

Fall 1990

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## Recommended Citation

Bullot, Maximilien and Helyot, Pierre (1990) "Concerning the Congregation of the Mission, with the Life of M. Vincent de Paul Their Founder," *Vincentian Heritage Journal*: Vol. 11: Iss. 2, Article 2.  
Available at: <http://via.library.depaul.edu/vhj/vol11/iss2/2>

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## Concerning the Congregation of the Mission, with the Life of M. Vincent de Paul Its Founder

BY PIERRE HÉLYOT AND MAXIMILIEN BULLOT  
TRANSLATED BY WARREN DICHARRY, C.M.

*An early eighteenth-century account of the establishment  
and history of the Congregation of the Mission<sup>1</sup>*

The disorders caused by heresy and the excesses of the armies during the civil wars with which France was afflicted at the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth were too great for the priests of the Oratory alone to remedy either by bringing about a reflowering of clerical and priestly virtues in the ecclesiastical state or by helping pastors restore the sheep to the fold which heresy or wantonness had caused them to leave. That is why God, who knows the needs of his Church and never fails to give her the necessary helps, raises up in this kingdom other holy personages who, animated by his Spirit and strengthened by his grace, will found congregations after the example of Cardinal de Bérulle, congregations whose principal end is to labor at missions and to inspire in young clerics the spirit of piety and devotion necessary to acquit worthily the functions of their ministry. Such are the congregations of the Priests of the Mission, the Eudists of the Blessed Sacrament, the Missionaries of Lyon, and some others. . . .

The Congregation of the Mission had as its founder Monsieur Vincent de Paul. He was born in the village of Pouy near Dax, a little diocesan town situated at the far border of the Landes from Bordeaux towards the Pyrenees Mountains. His parents lived by their labor. His father was named Jean de Paul, and his mother Bertrande de Moras.

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<sup>1</sup>Pierre Hélyot (1660-1716) was a Picpus Father whose name in religion was Hippolyte. His position as secretary to the provincial of his community necessitated wide travel, affording him the opportunity to collect materials for his masterful multi-volume work *Histoire des Ordres monastiques, religieux et militaires, et des Congrégations séculières de l'un et de l'autre sexe*, 8 vols. (Paris, 1714-1719). The work was actually a collaborative effort because Hélyot died during the printing of the fifth volume; the final three were written by his confrere, Maximilien Bullot, using Hélyot's research. This article is chapter 11 of the sixth volume. Ed.

They had a house and some small estates, which they improved with their hands, aided by their children, who were six altogether, four boys and two girls. Like the others, Vincent, the third child, was employed from infancy in work, particularly in pasturing and guarding his father's flocks. Because the vivacity of spirit which Vincent manifested in all his words and actions indicated that he was capable of something better than pasturing animals, his father resolved to have him study in the hope of one day drawing some benefit from it for the family. To that end, around the year 1588, Jean placed him in the boarding school of the Franciscan Fathers of Dax and contributed about sixty *livres* a year. Vincent made such progress in the Latin language that four years later Monsieur de Comet, a lawyer of Dax and judge of Pouy, having withdrawn him from the Franciscan convent school, received him in his home as the tutor of his children, so that while taking care of their instruction and their conduct, Vincent could continue his studies without being a burden to his father. This would give him the means of perfecting himself in the knowledge of the humanities, which engaged him for nine years. At the end of that time, Monsieur Comet, a person of piety, being satisfied with the service which Vincent had rendered in the person of his children and judging that he would someday be useful to the Church, had him receive tonsure and the four minor orders on 19 September 1596 at the age of twenty.<sup>2</sup>

Seeing himself thus engaged in the ministry of the Church and having taken God as his portion, Vincent left his birthplace with the consent of his father, who gave him a little help, to go and study theology at Toulouse. There he received the orders of subdiaconate and diaconate in 1598 and priesthood in 1600. A little while later he was given the parish of Tilh in the diocese of Dax, but since the appointment was contested by a competitor, Vincent chose to avoid a lawsuit and ceded possession to the man. This God permitted so that Vincent would not be obliged to abandon his studies. He employed seven years in the study of theology, after which, having received a bachelor's degree from the University of Toulouse, he was permitted to teach publicly in the same university.

