Apotheosis of Monsieur Étienne. Engraving commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of his entrance into the community.
Chapter 9

The Legacy of Jean-Baptiste Étienne

"Quelle puissance et quelle autorité!...
très catholique et très française."

As Étienne drew his Notice to a close he took one final opportunity, “for posterity’s instruction,” to summarize the “precious lessons” contained “in the ensemble of providential circumstances that have marked the Company’s restoration.”

With regard to the French Revolution, he noted that at the time the Congregation was like a tree “needing clipping and pruning” so that it could become as fertile as the “divine gardener” wanted. It was this divine-horticultural prerequisite that explained “the misfortunes and difficulties that surrounded its restoration.” God designed this pruning “to cut away any element that was foreign to its [the community’s] primitive purity.” Having undergone this process, the community would return to its primitive spirit and would exist exactly as it had “when Saint Vincent’s hands formed it.”

Étienne commented that the “venerable old men” who led the Congregation in the restoration’s first phase had not understood this divine requirement. These men “dreamed only of reestablishing the Congregation as it was when it was swept away by the revolution.” It was this mistaken dream “that explained the sterility of their efforts over many years to restore life and fruitfulness” to the community. The Lazarists to whom Étienne refers may or may not have been as nostalgic for the past as he portrayed. They were, however, too tired and too old to lead the community as the nineteenth century entered.
its second quarter.\(^7\)

Étienne “could easily see” the providential role of these senior missionaries.\(^8\) They served “as a link connecting the community’s ancient traditions with the new existence to which Heaven destined it.” He also concluded, however, that providence had reserved “to the next generation” [his own generation] the task of introducing the community “to the career opened before it.” This new generation was to lead the community “in the accomplishment of its beautiful destinies.”\(^9\)

Not unexpectedly, there existed a generation gap between those who came to adulthood before and after the French Revolution.\(^10\) In his study of the Restoration era, G. de Bertier de Sauvigny noted a common attitude among the ambitious young men of Étienne’s generation. By the late 1820s, these young men were impatient to grasp the reins of economic, political, social, and religious power from “the leaders of the previous generation.”\(^11\) Fifty years later, Étienne recalled how in contrast to the “venerable old men,” his generation “understood the

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\(^7\) For example this is what Pierre de Wailly wrote in his first circular in 1827.

Imagine my astonishment when His Holiness deigned to cast his eyes upon me to occupy the important position of superior general. After the fatigues of a long and painful exile and after arriving at an advanced age, I already had found myself bearing the heavy burden of being a local superior. I had no other thought than of ending my career in the peace of the Lord. Alas! How am I to occupy a place requiring so much wisdom, zeal, and virtue? What means will I find within myself to represent Saint Vincent and become one of his worthy successors? How can I embrace the care of two Companies that are so large and extended? Frightened by my weakness and my insufficiency, I at first judged that I was incapable of fulfilling the wishes of the sovereign pontiff. My first thought was to refuse the dignity which he had deigned to offer me and beg him to choose another who would be more worthy to succeed Saint Vincent. (De Wailly, Circulaires, 2: 413.)

In 1835, after his election, Dominique Salhorgne wrote, “Despite my prayers and my repeated pleas, despite my advanced age and my infirmities, a burden has been imposed upon me which only my fear of resisting the will of God has kept me from refusing. I admit to you that the sacrifice has been painful, and everything I think about increases my inquietude. Nevertheless, however great the sacrifice it is not beyond the strength of a true missionary.” (Salhorgne, Circulaires, 2: 430.)

\(^8\) Étienne, Notice, 65.

\(^9\) Ibid., 66.

\(^10\) Bertier de Sauvigny noted for instance,

Thus in 1827, the Frenchmen who had been adults at the time of the French Revolution and who could regret the demise of the Ancien Régime or to have suffered from its abuses, only comprised one-ninth of the population. At the same time more than 25% of those who had lived under the Empire were also dead. One must take this into account in order to understand the rapidity of the transformation of public opinion from Louis XVIII to Charles X. The young men who were so enthusiastic for the cause of liberty in 1830 could not understand either how their fathers had accepted the imperial despotism nor the ease with which they had accepted the return of the Bourbons.... The quarrels that had inflamed the generations that preceded them made no sense to them at all. With what scorn, the young Montalivet in 1827 spoke of “these old men filled with their old hostilities... these survivors of exile, anarchy, or despotism.”

The author also cites a 1828 pamphlet entitled, De la Gérontocratie, ou de l'abus de la sagesse des vieillards dans le gouvernement de la France, 238-39.

\(^11\) Bertier de Sauvigny, Restauration, 239.
future.” What his generation had sought was a “prosperity for the interests of the Church and the salvation of souls.” What his generation had understood was that this could happen only through “a return to the primitive spirit.” This return to the primitive spirit could come about only “through a fidelity to the teachings inspired by our Holy Founder.”

However, the importance of the primitive spirit was not a concern that was unique to Étienne and his generation. In 1832, Dominique Salhorgne wrote on this topic. He commented, “How has the Congregation survived to this day? We would be ungrateful if we did not thank our holy founder who has interceded powerfully for his two families. I firmly believe that he will continue to protect us as his children. He will do so if he sees that we imitate his virtues and share his spirit. This is the same spirit that animated his first collaborators. I know this to be the primitive spirit of our vocation.”

Salhorgne continued at a later point,

We know that our holy rules express the proper and distinctive spirit of our vocation. It is by an exact observance of them that we find this spirit...One cannot ignore that they are the work of a higher intelligence and the fruit of long experience. Their conformity with the counsels of perfection given us in the gospel requires us to esteem and respect them...I have always remembered the words spoken to me as I took vows. The assistant of our house of Saint-Lazare gave me a copy of the rules. Then he said, “Take these and behold the standard by which you will be judged.”

Salhorgne also went on to note, “some say that our rules do not oblige us to obey under the penalty of sin.” Attacking this presumption, he asked,

Who says this? Not those fervent souls who do not neglect the observance of a single point of the rule! Not those who want to progress daily in virtue! These confreres know that fidelity in the smallest matter is the most efficacious way to ensure that one is faithful in great matters. Those who truly love their vocation and above all want its preservation do not say this. They are aware that the frequent violation of even the least provision can become a...
habit. If such a violation is habitual, it signals a relaxation that ruins one's vocation... What would become of our society if each person, full of confidence in his own judgment, decided that he had the right to neglect the practices that he considered unimportant? This person would soon have many imitators. Examples of relaxation of the rule are always contagious. As a result, these men soon discard the spiritual exercises established to nourish virtue. They no longer observe the most important rules. The institution's end is thus lost. This is what happens when one habitually and deliberately transgresses the rules under the pretext that they do not bind one under penalty of sin!

