Ile-de-France
Saint Vincent with begging bag,
parish church, Fontainebleau
Once Vincent de Paul began supervising the development of the Congregation of the Mission and the Daughters of Charity, he rarely left Paris. His concern was worldwide, but the references in his writings show that he focused largely on the capital and the region around it, the Ile de France. Similarly, Louise de Marillac, in her younger years, visited and encouraged the Confraternities of Charity and her Daughters but gradually restricted her work to supervision from Paris. The significant places described here are listed simply in alphabetical order, while other sites are described in geographical relationship to the principal ones. Their Vincentian history is rich and complex.
1. Argenteuil
2. Brie-Comte-Robert
3. Crécy-La Chapelle
4. Ecouen
5. Étampes, Étréchy, Dourdan
6. Fontainebleau
7. Frenneville, Valpuiseaux, Mespuits
8. Grigny
9. Meaux
10. Montmorency
11. Ollainville
12. Orsiny (Saclay)
13. Poissy
14. Pontoise
15. Port-Royal-des-Champs
16. Rueil-Malmaison
17. Saint-Cyr-l'École
18. Saint-Germain-en-Laye
19. Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône
20. Vaux-le-Vicomte
21. Versailles
22. Vert-le-Grand
23. Villepreux
When Vincent received the property of Saint Lazare, he also received most of the properties elsewhere that belonged to the ancient priory. Among those properties was land at Argenteuil. As part of his missionary work, he was present for the foundation of the Confraternity of Charity (for women) at the parish of Argenteuil, 24 August 1634. Louise came here to visit the confraternity in 1639. The old church that he knew is no longer standing, but in its place is the basilica of Saint Denis, finished under Napoleon III in 1864. A large modern window of Saint Vincent de Paul recalls, perhaps unconsciously, his presence in the parish.

The present parish church also contains an important relic, the Holy Tunic. It is said that the empress Irene gave this relic of the passion of Jesus, the “seamless garment,” to Charlemagne in Constantinople in the year 800. He in turn gave it to one of his daughters, Theodrade, a nun in the abbey of Argenteuil. It remained in the abbey until the Revolution, and was later restored to the Church and placed in the new parish church, since the abbey had been destroyed. No record mentions that Vincent came here to venerate it, but it is highly probable, given its proximity to Saint Lazare and the founder’s presence in the parish. (Basilica of Saint Denis, 17, rue des Ouches, Argenteuil) The city of Argenteuil today numbers around 95,000 inhabitants.

West of Argenteuil is the old town of Houilles, today a thriving city of some 30,000. Daughters of Charity came here to work for the poor beginning in 1655. As with most of their early foundations, it is difficult to locate their home, since these were often rented, a common practice even in the upper levels of contemporary society, and there were only two or three Sisters living there.

Farther west is Sartrouville. We are better informed here about the work of the Daughters. Vincent wrote: I am going to Pontoise at the first opportunity. I have heard about a young woman there. I shall hire her for Sartrouville where Madame de Villeneuve wishes someone. (Letter 86, 17 October 1631) Oral tradition says that the founder himself inaugurated the work of the Daughters at the Charity here. They were certainly here from 1728, maintained their service here even after the Revolution and continue this old mission.

North of Argenteuil are four other towns which Louise visited during her inspection and encouragement of the Confraternities of Charity. The date of
her visit is unknown, but she left interesting comments about the Charities in Conflans (now Conflans-Sainte-Honorine), Herblay, Franconville, and Sannois. The proximity of these places to each other demonstrates how developed the Charities must have been, even from an early date.

**BRIE-COMTE-ROBERT**

This town is the former capital of Brie-en-France, an area east of Paris in the Ile de France. It is still an agricultural market, and its restored street signs show the many streets and lanes devoted to various products. Today, the town has a population of about 11,000.

The town takes its name from Robert, count of Dreux, lord of Brie, and brother of Louis VII. The town has borne his name since the twelfth century when Robert had the castle built. This building is now gone, and all that remains above ground are its walls and corner towers, somewhat restored. Archaeological work has taken place to learn more about the ancient castle. A water-filled moat surrounds the site.

The *parish church* of Saint Étienne is of Vincentian interest since Vincent lived here for a time and certainly prayed and celebrated the eucharist in the church. A Confraternity of Charity had existed from 1628, and it appears likely that Vincent himself was present for its inauguration, since he signed the document establishing it. It seems that Antoine Portail (1590-1660), Vincent's first companion in the Congregation, had given a mission in this town in 1635, since Vincent replies to one of Portail’s letters written from here. Perhaps Vincent himself gave a mission in 1638, the occasion for his only extant letter written from this town, dated 8 May of that year. In the terrible period of civil wars in 1649, many churches were despoiled, among which was this one. As a mission was already being given, Vincent decided to add public acts of reparation for sacrileges. In this, he was following the lead of the Company of the Blessed Sacrament, to which he belonged. The parish church at Férolles-Attilly joined with Brie-Comte-Robert in this effort.

The church of Brie-Comte-Robert
is Gothic in style, begun in the thirteenth century. Its patron, Saint Étienne (Stephen) is represented in a sculpted and gilded wooden statue and in a large painting over the main altar. The pulpit might be original, coming into use, as other pulpits did, in the early seventeenth century. If so, Vincent probably preached from it. Only a small picture of him recalls his ministry in this church.

In the first chapel to the right is a life-sized canvas of the Lord of Charity. It depicts, in an original style, the standing resurrected Lord of Charity, arms outstretched downward, with the marks of the nails evident in his hands and feet. Louise probably sent this painting, and several others like it elsewhere, from Paris to the Confraternities of Charity. The purpose was to help the members realize that the service rendered to the poor was rendered to the risen Jesus. The two biblical texts in French on the top reinforce this. Left: “Come, beloved of my Father, to take possession of the kingdom prepared for you since the beginning of the world.” Right: “Because I was hungry, you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink; I was sick and you visited me.” At the bottom is this text: “The Charity of Jesus Christ urges us on. Cor 25.” (The correct reference is 2 Cor 5:14.) This Charity began in April 1631.

Beginning after 1641, Vincentians preached missions in and around Brie Comte Robert. They assumed this obligation as part of the contract for the house in Annecy, signed in 1639. It is unknown how long this obligation continued to be fulfilled.

Daughters of Charity came to Brie, called in those days Brie-en-Beauce, to serve the poor. They began in 1664 and probably remained until the Revolution.

CRÉCY-LA-CHAPELLE

The present town of Crécy-La-Chapelle was formed administratively from two others. The main one, Crécy-en-Brie, was the site of a foundation in Vincent's time. The former community house is now a poor place on Rue des Caves. At first, the Vincentians had to lodge in a tumbledown chateau and relied on five large farms to support their works. Nothing remains of the chateau today, however. Vincentians had come here to work in the rural missions in the diocese of Meaux. As usual with other early foundations, the priests also conducted ordination retreats and helped in rural parish churches as needed.

In the old town of Crécy Vincentians occasionally served the parish church of Saint Georges. The only reminder of their presence is the ever-present statue of Saint Vincent de Paul. Remains of the Vincentian church, dating at least from the thirteenth century, can be detected in some bits of stone carving put up on the walls. The present church was built between 1779 and 1781. Vincentians remained here until the Revolution.
Existing documents show that the founder encountered various problems with the Crécy foundation. In particular, the bishop of Meaux, Dominique Séguier (1593-1659), supported the Congregation when its funding evaporated and in 1654 Vincent had to withdraw several of his confrères. Ladies of Charity were also active here in Vincent's time. Daughters of Charity served in the hospital and ran a school from 1757. They returned in 1856 to the hospital.

The other original town was La Chapelle, called after the still-standing Gothic chapel. Crécy-La-Chapelle today has a population of about 3300 inhabitants.