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<sup>2</sup>In fact, Vincent received tonsure and the four minor orders on 20 December 1596 at age fifteen. On the date of Vincent's birth, see Pierre Coste, C.M., "La vraie date de la naissance de Saint Vincent de Paul," *Bulletin de la Société de Borda* (1922); Douglas Slawson, C.M., "The Phantom Five Years," *Vincentian Heritage* 2:81-93. Ed.

Up to that time everything had turned out according to Monsieur Vincent's liking. However, in the year 1605 someone had made him his heir, and, being obliged to go to Marseille to collect payment of a debt of 500 *écus* which was part of the inheritance, Vincent fell into misfortune. In this he could not doubt the divine over him because of the way in which God snatched him from it. For, after finishing his business in Marseille, Vincent was inclined to return overland to Toulouse, but a gentleman from Languedoc persuaded him to sail with him for Narbonne. En route they encountered three Turkish brigantines which captured them and took them to Barbary, where Vincent de Paul was sold to a fisherman. Since, however, he was unable to serve the fisherman because of seasickness, he was resold to a physician. When the latter died, Vincent became the slave of a turncoat from Nice in Savoy. Far from imitating his fellow slaveowners who ordinarily persecuted Jesus Christ all the more in those Christians who had the misfortune to fall into slavery, this man was on the contrary the instrument which God used to restore freedom to his servant while restoring to the renegade himself freedom of soul. For, repenting his apostasy, he saved himself along with Vincent in a manner all the more admirable and miraculous because they crossed the entire Mediterranean in a skiff which the slightest wave could engulf. But God, who guided them, enabled them to avoid all the dangers to which the greatest vessels are exposed. They arrived at Aigues-Mortes on 18 June 1607. Thence they went to Avignon, where the [papal] vice legate received the abjuration of the renegade.<sup>3</sup> Having gone to Paris the following year, Monsieur de Paul entered there into friendship with Monsieur de Bérulle, who was already dreaming of establishing his congregation. He begged Vincent to take charge of the parish of Clichy, which Monsieur Bourgoing desired to leave in order to enter the Congregation of the Priests of the Oratory, and to take care of the children of the count of Joigny, Emmanuel de Gondi, general of the galleys of France, by becoming their tutor.<sup>4</sup> In this role Vincent acquitted himself so well that Françoise de Silly, spouse of the count and mother of their children, a woman of singular piety, edified by his modesty, his discretion, and his charity, judged it appropriate to confide the direction of her soul to him.

The sojourn which Vincent made in the count of Joigny's house was

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<sup>3</sup>For a critical—and skeptical!—look at the story of Vincent's Tunisian captivity, see Stafford Poole, C.M., "Saint Vincent de Paul, 1596-1617," *Vincentiana* 4-6 (1984):425-35.

<sup>4</sup>Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi was count of Joigny, marquis of Îles-d'Or, baron of Montmirail, Dampierre, and Villepreux, general of the galleys, and the king's lieutenant in the Levant. Ed.

the cause of the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission. For, around the year 1616, having gone with the countess into one of her estates named Folleville in the diocese of Amiens where Vincent occupied himself during his sojourn with works of mercy, he was asked one day to go to the village of Gannes, about two leagues distant from Folleville, to hear the confession of a peasant who was dangerously ill. This man had always lived with the reputation of being a good man. Nevertheless, when Monsieur de Paul had gone to see him and had helped him to make a general confession, he found the man's conscience burdened with many mortal sins, which he had always held back out of shame and of which he had never accused himself in confession. He himself declared this to Vincent in the presence of many persons, even the countess of Joigny. Frightened by the peasant's many sacrilegious confessions and the enormous sins of his past life, and learning that it was much the same with most of her retainers, she urged Monsieur de Paul to preach in the church of Folleville on the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul in the year 1617 to exhort the inhabitants to make a general confession. He did so, explaining its importance and usefulness with words of such efficacy that all these good people came to him for their general confession. The throng was so great that he was obliged to appeal for help to the Jesuits of Amiens. Together they had such success in this first mission that this zealous founder always regarded it as the seed of all the others which he conducted later and consequently as the origin of his Congregation. Every year on this same day, 25 January, he gave thanks to God and recommended to his disciples to do the same. That is why the priests of that institute celebrate with particular devotion the feast of the Conversion of Saint Paul, in memory of the fact that their founder happily began on that day his first mission, which was followed by so many others that have caused the conversion of a very great number of persons.

