sanctuary area, the "choir," was added to the church to serve as the mortuary chapel of the lords of Folleville. It is dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. In earlier years, it was separated from the nave by a wooden altar screen, a *jubé*. The items that follow describe the parts of the sanctuary, beginning on the left.

(1) The **family niche**, easily heated, used by the seigniorial family to attend mass. Old gate closings on its front are still visible. From it, they could look through the small opening directly onto the tomb of their ancestors.

(2) An elegant white marble *sarcophagus* of Raoul de Lannoy (d. 1513) and Jeanne de Poix (d. 1524). This is an excellent example of Renaissance work, carved in Genoa in 1507 by Antonio della Porta at the time when Raoul was governor of that city, and where he died. Among the elements to be noticed are the letters R and J intertwined, a Pietà, Saints Anthony, Sebastian and Adrian,



*Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion*



and the representation of the beheading of John the Baptist (patron of Jeanne). Above is the coronation of the Virgin; she is depicted as surrounded with a floral rosary. This rosary, in medieval fashion, is made of wild roses, with five petals each, the only kind of rose in France before hybridizing. Below are four children weeping, holding the epitaph and the coats-of-arms of the families. Representations of skulls are numerous. The tombs were emptied during the seventeenth-century wars of religion. Raoul and Jeanne were the great-great-grandparents of Marguerite de Silly, Madame de Gondi.

(3) The *tomb* of François de Lannoy (d. 1548), son of Raoul, and Marie de Hangest, pictured kneeling, carved from local stone. Above the figures on the wall behind are carved heads. Below on the lowest register are the four cardinal virtues. This tomb is surrounded with a fine marble frame in Renaissance style. Both tombs have the figures facing the niche, which used to hold the sepulcher of Jesus. This couple were the great-grandparents of Madame de Gondi.

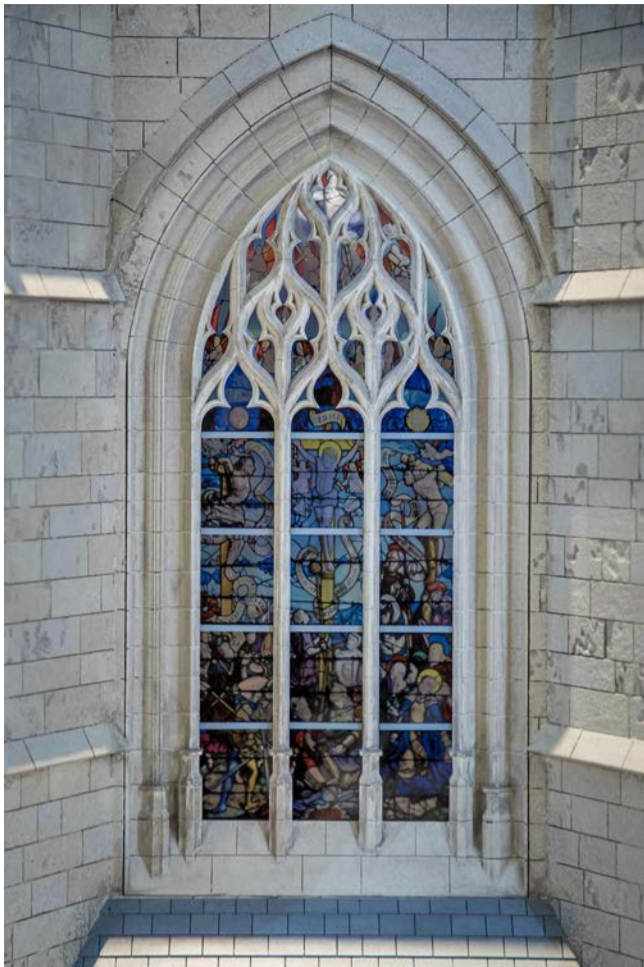


Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion



(4) Above the *funerary niche* and under the central window are angels bearing the instruments of the Passion. In the center is the risen Christ appearing as a gardener to Saint Mary Magdalene. He holds a shovel, symbolic of his nourishment of the tree of life. This shovel is typical of the time and the region: although stone, it depicts a handle and blade of oak, with a small crescent of wrought iron on its lower edge. The carved sepulcher of Jesus that used to repose here was removed in 1634 to the parish church of Joigny, the main seat of the Gondi family, when Pierre, Marguerite's son, sold the Folleville castle. It follows the same style as the marble sarcophagus mentioned above.

