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Chapter One: Design and Methodology

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Part I. Overview

Chapter 1. Design and Methodology

Genesis and Goal

The idea of researching the Vincentian family tree surfaced in March 1990 when members of the Vincentian Studies Institute (VSI) reviewed an informational brochure designed for lay collaborators that presented an overview of the extended Vincentian family.¹ The VSI recognized its value and recommended that a detailed study be conducted in order to publish a more comprehensive edition. In October 1991 this resulted in a plan to document the historical development of the extended Vincentian family, trace its expansion around the globe, and publish the findings.²

The VSI appointed Sister Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., to develop and coordinate the Family Tree Project as a genealogical study of the extended Vincentian family. This project identifies Catholic and non-Catholic entities that might claim kinship to Vincent de Paul and examines their origins. The study included religious institutes, societies of apostolic life, and lay associations for men and women.

Premises of the Study

Since this study presents the first international listing of its type, the VSI aims to identify only those institutes with some established Vincentian connection rather than attempt to prove hypothetical relationships. Some institutes, for example, have names that include "charity" or "the poor" but otherwise have no readily discernible link to

¹The Vincentian Studies Institute met at Saint Stephen's Parish in New Orleans, Louisiana (USA), 23-24 February 1990. Sister Kieran Kneaves, D.C., compiled a brochure, *The Vincentian Family* (New Orleans, 1991) in preparation for the symposium: *Louise de Marillac: A Legacy of Charity, 1591-1991*, held at Marillac Provincial House, Saint Louis, Missouri, 21-25 June 1991.

²The Vincentian Studies Institute met at Saint Thomas Seminary in Denver, Colorado (USA), 18-19 October 1991.

Saint Vincent or to the Vincentian charism.³ Institutes are presumed to be extinct if no current information or address was located after appropriate research. However, it is impossible to report about the survival of religious institutes serving the peoples in communist Asia.

The author presumes that the phrase "rule of Vincent," without further specification, refers to the *Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity* regarding women's institutes and to the *Common Rules of the Congregation of the Mission* for male institutes. For those women's communities established after 1672, any reference to the rule of Saint Vincent refers to the document promulgated on 5 August 1672 by Saint Vincent's successor Reverend René Alméras, C.M., (1613-1672, superior general 1661-1672).⁴

The reliability of this study is related directly to the accuracy of available resources. The author acknowledges that some of these may contain historical flaws, which may not have been detected despite careful scrutiny and verification efforts. The correctness of the infor-



Very Reverend René Alméras, C.M.

³Among these are the numerous institutes that developed from the 1738 Canadian foundation at Montreal by Saint Marie Marguerite d'Youville and her Sisters of Charity who are also called the Grey Nuns; the Carmelite Sisters of Charity of Vedruna; the Sisters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Charity both of Spain; the Sisters of Charity of the Incarnate Word and the Daughters of Charity of the Most Precious Blood in the United States.

⁴Rybolt, "From Life to the Rules," 173-99.

mation gathered through the international survey depended on several factors including the knowledge of respondents, their attention to historical detail, and the extent to which they were familiar with their own community's history, as well as the institute's accurate understanding of its roots, and the amount of archival material preserved at the time of foundation. Documentation about the origins of some institutes was not obtainable and it was impossible to resolve some historical questions. In some instances different sources reported conflicting dates. In these cases the most recent credible source was used. The information published in the *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione* (DIP) was ordinarily chosen.

Criteria

The seven classifications used by the late Reverend Raymond Chalumeau, C.M., (1907-1994), became the starting point for the development of criteria for this project.⁵ Comprehensive criteria for distinct categories subsequently were defined. The Family Tree Project identified fourteen Vincentian criteria to distinguish three groups within the extended Vincentian family.⁶

This study highlights Vincent de Paul as a charismatic leader and an organizational genius whose contribution to human society and the Church continued beyond his lifetime. An examination of how closely religious institutes might be related to Saint Vincent and his charism offers one way to illustrate his impact. Various degrees of the criteria distinguish the rule of Saint Vincent and his own original thinking from his disciples who followed his teachings and replicated his tradition of evangelization and charity in subsequent generations.