Recognizing from this first attempt, which succeeded so happily, the necessity of missions, especially for the country people, madame the countess of Joigny conceived from that time onwards the idea of donating a fund of 16,000 *livres* to any community that would agree to undertake the responsibility of giving these missions every five years on all her estates. She had requests made about it to the Jesuits and Oratorians. Their unwillingness to assume the responsibility caused her to resolve to insert in her will an article according to which after her death she would give these 16,000 *livres* to establish this mission at the place and in the manner which Monsieur de Paul should judge appro-

priate.

This servant of God lived in the home of Monsieur de Gondi as if in a seminary, both in regard to the freedom he had there of practicing exercises of the greatest piety and in regard to the regularity with which he lived there, according to the needs and demands of Madame de Gondi. Nevertheless, the great desire which he had of giving himself more perfectly to the service of God and the instruction of the neighbor moved him to resolve to leave. Using the pretext of a little journey which he had to make, he left Paris in the month of July 1617 without having determined any place of destination. But Monsieur de Bérulle, who had seen that he was resolved to leave, proposed that he go work at a certain place in Bresse, where there was a scarcity of evangelical workers, particularly in the parish of Châtillon-les-Dombes.

Vincent followed this advice and went to that place where, once arrived, one of the first things he did was to take five or six clergymen whom he found there, bring them together, and form a kind of community for the purpose of giving themselves more perfectly to God and to the service of his Church. This they did at Vincent's persuasion, esteeming themselves very blessed to be associated with so holy a priest for a purpose so praiseworthy and useful. However, the joy which they had in possessing him lasted only a short time, for Madame de Gondi who, as we have already said, had placed the guidance of her conscience in the hands of Monsieur de Paul, suffered with great pain his remoteness and did all she could to make him return, even using the authority of Cardinal de Retz, then the bishop of Paris.<sup>5</sup> Being her brother-in-law, he was willing to write favorably on behalf of this endeavor. Monsieur de Bérulle also interested himself on her behalf, sending as an express messenger one of Vincent's closest friends,<sup>6</sup> who reinforced the letters with which he was begged to render this consolation to Madame de Gondi. All of this moved Vincent to return to Paris, where he arrived in the month of December of the same year 1617 and on Christmas Eve reentered the house of de Gondi. He was received as an angel sent from heaven, especially by Madame de Gondi. In fear that he would leave her again, she made him promise that he would assist her until her death, which he did.

In this way, God had willed to provide a beginning for the Congre-

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<sup>5</sup>Henri de Gondi, cardinal de Retz, was Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi's brother. Ed.

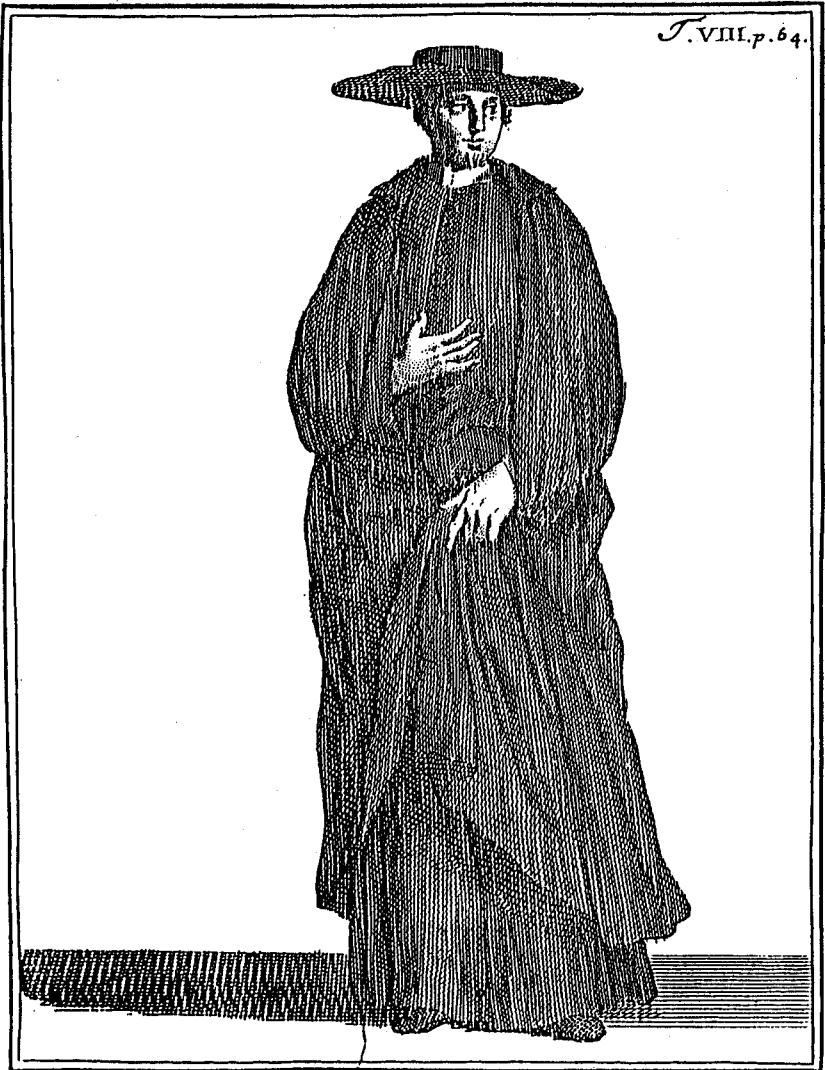
<sup>6</sup>This was Charles du Fresne, the former secretary of Queen Marguerite de Valois and at this time secretary of Count Philippe-Emmanuel de Gondi. Ed.