Étienne believed that it was the attitude Salhorgne attacked that differentiated his generation from the older generation of missionaries. He claimed that his generation needed no persuasion to believe in the importance of this fidelity. He noted, "The new generation did not need any convincing. It believed this truth as if by instinct and put it into vigorous practice." Étienne pounced on this claim and said, "The secret of all that we have seen accomplished is here. This spirit will accomplish even more if future generations receive it and maintain it fervently."

The second of Étienne's concluding lessons dealt with the nature of the relationship between the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity. Étienne claimed that "It was not until our era that the intimate union that must exist between our Company and that of the Daughters of Charity was apparent." He said that previously the reason Saint Vincent "had established them under the one and same head was not understood." In a circular of 26 May 1844 to the missionaries Étienne commented, "From the moment I first became familiar with this interesting institution [the Daughters of Charity], I have understood the intimate, necessary, and complementary connection that exists between their functions and ours. I have understood that the spirit of our two companies is identical and that in reality the two families of Saint Vincent really form only one family. This family is under the same authority and has the same end: the glory of God and the salvation of the poor."
In a circular letter of 26 January 1870 to the Daughters of Charity, Étienne said,

Now the first means to secure to yourselves a glorious future is to keep a strong union with the Congregation of the Mission. This Congregation is your Mother since it gave birth to your Company. It has nourished it with its teachings and directed it in the path open before it. It has made you able to realize the most happy successes. By means of periodic retreats, visits, conferences, and other kinds of services you renew your primitive spirit. You then spread it abroad and maintain it in all your houses. Therefore, wonderful prosperity accompanies all your good works. This prosperity accompanies you to every part of the world. In this way you preserve yourselves in a state that enables you to accomplish the designs of God. It is by it, in a word, that the life-giving sap of the grace of your vocation circulates through all the branches of this tree of charity. These branches extend over various parts of the globe. In every climate they produce the same fruits of benediction and salvation. If you deprive these branches of this life-giving sap, you will soon see them wither away and perish. If your company were ever to separate from that of the Mission soon life would be extinct in its bosom. Instead of presenting a spectacle of edification, it would only present a spectacle of contentions, divisions, and scandals. Experience has proven this truth in too convincing a manner to admit any doubt about it.23

In his Notice, Étienne said,

The two rivers of Charity come from the same source and flow next to each other each in their own courses traced by the Founder. Without mixing their waters, they each carry the elements of fertility within them. This enables them together to produce abundantly the fruits of salvation in the regions where they flow. The Company of the Mission, separate from the Daughters of Charity, is essentially incomplete. Missionaries, wherever they exist throughout the world, always feel the need to ask for the immediate assistance of the Daughters of Charity. They do this because they understand that without their assistance they would be powerless to obtain success in their works. For their part, the Daughters of Charity find their fecundity in that of the Mission.24

Étienne concluded, "When one considers the wisdom of the arrangement by which these two families form but one and the ingenious

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23Circulars of the Superiors General to the Daughters of Charity, Circular of 26 January 1870, 5, DRMA. Étienne comments on this point, "This is exactly what happened in 1809, when they were withdrawn from the authority of Saint Vincent’s successor and were placed under episcopal authority. Five or six years was enough time to create such trouble and disorganization that if it had lasted much longer it would have infallibly led to their entire ruin." (Notice, 67.)

24Ibid., 67.
means by which they cooperate for a common end, one must recognize this as the most admirable result of Saint Vincent de Paul's genius.\textsuperscript{25}

The reason for this success was that “while the administration of each family is distinct, both receive direction from a common authority residing in Saint Vincent's successor.” Respecting “the distinction of rights and respective obligations” prevented conflict and assured “a sincere union and mutual confidence” between the two branches of the one family of Saint Vincent. Étienne observed that “nothing is arbitrary in this, nothing is left to individual interpretation, or to the will of any individual. Everything and everyone submits “to the sovereign authority of the Rule.”\textsuperscript{26}

This “wise and strong organization maintained for more than two hundred years” earned the Double Family, “the admiration of the world and of the Church.” According to Étienne, it led Pope Pius IX to call it “a lasting miracle of Saint Vincent.” One had to attribute “the present prosperity of our Double Family” to the reestablishment of the organization given it by Saint Vincent. Having accomplished this reestablishment guaranteed to the Double Family “the promise of grace and the protection of heaven.”\textsuperscript{27} Étienne further commented, “Thus, today we see ourselves as a well-disciplined army marching to

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 66.

\textsuperscript{26} Étienne summarized the principles of constitutional separation between the Daughters and the Missionaries in this way:

It is the superior of the Daughters of Charity who conducts their Company together with the superior general. It is the Visitatrix who conducts her province together with a Director delegated by the superior general. The sister servant conducts her house... Missionaries have received no delegation to take part in the administration of the Daughters of Charity. Their actions are limited only to the functions of their ministry which is to say confession, spiritual conferences, annual retreats. In order to fulfill these functions, they must first receive from the superior general a mandate to do so... They cannot depart from these rules of conduct without disturbing the harmony established by hierarchical authority and without rendering their ministry sterile, odious and impossible. (Ibid.)

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
combat the powers of men and of hell with the assurance of triumph. 28
No fear, no inquietude, no apprehension restrains us. Obedient to the
authority that comes from God, we understand the truth of these
words of Saint Vincent, 'let us attend well to the interests of God, and He
will attend to ours.' 29

In Étienne's view, what was "truly marvelous" about the organi-
zation of the Double Family "was its power of assimilation."