Saint Vincent's legacy of evangelization and service of the poor resembles a valuable tapestry intricately woven from a variety of hues and textures over time. It is woven from the witness of his life to the gospel, his commitment to preaching the gospel and charity, his example of these values in his teaching and counsel, and his response to the Holy Spirit's prompting to risk inventing new approaches to the overwhelming needs of the most abandoned among the poor in

⁵Raymond Chalumeau, C.M., "La Descendance Spirituelle de Saint Vincent de Paul," *BLF* 69 (1979): 17-20. Chalumeau used seven criteria.

⁶See list of criteria in this chapter. The study considered three groups: Roman Catholic religious institutes and societies of apostolic life, lay associations, and non-Catholic religious institutes.

seventeenth-century France. His collaboration with so many religious institutes, charitable associations, ecclesial bodies, and state institutions give abundant testimony to the wide sphere of influence he exerted.

The Congregation of the Mission, the Company of the Daughters of Charity, and the Ladies of Charity represent the most prominent of his foundations. The *Common Rules* of the Vincentians and Daughters of Charity document his precepts that are often called the "Vincentian tradition" or "the way of Vincent de Paul."

This study is from a genealogical perspective. It views Vincent de Paul as the family patriarch in order to make distinctions between the generations of his followers and himself as founder. Other disciples of his way adopted or adapted his charism in new foundations. Membership in associations that Vincent de Paul founded or affiliation with later establishments based on his *Common Rules* represents the closest relationship. Less direct but significant because of their personal involvement with Saint Vincent himself are those communities for whom he was mentor, consultant, mediator, or spiritual guide during his lifetime. Subsequent foundations made by members of his communities are related to a lesser degree. Other significant factors used to classify relationships include: emulating him as institutional patron, formative mentoring of other founders by members of his communities, and selectively adopting his teachings, methods, and way of life.

The following shows the study's multilevel approach that categorizes each criterion and illustrates its degree of relationship to the historical Vincent de Paul and the foundations he made.

Criteria

1.1	Institutes founded by Vincent de Paul
1.2	Institutes that adopted the <i>Common Rules</i> of Vincent de Paul or substantially incorporated major principles into their rule ⁷
1.3	Institutes for which Saint Vincent was mentor, advisor, or involved in another way

⁷See CED 5: 640, note 3, for a discussion of the rule of the Confraternity of Charity and its replication. See also CED 13: 423-38.

2.1	Institutes established by members, or former members, of the Congregation of the Mission
2.2	Institutes established by members, or former members, of the Company of the Daughters of Charity
2.3	Institutes established by lay members of the Vincentian family
3.1	Institutes for which Daughters of Charity or a Vincentian priest or brother were mentors during their establishment
3.2	Institutes that have had ongoing influence from members of the Congregation of the Mission or the Company of the Daughters of Charity
4.1	Institutes that honor Vincent de Paul as one of their patrons
5.1	Institutes that profess the same spirit as the Congregation of the Mission or the Company of the Daughters of Charity
5.2	Institutes that have adapted aspects of the Vincentian charism of evangelization and service of the poor but with a unique emphasis
6.1	Institutes related but in another manner
7.1	Institutes needing further research. See Appendix 8.
7.2	Institutes that have only an indirect relationship. See the Introduction and/or footnotes.
L	Lay associations that meet one of the criteria
NC	Non-Catholic religious institutes that meet one of the criteria

The discovery process of the Family Tree Project went from the known to the unknown. First, existing information was located, organized, and recorded. Resources included the few national listings of Vincentian communities in Europe published to date, most notably for France, Spain, Germany, and Italy.⁸ In addition, similar lists have been developed for Peru and Brazil.⁹ The VSI Family Tree Project, however, represents the first comprehensive list ever compiled from a global perspective.

Methodology

The research methodology for this study included extensive consultation with Vincentian scholars, members of religious institutes, and conferences of major superiors, and also an international survey. The survey instrument collected identifying data and historical details about specific criteria. The format invited respondents to provide reference information about other communities that should be contacted. (See Appendix 5.)