gation of the Mission by means of this holy woman, who still persisted in the resolution she had taken to make a foundation for the maintenance and subsistence of whatever good priests or religious would go from time to time to give missions on her estates. She had sought through Monsieur de Paul all the means for executing her design but without success because of the refusal made by several superiors of communities with whom it was discussed. Now she finally concluded that the many teachers and other virtuous clergymen who ordinarily attached themselves to Monsieur de Paul in order to work on the missions and who had not discontinued their work since his return, would perhaps have no difficulty in forming a special congregation whose principal obligation would be to give missions. Therefore she established for them a house in Paris where they would be able to withdraw and live in community, which would rightly constitute the execution of her pious intention. She spoke about it to her husband, the count of Joigny, who not only approved her decision but also wanted to make himself its founder together with her. The two of them discussed it with his brother, Jean-François de Gondi, the first archbishop of Paris, who not only approved their zeal but, trusting that his diocese would be able to receive great benefits from it, also wanted to contribute to this foundation by reserving for the priests the Collège des Bons-Enfants, which was at his disposal, as a residence for them. The three then spoke about it with Monsieur de Paul, who consented to their proposal: first, to accept the college along with the direction both of the priests who would withdraw there with him and of the missions to which they would apply themselves; second, to accept the foundation in the name of these priests; and third, to choose personally those whom he would find properly disposed for this pious endeavor. The matter, thus happily resolved, was executed the first day of March 1624, and on 17 April of the following year, 1625, the archbishop of Paris expedited the appointment of Monsieur de Paul as principal of the college.<sup>7</sup> Monsieur and Madame de Gondi donated to Vincent 40,000 *livres*<sup>8</sup> in silver to begin the foundation and conceded to him the right of choosing such a number of ecclesiastics as the revenue of the foundation would be able to support. They would be under his direction during his lifetime, on condition nonetheless that

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<sup>7</sup>Here Hélyot and Bullot have reversed the dates. Vincent was appointed principal of Bons-Enfants on 1 March 1624 and signed the formal contract with the Gondis on 17 April 1625. Ed.

<sup>8</sup>In fact, the couple gave 37,000 *livres* in cash with a promise of 8,000 more. Ed.



*A Priest of the Mission in eighteenth century habit.*



despite this he would continue to remain in the Gondi home in order to continue giving them and their family the spiritual assistance which he had previously rendered.

After establishing this foundation, as if there remained for Madame de Gondi nothing further than to go to heaven to receive the crown which was prepared for her for all the services which she had striven to render to God and which, though weakened by illnesses, pains, and fatigues, her zeal and charity had enabled her to undertake, she passed away on the vigil of the feast of John the Baptist in the same year [1625]. Once her body had been carried to the Carmelites on Rue Chapon, where she had chosen to be buried, Monsieur de Paul departed Paris to carry this sad news to her husband, who was in Provence, and to ask his consent to withdraw to the Collège de Bons-Enfants. Having received this consent, he returned to Paris where he put the finishing touches on the establishment of the Congregation of the Mission, which was approved by the archbishop of Paris on 24 April 1626. Monsieur Portail, who had already been with Vincent for fifteen years, did not at all wish to leave him on such a beautiful occasion. Two good priests of Picardy named Coudray and de la Salle then offered themselves to this holy founder, who associated all three with himself in execution of the foundation by an act approved before notaries on 4 September of the same year.<sup>9</sup> Four other priests followed them a little later. When their community was eventually considerably augmented, Pope Urban VIII, by a bull of January 1632,<sup>10</sup> erected this company into a congregation under the title of the Mission and permitted its founder to draw up rules for the good order of this same Congregation. To authorize this institute still more, King Louis XIII had letters patent issued in the month of May 1642, and they were ratified by the Parlement of Paris in the month of September the same year.<sup>11</sup>