(5) The *main window*, the crucifixion, dates from the sixteenth century. On the right hand is a mounted soldier—a portrait of François de Lannoy, shown wearing his golden chain of office. In its upper registers angels appear with the instruments of the Passion. The *ceiling vaults* are richly decorated, recalling the sculptures of the tomb of Lannoy and Poix. The artist responsible for the window also did those in the neighboring village of Paillart.



Courtesy of DePaul University/  
Jeff Carrion



(6) The *niche* used for the wine and water for mass is a sixteenth-century work, adorned with the initials of Raoul de Lannoy and his wife.

(7) Next to the niche and high in the wall is a small *iron door*, the remainder of a sixteenth-century tabernacle for holy oils. The interior was finished in wood and still has traces of cloth glued to it.

(8) The present *sacristy* has some of the oldest paving stones in the church.

(9) A side chapel, containing a *shrine of Saint Vincent de Paul*, in imitation Gothic, bears the date 1899, with another representation of angels with the instruments of the Passion on the upper wall of the sanctuary. Inside the chapel are figures of saints representing the four cardinal virtues. To one side is an old door leading to a tower; it also gave access to the *jubé*. This area was formerly the sacristy, and the remains of an outer door, now blocked up, can be seen in the left-hand wall. It gave the family access to their part of the church.

(10) Above is a *modern window*, dated 1869, the design of Charles Bazin. Its upper section features several words written on scrolls: Meekness, Simplicity, Humility, Zeal, Mortification, Religion; and then two titles of Saint Vincent in



*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*



Latin: *Cleri Parens, Pater Pauperum* (Parent of the Clergy, Father of the Poor). There are four figured sections: (a) Vincent hearing the confession of the dying peasant at Gannes, with the text in French: "25 January, day of the Conversion of Saint Paul;" (b) the conversion of Saint Paul, the feast day with the first sermon of the Mission, the text reads: "The conversion of a notable inhabitant of Gannes;" (c) Vincent preaching at Folleville, with the text: "Saint Vincent de Paul preaches the sermon of his first mission at Folleville," which also pictures the *jubé*; and (d) Vincent teaching the three Gondi children, with the text: "Tutor of the three sons of Monsieur Philip Emmanuel de Gondi, lord of the area." It should be noted, however, that this responsibility lasted only until Vincent's return from Châtillon and, that, furthermore, only Pierre, the oldest son, born in 1606, was of an age to profit from the saint's teaching. The others, Henri (b. 1612) and Jean François Paul (b. 1613), were probably too young for him and would have been in the care of others.

Below these pictures are the emblem and motto of the Congregation of the Mission (text: "On 25 January 1617, Saint Vincent de Paul projects the establishment of the priests of the Mission"); Cardinal de Retz archbishop of Paris (text: "The Cardinal archbishop of Paris approves the Congregation of the Mission"); the Daughters of Charity (text: "In 1633 the institution of the Daughters of Charity took place"); and Urban VIII (text: "On 15 March 1655, Pope Urban VIII approves the institution of the Priests of the Mission"). (The windows are not in the right order to correspond with the texts below them, since they



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were taken down and repaired and put back incorrectly — [a] and [b] being inverted.)

(11) Across the sanctuary, on the wall, is a *tablet* commemorating donors from the Congregation of the Mission and others to this Vincentian shrine, together with a statue of John Gabriel Perboyre, who visited here while he was teaching at Montdidier before his ordination.

(12) The *high altar* dates only from 1874. On it, however, is displayed a small wooden statue of Vincent, dating from the eighteenth century. The style and gestures of this piece are unusual, and its provenance is unknown.

In the nave are the following elements, from left to right beginning at the door of the church:

(13) The *confessional*, apparently dating from the early seventeenth century, in earlier days faced the pulpit. Vincent may have gestured toward it during his mission sermon of 1617. It more probably dates from his second mission in 1620.

(14) The marble *baptismal font*, carved in 1547 for the baptism of Louis de Lannoy. It is mounted on a pedestal of local stone. On the exterior of the basin are four coats-of-arms and the Lannoy chain of office.

(15) The *paintings* on the walls are copies of those prepared for Vincent's canonization. They hung previously in the Vincentian house at Montdidier until their transfer here in 1913.



Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University; and DePaul University/Jeff Carrion



(16) An old *crucifix* was removed from the *jubé* and placed on the wall facing the pulpit. It was painted (again?) in the seventeenth century. Two statues accompanying it were stolen in 1970.

(17) The stone *statue* of Saint James the Greater replaced, in the sixteenth century, the original one brought from Spain by one of the lords, Jean de Folleville, who had made a pilgrimage there. The present statue has often been repainted but keeps its original colors. It sits in a niche, the remains of an old staircase that led to the *jubé*. With the decline of the use of this altar screen, it began to fall into disrepair, and all that remains of it are some pieces of vaulting visible on the walls. It was replaced by the next item.

(18) The oak *pulpit* was carved in Montdidier. Recent research has shown that this in all likelihood is not the pulpit where Vincent preached what he later recalled as the first sermon of the Mission, since it appears to date from 1620. Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi and his wife gave this pulpit to the church after their chaplain returned from his brief pastorate in Châtillon, perhaps as a way of implementing locally the decrees of the Council of Trent. This old pulpit, with a seat inside, was restored in 1868. It stands on a small, carved leg in the Louis XIII style. Six panels, sculpted with various designs, constitute the body of the pulpit. The backboard was replaced in the eighteenth century, and a carved inscription dates from 1868: "On January 25, Feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, 1617, Saint Vincent de Paul preached his first sermon of the Mission in this pulpit. It was repaired with the help of the Congregation of the Mission in 1868." An iron



Courtesy Division of Mission &  
Ministry, DePaul University



grille was added at that time to protect the pulpit from the pious pilgrims who had, over the centuries, removed parts of it for their own devotion. At the foot of the pulpit are two carved stone portraits. The head facing right is that of Raoul de Lannoy.

(19) The *pews* probably date from 1620, ordered at the same time as the pulpit. Before Vincent's time, men and women were separated in the body of the church, each group with its own altar. The men remained on the right, and their altar was dedicated to James. This altar also served as the main altar for the parishioners. The women were on the left, and their altar had Mary as patron. A niche (*piscine*) in the wall by the pulpit, used for holding wine and water, gives an idea where one altar was placed. These two altars blocked the view of the high altar, but it should be remembered that the church building was divided into two sections: the more elaborate (closed off with a gate in the *jubé*) belonged to the lords, who had their own chaplain; and the older and more common part belonged to the people, who had their own pastor—doubtless a cause of confusion.

(20) The *graffito* scratched into the wall to the right of the pulpit. This is barely legible but recalls the gift of an ex-voto, placed here by a parishioner after a pilgrimage to Compostela.

(21) The stone *statue* of Saint Sebastian over the back door, now unused, is very old.

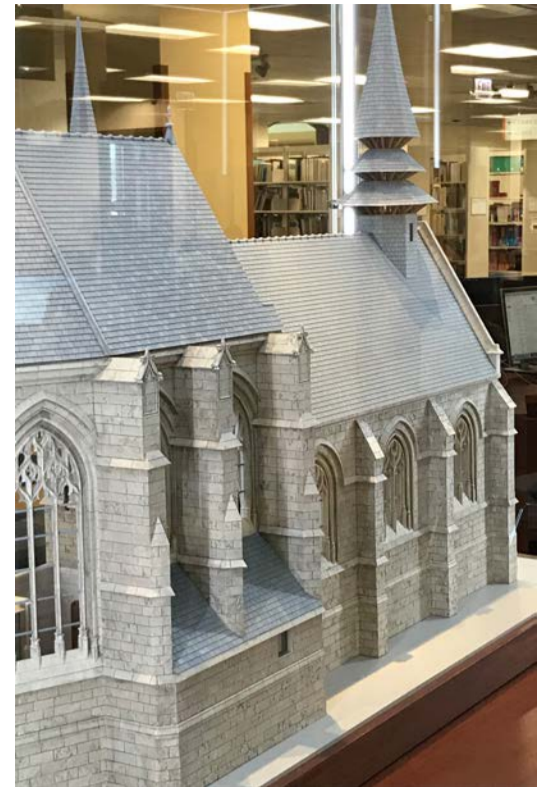


*Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion*



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(22) The *carved figures* at the lower end of the ceiling vault, mentioned above, are difficult to identify. One is clearly Santiago, known from the scallop shell on his cap. Others are grimacing, bearded, nude, etc., but their meaning is not known.