The Double Family forms today a vast network that entwines all
nationalities and makes of them only one, unique, family. It disengages
them from their own particular habits and customs. It makes them
speak the same language, although it is expressed in all their different
idioms. Uniformity makes them live the same common life and fulfill
their functions in the most diverse countries and climates. They obtain
the same success in the most diverse conditions of existence. All
this happens without the least repugnance but with happiness.
From one pole to the other, the Missionaries and the Daughters of
Charity turn their hearts and eyes unceasingly toward our two
Maison-Mères. Here they receive direction and they follow their
examples... Throughout the world, the uniformity of means as-
sures the same success in realizing the same destinies. The only
things that could paralyze this action and fecundity are national-
istic prejudice, an attention to worldly things, and merely human
considerations. Uniformity has disengaged us from all these. 30

At the end of this Étienne could only ask rhetorically, "Does the
history of the Church present the example of any other religious
Institution that offers the same marvel?" 31

Étienne noted that the "end of our institute to embrace the clergy

28 The providential mission of the Daughters of Charity was, according to Étienne.

To spread over the whole world, an immense net of charity, to take a multitude of souls
and lead them into the Savior's fold... to carry the light of truth amidst the darkness of heresy,
to touch the hearts of infidels, to astonish, confound and convert those who are far away from
the road of salvation... carrying an efficacious remedy to all the evils which afflict the
world... regenerating nations fallen into the neglect of religious duties, and blinded by the
delusions of ignorance and corruption... Lending in a word, a powerful cooperation to the
labores of the gospel, to combat every kind of error and exhibit to the infidels, with the view
of bringing them to the true faith, that characteristic of religion which is at once most
distinctive and the most capable of touching their hearts... In the present day you will save
the world by charity.

Étienne to the Daughters of Charity, Circular letter of 27 September 1855, D.C. Circulars,
DRMA, 1-2. Also, "21 March 1867, Conference on the Vows given by our most honored Father,
M. Étienne superior general of the Congregation of the Mission and of the Daughters of
Charity," D.C. Conferences, 68, DRMA.

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
and peoples of the world with zeal” fit in exactly with the contempo-
rary needs of the Church. Providence had already opened “a large
door” for the Double Family’s “great work in society’s transforma-
tion and its return to the faith.” Bishops and governments everywhere
understood “the good done” by the Double Family. All indications
were that this work of “regeneration” would continue and would
grow. It was no less evident to Étienne that “the spirit of Saint Vincent
is the means by which this will come about, because the spirit of Saint
Vincent is the spirit of the gospel.”

Their “great mission of salvation” required the members of the
Double Family to “have no other rule of conduct than that which is
found in Saint Vincent’s teachings.” The first teaching of Saint Vin-
cent, according to Étienne, was “never to take the initiative in any
enterprise or in any work but to hold oneself always ready to follow
the way shown by God’s providential will.” In all their activities, the
Lazarists and sisters were to trust in the one who recommended,
“Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice.” It was up to the
“master of the vineyard” to choose the workers he wished to employ.
He would then designate to each of them the tasks they were to
complete. This was the “essential condition for the success of both.”

According to Étienne, Saint Vincent taught the necessity of leaving to
God alone “the initiative of his works” and the necessity of avoiding
“haste” in pursuing their accomplishment. Providence not only clearly
establishes its goals but also provides the means to accomplish them avec
suavité. The actions of providence “are always mysterious.” Despite “our
natural impatience” they require from us faith and confidence. When one
finally learns to wait for providence, “our admiration grows as we soon
see rapid progress.” It is our responsibility to “plant and to water.” It is
reserved to providence to decide the yield, “in the interests of God’s glory
and the good of souls.” God does not demand from us the success of our
works, but only the contribution of our work and our devotion.

Étienne then asked the rhetorical question, “Over the last twenty
years have we not seen the seeming sluggishness of providence revealed
to be magnificently fruitful?” He also asked, “What unexpected events
have furnished our two families the opportunity to operate prodigies of

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11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
13 Ibid., 71.
14 Ibid., Matthew 6: 33.
15 Ibid., Matthew 20: 1-16.
16 Ibid.
devotion forgotten or unknown since their foundation!” Étienne’s rhetor- 
ic continued,

What a beautiful scene they [the Double Family] presented to the world during the Crimean War, the wars in Italy, Mexico, and the United States.39 Think of the increase of vocations that has swelled their ranks and allowed them to send many colonies of missionaries to foreign lands! Thus, they have spread throughout the world, to the great astonishment and admiration of all! What beautiful results Missionaries have accomplished in seminaries! What beautiful results Missionaries have obtained working in the missions whether at home or among the infidels and heretics! What beautiful results the Daughters of Charity have obtained in their hospitals, whether civil or military, in the midst of disease or on the battlefield! What beautiful results in their associations of the Children of Mary or that for Christian Mothers!40 This beautiful harvest of salvation’s fruits that we are seeing today is the result of thirty years of waiting, of labor, of suffering, and all kinds of trials.41

Étienne summarized by noting, “Thus providence has its plans and its means to arrive at the accomplishment of its ends. Our duty is to await the first, and to help the second. If we do this, our success is assured.”42

According to Étienne, Saint Vincent also recommended that “in the accomplishment of our mission we must use the same means as those used by our Savior. These include humility, modesty, and having the sole aim of obtaining God’s glory without any selfish considerations or mere human interests.” According to “the thought of our holy founder,” if the company wanted “esteem and consideration” it should obtain them “by the good example of its virtues and not by any human means.” In line with this principle, the founder taught that the community should avoid all publicity. If providence wanted the public to know of the “fame of the Congregation and the results of its works it knew better how to inform them.” Again, according to Étienne, experience had proved the truth of this teaching. He noted, “Up to this

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39 Here, Étienne is referring to the wartime service of Lazarists as chaplains and sisters as battlefield nurses. For an account of the Crimean War services see Rosset, Vie d’Étienne, 357-72. For an account of the service in the Italian wars see, for example, Annales, 24 (1859): 444. For an account of the service in Mexico see Annales, 28 (1863): 324-30. For an account of the nursing of the Daughters of Charity during the American Civil War see Annales, 28 (1863): 306, 313. See also Hannefin, Daughters of the Church, 107-38.
40 Wherever Daughters of Charity were established they set up devotional societies for children under the patronage of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal. They also specialized in forming Christian mothers. For example see the description of the work of the famous Sister Rosalie Rendu, D.C. in Paris during this era, Armand de Melun, Life of Sister Rosalie, A Sister of Charity, trans. Joseph D. Fallon (Norwood: 1915).
41 Ibid., Notice, 72.
42 Ibid.
day we have not publicized the success of our works, yet all over the world everyone knows them. From everywhere requests come for our missionaries and the Daughters of Charity. If we want the tree of our Double Family to continue to grow...it is necessary that its roots remain hidden in the soil of its humility.”

In Étienne’s mind, another corollary of this principle was that the Double Family was to remain “simple and modest, enemies of all controversy, pretension, and strangers to all the opinions that divide men.” The result of this conduct would be that, “We will obtain the sympathies of all people. All political parties will consider us inoffensive. Thus, we will not offend any form of government. You can easily see that this policy will preserve us from all opposition by the world.” This simplicity will attract the hearts and good will of men. It will provide a power of persuasion that will have the most happy results.