**ECOUEN**

Ecouen is the birthplace of Jean and Philippe Le Vacher, priests of the Congregation of the Mission, and both missionaries in Algiers. Jean, the more famous, was born 15 March 1619 and baptized in the parish church (Saint Acceul or Achuel) on the same day. Perhaps because Jean and Philippe's uncle was André Duval (1564-1638), Vincent's one-time spiritual director and counselor, Jean attended the Bons Enfants in Paris. He came to know Vincent personally during the latter's visits there from 1640 to 1643. He was also sent to Ireland in 1646 while still a student. By 1652, he was in Algiers. A plaque in the baptistery recounts the main events of his life: "Here on the 15
March 1619 was baptized, by Jean Baroche, pastor of the parish and canon of the collegiate church of Montmorency, Jean Le Vacher son of Philippe [Le Vacher] and Catherine Butefer. A very worthy son of Saint Vincent de Paul, he was consul of France and Vicar Apostolic, defender and confessor of the faith. He died at the mouth of a cannon on the breakwater at Algiers, on 26 July 1683. The Sons of Saint Vincent de Paul [erected this on 17 July] 1927. Jean had been seized by rioters and killed in revenge for his alleged complicity in the French bombardment of Algiers.

The church building clearly has two parts, the older being the choir and sanctuary, familiar to the Le Vacher family.

The stained-glass windows come from the Renaissance period and are contemporary with the older section of the church, dating from 1536. The newer section dates from the early years of the eighteenth century, and the façade is from the mid-nineteenth century.

The Le Vacher family home is on the re-named Place Jean Le Vacher, a few steps behind the church, at number 2. A plaque above the main door of the house reads: "In this house was born, on 15 March 1619, Jean Le Vacher, missionary of Saint Vincent de Paul, French consul at Algiers, put to death at the mouth of a cannon for his country by order of the Dey, on the breakwater of Algiers. 26 July 1683. This memorial was offered by the Historical Society of Pontoise, 1927." Vincent sent him to Algiers to help care for enslaved Christians. Many letters between him and the founder still exist. They offer an extraordinary witness to the trials of their fellow-Christians in Algiers.

Exactly how Jean died depends on who is recounting it. Some have him seated, tied to a chair, and facing the can...
non that eventually fired into him. Others have him facing out to the harbor. Others have him tied to the mouth of the cannon or even stuffed inside it—the most romantic version and the least likely. It seems more probable that he was tied to a plank across the mouth of the cannon and then shot out to sea, partly to terrify the attacking navy in the harbor. The cannon itself, renamed “La Consulaire” by the French, had been cast in 1542. Some say it exploded. Others assert that the French brought it to Brest in 1830, where it was reerected at the military harbor (not in Jean Le Vacher’s honor but as an item of war booty). Some interest was shown in his cause for beatification and canonization as a martyr but it has not progressed.

Jean’s younger brother, Philippe, also joined the Congregation. Born in 1622, he joined on the same day as his brother, 5 October 1643. Before his ordination in Marseilles in 1650, he worked as a missionary in Algiers. Afterwards, he returned to Tunis to a rough missionary life. After twelve years he left in the company of 70 slaves he had ransomed, and then spent the rest of his years in the Vincentian house at Fontainebleau. Catherine Buteler, their mother, was, like her two sons, very devoted to Vincent. At her death, she was buried at Saint Lazare, and Vincent called her this good mother of such worthy children. (Conference 178)

Ecouen is also the site of the National Museum of the Renaissance.

Despite its out-of-the-way location, it is worth a visit since it contains art and artifacts from the period of Vincent and Louise. Ecouen today numbers about 5000 people.

**ETAMPES, ETRÉCHY, DOURDAN**

Another site of works of charity by the Vincentians and the Daughters of Charity is Etampes, a large town of about 22,000 people, west of Valpuiseaux. Next to the imposing colle-
The Daughters and Vincentians were here to help in 1652, during the Fronde, and saw to the establishment of soup kitchens serving hundreds in several surrounding villages: Guillerval, Saint-Arnoult-en-Yvelines, Villeconin and Étréchy. The parish church of Villeconin keeps alive the memory of Vincent's establishment of this service in the courtyard of the castle facing it. Probably because of the dedication of these priests, brothers and sisters, testimony preparing for Vincent’s beatification was taken during 1705 in the chapel of the Étampes Hôtel Dieu. Although this hospital is partly abandoned and in ruins, the chapel (dated 1559) is a registered historical building. In gratitude for the work of the Daughters of Charity and the Vincentians, the people erected a large iron cross near the twelfth-century church of Saint Basile. It was still standing about 1860, but has disappeared. During the Fronde, the Vincentians lodged as the guests of Guillaume de Lamoignon at his imposing chateau of Bâville, above Saint-Chéron. He was the son of the pious Chrétien François de Lamoignon and Marie Des Landes, supporters of the charitable endeavors of Vincent and Louise. The exhausting work of the Vincentians for the poor had ruined the health of several of them, with one dying at the chateau. Daughters of Charity worked here from 1689.

In the parish church of Saint-Étienne at Étréchy, a traditional window of Saint Vincent and the foundlings (which Vincentians installed in 1898) recalls the tradition that Vincent had ministered here. Behind the church used to be a small priory established to look after the sick. Vincent is said to have come here to minister during a plague, but no record exists. Today, the town numbers about 6000 persons.
Not far from Étampes is Dourdan, another site of the charitable work of the Daughters of Charity in the lifetime of the founders. As elsewhere, they worked for the sick poor and cared for young children, imparting the rudiments of an education. Their service in the hospital, however, may have begun only in 1663. It is known that Vincent visited the area in 1637. Why he came here to this area on the way to Chartres, and where he went exactly, are unknown. (Letter 268) It is likely, however, that he was on some business concerning property. The Daughters continued here at the Hôtel Dieu after the Revolution, probably until about 1904. Shortly before they left, the hospital chapel was adorned with stained glass windows in honor of Saints Louise and Vincent, and John Gabriel Perboyre. Over the altar is the large painting depicting the death of Saint Vincent, the work of M.L. Roux, dated 1877.

Another Vincentian connection is Blessed Marie Poussépin (1653-1744). Following her mother’s example, Marie became a Lady of Charity at the Hôtel Dieu of Dourdan. She founded the Dominican Sisters of Charity. Pope John Paul II beatified her in 1994.

**FONTAINEBLEAU**

The hamlet of Fontainebleau had been one of the preferred hunting lodges of the French kings at least since the twelfth century. Under François I, the old buildings began to disappear, and the present somewhat haphazard chateau began to take shape. Louis XIII, in fact, was born at Fontainebleau and made it one of his favorite residences.

René Alméras, Vincent’s successor as superior general, presided at the establishment of a Confraternity of Charity here, 26 November 1644. This led eventually to the foundation of a Charity hospital, where Vincent installed the first Daughters of Charity in August 1646. He came here also because of his royal duties, especially for the Council of Conscience meeting in July 1646. Other visits may be reasonably supposed.

Anne of Austria wanted to further the moral development of her son, Louis XIV, especially after the death of Cardinal Mazarin and the king’s accession that same year, 1661. Consequently, she considered replacing the Mathurins (the Trinitarians, founded by John of Matha) as the pastors of Avon (the main town near the hamlet of Fontainebleau). In her estimation, these priests were...
unfit to be the royal chaplains. Because of her interest in Vincent and his priests and, out of esteem for their piety and dedication, the queen arranged for the king to invite them to Fontainebleau. They would have charge of the royal parish in a town already influenced by the Confraternity and the work of the Daughters of Charity at the “Royal Charity for Women,” now the site of the city library. The same Alméras who had begun the Confraternity here tentatively accepted the king’s offer.

After much discussion, Alméras concluded an agreement, and the king assigned the town chapel of Saint Louis, built under Louis XIII, to the Congregation of the Mission. The Mathurins raised several objections. In 1667-1668, after difficult negotiations between the two congregations over matters such as precedence at royal occasions and loss of income, the former Trinitarian chapel was erected as an independent parish.

Ten Vincentians were assigned to Fontainebleau. Along with fulfilling their parish duties, they also gave parish missions and were the chaplains for the royal palace. This was of particular importance, of course, while the court
was present. The former Vincentian residence, at the side of the parish church, no longer stands, a city building having replaced it. It had been the former Hôtel de Martigues and opened out on a public market, still in use. Vincentian presence is remembered in the “Cour de la Mission,” the name given to the site of the residence.

The main doors of the parish church have carved high relief figures of Saint Louis on one door, and Saint Vincent de Paul on the other. He is carrying a scroll in one hand and a begging bag in the other, an unusual depiction. His statue also adorns the façade, dated in its present condition to 1868. In the interior of the church two windows depict Saint Vincent. The principal one, above the main altar, shows him celebrating mass. The image itself comes from the engraving of his vision of the “Three Globes,” which took place as he celebrated the eucharist one day. These globes represented for him the souls of his friends Jane Frances de Chantal and Francis de Sales. As a subject for a full window, it is probably unique.