*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*



Outside the church, the differing rooflines demonstrate the various ages of the buildings. Also, the statue of Mary, fourteenth century, probably comes from the previous church building. She holds the child Jesus on her right arm, but his figure has been partially removed. The small round section held the staircase leading to the altar screen. Below the statue of Santiago by the main entrance is an old sundial, useful in times when clocks were rare.





*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*





*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*





*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*





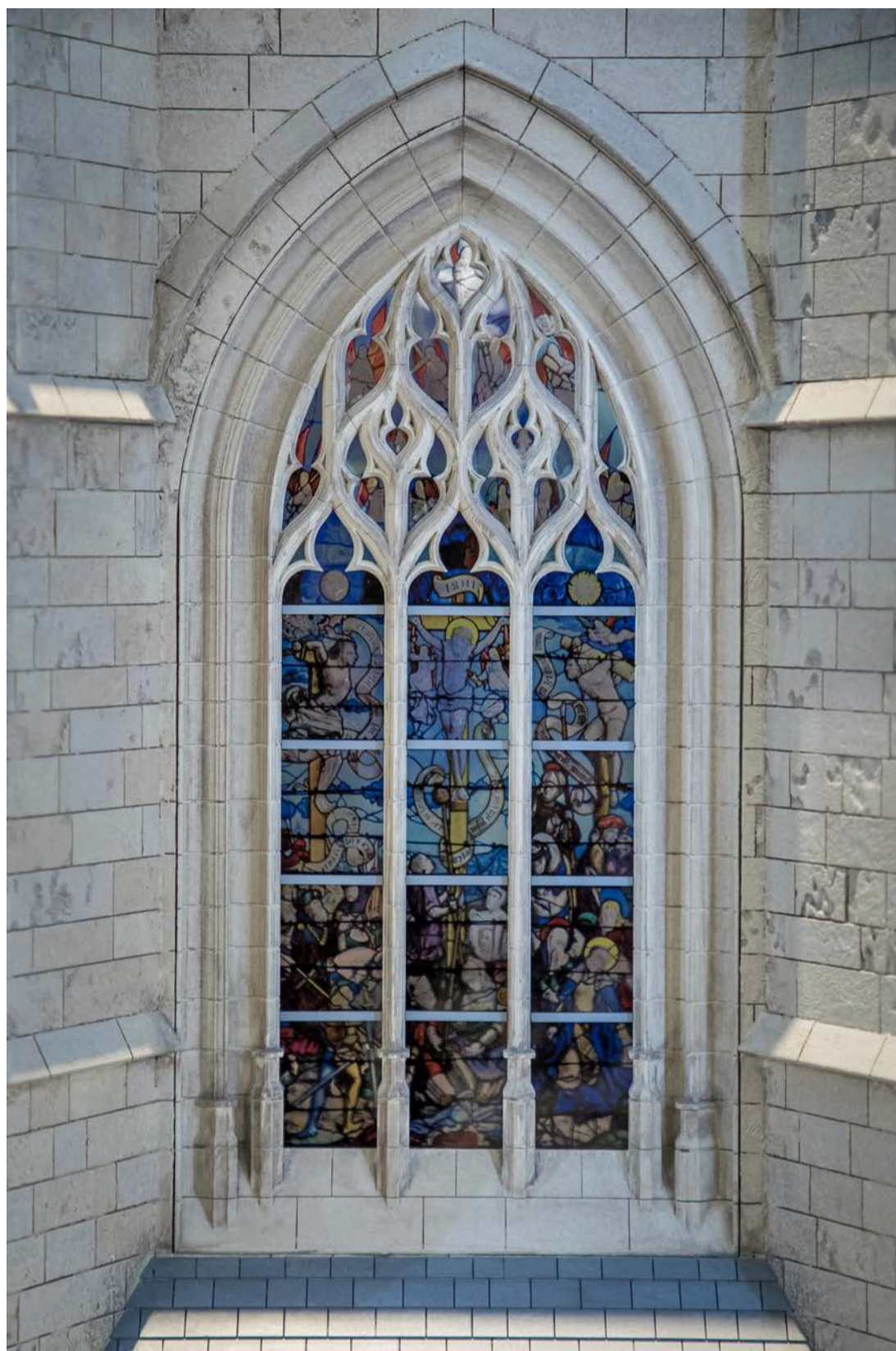
*Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion*





*Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion*





*Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion*





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*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry, DePaul University*





*Courtesy Division of Mission & Ministry,  
DePaul University; and DePaul University/  
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DePaul University*



# Newsnotes

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# NEWSNOTES

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## NEWS

### *DePaul University Unveils Folleville Model*

Sandy Antunez of Newsline writes, “DePaul University is honoring its Vincentian heritage with an exhibition that transports visitors back to seventeenth-century rural France via a model of the historic church created using traditional craftsmanship and 3-D printing.