In the time that followed the aforesaid bull, the priests of this Congregation entered the Priory of Saint-Lazare at Paris, which until then belonged to the Canons Regular of the Congregation of Saint Victor, who were willing to agree to its cession by the prior according

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<sup>9</sup>The full names of Vincent's first three companions were Antoine Portail, François du Coudray, and Jean de la Salle. Ed.

<sup>10</sup>Although the bull bears the date 12 January 1632, it was actually issued in January 1633. During the seventeenth century, the ecclesiastical year began on 25 March rather than on 1 January. Thus January 1632 according to the church calendar corresponded with January 1633 in the secular calendar. Ed.

<sup>11</sup>In fact, royal approval antedated papal approbation. Louis XIII issued the letters patent in May 1627; they were registered by the Parlement of Paris four years later, in April 1631. Ed.

to conditions expressed in the concordat made in their presence on 7 January 1632. Following this concordat and the resignation of the Prior, the archbishop of Paris effected the annexation of this priory as a benefice which would belong on its conferral to the Congregation of the Mission according to the letters of the end of December 1633. This was confirmed by Pope Urban VIII by a bull in the month of March 1635.<sup>12</sup> Because of its vast size, the grandeur of its buildings, the number of priests and seminarians who lived there, and the residence of the [superior] general there, this house became the motherhouse of this Congregation, which made itself more and more necessary to the Church. During the following years, it achieved the greatest progress in the city of Paris, where it obtained the Seminary of Saint-Charles,<sup>13</sup> as well as in the rest of the kingdom and even in foreign lands. The first of these establishments was at Toul in 1635. In 1637 the missionaries received the house of Nôtre-Dame de la Rose in Guyenne.<sup>14</sup> In the year 1638 Cardinal Richelieu established them at Richelieu and Luçon. They obtained another foundation at Annecy in Savoy the next year. In 1642 they spread to Italy, where the duchess of Aiguillon, Marie de Vignerod, established a house for them at Rome. She also founded one in her duchy of Aiguillon and in her county of Agenois as well as at Marseille.<sup>15</sup> They were invited to Genoa in 1645 by Cardinal Durazzo, who established a house for them in that city. In the year 1651 they were received in Poland, where Queen Marie de Gonzague established them at Warsaw. In short, progress was so great and in such a short time that Monsieur de Paul had the satisfaction during his generalate of seeing twenty-five houses of his institute established, the last of which was

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<sup>12</sup>On 8 January 1632, the day after the signing of the concordat, Jean-François de Gondi, archbishop of Paris, approved the union of Saint-Lazare with the Congregation of the Mission. Vincent, however, was displeased with two clauses in the original agreement and sought their modification. The changes were made and received the archbishop's approval in December 1632, the date given in the text above. Later, when the monks of Saint Victor, the monks of Saint Genevieve, and the knights of Saint Lazare contested the concordat of union, Vincent sought papal confirmation. Urban VIII had a bull prepared on 15 March 1635, but the opponents prevented its being issued. The scene was replayed in 1655 with the same results. Ed.

<sup>13</sup>Originally called the Little Saint-Lazare, Saint-Charles was actually the building at the far end of the priory. In 1645 it became, in effect, the first "major" seminary of the Congregation. Until that time, the Collège des Bons-Enfants accepted clerical students of all ages, from boys in their early teens to men in major orders. Disillusioned with this arrangement, Vincent transferred those studying theology to the Little Saint-Lazare, which was renamed Saint-Charles in honor of Charles Borromeo. Ed.

<sup>14</sup>This mission house was actually established in Aiguillon by the duchess of that place. Later, the house was transferred to the sanctuary of Nôtre Dame de la Rose. Ed.