This was how, according to Étienne, the Lord “had attracted a people avid to hear his words and profit from his teachings.” The Pharisees and the high priests were the Lord’s only enemies because his life and his teachings “were the condemnations of their pride and ambition.” Without a doubt, Étienne observed, “as the Lord predicted we will also experience calumny as he did.” If others misunderstand “our attitude and manner of judging,” we will experience opposition from those who should sustain and defend us. Like the Lord, the Congregation would have “to suffer these tribulations in silence and patiently endure all the attacks directed against us.” Here again, Étienne returned to one of his favorite quotations from Saint Vincent: “Calumny always turns out to be to the advantage of the one who accepts it in silence, and human opposition is an indication of the blessings and the success that God has reserved for us.” Because of this, the Double Family was to attach “little importance” to what the world thought or said about it. It was only to be concerned about edifying the world by its wise, reserved, and modest conduct “having no other ambition than that of doing good throughout the world.” In the midst of the “vicissitudes of humanity” Étienne reminded his readers of the reassurance offered by Christ, “Take courage. I have conquered the

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43 Ibid.
44 The Congregation’s almost one hundred year Gallican alliance with the French government ended in 1902 with the disavowal of the 1801 concordat and the bitter separation of Church and state under Waldeck-Rousseau. Twenty six of the Congregation’s thirty houses in France were suppressed, and almost half of the Lazarists left the country to work in the foreign missions. See Sylvestre, French Provinces, 364.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
world.”

Étienne cited the Double Family’s contemporary experience in the newly united Italy to demonstrate the “power of this principle.” “In Italy where the Revolution has suppressed all religious institutions, we see the Daughters of Charity multiply and establish themselves everywhere on these ruins. On the other hand, the Missionaries de­spoiled of their goods and expelled from their houses tranquilly continue the work of the country missions and the regeneration of the clergy. Both enjoy the people’s affection and the consideration of the authorities. They accomplish their double mission in calm and in peace. They patiently await better times.”

According to Étienne, the same would be true “in all the other countries of the world if the teachings of Saint Vincent alone inspire our con­duct.” Since the spirit of Saint Vincent was synonymous with the spirit of the gospel, like the gospel, it would continue through the centuries. Revolu­tions could neither defeat it nor affect its “power in action and in word.”

Étienne: “The timid and obscure successor of Saint Vincent”

Étienne described himself in one place as the “timid and obscure” successor of Saint Vincent. He more aptly described himself elsewhere as the “dépositaire” of the founder’s “heritage.” As superior general, he continually looked to his understanding of Saint Vincent’s teachings, the community’s charismatic and Gallican constitutional roots and its “pious customs and traditions.” In these, and in the dogmas of Catholicism, he found his deposit of eternal, unchanging, and unchangeable truths.

Étienne also looked back to the experiences of the community’s prerevolutionary, revolutionary, Napoleonic, and schismatic eras. From these he learned providential “lessons” concerning the consequences of the community’s straying away from its “primitive spirit.” From his vantage point at 95 rue de Sèvres, overlooking the entire world, he saw the “torrent of democracy” that was giving birth in such pain and chaos to “modern times.” Étienne recreated and refounded the Double Family of Saint Vincent specifically for these “modern times.”
believed that a providential worldwide destiny awaited the Double Family at the nexus of Church, state, and empire. Just as fulfilling this providential mission required certain kinds of internal behaviors from the Congregation, it also required certain external behaviors. Étienne understood the difficult challenges faced by the foreign missions in the hostile environments of China, the Levant, or Ethiopia. He knew of the difficult conditions created for the Church throughout Europe and Latin America by liberal, anticlerical, nationalistic revolutions and unification movements.\(^5\) He understood and accepted the fact that the political future of the world lie in democracy. Étienne believed that the development of a successful French model of conservative reconciliation between a democratic state and the Church was the solution to the “illusions that are the source of the world’s troubles.”\(^5\)

At the end of his 1864 Discours, Étienne spoke of the “dawn of a new day for religion and society.”\(^5\) He characteristically prayed for Saint Vincent’s continued intercession. He prayed for God’s blessing on “our immortal pontiff” and “our magnanimous Emperor.”\(^5\) Finally, he prayed, “Bless our dear France that you have always loved, whose political influence is so formidable because it possesses such an immense power for good. It uses this power to agitate the world under the protection of providence to force it to become better.”\(^59\)

The original Napoleonic legal restoration of the Double Family in France was solely based on the utility of its functions. Étienne went to great pains to take every opportunity to prove the disinterestedness, utility, and loyalty of the Double Family to successive French governments.\(^6\) He accomplished this goal. He believed that the government, through its intimate relations with the Lazarists and Daughters of Charity, would come, and was coming, to understand the natural link between “the glory of France and the triumph of religion.”\(^6\) Étienne believed that this French accomplishment could then be repeated throughout the world. Establishing this alliance, however, demanded a code of external behavior from the

\(^{5}\) For example, near the end of his life, in 1873 the Kulturkampf in newly united Germany resulted in the suppression of the Prussian province. Instead of becoming members of the diocesan clergy the members of the province went into exile in France. The Germans put themselves at the superior general’s disposal, and he reassigned them throughout Europe and the foreign missions. See Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 578–79.

\(^{6}\) Étienne, Discours, 26, ACMP.

\(^{57}\) Ibid., 28.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.

\(^{58}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{56}\) See, for example, Devin, 318–23, ACMP.

\(^{1}\) Étienne, Discours, 19, ACMP.
The 1849 general assembly established a set of detailed rules of office. Étienne reported this development in his annual circular.

The assembly understood the importance of conserving that character of the community that makes it universally acceptable and capable of doing good namely of being a stranger to all politics and political questions. This character attracts the goodwill of all parties, because it embraces none of them. To the present this has been our safeguard in the midst of all the events that have upset the world and destroyed so many institutions...The assembly believed that the existence of the Congregation depends upon this observance. Given the present dangers and perils it believed it was necessary to lay out a code of conduct.

The assembly directed the Lazarists to “abstain from taking part in political elections” or from being elected “to a political assembly.” They could not belong to political parties nor speak at political rallies. The assembly established restrictions on the dangerous “abuse” of the purchase and reading of newspapers and subscribing to journals. Étienne told superiors “to use all the means in your power to convince the missionaries placed under your conduct to be very prudent in their discussions with outsiders. They are always to be neutral on political questions. Above all, in their preaching they are to avoid all allusion and all insinuation in such matters.”