The tabletop model of the parish church in Folleville, France, where St. Vincent de Paul delivered a 1617 sermon regarded as the genesis of the Vincentian mission, was unveiled January 26, 2018, at the John T. Richardson Library on DePaul’s Lincoln Park Campus. DePaul University’s Vincentian Studies Institute commissioned the model, which is two feet wide by five feet long. At its highest point, the church’s spire, the model is 58 inches tall.

The Rev. Edward R. Udovic, C.M., a historian and DePaul’s vice president for mission and ministry, wanted to find an appropriate way to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the Vincentian mission. Planning started on the model in 2012. Rev. Udovic believed creating a model of the church, located roughly 75 miles northwest of Paris, would be an important and unique contribution to the anniversary celebration.

“DePaul University is the premier international center for Vincentian studies,” Rev. Udovic says.

The model will be a permanent exhibition in the Richardson Library. Interactive kiosks providing information on the church’s art, architecture, and its Vincentian significance flank the structure.

The model shows the church as it was in 1617 prior to the ravages of history and renovations through the centuries. It depicts the original front façade and steeple, and the original choir screen made of richly carved wood. Visitors will be able to peer through cross-sections of the model to appreciate the full beauty of both the interior and exterior of the church.

### **History meets high tech**



*The Folleville model, Richardson Library, DePaul University, Chicago, IL.*

*Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion*

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Jeff Wrona, the artist who created the Saint-Lazare diorama in the Richardson Library in 1992, provided the architectural research for the concept and structure of the Folleville model. The architectural model firm Presentation Studios International LLC of Chicago completed the work.

“The model came together like a large Lego set,” Rev. Udovic says. “Each of the major pieces was individually printed out, joined together, hand-finished and painted.”

The interior is without pews or pulpit because those church furniture items were not present in 1617, he adds.

### **Folleville, then and now**

In 1617, the church was on the lands of the powerful and noble Gondi family who served as St. Vincent’s great and generous patrons.

The church, which is no longer an active parish, continues to attract visitors as it is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a stop on the northern medieval pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, a Spanish city home to the shrine of St. James the Great.

The church at Folleville is significant in art and architectural history as well as Vincentian history. Originally built as a simple parish church at the beginning of the

fifteenth century, it was remodeled at the beginning of the sixteenth century with the addition of a flamboyant gothic chapel decorated with important late-medieval Italian sculptures and tombs.”

The official unveiling ceremony included remarks by DePaul University’s President A. Gabriel Esteban, Ph.D., as well as Rev. Udovic. The event also included a foundation day celebration hosted by the Vincentian Community of Rosati House.

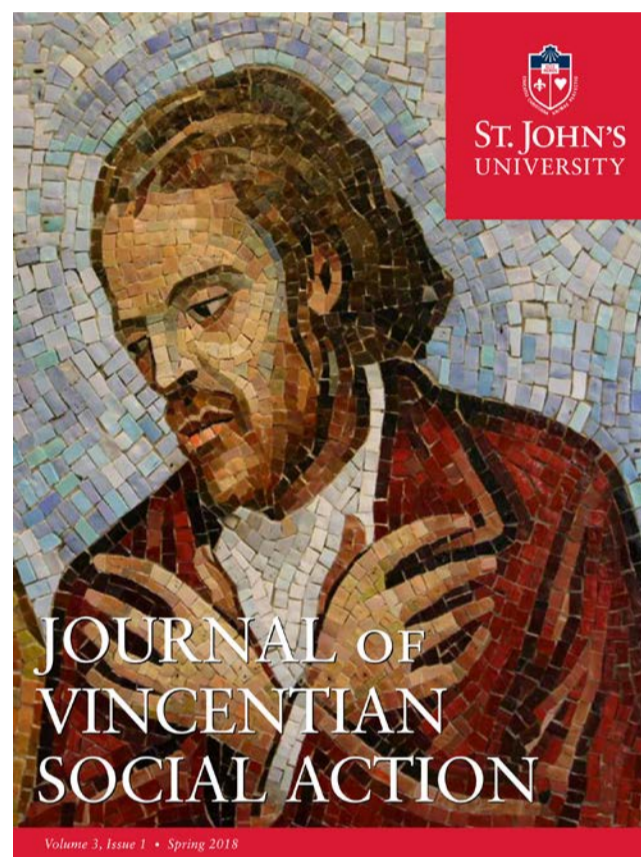
To watch an Introduction to the Folleville Exhibit, please visit: **Intro to Folleville Exhibit**