The study employed a tiered approach to collect data from historical and collateral resources. Publications such as the *Annuario Pontificio*, *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, *The Official National Catholic Directory*, and *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* assisted in identifying prospective communities to be surveyed.¹⁰ Other indicators used for the survey included the place of origin, similarity to the Vincentian mission and/or spirit, and key words in the institutional title such as "Vincent de Paul" or "charity." Besides the referral information provided by survey respondents, the project requested additional leads from key

⁸Ibid. See also: Chalumeau, "La Descendance Spirituelle," 18; Nicolás Mas, C.M., "Fundación de las Hijas de la Caridad in España," n.p., n.d., reprinted from *ACMHC* 85, nos. 6, 7, 8 (1977): 107-48; 86, no. 3 (1978): 106-40; Luigi Mezzadri, C.M., "Quando la Legge libera il Dono," *La Regola delle Figlie della Carità di Vincenzo de' Paoli* (Milan: Jaca Book, 1986), 28-31; Miguel Pérez Flores, C.M., "The Common Rules of the Daughters of Charity," 23-25; Otto Schnelle, C.M., "100 Jahre Patronat d. hl. Vinzenz," 7-12. Several issues of *Le Missioni Estere Vincenziane (MEV)* published 1930, 1931, 1933, 1935, and 1938 also highlighted some communities with Vincentian roots. See also *MEV* 12, no. 4 (1934): 142-43.

⁹*Vicente de Paul en el Perú de Hoy* (Lima: Centro de Animación Vicentina, 1989), 29; "A Familia Vicentina no Brasil," *Informativo São Vicente* 15 (November-December 1981): 5, 42; José Herrera, C.M., "Más Hijos Espirituales de San Vicente de Paúl," *ACMHC* 87, no. 9 (September 1979): 418-19.

¹⁰The *Official Catholic Directory* is published annually by P. J. Kenedy & Sons, a Reed Reference Publishing Company (New Providence, New Jersey, USA).

individuals in countries where the Daughters of Charity and/or the Congregation of the Mission are established.

The project contacted fifty-two Visitatrixes and regional superiors of the Daughters of Charity throughout the world, except those portions of the Company for which information was available already. Twenty-six replies (50%) were received.

Additional contacts for collateral research were made through the gracious cooperation of archivists of both the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity and other individuals in administrative roles.

Approximately fifty collateral contacts with individuals included but were not limited to the following: past international leaders of the Daughters of Charity and the Congregation of the Mission; former or present foreign missionaries; foreign subscribers to *Vincentian Heritage*; and experts in Vincentian studies. Forty-three individuals (86%) responded. These leads significantly furthered research efforts.

Sixty-five of the approximately 170 conferences of major superiors throughout the world received letters inviting participation. Eleven conferences (17%) responded.

The following publications contained announcements about the project to elicit information from readers: *Vincentian Heritage* and *The Nuntia of the Congregation of the Mission*.

Implementation

Data management allowed for final analysis by key variables of all data received by 31 March 1995. The final report organized the data first by country of origin, then by a coded identification number reflecting affinity, criteria, country of origin, and year of foundation. A secondary sorting by each criterion also allowed for alphabetization by official institutional title. An identification code illustrates whether the institute has remained the same or has undergone corporate changes since its foundation including separation from a parent institute or generation of branches that later became autonomous. The code also shows whether the original institute combined with another institute in any manner. Another coding factor identifies those communities currently belonging to a federation, such as the Föderation Vinzentinischer Gemeinschaften (Vincentian Federation) in Germany or the Elizabeth Seton Federation in the United States. In order to manage and retrieve data effectively, each institute is cross-referenced by its identification code.



Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton and her daughters of the Elizabeth Seton Federation

Data Management

The report lists each institute by its country of origin, chronologically by foundation date, alphabetically by official institutional title, and by its identification code. This code situates the institute by the variables and its degree of affinity within the extended Vincentian family. The identification code includes the following:

Country of Origin	Name of country where founded.	
Year Founded	.617--.995	
Status	.0 .1 .11 .2 .22 .3 F	Status unchanged Separated from parent institute Generated branches Joined another institute Received another institute Established by intercommunity collaboration Belongs to a Federation

The affinity concept provides a window for viewing the extended Vincentian family from a genealogical perspective. The study used the alphabetical designation for each criterion from the onset of the research, but added the affinity designation at a later stage in the project.