The other window, in poor condition, shows Saint Vincent giving the rules to the Daughters of Charity. These sisters remained here, with some gaps, until recent years. Shortly after their arrival, they discovered that it would be difficult to secure enough funds for their living expenses. Louise told them to not be ashamed to beg from the rich, even from the stingy queen herself. On their departure, the Daughters presented the church with a medieval statue of Mary, kept in their convent for over a century. It is above the main altar of the Mary Chapel. A modern sculptor, Heidi Story, has also depicted him helping a foundling child. Her statue dates from 1984.

A wall plaque records the names of the pastors, the first dozen of whom were Vincentians. They remained here from 1691 until the Revolution. A great Vincentian missionary, Philippe le Vacher (1622-1679), returned to France after years of work in North Africa. He was assigned to Fontainebleau until his
death. He was buried in the choir of the church, but his tomb is no longer visible. Another pastor was Antoine Durand (1629-1708), whose valuable memoirs of Fontainebleau were published in 1900.

In the palace itself are two chapels, of which one, the Trinity Chapel, is open to the public. Louis XIII dedicated it in 1633, and the Mathurins (or Trinitarians) staffed it at the time—hence its name. In the chapel, several significant events took place, including the marriage of Louis XV to Marie Leczinska.
(1725). Although the Mathurins retained the title of "perpetual preachers" at the chateau, the Vincentians alone were responsible for this chapel and for the celebration of the sacraments. It is unknown what, if any, advice the Vincentians gave to Louis XIV on the occasion of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 18 October 1685, which took place in the palace, and which caused harsh reactions in France and elsewhere in Europe. The other chapel, called after Saint Saturnin, was reserved in the seventeenth century for the servants of the palace. It had the distinction of being the chapel where, in 1162, Thomas Becket was ordained a bishop.

It is also noteworthy that Pius VII, who had visited the parish church in 1805, remained in Fontainebleau as Napoleon's prisoner from June 1812 to 21 January 1814. A plaque in the parish church records these sad events. Today, Fontainebleau numbers around 16,000 residents.

The Vincentians briefly had a house in Avon. The minor seminary of Meaux transferred here in 1882 but remained only until 1890, when it moved again.
FRENNEVILLE,* VALPUISEAUX, MESPUITS

In the countryside southeast of Paris is the small hamlet of Frenneville, located in the commune of Valpuiseaux. Charlotte de Ligny, the marquise of Herse (d. 1662), gave Vincent two farms, at Frenneville and Mespuits (23 July 1635), and he went to visit the property at that time. He came on his own several times, for example, in 1636, 1638 (for his health) and 1644. He also came to Valpuiseaux to visit the Daughters whom he sent there to work among the rural poor in 1647. Their work was to visit them in their homes and to teach their young girls. Vincent fled here in early 1649 to escape the wrath of leaders of the Fronde. Valpuiseaux felt the effects of this civil war terribly, with starving soldiers, desperate refugees, and ravenous animals terrorizing the inhabitants. Vincent wrote several letters at the farm, and he used his time here also to give a mission in the region. The Vincentian farm and its buildings were seized 19 November 1792 and sold to benefit the State.

At Frenneville, in a small field adjacent to D837, stands the tiny chapel (only six by six meters), Notre Dame de Varennes. This stone building dates from 1313. Vincent certainly celebrated mass here, and its old altar stone is preserved in the Vincentian museum at the Paris motherhouse. At the Revolution, the chapel was sold, but the bishop of Versailles reconsecrated it in 1872. It was restored to its present condition beginning in 1972.

Vincent’s farmhouse still stands. The window next to the faded sundial is pointed out as the room he used. The property and buildings are in private hands. (26, rue de Petit Frenneville)

A witness for Vincent’s beatification, Pierre Gâtineau, a farmer in Valpuiseaux, testified that Vincent cared for the poor, giving them seed, tools, and clothing in their time of great need. Others testified at the same time to his good reputation in the area. Today, Valpuiseaux and Frenneville number around 600 people.

The property at Mespuits is less well known. Vincent had others run it for him, but he regularly received income from it. As a prominent landholder, he also was able to increase and centralize his property in Mespuits, a policy followed by his conferees after his death. Many contracts attest to his intense management of his property, and it is still productive and beautiful land. He was also in contact with the local pastor, whom he gifted, at least once (1644) with some vestments for the parish. The parish church boasts one large stained glass window of the saint, a nineteenth-century window of him with foundlings. It recalls his presence in Mespuits, today a village of perhaps 200 people.

GRIGNY

On 21 January 1635, Nicolas Le Camus and his wife gave Vincent an important farm in this suburban location near Evry. This property, now completely urbanized, is in the town of Ris-Orangis, just on the border of Grigny. This industrial zone is called the Lands
of Saint Lazare (Terres de Saint Lazare), undoubtedly keeping the name of its famous proprietor. Otherwise, there is nothing to distinguish this property as Vincentian. The whole area of Grigny numbers nearly 25,000 persons, testimony to its recent growth. (Route D310, and Route de Grigny)

It appears that Vincent came here to visit Geneviève Fayet, Madame Goussault (d. 1639), who had her country home in Grigny. Widowed at a young age, she gave herself unstintingly to works of charity and was the first to have the idea of an association of ladies to serve the sick poor in the Hôtel Dieu in Paris. It is certain that Vincent came to visit her in Grigny in 1636, and he probably returned later in 1638 or 1639, the year of her death. He also sent Louise here at various times.

MEAUX

Throughout his episcopate, Dominique Séguié (1593-1659), bishop of Meaux, had experienced the works of Vincent in his diocese. The Vincentian house at Crécy-en-Brie, for example, although it had faced difficulties, was in

his diocese. Louise visited the Confraternities of Charity in the diocese, as well. In 1645, this bishop founded a seminary in Meaux, staffed by diocesan clergy. It was not well run and, in 1658, he invited the Congregation of the Mission to assume its direction. A few Vincentians went there but, because of financial problems caused by bad management by the diocese, the Community chose to leave in 1661. One reason may have been the recollection of the sordid story of the seminary at Saint-Méen in Brittany. The seminary buildings at Meaux no longer exist, apart from the chapel. This building, originally part of the Jean Rose Hospital, is located at the end of Rue Saint Rémy. It now forms part of the Lycée Henri Moissan. There is no indication that Vincent visited this foundation. Its work was complicated by the fact that the superior was at the same time the head of the seminary and the head of the hospital, which in some way continued to function. The chapel is not open to the public.

Neither is there any indication that Vincent ever visited the Convent of the Visitation, founded in Meaux in 1631. Nevertheless, since he was the ecclesiastical superior of the Visitation in Paris, he might have gone there, particularly since the convent opened in his younger years when he traveled more regularly. The Rue de la Visitation and the chapel of the Sacred Heart mark its location.

Daughters of Charity worked in the hospital in Meaux beginning in 1700. They had a school and other works from 1695 and returned in 1833 after the Revolution.
The dominant figure in Meaux during Vincent's period was its bishop, Jacques Benigne Bossuet (1627-1704), known as the Eagle of Meaux because of his eloquence. Bossuet had been the tutor of the Dauphin, the future king Louis XIV, before acceding to the see of Meaux. While here, he combated the considerable Huguenot influence in the city. A model and studious bishop, Bossuet had been formed in Vincent's image and was a member of the Tuesday Conferences. His private study retreat, a small building situated on the city walls behind the gardens of his episcopal palace, attests to many long hours of research and writing. Noteworthy guests at the palace included Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette, as they were being returned under revolutionary guard from Varennes to Paris in June 1791 after attempting to escape to the Austrians.

The exterior of the cathedral of Saint Étienne remains in poor condition, and certain details were never finished. The interior was restored in the eighteenth century, but not much renovation has been done since then. Bossuet is buried in the sanctuary, and two large statues of him are found in the side aisles of the church.

The Vincentians took up the Meaux seminary again from 1862 to the general expulsion of congregations in 1903. Meaux today numbers about 50,000 people.