### *St. John’s University launches new Journal of Vincentian Social Action*

The *Vincentian Heritage* journal would like to alert our readers to a new publication begun in 2016, the *Journal of Vincentian Social Action*. Edited by Marc E. Gillespie, Ph.D., and published biannually by St. John’s University, the journal has to-date released six issues, all containing scholarly articles available free to download through the same BePress Digital Commons portal we utilize for *VH*.

*JoVSA*’s stated mission is to engage the greater community in the service of the disadvantaged. From their site: “The journal provides a scholarly forum for those working to address community-defined needs; a forum where practical solutions are presented to address the plight of the disadvantaged and needy. Measurement and assessment of these efforts connecting action to outcome are a critical component ensuring positive results and real change in the lives of the disadvantaged.”

We encourage you to visit their site and support this exciting new publication. More information, as well as access to the new spring 2018 edition, and all previous issues available for download, can be found here: <https://scholar.stjohns.edu/jovsa/>

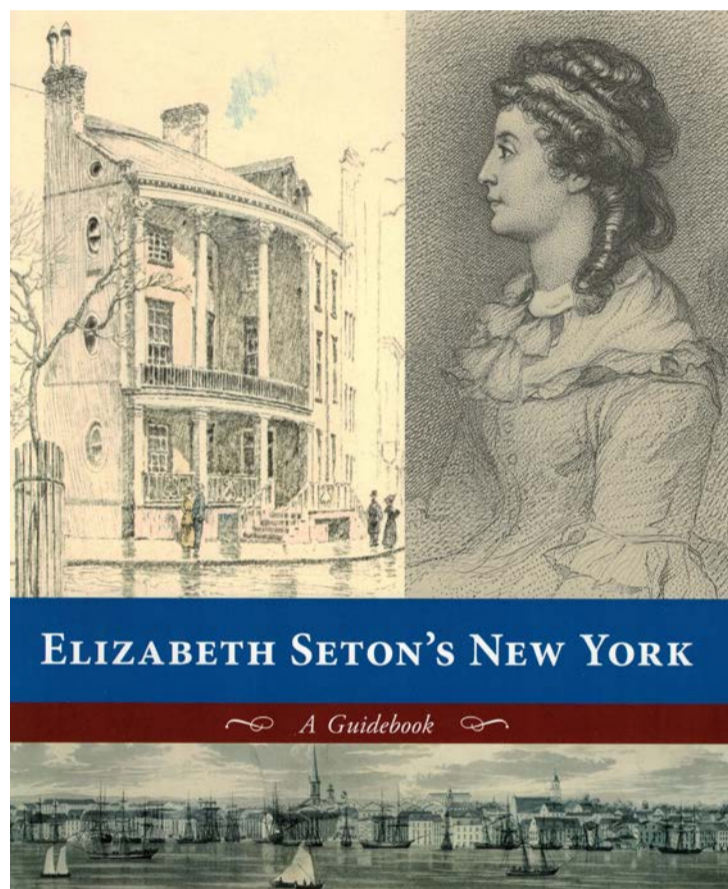


## PUBLICATIONS

### *Notable Books*

Regina Bechtle, S.C. (adapted by), with text from Rose Maria Laverty, S.C., and Patricia Noone, S.C., *Elizabeth Seton's New York: A Guidebook* (Sisters of Charity of New York, 2017), 16 pp.

From promotional material on this fully-illustrated-in-color, glossy booklet, "New from the Sisters of Charity of New York, *Elizabeth Seton's New York: A Guidebook*, celebrating their 200th Anniversary: Visit sites where Elizabeth Seton lived and prayed in downtown Manhattan, Staten Island, and New Rochelle. Follow in the footsteps of this intrepid woman of New York and first native-born saint of the United States."