In the midst of everything else, Jean-Baptiste Étienne never lost sight of the reason for the Double Family’s existence in Church and society: “God’s glory and the salvation of souls.” He worked to see that the Double Family “spread a charitable net that will embrace the entire world, so that no suffering is left unattended, and no need is left without relief.” He also said, “It is not enough for us to devote ourselves to the material assistance of peoples. Thus, we must also consider their moral needs, rehabilitate them, and make them worthy of their dignity as people and as Christians...In a word, we must see that the light of Christian progress penetrates everywhere even to the community.”

Étienne reminded the members of the community that failures in this regard had caused troubles in the province of Lombardy in the early 1850s. The duke of Parma felt that missionaries at the Collegio Alberoni in Piacenza were supporting the incorporation of the duchy into a unified Italy. He eventually expelled them from his lands and confiscated the college. Only the united efforts of the Holy See and the French government got this decision rescinded. When the duke again allowed the Congregation to take over administration of the college, Étienne replaced all the former teachers and brought in a Lazarist from the province of Naples as superior. For more information see, Rosset, Vie Étienne, 312-26.

Acta XX, 846-47, ACGR.
64 Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 137.
66 Ibid.
67 Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 360.
68 Étienne, Discours, 18, ACMP.
most obscure cottage.”69 Adrien Dansette has noted that “the great religious work of the nineteenth century is a work of reconstruction.”70 Étienne once said, “One thought sustains my confidence. This is that he who brought the Congregation into being is the same one who will lead it to the accomplishment of its destinies. He will dispose events and circumstances so that these will be realized completely.”71

Étienne’s understanding and exercise of his role as superior general was paternalistic.72 He viewed himself as the father, in the truest sense of the word, of the Double Family of Saint Vincent and of each of its members.73 Louis DeBonald, in his contemporary works describing the traditionalist understanding of the paternal role in family and society, equated the person of a father with “power” that is “one, perpetual, independent, and definitive.”74 He defined the “power” of a father in this context as “the will and the actions that will produce, conserve, and develop the intelligence of the child. It teaches a child all that it needs to know for its best interests.”75

With a paternalistic view of authority, it is not surprising that Étienne believed that the greatest evil of the “poisoned atmosphere” of his age and the source of all its problems was pride and “a spirit of independence that seeks to censure all authority.”76 He reflected, “Oh, how rare it is today to find missionaries who see only God in their superiors and his will in theirs. Missionaries who receive their wise advice and sage observations as coming from heaven. Missionaries who fill their hearts with sentiments of filial confidence. Saint Vincent requires a familial spirit from his children; a spirit that will enable them to lovingly put themselves into the hands of their superiors, as a tool in the hands of a workman.”77

A spirit of filial obedience was the “vital principle of the community’s life.”78 Étienne appealed to the missionaries,

I thus implore you, messieurs and my very dear brothers, because of the love that you bear for the company. Have a filial respect for superiors. Banish from your conversations anything that would criticize their conduct or their administration. Preserve your spirits

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69 Ibid., 19.
70 Dansette, Histoire Religieuse, 1: 488.
71 Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 380.
72 For background to Étienne’s traditionalist paternalism see, for example, Bonald’s Démonstration Philosophique du principe constitutif de la société, suivie de Méditations Politiques tirées de l’évangile (Paris: Adrien Le Clerc, 1830).
73 See, for example, Devin, “Ses rapports particuliers avec les Missionnaires,” 344-51. See also, “Ses rapports particuliers avec les Filles de la Charité,” 352-61, ACMP.
74 Bonald, Démonstration, 101-02.
75 Ibid., 93-94.
76 Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 140.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 3: 141.
and your hearts from all thoughts, all judgments, all reflections that
would reflect on the exercise of their authority! Persuade yourselfs, as Saint Vincent taught us, that God gives superiors the
graces necessary to judge and to lead; and since you have not been
given these graces it is dangerous for you to judge those who have.
I assure you that in reasserting these ties of fraternal charity you will
see that the yoke of the Lord will become sweet and light.79

Étienne possessed “paternal tenderness” for those who accepted
this model of paternal authority.80 However, he considered those who
resisted or opposed this authority by saying “I will not submit,”81 to
be “unworthy children who have declared themselves to be the ene­
mies of his [Saint Vincent’s] work.”82 Étienne treated them as such.

In his extensive biographical notes, Auguste Devin, C.M., has left
a revealing portrait of his uncle. According to Devin, Étienne “paid
close attention to the smallest details of community life.”83 Whether in
the kitchen, sacristy, or gardens of the mother house, or in his admin­
istration as general, no detail was too small to escape his daily, per­
sonal notice. The importance that Étienne placed on order, and its
integral connection to uniformity, unity and “fecundity” cannot be
emphasized enough. Not content with the rules provided for the
Congregation by the constitutions, the Common Rules, the decrees of
the general assemblies, and the ordinances of the superiors general,
Étienne supervised the establishment of numerous mind-numbing
“directories” and “rules of office.”84

Beginning in the 1840s, succeeding general assemblies authorized
definitive directories for each of the Congregation’s apostolates.85
According to Étienne, the absolute uniformity required by Saint Vin­
cent was not only a matter of “a way of living but also of thinking,
speaking, and doing.”86 He also noted that a community “all of whose
actions, and all of whose movements are directed by uniformity ap­
pears to the world as the army prepared for battle spoken of in
scripture.”87 In order for the Congregation “to be capable of worthily

79Ibid.
80Devin, 344, ACMP.
81Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 141.
82Étienne, Notice, 94.
83Devin, 313.
84Etienne, Circulaires, 3: 97.
85The 1843 general assembly authorized the publication of the decrees of the general assem­
blies and ordinances of the superiors general. Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 139.
86Directories were produced for the missions, parishes, and minor and major seminaries. See
Acta XX. Conventus Generalis Congregationis Missionis, 1849, 841-861, ACGR.
87Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 97.
88Ibid. Numbers 32: 27.
fulfilling the career opening before it in God’s Church it is necessary that its members follow a uniform direction in their ministries, so that they will be unified not just in spirit but in action.”

The general assembly of 1849 approved the directory for the grands séminaires, and made its use obligatory in the Congregation’s seminaries throughout the world. To accompany the various Directoires, the 1849 general assembly approved a set of “Rules for the various offices and various functions of our Institute.” The general assembly of 1843 had entrusted Étienne with the task of reviewing these rules. He was to make “those alterations that the change of times and circumstances and the actual needs of the Congregation require.” Étienne explained that following these rules to the letter would “assure order in community houses, establish uniformity in the exercise of our functions, and fix in a precise manner the relations of inferiors with those who occupy the various levels of hierarchical authority and the duties of each.”