MONTMORENCY

Montmorency is renowned for its beautiful chateau, formerly the seat of an important family. Vincent undoubtedly visited here on various missionary trips. In a letter written about 1634, he described for Louise at least one visit: Since my slight fever goes on, I decided to go on with your advice which is to do as I did in the past for it, enjoy some country air. I am going to try, therefore, to visit a few Charities and perhaps, if I feel well, I shall go as far as Liancourt and Montmorency to begin what you will be able to complete later. (Letter 198a) Daughters of Charity were also established here in the earliest days of their foundation, but it is unknown how
long they remained. Montmorency has a population today of around 20,000.

OLLAINVILLE

Although the identity of Louise's mother may never be discovered, she was a Marillac, a member of one of the most distinguished families of the kingdom. She naturally remained close to her one son, Michel, his wife Gabrielle and daughter, known affectionately as Little Louise. She also took an interest in the affairs of various relatives. Some of them had country estates in Ollainville near Champlan, south of Paris. In one letter (2667, dated September 1658), Louise consulted Vincent about the obligation she felt, even in her old age, of visiting Michel de Marillac, lord of Ollainville, and his wife Jeanne. Another letter in her correspondence (L. 594, 29 September 1658) suggests that she made the journey. Vincent's coachman and horses brought her here and back.

ORSIGNY (SACLAY)*

In 1644, a childless couple, Jacques and Elisabeth Norais, donated to Vincent their large farm, called Orsigny. In return for this land, today located in the town of Saclay, he assigned them a life annuity. Adrien Le Bon (1577?-1651), Vincent's predecessor as prior of Saint Lazare, first proposed the idea of acquiring this land, but Vincent was not keen on it. He signed the contract, however, 22 December 1644. Work began on the buildings and he eventually placed brothers here and hired other farm hands and women servants. Within a year of acquiring the land, Vincent, with his solid peasant background, purchased other properties in the area. For some years, he continued to increase his holdings, nearly doubling the original property by 1660. For example, some property was purchased in Villiers-le-Baclet, but the old buildings on this property have long since disappeared. Other property names listed in the records are Belleville, Villedombe and Toussus-le-Noble.

Because the farm was important—it provided at one point nearly one-sixth
of the needs of Saint Lazare—it was an attractive target. Marauding troops pillaged it during the Fronde in February of 1649. To help save the property, Vincent himself led away 240 sheep and two horses toward Valpuiseaux to the hamlet at Frennevillle. Since there was also a problem in Frennevillle, he then led them to a fortified town near Etampes (otherwise not identified). Some think that this town was Itteville, although nothing in Itteville confirms this suggestion.

After the death of the Norais couple, the two brothers of Madame Norais asserted that the farm had been illegally given to the Congregation and that it should revert to them. They went to court and won. In September 1658, Vincent had to withdraw his confreres from this farm that had been so important for the maintenance of Saint Lazare. He refused, as well, to appeal the verdict. Nevertheless, he was able to hold on to other nearby properties, since they had not been part of the original Norais farm. In 1663, the Congregation was able to return to part of the Orsinya property and, in 1684, regained the rest. Vincentians continued here until 1792. The saint apparently felt some guilt over his attachment to this farm, since he said once to his confreres:...God has taken away from us, with this farm, the satisfaction we had in possessing it and the pleasure we used to take in visiting it from time to time. As this recreation was pleasant to the senses, it might have been for us a sweet poison that slays, a knife that wounds, and a fire that burns and destroys. (Conference 189)

The farm still exists but is private property. The old entry gates lead in to the courtyard. Of primary interest is the oldest building. On its first floor is a series of rooms commonly referred to as the brothers' rooms. The main staircase
is old and well constructed, as is the carpentry work in the old loft adjoining their rooms. A separate chapel building has disappeared. The garden contains an icehouse (glacière), to contain ice gathered in the winter from the ponds adjoining the property and stored in the icehouse for use all through the year. The age of other outbuildings and walls is open to discussion, but at least the early appearance of this prominent farm can be appreciated from what remains.

The farm used to have bells dated 1663 or 1665, belonging to the Vincentian chapel. Their whereabouts today are unknown. (Country road west of Le Christ de Saclay)

During a particularly terrible period in the neighboring town of Palaiseau, on 5 June 1652, Vincent sent several of his confreres and a surgeon to offer spiritual and corporal help to the sick and starving. The lengthy presence of troops had reduced the inhabitants to misery. Nothing is known of any further ministry here. (Doc. 108)

POISSY*

Poissy, a royal residence as early as the fifth century, became particularly famous with the birth and baptism in 1214 of Louis IX, Saint Louis, king of France. He sometimes signed his name Louis of Poissy because of the fond recollection he had of this place. The men's abbey in the town has become a prison. The women's abbey, formerly Dominican, was closed at the Revolution. On the same spot, however, some of its works continue, notably the Institut Notre Dame, a school. A portion of the monastery grounds has been set aside as a public park. Louise, perhaps as young as three years old, was sent here under the care of her aunt, Catherine Louise de Marillac, a nun in this abbey. Jeanne de Gondi, aunt of Philippe Emmanuel de Gondi, was prioress in Louise's day—another of the strange coincidences that bound her and Vincent together.

This abbey was founded to honor Louis IX, whose birthplace is located where the convent chapel was built. Although many of the nuns were of the
highest nobility and adorned the buildings beautifully, they emphasized both piety and learning for the girls sent here for an education. It was probably here that Louise received her training in the classical Latin, philosophy and theology so apparent in her writings.

Some of the former abbey walls and buildings are still standing, mainly a part of the perimeter wall and gate towers, as well as the tithe barn. Nothing directly recalls the presence of Louise here, however. There is no record that she ever mentioned this part of her history in her later life.

The young Louise probably made her first communion in Poissy, most likely in the parish church. Vincent gave a mission in Poissy in February 1634. In 1636, he also worked to reestablish harmony among the Dominican nuns here. The parish church of Notre Dame, in which he preached, dates from the eleventh and twelfth centuries and preserves the baptismal font where Louis IX was baptized. However, it has no memorials to either Saint Vincent or Saint Louise. The modern town of Poissy has about 38,000 inhabitants.

**PONTOISE**

Pontoise has a rich ecclesiastical history, perhaps because it has a privileged geographical position, dominating from its heights the valley of the Oise. Saint Louis the king (Louis IX, 1214-1270) founded the Hôtel Dieu here, as he did in Paris, and he lived here for some time. After falling ill here in 1244, he vowed to go on crusade to the Holy Land if he recovered. Unfortunately, the crusaders were routed and the king taken prisoner. He returned to France, resumed the crusade in 1270 but died in Tunis. The church of Saint Maclou, a cathedral since the erection of the diocese in 1966, is renowned for its Renaissance art and architecture. The city today has a population of around 28,000.

The *parish church* of Notre Dame (sixteenth century) preserves the statues of Our Lady of Pontoise and Our Lady of Health, for which the first church was built in 1177. Within the parish is the Carmel of Pontoise, where Marie of the Incarnation, Madame Acarie, died in 1618. She had been influential in the development of the French school of spirituality and undoubtedly had an influence on Vincent.

Vincent's connection with Pontoise is not known. It is clear, however, that he visited several times (in 1631, yearly from 1636 to 1639, and probably in 1651), and personally knew the town magistrates. He may have gone through Pontoise on the way to Beauvais to conduct a formal visitation of the Ursulines there. His 1638 visit may have been occasioned by the plague of Pontoise in that year, but the details are unknown. The members of the ecclesiastical conference (the Tuesday Conferences) asked him to send them some help in developing their own conference. It seems quite possible that his friend Michel Alix, pastor of Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône, was a member, although
Pontoise was not in the diocese of Paris, to which Alix belonged.

A few kilometers down the river Seine from Pontoise is La Roche-Guyon, site of a work of the Daughters of Charity begun in 1654. They came here at the invitation of the powerful dukes of Liancourt, whose chateau still stands on the heights overlooking the Seine. The original work of the Daughters here was for the sick poor and in the school. It resumed in 1853 as a retirement home, probably lasting until about 1904 when sisters were routinely expelled from their works in France. The hospice, now a children's hospital, still exists on rue de l'Hospice.