To simplify the coding system, the first digit of the year of foundation was omitted, since every year begins with "1." Therefore, the foundation date for the Congregation of the Mission appears as .625 in its identification code, rather than 1625. Also, in particular cases numerical designations serve to highlight multiple splits or mergers (.11, .12, .13) to illustrate the sequential record of the community's development. Despite the number of provinces existing in different countries, the study lists each institute only once according to the country where it was first founded. The Daughters of Charity, for example, founded by Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac at Paris are identified as 1.1-FRA.633.22. This would be decoded as follows:

1.1	Founded by Vincent de Paul
FRA.633	First established in France in 1633
.22	Received other institutes due to mergers

To illustrate further, the code for the Sisters of Charity of Saint Joseph's at Emmitsburg, initiated by Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton is 1.2.USA-809.11.2F which shows the subsequent union with Paris in 1850 and its membership in the Elizabeth Seton Foundation. Other branches developed from the Emmitsburg foundation. The first branch was the Sisters of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul of New York: 1.2-USA.846.1.11.3F. This institute belongs to the Elizabeth Seton Federation as indicated by the "F," which flags institutes that have joined with others to form a federation of communities related to Vincent de Paul. The identification code, preceded by either "L" or "NC," differentiates lay associations (L) and non-Catholic religious institutes (NC).

For the working draft each entry was cross referenced with its source documents now cited in endnotes. Identification numbers assigned to each survey respondent and to each bibliographical source allow for cross reference, and by page number if the institute appears in the 1993 *Annuario Pontificio*. That publication, however, includes only congregations of pontifical right and not those of diocesan right.¹¹

Survey

The survey package, written in English, contained a two-page questionnaire, cover letter, self-addressed return envelope, and a referral form for assistance in identifying other prospective communities (see Appendix 5). Return postage was provided for United States addresses only. The entire package was translated into French, Spanish, Italian, and German. Addresses of prospective communities were

¹¹The status of the religious institute is determined by the type of ecclesiastical approval it has received. It is (1) pontifical, if it has obtained approval, or at least a decree of praise, from the Holy See; and (2) diocesan, if it is governed by the local ordinary in accordance with the constitutions of the institute. This is the law of the 1917 Code of Canon Law. According to canon 589 of the 1983 code, "an institute of consecrated life is said to be of pontifical right if it has been erected by the Apostolic See or approved by a formal decree of the Apostolic See; on the other hand, an institute is said to be of diocesan right if, after having been erected by a diocesan bishop, it has not obtained a decree of approval from the Apostolic See."

maintained by the language group of initial contact to facilitate subsequent communication. Follow-up was done for non-respondents. The cover letter served two additional purposes: first, to promote the Vincentian Studies Institute by enhancing its name recognition and, secondly, to market the journal *Vincentian Heritage*.

In January 1993 the English survey was tested within North America. Six months later (July 1993) a linguistically appropriate survey package was sent internationally to prospective communities identified through historical and collateral research. Approximately 137 communities in Africa, America (Central, North, and South), Asia, Australasia, and Europe were surveyed. Of the 132 communities that responded, 122 are unduplicated making a response rate of 90% as of 30 June 1994.¹² The participation has been overwhelmingly positive. In a few instances, the founder personally completed the questionnaire!

Several foreign conferences of major superiors were especially helpful. The Conference of Major Superiors for Women Religious in Germany volunteered to translate the survey into German and then included it in one of their routine mailings. Likewise, their counterpart in Great Britain copied the survey and distributed it with their newsletter. This generous collaboration made it possible to identify several local communities that would have otherwise remained unknown.

Many interesting comments were received that served as leads for further contacts. These included: "I met a confrère when I was in Africa, and he told me about some sisters in Tanzania who followed Vincent de Paul's rule." "I met a group of sisters in Mexico called Daughters of Charity, yet I don't think they belonged to the community [Daughters of Charity] at rue du Bac."

Sister Jenny Nolvía Manaiza, a former Daughter of Charity, who founded the Missionary Sisters of the Presentation in 1987 in El Salvador, conveys the spirit of the Family Tree Project: "We will always be united in prayer so that Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Louise de Marillac bless us from heaven and together, as one great family, we continue building the Kingdom which the Lord has recommended to us especially in our service to the poor who were always of special concern to Saint Vincent."¹³

¹²Some additional responses were received as a result of published announcements about the project, such as those notices circulated through the newsletters published by regional or national conferences of religious.

¹³Personal communication Jenny Nolvía Manaiza, H.M.P., to Betty Ann McNeil, D.C., 1 May 1995, San Pedro Sula, Honduras.