To order: 1 to 4 copies are priced at \$8 per copy (includes shipping); 5 to 9 copies at \$7 per copy (additional shipping costs will be added when order is received); for 10 copies or more, please call Sr. Regina Bechtle at 718-549-9200. Please make check payable to the Sisters of Charity, New York. Send payment & order to: Sisters of Charity Center, EAS Guidebook, 6301 Riverdale Ave., Bronx, NY 10471, ATTN: Sr. Regina Bechtle.

Jean Dufaux, illustrated by Jamar Martin, *Vincent – Un Saint au Temps des Mousquetaires* (Dargaud, 2016), 80 pp. ASIN: B01MCRVQLN. Kindle edition at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

From the publisher, regarding this graphic novel: "En 1643, saint Vincent de Paul était le père Vincent, un prêtre exceptionnel qui battait le pavé de Paris pour aider les plus démunis. Lorsqu'un de ses protégés, Jérôme, se fait assassiner, il décide alors de mener l'enquête. Ses actes de charité et son ouverture d'esprit lui permettent d'interroger tant les marauds que les grands de ce monde. Avec ce one-shot intitulé Vincent, Dufaux signe un scénario original autour du patron des oeuvres charitables, selon les dessins incroyable d'un Paris du XVIIe de Jamar. Biographie de l'auteur Jean Dufaux est l'auteur d'une oeuvre importante comprenant près de 200 titres, une oeuvre originale, à l'écart des modes, plus complexe qu'il n'y paraît: "Complainte des landes perdues, Double masque, Murena, Rapaces, Djinn, Croisades, Barracuda, Sortilèges, Loup de Pluie, Le Bois des vierges, Conquistador..." Le monde de Jean Dufaux s'orchestre autour de

quelques thèmes récurrents qui structurent ses récits: le pouvoir et la folie, la solitude et ses miroirs, les égarements du temps, les blessures du passé. Cette mosaïque immense qui ne refuse ni les jubilations du roman-feuilleton ni les ellipses cinématographiques se veut avant tout une oeuvre de plaisir, d'enchantement, au sens féérique et occulte du terme.... Dufaux a été nommé chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres en 2009. Né à Liège (Belgique), le 6 novembre 1959, Martin Jamar s'est découvert très tôt une vocation d'illustrateur et de dessinateur de bandes dessinées. C'est toutefois vers des études universitaires de droit qu'il s'oriente à la sortie du lycée."

Rita George-Tvrtković, *Christians, Muslims, and Mary: A History* (Paulist Press, 2018), 272 pp. ISBN: 978-0809153282. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780809153282)

A new work from a recently featured guest speaker at DePaul University. From the publisher: "Moving through history, views of Mary's role in Christian-Muslim relations have constantly shifted back and forth from bridge to barrier and back again. This book focuses on history, and the use (sometimes polemical, sometimes irenic) of Mary as either a bridge or barrier between Islam and Christianity. It is NOT a comparative theology of Mary in both traditions; rather it focuses on how Mary has functioned within the Christian theology of Islam over time (and to a lesser degree, in the Islamic theology of Christianity). The book begins with a comparison of biblical and Qur'anic accounts of Mary. The author walks readers through these texts, with some attention given to extra-scriptural sources (hadith, Christian tradition). Subsequent chapters highlight key texts/theologians from various time periods (mostly Christians, but some Muslims) who discuss Mary in light of the other, ending with a consideration of *Nostra Aetate's* groundbreaking theology of Islam."

M. Veronika Häusler, D.C., *The Strength of Mercy: Four Weeks with Louise de Marillac* (New City Press, 2017), 115 pp. ISBN: 978-1565486232. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9781565486232)

From the cover: "Louise de Marillac, born out of wedlock into an aristocratic family, young widow and mother of a son, fully committed her life to all those who were suffering, regardless of who they were. In Paris together with St. Vincent de Paul she founded a community of Sisters, who dedicated themselves to care for the sick and for the poor. The Daughters of Charity, one of the largest Catholic women religious communities are active today in more than 100 countries." Marie Poole, D.C., writes, "In this age when hope sometimes seems far off, *The Strength of Mercy* shows the courage of one woman, Louise de Marillac, in living God's plan for her amid difficulties – a model for the twenty-first century." Louise Sullivan, D.C., notes that this "work provides a contemporary and practical tool for personal and group reflection on the Vincentian Charism as exemplified in the lived experience and writings of St. Louise." Sr. M. Veronika Häusler, D.C., is a Caritas theologian and spiritual director. As a Daughter of Charity, she vividly brings to us Louise's life and her encouraging message for our own spiritual journey.