Another work founded by a wealthy benefactress was the house at Chars, a few kilometers northwest of Pontoise. It opened in 1647 for the service of the poor and the education of children. The foundress, Charlotte de Ligny Madame de Herse (d. 1662), was very devoted to works of charity and to Vincent's two communities. She called for Daughters of Charity in various places besides here. Unfortunately, the Jansenist tendencies of the sisters' pastor and his associate caused them many problems, and they were obliged to leave Chars in 1657.

PORT-ROYAL-DES-CHAMPS*

The ancient Cistercian monastery for women at Port Royal near Chevreuse had, by the seventeenth century, become very lax. Angélique Arnauld (1591-1661), daughter of a powerful noble family, became abbess in 1602, at age eleven. She acceded, since the abbey was something of a family responsibility and she could earn a living as abbess. Following an illness, she began in 1609 to take religious life seriously—very seriously. One of the results of her reforming spirit was that novices flocked to Port Royal, despite its damp and otherwise unhealthy location. She also attracted Jean Duvergier de Hauranne (1581-1643), better known from his title as the abbé of Saint Cyran. He was a leader of the Jansenist movement, emphasizing religious conversion in a somewhat Calvinist fashion: austerity, detachment from pleasure, admission of total personal corruption.

As the monastery grew, expansion became necessary. For this reason, in 1625 Mother Angélique led all her nuns to a new house in Paris, also called Port Royal, near the Val de Grâce. Her reforming personality, joined with the power of her family and pushed by Saint

* Memorial chapel, Port-Royal, Chevreuse
Cyran, led to an ever-increasing popularity of the Jansenist movement. One of her brothers, Antoine (1612-1694), returned to the country location and attracted other men of like temperament. They lived on the hill above the old abbey in refurbished barns. One of their works was primary education. They became known as the “Solitaries” of Port Royal. A group of nuns from the city house who wanted to resume living at the abandoned abbey joined them in 1648.

The theologians of Port Royal found in the work of Jansenius, late bishop of Ypres, a good statement of their convictions. Gradually, Vincent became involved. He had been a friend of Saint Cyran’s and continued to visit him (probably at Port Royal in the city). Vincent eventually found himself as one of the leaders of the opposition against the Jansenist movement and promoted multiple papal condemnations. Louis XIV, as a loyal son of the Church, also became involved. He finally forbade the nuns to receive novices, dispersed the Solitaries and, when the nuns were mostly aged, had them removed and leveled their old monastery beginning in about 1710.

Today, the privately owned ruins of the old abbey may be visited. Only two original buildings are left: the tithe barn and the pigeon coop. A small memorial chapel (1891) has been erected on the site of the old abbey church. The “canal” or narrow waterway used by the nuns remains, as does their outdoor recreation area, tucked into a fold of the rocks along a creek. They read, sang, prayed, and conversed here.

To reach the residence of the Solitaries from the abbey, the traditional route follows the Hundred Steps cut into the hillside. The school that the Solitaries built in 1651-1652 has been turned into a museum. Many of the rooms are maintained as they were originally. Intriguingly, few references to Vincent’s work are to be found among the museum exhibits. It appears that the saint visited here at least once, in 1653. His purpose was to try to persuade the Solitaries to submit to the papal condemnation. He was not successful. Louise also visited, in 1649, concerning one of her relatives, a nun of this abbey. (Route D91, near Chevreuse)

**RUEIL-MALMAISON**

Although most French people know of Rueil (now called Rueil-Malmaison) because the emperor Napoleon and his first wife Josephine de Beauharnais lived here, the town also has Vincentian connections. Cardinal Richelieu made Rueil one of his official residences, perhaps to be close to Louis XIII, who lived at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Vincent came here to visit the cardinal minister in 1638, to sign the foundation contract for Richelieu, and then again in 1640. He certainly came here after the cardinal’s death, 4 December 1642. One reason was that the cardinal’s
niece, the duchess of Aiguillon, inherited his chateau, and Vincent had many dealings with this pious and charitable woman. Her castle, the Château du Val, no longer exists, but some of its grounds and artificial ponds remain where the Sandoz chemical company has its headquarters. (Rue de Zurich, Rue du Lac)

Vincent also probably came here to give a mission in 1637 (or at least a mission was given here that year). The parish church of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, visible today, had been completed just two years before. The architect of the façade, Lemercier, also designed the façade of the church at Richelieu, which it resembles. The present church also contains the tombs of the empress Josephine (1763-1814) and her daughter, Hortense (1783-1837). Hortense married Napoleon's brother Louis and was briefly queen of Holland. She died at Malmaison. Rueil-Malmaison is today a city of some 67,000 people.

SAINT-CYR-L’ÉCOLE

Saint-Cyr-L’École, with a population of about 15,000, is best known in France for the military academy Napoleon founded in this city in 1808. He lodged his young officers in a school with unusual Vincentian connections.

Françoise d’Aubigné, Madame de Maintenon (1635-1719), Louis XIV’s second wife, but not his queen, founded a school for the daughters of impoverished rural nobility at Saint Cyr. This opened in 1686 and enjoyed the king’s support. Her Maison Royale de Saint Louis gradually grew in fame but lacked discipline. Order was restored by turning the school increasingly into a convent and by inviting the Vincentians to provide its chaplains. After much hesitation, the superior general, Edme Jolly (1622-1697), agreed. Vincentians took up residence in August 1691. They had their own section of the building near the chapel with their own courtyard and garden. Their obligation was to staff the chapel and give religious instruction to the nuns, the girls and all the others associated with the institution. At the same time, the Vincentians, who numbered approximately six priests and three brothers, were free to give missions. They remained for 100 years, until the Revolution. Daughters of Charity came to work in the infirmary beginning in 1704 and remained until the Revolution. Louis Joseph François was one of the featured preachers for its centenary, July 1786. His printed eulogy of the foundress ran to 78 pages. The last religious left the school in 1793, and mobs pillaged the buildings, but the institution was later reconstructed and repaired, and the Daughters resumed their work in 1802.

Cookery formed a part of the training given the girls. It became so famous that it gave its name to the Cordon Bleu (blue cord) style, from the cord or perhaps the blue ribbon worn at ceremonies by the young women in their final year. Equally famous in the begin-
ning were two plays written by Jean Racine (1639-1699) for the girls to perform—a scandalous occasion in the opinion of some, including François Hébert, the influential Vincentian pastor at Versailles.

The chapel was heavily damaged in the bombing of 1944. After thorough restoration, it now forms part of the military academy and can be visited with special permission. It was noted as being especially bereft of decoration. The foundress, Madame de Maintenon, was buried here.

SAINT-GERMAIN-EN-LAYE*

A royal chateau on the heights of Saint Germain can be dated to sometime in the twelfth century. The old buildings were dilapidated by the time of François I (1494-1547), married in the chapel built by Saint Louis, which still stands. He then built what is substantially the present “old” chateau. Another much smaller building, the “new” chateau, stands on a marvelous height overlooking the plains and the city of Paris. Louis XIV was born in this new chateau on 5 September 1638.

Vincent had many connections with this royal residence. He is said to have given a mission here to the court in 1638, and his pulpit can be seen in the chapel of the former Daughters of Charity hospital. The Vincentians and the members of the Tuesday Conferences joined in the mission, and spoke, patiently, against the low-cut dresses of the ladies of the court. (Letter 307) Neither Vincent’s presence here nor the authenticity of the pulpit can be completely assured, however. The saint often visited the palace, particularly during the last days of Louis XIII, who died here 14 May 1643. The crucifix that Vincent used to comfort the monarch passed down through the royal family and is now to be seen in the hands of the saint’s effigy at the Vincentian motherhouse. Vincent, however, was only one among several persons at the monarch’s deathbed. Nevertheless, he retained a vivid memory of the king’s saintly death,
as he recounted to the Daughters of Charity: God gave me the grace to assist at the deathbed of the late king. He refused food. . . . He then did me the honor of summoning me and said: 'Father Vincent, the doctor has urged me to take some food and I refused him. . . . What do you advise me to do?' Vincent recommended that he take something and follow the doctors' advice, and so the king had some soup brought. (Conference 85)

A Confraternity of Charity began here in January 1638, perhaps because of Vincent's mission. Its members included ladies-in-waiting to the queen and wealthy ladies of the town. Daughters of Charity, too, arrived shortly afterwards in the same year to help the sick poor and to keep a school. The Ladies bought a hospice for the Daughters, 20 April 1649. This work continued only to 1655—since the work of caring for the sick proved too great for the elegant women of society.