Étienne noted that while the Common Rules and constitutions “by their very nature are unchangeable,” “proper authority” could adapt the rules of office as needed. In preparation for the 1849 assembly, Étienne had sent each house a copy of his proposed changes in the rules of office. He submitted this draft and the responses from the houses to the assembly. Étienne noted,

The assembly examined this draft with all the attention and solicitude that such a work deserves...How important it is for the success of our works that these rules are uniformly observed and that from now on each missionary clearly understands the obligations imposed upon his conscience in the fulfillment of the various responsibilities he is called upon to fulfill...Now, we have filled a lacuna that has existed since the restoration of our Congregation...In fixing these rules of office the general assembly of 1849 has completed the reconstruction of Saint Vincent’s edifice.

The three volume set of rules of office approved by the 1849 general assembly included those for the visitor, the provincial procurator, the director of the internal seminary, the director of students, the prefect of studies, professors, scholastics, local superiors, local procura-
rators, and a long list of others. Every person, every officeholder, in the Congregation had a detailed set of rules to follow. A provincial treasurer in China had the same rules to follow as a provincial treasurer in Mexico or France. These rules of office extended even to the lay brothers who had care of the community laundries and garbage. Everyone had a place. Everyone knew his place. Everyone was in his place. Order was thus guaranteed to reign throughout the community. Étienne once told the brother gardener at the mother house, "Do your best, but do not worry about arranging things to be beautiful, arrange them simply to be orderly."

As evidenced by the contents of his Notice, Étienne spent his entire career as superior general establishing a comprehensive, conservative, authoritarian, paternalistic, and mythic "ultramontane" culture and ecclesiology within the Double Family. However, in Étienne's Vincentian-centric "ultramontanism," France, Paris, the mother house, the "primitive spirit," and the person of the superior general as the successor of Saint Vincent substituted for Italy, Rome, the Vatican, ultramontanism, and the person of the Supreme Pontiff as the successor of Saint Peter. Just as Pius IX wanted all eyes and hearts of the Catholic world focused first on Rome, Étienne wanted all eyes and hearts of the Vincentian world focused first on Paris. The emphasis of Pius IX on hierarchical authority, obedience, unity, uniformity, clarity, and order all were understood, repeated, and carried out internally by Étienne through his efforts to restore the community's "primitive spirit."

In 1852, the embattled Gallican bishops and Sulpicians published a detailed memorandum "analyzing and defending the fundamental Gallican doctrine on the rights of national churches." The memorandum was entitled, *Sur la situation présente de l'Église gallicane relativement au droit coutumier: Mémoire adressé à l'Épiscopat*. The authors acknowledged that the pope possessed a primacy of jurisdiction in the church and a primacy of honor. As Austin Gough notes, however, they also came close to "decentralism" with their answer to the question of "What, then, stopped the papacy from governing national churches directly?" They answered that what stopped the papacy was the existence of customary law, hallowed by centuries of harmonious
and agreeable practice, under which bishops admitted the right of the Pope to act in matters of wide importance, and Rome agreed that the local bishop was the best judge of ordinary affairs and should not be overridden without exceptional cause. This balance was what made a centralized religion acceptable to local people anywhere in the world: unity of fundamentals must be flexible enough to contain local variations in customs, ceremonial, and administration, and French bishops in particular must have the right not to receive rules made at Rome, made perhaps to solve Italian problems, which would cause severe difficulties if put into force in France... Authorities were marshaled to show that local usage had the force of law in the Church if it were not manifestly immoral, was followed by a majority of the faithful, and was of reasonable antiquity.10

Étienne always acknowledged the Pope’s authority in “matters of wide importance in the Church.” As a Gallican, he also believed that Rome should acknowledge that he as superior general, together with the community’s general assemblies, was the best judge of conducting the ordinary administration of the community and its missions. As such, he should not be overridden or interfered with, without exceptional cause.101 The liberal-Gallican notion that a “unity of fundamentals must be flexible enough to contain local variations in customs, ceremonial, and administration” was anathema to Étienne. As we have seen, he rejected the idea that the Congregation’s provinces should or could adapt the community’s customs and traditions to the exigencies of local conditions.

Jean-Baptiste Étienne was to the Double Family of Saint Vincent what Pius IX was to the universal Church. The community created by Étienne and the general assemblies of his era parallels the Church created by Pius IX and the First Vatican Council. The understanding reached between these two looming figures was a tenuous one. Pius IX understood Étienne’s Gallicanism, and as much as he despised it he generally accepted the realities of the Congregation’s special status and protected relationship with the French government. Étienne, for his part, never understood contemporary ultramontane cultural and devotional attitudes with their affected affinity for all things Roman. However, when it came to hierarchical authority, traditionalist paternalism, simplistic theology, and unity achieved through order and absolute uniformity, both spoke the same language.

10 Ibid.
101 After 1843, the papacy consistently supported Étienne’s authority in his struggles with the Spaniards and Italians. It even made broad concessions to him in his administration of the foreign missions.
Étienne: “I find myself facing death.”

The spiritual testament that Étienne wrote at the end of his annual retreat in October 1871 is self-revelatory. Étienne began by noting, “I find myself at the end of my annual retreat. Perhaps this will be the last of my life. Facing death, I sense a need to write this farewell to the members of the little Company of the Mission.” Étienne begged the community members’ pardon for his many “iniquities.” He asked forgiveness “for the bad example” that he had given and for any pain that he had caused anyone. Finally, he asked pardon for the losses he had caused to the Congregation, “whether spiritual or temporal,” because of his mistakes in office. These sentiments show Étienne’s awareness of the shadow side of his life and his generalate.