Tim O'Sullivan, *Early History of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in New Zealand: 1867-1925* (Society of St. Vincent de Paul, 2018), 184 pp. ISBN: 978-0-473-40997-5. To order, send enquiries to: [admin@svdpchch.co.nz](mailto:admin@svdpchch.co.nz)

From the publisher: "The Society of Saint Vincent de Paul was founded by French Catholic layman Antoine Frédéric Ozanam (1813-1853) in Paris in 1833, and named after Saint Vincent de Paul. In New Zealand, the Society has grown from small beginnings in Christchurch in 1867 to become the pre-eminent Catholic Charitable organization in most towns and cities of New Zealand. After 150 years, it has been thought fitting that the history of the Society in New Zealand, and those who strove to live the Vincentian vocation, should be remembered with an outline of their foundation and development. This is the story of the Society."

William L. Portier, *Every Catholic An Apostle: A Life of Thomas A. Judge, C.M., 1868-1933* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), 576 pp. ISBN: 978-0813229812. Available at: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

From the jacket: "Born in Boston of immigrant parents, Thomas A. Judge, C.M. (1868-1933), preached up and down the east coast on the Vincentian mission band between 1903 and 1915. Disturbed by the "leakage" of the immigrant poor from the church, he enlisted and organized lay women he met on the missions to work for the "preservation of the faith," his watchword. His work grew apace with, and in some ways anticipated, the growing body of papal teaching on the lay apostolate. When he became superior of the godforsaken Vincentian Alabama mission in 1915, he invited the lay apostles to come south to help. "This is the layman's hour," he wrote in 1919. By then, however, many of his lay apostles had evolved in the direction of vowed communal life. This pioneer of the lay apostle founded two religious communities, one of women and one of men. With the indispensable help of his co-founder, Mother Boniface Keasey, he spent the last decade of his life trying to gain canonical approval for these groups, organizing them, and helping them learn "to train the work-a-day man and woman into an apostle, to cause each to be alert to the interests of the Church, to be the Church." The roaring twenties saw the work expanded beyond the Alabama missions as far as Puerto Rico, which Judge viewed as a gateway to Latin America. The Great Depression ended this expansive mood and time and put agonizing pressure on Judge, his disciples, and their work. In 1932, the year before Judge's death, the apostolic delegate, upon being appraised of Judge's financial straits, described his work as 'the only organized movement of its kind in the Church today that so completely meets the wishes of the Holy Father with reference to the Lay Apostolate.'" William L. Portier is in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Dayton, and author of *Divided Friends: Portraits of the Roman Catholic Modernist Crisis in the United States*.

## ***Notable Videos***

Watch Richard J. Janet, Ph.D., Professor of History at Rockhurst University, deliver the fall 2017 DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives lecture, titled: *St. Mary's of the Barrens and the American Catholic Church, 1818-2016*.

In 1818, a small group of Catholic clerics established a religious community in southeastern Missouri and opened a school, grounded in its European Vincentian roots but influenced by the isolation of its rural location. St. Mary's of the Barrens became the first American institution of higher learning west of the Mississippi River, and only the fourth Catholic seminary in the United States. Over the years, St. Mary's emerged as a significant institution whose early leaders played an important role in the development of the Catholic Church on the American frontier. The school's subsequent history reflected the changing status of the growing American Catholic community. In speaking about his newly published book *In Missouri's Wilds: St. Mary's of the Barrens and the American Catholic Church*, Rick Janet demonstrates how this story reflects the broader sweep of the American Catholic experience. View online at: [\*\*Barrens DRMA lecture\*\*](#)

For more historical background on the subject matter of DePaul University's new Folleville model exhibit, please click on these video links:

[\*\*History of the Church at Folleville\*\*](#)

[\*\*The Architecture of the Church at Folleville\*\*](#)

# About Vincentian Heritage

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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.

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Cover image: Detail of Folleville Model, Richardson Library, DePaul University, Courtesy of DePaul University/Jeff Carrion; Title page image: Entrance to the motherhouse of the Congregation of the Mission, Paris, Courtesy of Brian Cicirello, Division of Mission and Ministry, DePaul University.

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