Vincent came here also in 1648, during the difficult days of the civil war (the Fronde) to try to get Cardinal Mazarin to resign and thus restore peace to France. Vincent's brave and selfless appeal, however, came to nothing. He also came here on 13 February 1649 to discuss issues with Anne of Austria, who was battling the Fronde in self-imposed exile away from the Parisian mobs. Unable to return to Paris because of those mobs, Vincent went instead to Orsigny and Frenneville, and then extended his journey to the Community houses in Brittany.

The present parish church of Saint Germain is the fourth one erected on this spot since 1028. It was finished in 1827, although Louis XV had laid the cornerstone some sixty years before. It was in Saint Germain that Louis XIII had made his solemn vow dedicating his kingdom to the Virgin Mary, a theme often seen in paintings in French churches, and in one modern window here. The church has a small chapel in honor of Saint Vincent de Paul. The major commemorative work is a painting showing the charitable priest surrounded by his confreres, Daughters of Charity, Ladies of Charity and others. Vincent, however, was not pleased with the way the clergy celebrated mass here. He recalled one day: I was once at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, where I remarked seven or eight priests, all of whom said mass differently; one did it in one manner, another in another, it was a diversity worthy of tears. (Conference 206)

The church also contains the tomb of James II, king of England (1633-1701). He must have had some contact with French Vincentians while in exile during the Cromwell period (1653-1658). After succeeding his brother Charles as king in 1685, he invited and received four Vincentians to serve as his royal chaplains in London. After James was deposed in 1688, the Vincentians left England, the last Catholic chaplains at the English court. Louis XIV provided the English king and his wife hospitality
at the old chateau of Saint Germain, and
the royal couple often attended Sunday
and feast day vespers at Saint Lazare.
James II died in 1701 and requested bur-
ial here. George IV had the present mon-
ument built, and Victoria came in 1855
to visit the last home of her ill-starred predecessor.

The hospital used to contain one
(or perhaps two) of the paintings of the
"Lord of Charity." They must be quite
old, dating perhaps to shortly after 1638
when they arrived, inasmuch as the serv-
ing women depicted there are most like-
ly Daughters of Charity, but they are not
wearing the cornette. Its generalized use
began only in 1685. The reasons given
for this change of headgear were the use-
fulness of a head covering in summer
and winter while serving the poor in
their homes, and the uniformity sought
among the sisters. It had been worn up
to that time only when needed. The sis-
ters began their hospital work in 1692.
During the Revolution, a priest of the
Constitutional Church replaced their legiti-
mate chaplain, but the sisters refused to attend his masses or go to him
for confession. Another priest, some-
times disguised as a soldier or a garden-
er, would come for the sacraments
secretly.

Other hospitals followed, and the
present one is certainly the successor of
those earlier institutions. The modern
city of Saint Germain has a population
of about 40,000.

SAINT-OUEN-L'AUMÔNE

Across the river Oise from Pontoise
is Saint-Ouen-l'Aumône, a town of
about 19,000 people. The parish church,
although dating from the twelfth centu-
ry, was dedicated to this saint in 1499.
One of its treasures is a thirteenth-cen-
tury statue of the Virgin and Child, pre-
viously located in the neighboring abbey.
In Vincent's day, its pastor, Michel Alix
became his friend and was a member of
the Tuesday Conferences (probably the
one founded in Pontoise). As a token of
his friendship, he dedicated a book to
Vincent. Alix edited and, in 1651, repub-
lished this volume, the Hortus Pastorum
by Jacques Marchant. The founder
sought to discourage him from includ-
ing his laudatory introduction.

Alix probably also had a
Confraternity of Charity in his parish,
although records are lacking. The only
indication in the church is a copy of the
Lord of Charity, a painting that Vincent
and Louise had copied and sent to the
various Charities. It depicts the risen
Lord standing on a globe, arms out-
stretched downward, hands empty in a
gesture of charity. To either side of him
are groups of people engaged in corporal
and spiritual works of mercy. Below is
the Latin text "The charity of Christ
urges us on." Besides this rare painting,
there is no other reminiscence of
Vincent here.

Within the parish is the royal abbey
of Notre Dame La Royale, called
Maubuisson. Mostly destroyed during
the Revolution and later reconstructed,
this abbey had been founded in 1236 by
Blanche of Castile, queen of France,
mother of Louis IX. In Vincent's day, it became very important. One letter from him, dated 1630, mentions a trip to this abbey, perhaps during a visit to his friend Michel Alix. The purpose of his visit here is unknown. However, the abbé of Saint Cyran had once gone to Maubuisson to preach and had some connection with the nuns here. Angélique Arnauld, one of the great Jansenist figures, was sent here as abbess in 1619 to introduce reforms.

Also in the same town is property called Saint Lazare, now the site of a public park and a railway station. Perhaps this recalls property owned by the Saint Lazare of Paris, used here to support the Hôtel Dieu.

**VAUX-LE-VICOMTE**

The chateau at Vaux-le-Vicomte is one of the masterpieces of seventeenth-century French architecture. It was the creation of Nicolas Fouquet (1615-1680), superintendent (or minister) of finances under Mazarin. His taste was excellent and his funds apparently inexhaustible. When he imprudently invited the young Louis XIV and his mother to the midsummer party to dedicate his new chateau and its sumptuous grounds, the king felt humiliated by his own relative poverty. Nineteen days later, the finance minister was arrested and spent the rest of his life in prison, ostensibly for embezzlement or misappropriation of state funds.
Of Vincentian interest is the invitation from Nicolas to send Daughters of Charity to the adjoining village to work for the poor. They arrived in 1659. The Fouquet family had many dealings with Vincent and Louise. Marie de Maupeou, mother of Nicolas, was a Lady of Charity. Four of her daughters and one sister were Visitation nuns. A brother, François, was bishop of Bayonne, then of Agde, and lastly archbishop of Narbonne. He invited Vincent to send missionaries and Daughters to Agde and Narbonne. Another brother, Louis, succeeded François as bishop of Agde and had further dealings with Vincent. Louise visited Nicolas in his capacity as attorney general (procureur) concerning the contract of foundation of the Daughters of Charity. He lost or misplaced the document, and Louise was forced to begin again.

VERSAILLES***

Vincentians are often surprised to learn that the royal family (first Anne of Austria, then her son Louis XIV) engaged their confreres as parish priests and chaplains for the royal establishments at Fontainebleau, Versailles, Saint Cyr, and Saint Cloud. Service in these exalted surroundings, amid luxury, power and intrigue, seems to contrast markedly with Vincent’s spirit. The queen, however, had maintained close contacts with the founder and, after his death, summoned his confreres. Vincentians assumed control of the Fontainebleau church in 1661. Nearly eleven years later, in 1672, the king summoned the Congregation for the pastoral care of his intended residence, the old town of Versailles. Since the property had belonged to Albert de Gondi and later to Pierre de Gondi, brother of Philippe Emmanuel, on whose lands Vincent was obliged to give missions, he
may have done so even here. In any case, Louis XIII purchased its lands and chateau from Pierre de Gondi, a relative, for use as a hunting lodge. Louis XIV transformed it and Versailles completely. By the time of the Revolution, the Vincentians were pastors of its two most important parishes, as well as chaplains of the royal palace.

Versailles had an ancient parish church dedicated to Saint Julien. It was located in front and to the left of the present chateau, along Rue Saint Julien. Louis XIV wanted to replace it with a royal parish worthy of his new residence. He had another church built, also called Saint Julien, and the former one demolished. The second Saint Julien was to the west of the present Notre Dame parish. The Vincentians inaugurated their new house there, a royal foundation, on 6 October 1674. A mission preached in that church preceded their arrival. Then, after the funeral of Queen Marie Therese in 1683, it became clear that Versailles would need an even larger church to satisfy parish needs, since in 1682 the king, a parishioner, had moved to the unfinished chateau and transferred the seat of government here.

The king intended that all parochial ceremonies (baptisms, marriages, burials and processions) be held in the new church, Notre Dame de

Saint-Julien, Notre-Dame et la Maison des Missionnaires.