<sup>15</sup>Marie de Vignerod de Pontcourlay, marchioness of Combalet and duchess of Aiguillon, was the niece of Cardinal Richelieu. See note 14. Ed.

founded at Turin in the year 1654.<sup>16</sup>

Besides the good which this holy founder procured for the Church by giving it so many evangelical workers through the establishment of his Congregation, he distinguished himself the more by many other holy institutions both for the corporal relief of the poor and for the salvation of their souls. For, besides the Confraternities of Charity in each parish, which were indebted to him from their beginning, he also established the Daughters of Charity, servants of the sick poor, about whom we will speak in chapter 14 [see the next article], and contributed to the establishment of the Daughters of the Cross.<sup>17</sup> . . . It was he who originated the Company of Ladies for service at the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, the exercises for those who were to receive orders [i.e., the retreats for ordinands], the spiritual retreats for all sorts of persons who wished either to choose a state of life or to make general confessions, the Ecclesiastical Conferencés [i.e., Tuesday Conferencés], many seminar-ies, and finally a great number of hospitals for foundlings, for the poor elderly people of Paris, and for the galley slaves of Marseille.

Vincent assisted Louis XIII at his death and was later named by the queen regent as one of those who composed the Royal Council of Ecclesiastical and Beneficiary Affairs, of which he alone bore almost the whole weight for ten years.<sup>18</sup> In the midst of these duties and the indispensable functions of his role as general, he managed to keep himself in uncommon equanimity. Always united with God, Vincent walked in his presence, full of a spirit of zeal for his glory and charity for the neighbor, to whom he wanted to offer the helps which had always been given him. He put the final touch on his Rules and Constitutions, by which he obliged his disciples to continue for the salvation of souls what he had taught them by his example. That is why he assembled the community of Saint-Lazare in 1658 and, after making

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<sup>16</sup>In fact, thirty-three houses were established during Vincent's life, four of them—Agde, Meaux, Montpellier, and Narbonne—after the founding of the one in Turin. Ed.

<sup>17</sup>Founded at Roye in Picardy by Pierre Guérin, Claude Bucquet (both parish priests of that town), Françoise Unalet, and Marie Fannier, the Daughters of the Cross was a congregation of women unbound by vows and dedicated to the education of girls. Although Vincent had nothing to do with its establishment, he greatly encouraged the new community. One of several theologians commissioned to examine the orthodoxy of Guérin and Bucquet, Vincent exonerated both and urged them to defend and foster the work of the Daughters. The saint rendered his greatest service to the community's superioress, Marie l'Huillier d'Interville, Madame de Villeneuve, who belonged to the Ladies of Charity of Hôtel-Dieu. He helped her consolidate and perfect the new society during the 1640s when it suffered internal and external tribulations. Ed.

<sup>18</sup>This last statement greatly exaggerates. For a balanced and critical view of Vincent's role in the Council of Conscience, as it was called, see Pierre Blet, S.J., "Saint Vincent and the Episcopate of France," trans. Frances Proffit, D.C., *Vincentian Heritage* 10 (no. 2):102-35. Ed.

an emotional and paternal discourse to the members, gave each one a little printed book containing these Rules, which they received with great respect and sincere devotion.

Although his great works had severely weakened him and caused a long illness, Vincent never ceased to work not only for the good and progress of his Congregation but also and even more for the salvation of his neighbor, without however forgetting his own good in the fear that after having preached to and taught others, he himself would be cast aside. That is why, in order to avoid this calamity from which he had snatched so many souls, the more he advanced in age the more exact he became in the observance of his rules and particularly in satisfying the requirement of the divine office. This obliged Pope Alexander VII, who knew how important to the entire Church was the preservation of this great servant of God, to rush to him a brief in his own hand which dispensed him from the divine office. At the same time, Cardinal Durazzo, archbishop of Genoa, Cardinal Ludovisio, the grand penitentiary, and Cardinal Bagni, the former nuncio to France, wrote to Vincent urging that he ease up and take care of himself. However, when the time arrived at which God had determined to give him the recompense of all his labors, Vincent breathed his last on 27 September 1660 at the age of eighty-five,<sup>19</sup> after being disposed for this last passage by a renewal of fervor and piety. He was buried under the center of the choir at Saint-Lazare, where his obsequies were held in the presence of a great concourse of lords and ladies, especially the prince of Conti, Papal Nuncio Piccolomini, and the duchess of Aiguillon. Some days later, a solemn service was conducted for him in the church of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, where the bishop of Pouy said the funeral prayers. Later, the juridical information regarding his life, virtues, and miracles was drawn up for the purpose of pursuing at Rome the process of beatification.