Étienne confessed to being “confused by the respect, the confidence, and the affection” with which the members of the community surrounded him. He said he could only understand these expressions by seeing them as representing the “spirit of faith” that the community had in the office of superior general rather than in him personally. Étienne said, “I recognize, and I have always recognized, that I have

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100 In his biography, Rosset, published this spiritual testament for the first time. See *Vie Étienne*, 566.
101 Ibid.
102 Ibid. In his later years, a cult of personality surrounded Étienne. The highpoint of this was the celebration of his fiftieth anniversary. One commemorative card contained the following sentiments:

L'infirme et l'orphelin en lui trouvent un père,
Du pauvre et de la veuve il est le protecteur,
D'inombrables bienfaits remplissent sa carrière:
C'est que Vincent de Paul vit en son successeur.
Pour sa double famille il est brûlant de zèle,
Il lui donne et son cœur et ses soins assidus:
Sans relâche il travaille à la rendre fidèle
Aux plus parfaits conseils enseignés par Jésus.
Partout où le soleil fait briller sa lumière,
Vous voyez ses enfants, pleins d'une noble ardeur,
Former au saint amour l'âme du sanctuaire,
Secourir l'indigent, convertir le pêcheur.
Dieu lui donne en partage avec sagesse et force,
Paternelle bonté, ravissante douceur,
Dons de cœur qu'il tient lieu d'industrieuse amour
Pour attirer les coeurs au culte du Seigneur.
Guidé qui nous conduit
Vers le céleste empire,
Père qui nous chéris
Plus qu'on ne saurait dire,
Ah! digne du Seigneur
La tendresse infinie
Pour notre vrai honneur
Te prolonger la vie!!!

See, Étienne: Biographie, C 40, II 1°, Photographies et Images, ACMP.
103 Rosset, *Vie Étienne*, 566.
been unworthy to occupy the place of Saint Vincent.”\textsuperscript{106} He felt that his many faults revealed “how little I am filled with the spirit of our holy founder.” Étienne also recognized the effects of “the mediocrity of my talents, the obscurity of my birth, the incompleteness of my education, and the weak and indecisive nature of my character.”\textsuperscript{107} Over the years, any enemy of Étienne would have found much here to agree with.

In light of his many faults and failings, Étienne again confessed “with the sincerity of my heart that I would be desolated if anyone attributed the least part” of the Congregation’s successes during my generalate to me personally. He believed that his failings had been “true obstacles” to the execution of “the designs of providence for the children of Saint Vincent.” Therefore, as he had stated repeatedly, “God alone” was responsible for the fact that vocations to the Congregation had increased greatly and the community’s works “had become numerous and prosperous.”\textsuperscript{108}

Étienne’s only acknowledgment of a positive personal trait was his lifelong “ardent love for the Company,” and its members. The “only true joy” he experienced in his life was “the community’s successes.” He believed that the two central convictions of his life had been gifts from God. The first conviction was that God had reserved a great destiny for the Company in the Church. Because he had believed this with all his heart, he said that he had found his work as general to be “so rewarding.” This was also the reason that he “was so happy” as general even with “the fatigue and concerns” that came with his responsibilities.\textsuperscript{109}

The second grace that Étienne felt God had given him was “the intimate conviction that the Congregation’s existence, prosperity, and future depended on its fidelity to its primitive spirit and to Saint Vincent’s rules and teachings.”\textsuperscript{110} He repeated that his belief in this insight was so strong that he always had preferred “to see the Congregation suppressed” than for it to permit the least change in its constitutions.\textsuperscript{111} He rejoiced that he could say that after two hundred years the handiwork of Saint Vincent “had not undergone the least alteration or change.”\textsuperscript{112}

The century’s revolutions and troubles had never frightened him, since he knew they were always “the means used by providence to enlarge the Community’s mission and give it new elements of pros-

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 566-67.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 567-68.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 568. Étienne referred to even the suggestion of making any change in the constitutions or Common Rules as a “form of heresy.” See, for example, Etienne, Circulaires, 3: 136.
\textsuperscript{112} Rosset, Vie Etienne, 567-68.
perity." Since it did not have to worry about external threats, Étienne believed that "the Company's future existence would be assured if it faithfully observed its rules, customs, and constitutions." He predicted that if the community ever descended into "decadence" it could trace this sad end back to the moment when it first "modified or neglected" its primitive spirit. He left these two convictions to his successor "as a precious legacy." Finally, Étienne "pleaded" with his confreres to join with the new superior general to see that this terrible fate never befell the community.113

"His thoughts are not our thoughts," this quotation from the prophet Isaiah formed the theme of Étienne's 1871 New Year's circular letter.114 The general wrote from Brussels. Étienne had fled to Belgium following France's startling six-week defeat in the Franco-Prussian War. On 15 July 1870, France had declared war on Prussia. By the end of July, the Prussians were deep in French territory. Meanwhile in Paris, the celebrations for Étienne's anniversary took place as planned on 4 August. The following day, however, the Prussians defeated the French armies at Wissembourg. August was a month "of continual disasters" for the French culminating with the defeat at Sedan and the capture of Napoleon III on 2 September.115 In Paris, the Third Republic was declared and an emergency government of national defense established. On 5 September, as the Prussians began their march on the capital, Étienne fled the city.116 The four-month Prussian siege began soon after. Paris surrendered on 28 January 1871. The combatants signed a peace treaty on 10 May, in Frankfurt.117 The bloody Commune broke out in Paris at the end of March and continued for two months. In July 1871, Étienne returned to Paris in time for Saint Vincent's feast day celebration.

Étienne remarked that this July reunion was an emotional one. He gratefully recalled that during the Prussian siege and the Commune, the two mother houses remained unscathed. No priest, brother, or sister lost his or her life and "not even a hair on anyone's head was harmed."118 What he found just as remarkable, was that "in the midst

113Ibid.
114Isaiah 18: 32. Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 433.
115Rosset, Vie Étienne, 522.
116All non-essential personnel from the mother house dispersed to the provinces. The novices and students took refuge at the Berceau. See Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 437-38.
117The Prussians claimed Étienne's home province of Lorraine as spoils. According to the treaties ending the war, anyone born in the annexed areas who was living elsewhere in France had to declare his/her nationality option. On 17 September 1872, Étienne declared his "option for French nationality." Étienne: Biographie, C 40, II 2°, W° 7, ACMF.
118Étienne, Circulaires, 3: 442.
of a profound disturbance and disastrous events nothing stopped the Company's progress nor interrupted the flow of its vocations."119 That same year, the community opened two new houses in France, and twenty-four French missionaries departed for the foreign missions.120

Étienne repeated his now standard claim that this providential protection "was without precedent in the Company's history."121 He concluded: "In times that humanly speaking seem so evil and tormented, we find the community to be in a position that is so consoling that we must repeat the words of the prophet, *digitus dei hic* [the finger of God is here]."122

Beginning in 1856, Étienne's health showed the first signs of decline as he underwent painful and primitive surgery for gallstones. In subsequent years, these health problems and operations increased in frequency. By late 1873, Étienne's physical decline was precipitate. In the early days of March 1874, the community gave up all hope for his recovery.123

On 7 March, after receiving the last sacraments, Étienne bade the community farewell.