Floor plans, Saint Julien, Notre Dame and Vincentian house, Versailles
Jean Restout, Vincent preaching, Notre Dame church, Versailles

**Versailles.** He presided over laying the cornerstone of the new church, 10 March 1684, dedicated 30 October 1686. He reserved a special place for himself in the sanctuary on the epistle side. His new wife, Madame de Maintenon had a prominent place for herself and the numerous royal children, outside the grille enclosing the sanctuary, on the gospel side. The Vincentian parish clergy occupied the choir stalls, but all this has now been removed. The royal ritual continued during the two following reigns, Louis XV and Louis XVI. The old church, Saint Julien, became a chapel used until 1797 in various ways: for catechism, then for a seminary, later for a Revolutionary political club. It has completely disappeared, although its name is kept for a side altar in the new church.

The work of the architect Jules Hardouin Mansart, Notre Dame church today preserves much of its original appearance. It is well situated at the end of a street. Its height is somewhat restricted, since the king wanted his palace to dominate the town. The whole building is in the classical style favored in that period.

The interior has a wide nave and a barrel vault. Its decoration has always been solemn. The original furniture disappeared during the Revolution, except for the pulpit, some paneling and the organ case. Ten paintings also date to the time of the Sun King. Of Vincentian interest is the painting of Saint Vincent preaching to Emmanuel de Gondi and his family, the work of Jean Restout (1692-1768). The artist modestly included himself at the left, and on the right painted in two Vincentians—known from their high collars and distinctive beards—and two Daughters of Charity in the habits of the period. This canvas, exhibited in the 1739 salon, was painted for this church to mark Saint Vincent's canonization in 1737. Although this painting is found above the altar in a side chapel dedicated to the saint, the altar has no other decoration commemorating him. Vincent was somewhat con-
concerned about his preaching, as the artist seems to imply, and admitted to his confreres during a conference on preaching: [do] not do as I do: crying aloud, clapping my hands and leaning far too much over the pulpit. (Conference 136, 1655) In the nineteenth century, the church was refurbished, and the Blessed Sacrament chapel added.

The Vincentians had a large community house situated beside Saint Julien church. Like the church, the house has long since disappeared. In 1686, the king authorized a new and much larger house next to the present church. In 1710, for example, it held the extraordinary total of twenty-six priests, eight seminarians and six brothers. This house befitted one of the most splendid parishes of France, with its extensive gardens, large library, and gracious rooms for parish functions. This building still stands. (37-41, rue de la Paroisse)

The Vincentian pastors of Notre Dame and Saint Louis were both entitled to attend the formal morning rising of the king (the lever), held at the palace. Their presence allowed them to petition alms or other favors from the king. On one such occasion, Louis XV asked about the sick and the poor. “Do you have a lot of poor?” “Too many, Sire,” replied Joseph Baret (1703-1778), the pastor of Saint Louis, and known for being outspoken. “The numbers of the unfortunates are growing, too?” Yes, Sire. We even have valets from the palace looking for help.” To this, the king reportedly sighed, “I really think that we will have to pay dearly for this.” Whether the king was moved to help the pastor alleviate their poverty is unknown. The pastors were also entitled to bring the holy oils and Viaticum for the sick and dying to the palace, but the various royal chaplains had the responsibility to give the king communion (done rarely), distribute ashes for Lent, pray at formal meals, etc. In addition, under Marie Antoinette, the pastor of Notre Dame could take up a collection at the queen’s weekly gambling parties. She herself would pass among the guests to ask for money.

An event of significance for the Vincentian community was the episcopal ordination of one of its members in
This church. On 6 April 1704, the archbishop of Paris ordained François Hébert (1651-1728), the superior of the house, as bishop of Agen. Hébert had been the choice of the court for superior general in 1703. When this did not happen, Hébert became the first Vincentian bishop.

The Vincentians also bought property to house the Charity of the Poor. Beginning in 1670, Daughters of Charity served the poor here through their school and shelter. These latter two buildings are still standing, although somewhat remodeled. The Congregation also worked with the Ladies of Charity at this location. The king paid for the services of a physician to serve the poor here. (12-14, rue de la Paroisse) By the Revolution, the Daughters of Charity had several houses, but they were forcibly expelled by mobs that beat and whipped them. The sisters returned beginning in 1801.

From Notre Dame, the inaugural procession of the Estates General began, 4 May 1789, on the eve of the Revolution. Various plaques on the exterior of the building recount the history of this consultative body representing the three estates (clergy, nobility, commoners). The Vincentians remained until March 1791, by which date all religious congregations had been disbanded. The last pastor, André Aphrodise Jacob (1729-1792), was forced out by a constitutional bishop, who chose Notre Dame as his cathedral. This poor bishop lasted only from 1791 to 1793. The parish church was then adapted for use as a Temple of Reason but after the Concordat of 1801, it returned to Catholic worship. The Vincentians did not return, probably because they were too few in France at that period.

The second Vincentian commitment was to the royal chapel of the palace. Louis XIV summoned the Congregation to dedicate 14 of their confreres for this new service after about ten years at Saint Julien (1672-1682). In these capacities, the six priests, six seminarians and two brothers were responsible for the pastoral care of the court and prayers for the king. Their ministry included daily low masses and prayers, with a solemn mass at 10:00 when the king was present, and solemn benediction with the Blessed Sacrament on Sundays, Thursdays and feasts. When the king, the queen and the Dauphin received communion, they did so under both species, an ancient usage which the royal ritual maintained. Although the

Vincent de Paul defaced, Saint Louis church, Versailles
Vincentians did not hold the position of King's Confessor, they provided an opportunity for confessions by others. In the licentious atmosphere of the court, it was necessary. A special case concerned Louis XIV's mistress, Madame de Montespan (1641-1707). To receive absolution from her Vincentian confessor, the marquis had to leave court. Absence did make their hearts grow fonder, and her repentance was not total. Nevertheless, the king began to nourish an interest in other women. Amid all this, the Vincentians tried to maintain their usual simplicity and devotion. The palace had a succession of five small chapels, the most important being the third one, the guardroom, currently dedicated to Napoleon's coronation, used for worship from 1676 to 1684. The fifth and current one, begun in 1689, was consecrated in 1710 and can be visited in the palace. During weekdays, the king attended mass and vespers from the tribune; on Sundays and feasts, however, he assisted in the nave, probably from a throne in the sanctuary. The Vincentians, in keeping with their lowly station, were constantly in conflict with the principal royal chaplain, with various other chaplains of the king and queen, all diocesan bishops, and with chaplains to the children of the blood royal, also bishops. To assure constant service, two Vincentians were on call day and night from their small apartments in the palace.

As a part of their duties, the Vincentians were also chaplains of the royal infirmary. This hospital and retirement home for the poor and the domestics of the palace was built between 1693 and 1699, located west of the Vincentian house at Notre Dame. The Ladies of Charity, whose president was by tradition the queen of France, supported it. Marie Leczinska, wife of Louis XV, and Marie Antoinette, wife of Louis XVI, both provided liberally for the hospital. Daughters of Charity also served in this infirmary until the Revolution, and occasionally were seen entering the
queen's quarters of the palace to pick up discarded items to serve the poor. Today the old royal establishment, with its prominent chapel, is called the Richaud Hospital. (78, boulevard de la Reine)

The third Vincentian site was the parish of Saint Louis. Louis XV ordered the construction of this new church, since he wanted the southern Quarter of the town furnished with something more imposing than the small chapel formerly here. He asked his architect Mansart to draw up the plans, and construction took twelve years (1742-1754). Although other clergy worked in Versailles, the king summoned the Vincentians to serve this new parish. A portrait of one of the pastors, Joseph Baret, hangs in the sacristy, where it was moved from the chateau. The Vincentians continued here, as they did at Notre Dame, until the Revolution. (The seventeen who died during their service were buried in the crypt.) It was here at Saint Louis that the Estates General met at the conclusion of the inaugural procession, 4 May 1789. In June and July, several of their sessions took place here. The last superior, Jean André Jacob (1740-1800), younger brother of the Vincentian superior at Notre Dame, had to surrender his pastorate to his confere Jean Bassal (1752-1812), who eagerly took the various revolutionary oaths. In 1793, the church was closed to Catholic worship and became a Temple of Abundance, honoring farm workers. It later reverted to the

Church. Meanwhile, vindictive revolutionaries chiseled away the features of Saint Vincent from a medallion high on the outside walls of the transept. Their vandalism can still be discerned from the front of the priests' house.