Since the death of its holy founder, this Congregation has been greatly augmented, being presently composed of about eighty-four houses divided among nine provinces, namely those of France,<sup>20</sup> Champagne, Aquitaine, Poitou, Lyon, Picardy, Rome, Lombardy, and Poland. Besides these houses, the duchess of Aiguillon erected an endowed institution for the support of some missionaries in Africa and

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<sup>19</sup>In fact, Vincent died at age <sup>ē</sup>seventy-nine. See Coste, "Vraie date," and Slawson, "Phantom Five Years." Ed.

<sup>20</sup>This refers, not to the nation, but to Île-de-France, the region including and surrounding Paris. Ed.

the spiritual and corporal assistance of the poor slaves of Barbary.<sup>21</sup> The priests have been established there since 1645. In addition, Pope Innocent XII sent them in 1697 to China to labor for the conversion of that nation.

One can judge the accuracy of Monsieur Hermant in the enumeration made in his *History of Religious Orders, Regular Houses, and Secular Communities* by the fact that speaking of the Priests of the Mission, he deducts not only two of their provinces, those of Picardy and Lombardy, but also several important houses: Nôtre-Dame de Buglose in the parish of Pouy, the birthplace of Monsieur Vincent de Paul, which was given to the missionaries of the Province of Aquitaine in 1706 by Monsieur Bertrand d'Abbadie d'Arboucave, bishop of Dax, and the abbé de Batheder, curé of Pouy, who together united this parish to the Congregation; the Minor Seminary of Saint-Charles in the city of Poitiers, where it was established in 1710 by Monsieur Jean-Claude de la Poype de Vertrieu; four houses of the Roman Province, namely, that of Florence founded in 1703 by Pope Clement XI and the grand duke of Tuscany, that of Fermo founded the same year by Cardinal Cinei, that of Barcelona founded in 1704 by two canons of the cathedral, and that of Forli founded by Cardinal Paulucci in 1709; three houses of the Lombardy Province, namely, that of Ferrara founded by the marchioness of Villa-Camille Bevilaqua in the year 1694, that of Cremona founded in 1702 by Monsieur Malossi, canon of the cathedral and vicar general of the bishop of the same city, and that of Casal founded by several persons of piety in 1710; and finally in the Province of Poland, the house of Lowicz in the diocese of Gnesen founded in 1689 by Cardinal Radziewouski.

Furthermore, in 1661 King Louis XIV established the Priests of the Mission at Fontainebleau to care for the parish. Similarly, he established them at Versailles in 1674 to officiate at the parish and care for the chapel at the château. He appointed them to the Hôtel Royal des Invalides in Paris in 1657 to serve as pastors at that institution which, like the preceding two, was also united with the Congregation. Finally, in 1690, at the request of the marchioness of Maintenon, his majesty also established them at Saint-Cyr to be directors of the Ladies of Saint-Louis and to conduct missions on the estates of the abbatial benefice of Saint-Denis in France, belonging to the Ladies. The Priests of the Mission were also called to Saint-Cloud in 1688 by the duke of Orléans, the king's only brother, to take care of the chapel of his château and that of the hospital

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<sup>21</sup>This was the house in Marseille. Ed.

of the town.

In 1697 they made a second establishment at Rome, which is also one of those omitted in the catalog of Monsieur Hermant, even though the second edition of his *History* did not appear until 1710. Pope Innocent XII granted them the monastery of Saints John and Paul on the Celian Hill, which had previously belonged to the Jesuates before their suppression.<sup>22</sup> The Philippine nuns, about whom we have spoken elsewhere, had later occupied it, but after these religious had been transferred elsewhere, Clement X gave it to the English friars of the Order of Saint Dominic. In 1689 Alexander VIII had erected it into an abbey and conferred it on his nephew, Cardinal Ottoboni, with the intention of retaining the English friars. When, however, they were obliged to abandon it, Cardinal Ottoboni decided to return the abbey to the hands of Pope Innocent XII. The latter suppressed the abbatial title and gave the monastery to the Priests of the Mission, who established there the internal seminary [novitiate] and house of studies of the Roman Province.