I understand the emotions that you are feeling now. Containing mine would be difficult for me, if I had not been preparing for this sorrowful circumstance and this religious ceremony for a long time. At the [sexennial] assembly held last July, I told the confreres that I sensed my end approaching. My age and my infirmities were the warning signals sent by the Lord to tell me that my mission was ending...I said then that I wanted my last words to be those of Saint Vincent, "I am going to rejoin the great family of heaven. I trust in the mercy and goodness of Our Lord." Please do not forget me in your prayers, Messieurs and very dear brothers, so that the Lord may pardon my sins. I ask pardon of all my confreres whom I have caused any pain. I have never willingly done so, but if I nevertheless have, I am sorry. Pray that Our Lord will receive me into heaven with Saint Vincent. One must be pure to enter heaven. Yes, ask Our Lord to make me the object of his mercies and pardon my sins. May he give efficacy to the sacrament I have received. When I arrive before his divine Majesty, may I hear the words of the gospel, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter the joy prepared for you for all eternity by your Lord." Oh, how at these last moments I give thanks to Our Lord for all the

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119Ibid.
120Ibid., 3: 443.
121Ibid.
123Notice sur les derniers moments de notre très-honorable Père, M. Jean-Baptiste Étienne, supérieur général de la Congrégation de la Mission et des Filles de la Charité, Décédé le 12 mars 1874 (Paris: Librairie Firmin Didot Frères et Fils, 1874). ACMP.
graces he has given me and the Double Family of Saint Vincent! I ask you to join me in thanking him. Yes, the Congregation is today what it was in the times of Saint Vincent. The primitive spirit animates it. It is our Lord who has done all this. To him alone be the glory! When I am no more, I ask you. I beg you, not to attribute any of this to me. It is to God alone, the author of all good, who must receive this glory.

Nevertheless, I cling to one thing, and this no one can contest, my great love for the Congregation! Oh Yes, Messieurs and my dear brothers, I have loved the Double Family of Saint Vincent above all else. I have consecrated my entire life to them, all my strength, and all my affections. I have loved them more than my own life! Remember to tell all my confreres around the world; priests, students, novices, and brothers that if by the immense mercy of God, I am allowed into heaven, I will carry my love for each of them there. In leaving this earth, I have the firm hope of being able to love them from on high for eternity.124

Jean-Baptiste Étienne died at 11:00 P.M., on 12 March 1874. The next morning, his body lay in state in the mother house. The funeral took place at the mother house on Monday, 16 March. A variety of civil and religious dignitaries filled the chapel to overflowing. Louis Mellier, the new vicar general, celebrated the requiem mass. Cardinal Joseph-Hippolyte Guibert, the archbishop of Paris, gave the absolution. Following the services, a long funeral cortege made its way to the Montparnasse cemetery. Here, Jean-Baptiste Étienne found a temporary resting place.

At the request of the Ladies of Charity, the government permitted Étienne’s reburial in the mother house chapel.125 On 11 September 1874, Étienne’s successor as superior general, Eugène Boré, presided over his reinterment in a tomb under the chapel’s center aisle.126 A marble slab covers Étienne’s final resting place. It bears the inscription:

124 Étienne, Derniers Moments, 20-21, ACMP.
126 The twenty-third general assembly had elected Boré as superior general earlier that day.
All the major Parisian newspapers noted Étienne's death. Typical was the obituary that appeared in the 18 March, edition of L'Union.

The press is never too busy to note the death of a great and good man. Such a man was the Very Reverend Étienne, the superior general of the priests of the Mission and the Sisters of Charity. Seeing his funeral celebrated yesterday on the rue de Sevres would have been enough for anyone to understand who this man was who has now left the earth. He was the head of the Lazarists, who have carried the benefits of Christianity and the French name to far away places. He was the chief of the angelic army of Charity that combats suffering and devotes itself to the touching apostolate of relieving all the miseries of humanity.

What a tribute for Father Étienne that two thousand Sisters of Charity and thousands of children under their care walked silently and respectfully alongside his remains as they traveled to their last resting place. What a respectful attitude the crowds of people had as they watched. They understand who their true friends are in this world. They have experienced the Church's maternal tenderness through the services of these religious and these holy daughters!

It would take many pages to recount the works of Father Étienne during his long life, and above all over the last thirty years. He increased sixfold the number of establishments of his order. Turkey, America, China, and Japan, now know that the house on the rue de Sevres is a center of Christian civilization because of the preaching, teaching, and charity that come from there. Under the government of Father Étienne the number of the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul has grown prodigiously... The name of Father Étienne has given prestige to his order! He was the object of profound veneration and religious and filial love! What power, and what authority! Father Étienne's work has contributed to the striking growth of the Church that we have witnessed in the

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127 The obituary notice is wrong on this point. Neither the Lazarists or Daughters of Charity had any missions in Japan.
second half of this century. He leaves an imperishable legacy that is very Catholic and very French.128

Conclusion

Jean-Baptiste Étienne did leave a legacy to the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity that was “very Catholic and very French.” Not surprisingly, however, while it was lasting, it was not “imperishable.” The communities that Étienne recreata were nineteenth century communities. He ingeniously designed them to adapt to and thrive under the unique combination of events, persons, and movements that characterized that era.

Through the end of the nineteenth century, and for more than the first half of the twentieth, the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity successfully functioned largely as established by Étienne within the ecclesial framework of the First Vatican Council. When the Second Vatican Council came, this Church and these nineteenth-century communities were swept away as quickly and completely as they were swept away at the time of the French Revolution.

At the end of his Notice, Étienne said that only one thought could end his work: Soli Deo honor et gloria (to God alone be honor and glory).129 However, more than one thought is appropriate. While fully acknowledging the ultimately mysterious role of divine providence, Jean-Baptiste Étienne personally presided over the successful rebirth of the Congregation of the Mission and the Company of the Daughters of Charity. His claims that the communities again appeared exactly as they had been when Saint Vincent founded them were mythically true. The communities had recaptured their “primitive spirit.” This achievement came at a great price, and brought great rewards.

At the end of the twentieth century, in an era that is still experiencing the revolutionary chaos engendered by Vatican II to acknowledge that Jean-Baptiste Étienne was the “second founder” of the Double Family of Saint Vincent is also to acknowledge that the Double Family now awaits another rebirth and perhaps its third founder.

128 Étienne, Notice, 76.
129 1 Timothy 1:17
vue l'autorité 3. Dupuis, général
de mi ne 3 importa ne.
L'amour de Votre Ingenieur,
chrs Compeio,
Votre Divone Servitude

[Signature]

Autograph signature of
Jean Baptiste Etienne