Besides the approbation which this Congregation has received from Pope Urban VIII, it has been further confirmed by Popes Alexander VII and Clement X. The priests who comprise it have as their principal end to work toward their own perfection, to employ themselves in the salvation of the poor country people by means of missions, and to apply themselves to procuring the spiritual advancement of clergymen. To attain the first end, the Congregation has a rule which prescribes, among other things, an hour of mental prayer in the morning, three examinations of conscience each day, daily spiritual reading, some spiritual conferences every week, an annual eight-day retreat, and the observance of silence outside the time for conversation.

To attain the second end, the Congregation devotes itself for eight months of the year to country missions. The missionaries remain fifteen days, three weeks, a month, or sometimes more in each place according to what is appropriate. During that time they instruct the people every day by means of catechizing and familiar preaching, hearing general confessions, adjusting lawsuits and other differences, reconciling enemies, procuring necessities, particularly all possible help for the sick,

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<sup>22</sup>Founded about 1366 by Saint John Colombini and officially known (after 1499) as the Apostolic Clerics of Saint Jerome, the Jesuates were a lay congregation devoted to works of mercy. They were popularly called Jesuates because the name of Jesus was so frequently on their lips. Having fallen from their early fervor and being greatly reduced in number, they were suppressed in 1668 by Pope Clement IX. Ed.

striving to establish wherever they can a Confraternity of Charity, and finally concluding all these good works with general communion, to which they invite everyone.

To attain the third end, this Congregation applies itself to the direction of seminaries, in which those who are preparing themselves for holy orders or who have already received them remain withdrawn for a considerable amount of time in order to be formed in the virtues and functions of their vocation by means of the following exercises. Each day they engage in common mental prayer, recite together the divine office, hear holy mass or celebrate it if they are priests, and make a particular examination of conscience on one of the virtues before meals and a general examination in the evening. Twice a day they have theology lessons and once a day practice plain chant. They take turns reading during meals, and on leaving the table they enjoy about an hour of conversation on various useful subjects, such as a case of conscience or some passages of Holy Scripture, etc., but in a manner that suitably refreshes the spirit. Each week on certain days, they practice the ceremonies of the Church, such as low or high mass, other divine duties, and the administration of the sacraments. From time to time they also practice preaching a sermon or a catechetical instruction, etc. On Sundays and feast days, they chant mass and vespers or they are employed by turn in some office according to their orders. On the same days they go to confession and communion.

This same Congregation applies itself to preparing ordinands to receive holy orders worthily by a retreat of eight, ten, or twelve days in its houses before ordination. During that time, besides most of the exercises common to seminarians, there are two conferences each day, one on moral theology, which explains everything in summary for them during the retreat, and the other an exhortation on the subjects most important for their state. To the same end, moreover, the Congregation conducts spiritual conferences with clergymen, who assemble together each week in its houses in order to treat of the virtues and functions proper to their state. Finally, this Congregation uses still another means for the sanctification and perfection of both clergy and laity, such as spiritual retreats of five, six, or eight days, according to whatever is suitable to those who, under the guidance of a spiritual director, desire to apply themselves to mental and vocal prayer, spiritual reading, a general or annual confession, and to undertake a rule of life. By a brief of 1662, Alexander VII directed that all those who receive orders at Rome and in the six suffragan sees are obliged to make the

spiritual exercises of ten days with the priests of this Congregation under pain of suspension, from which they can be released only by himself or his successors. And in consideration of these exercises which this Congregation provides, Clement IX granted to it several graces and privileges.

It is necessary to remark that this Congregation belongs to the body of the secular clergy, even though the individual members who enter it, after two years of probation, take four vows, namely, poverty, chastity, obedience, and stability, from which they cannot be dispensed except by the pope or by the superior general. It fulfills all its functions regarding the neighbor with the approbation and permission of the ordinary of the place and does nothing in the mission without the agreement of the pastor. Finally, it exercises these same functions gratuitously if there is not a sufficient foundation for the upkeep of the workers whom it sends. It is governed by a general who remains such for life. The habit of these missionaries is similar to that of clergymen, distinguished only by a linen collar four-fingers in height and by a little tuft of beard which they wear.<sup>23</sup> They have as their coat of arms Our Lord the Preacher.

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<sup>23</sup>Although smaller, the little tuft of beard resembles the contemporary Van Dyke. Ed.



Lowliness does not keep the Son of God at a distance from us.

*(Saint Vincent de Paul, conference to the Daughters of Charity,  
date unknown)*

The more we pray, the more we wish to pray.

*(Saint Vincent de Paul, conference to the Daughters of Charity,  
31 May 1648)*