Up to 1797, Versailles had been part of the archdiocese of Paris. In that year Saint Louis was chosen as the cathedral instead of Notre Dame, but its first legitimate bishop was installed only 27 May 1802. To visit the newly reopened church, Pius VII was received here 5 January 1805 during his lengthy sojourn in France. After benediction, he went to the palace and, fully vested with tiara, imparted his blessing from the balcony of the Hall of Mirrors. A barely legible plaque in the Mary chapel records the papal visit to the cathedral.

The exterior of the cathedral is a good example of an eighteenth-century building, classical and Baroque at the same time. The inside is elegant and harmonious, in the shape of a Latin cross. A large dome crowns the transepts. Noteworthy are the many paintings, mainly in the side chapels. One of them
is another version of Saint Vincent preaching, painted by Noël Hallé in 1761. The canvas shows the saint in the pulpit of the church of Saint Étienne du Mont in Paris, recognizable from its elaborate jubé. The altar dedicated to him in one of the side chapels around the sanctuary has a fine bas-relief head of the saint in wood.

Another side chapel, the first on the left, contains a marble plaque: To the memory of Blessed Jean Henri Gruyer, Lazarist, vicar of the parish of Saint Louis from 1784 to 1791. Massacred at the seminary of Saint Firmin in Paris, 3 September 1792. Erected in 1992 on his second centenary.

The Vincentian community house is located to the right of the church. A plaque on the front mentions that Jean Henri Gruyer, vicar (or assistant) of the parish from 1784 to 1791, was massacred in Paris. He had spent most of his Vincentian life here in this house. (4, place Saint Louis) From 1711 the Daughters of Charity kept the parish school and served the poor two streets behind the church. (Rue des Bourdonnais) They returned in 1801 and continue their service elsewhere in Versailles today.

Three Vincentians were massacred in Versailles for refusing to take the prescribed civic oath: Jean Paul Galoy (or Galois), Mathieu Caron, and Jean Colin. These men had been imprisoned in the queen's stables, shortly after these had been turned into a prison. In the spirit of the massacres of 2-3 September in Paris, fanatics broke in and clubbed to death Galoy, sacristan of the royal chapel. The next day, they killed thirteen prisoners, including the other Vincentians. A plaque on the front of the buildings (now an appeals court) recalls its bloody history. Not all Vincentians, however, perceived the oath in such a bad light, and some took it. (5, rue Carnot)

To honor the century of Vincentian service, Versailles named a street after them, the Rue des Missionnaires. It runs along the Notre Dame parish cemetery. In addition, a small street, Rue Saint Lazare, runs directly behind and away from Notre Dame church. Nothing remains to identify the Vincentian mission at the chapel of Glatigny, another of the obligations of the Vincentians beginning in 1672. The present Capuchin friary and chapel is probably on the same property. (Rond Point de la Chapelle)

The modern city of Versailles, a wealthy bedroom community for Paris, has a population approaching 90,000.

The small village of Viroflay adjoining Versailles on the east had a Maison des Missionnaires. This was a country house for the Vincentians of Saint Louis in Versailles. Its large garden offered the priests and seminarians a respite from royal and parochial duties. Nothing remains of the house, and only a stretch of wall on Rue James Linard is believed to be left of the old enclosure. The parish church, Saint Eustache, likewise, contains no reminders of their
presence. The property was seized and sold in 1793. (Clos Saint Eustache, rue James Linard)

**VERT-LE-GRAND**

Letter 311, from Vincent to Lambert aux Couteaux (1606-1653), is dated Vallegrand, 3 March 1638. This little town of 1500 people, then also called Val le Grand or Val grand, is located not far from Orsigny, south of Paris, on route D31 between Orsigny and Frenneville. The founder was probably here on business concerning these two properties, although his letter gives no hint one way or the other. Perhaps he was giving a mission in this rural area. The reason for deducing this is that he was there long enough to have leisure to write, and he had access to a messenger to deliver his letter to Saint Lazare. The parish church of Saint Germain preserves no memory of his presence.

**VILLEPREUX**

Villepreux, among the oldest towns in the Ile de France, was part of the Gondi estates from 1568 to 1664 and included the lands at Versailles that the family eventually sold to Louis XIII as a hunting preserve. Vincent’s name is connected with Villepreux in several ways. Although precise information is lacking, it is nearly certain that he stayed at the Gondi chateau occasionally while he was the family tutor (until 1617). In early 1618, after his return from Châtillon, he gave a series of missions nearby with two priests. One was Jean Coqueret (1592-1655), a friend of Francis de Sales, and later superior of the Discalced Carmelite nuns in France. The other was Monsieur Belin, the chaplain for the Gondis at Villepreux. Together, they established a Confraternity of Charity here, the second one after Châtillon. Madame de Gondi was present on 23 February for one of the mission events in the village church. The same Belin was probably one of the first companions of Vincent, along with Antoine Portail, but his work at Villepreux kept him from fully joining the Mission. (Letter 190)
It was probably here in 1629-1630 that Vincent met Marguerite Naseau (or more correctly Nezot), regarded as the first Daughter of Charity. She was living here with a few others and spent her time in educating children. These young women had come to attend the mission, and Marguerite later spoke to him about her vocation to serve the poor. Vincent also sent Louise here in 1630 to help support the Confraternity. The same Marguerite Naseau also returned for a time to Villepreux in the service of the Confraternity, although her various assignments are not that clear, since the Daughters of Charity had not yet been founded. Vincent visited again in December 1633, when he came to see the young Catherine de Gondi, the wife of his former student, Pierre de Gondi, eldest son of Vincent's patron, Philip Emmanuel. The purpose of his visit is unknown.

After Philip Emmanuel's ordination to the priesthood as an Oratorian, and in his retirement, he lived for a period at the château. Cardinal Mazarin had expelled him from Paris because of the problems Cardinal de Retz, Gondi's third son, had caused him. Vincent visited Philip Emmanuel here from time to time. One visit of a week's duration is recorded in 1648. Vincent also visited in January of 1649 after his failed attempt to persuade the queen and Cardinal Mazarin to come to terms with the leaders of the Fronde. It was perhaps at this time that he recalled seeing the count in
a tattered cassock. He told the Daughters of Charity: I have seen him when he was a courtier changing his clothes three times a day, when he was at Court, and since then I have seen him in a poor old torn cassock out at the elbows. I have seen that with my own eyes. (Conference 82) Vincent also visited his friend and benefactor again here in the summer of 1655. Brother Robineau, the saint’s secretary, recorded that while returning from this visit, Vincent stopped his carriage to give two women a lift into Paris. Moved by their age and weakness, he departed from his normal procedure. The old Gondi chateau, begun around 1600, was demolished in 1885. A new one was built and stands amid elegant gardens.

Close to the chateau is the village church, dedicated to Saint Germain. This church dates from the twelfth century and was the site of Vincent’s early preaching. The apse chapel is dedicated to him, although there is nothing written to indicate this. The church has an old rose silk chasuble which Vincent is said to have used. His work is presented in more detail in the new church, located in the quarter called la Haie Bergerie. Built in 1967, the parish church of Saint Vincent de Paul boasts an unusual façade. It shows the life of Saint Vincent de Paul (although without depicting him in any recognizable way), through prominent dates and places—among which is the 1618 mission in Villepreux.

Another of Vincent’s undertakings is the Charité des Pauvres. (1, rue Pierre Curie, formerly Grande Rue) This building began in 1658, and the Gondis and others endowed it so well that funds remained until the nineteenth century. The Confraternity Vincent founded supported the charitable works carried on in this hostel, remarkable for its old corbelled façade. Daughters of Charity also worked in Villepreux from 1898 until
recent years. Their house, still standing, is entered from the side street. (Rue Amédée Brocard, Rue du Docteur Alexandre) A tiny statue of Saint Vincent placed in a niche adorns the front of the building, now used for the elderly. Today, Villedreux is a town of some 9000 people.

During his 1618 mission, Vincent did not limit himself to Villedreux alone. After the saint's death his friend Michel Alix recorded that he also traveled to Maisons-sur-Seine, today Maisons-Laffitte. This small city of some 23,000 today is the site of a sumptuous chateau, completed in 1651. Alix recorded that Vincent lodged in the old manor house, now demolished. He undoubtedly celebrated mass and preached in the old church, next to the chateau. This old church has been converted into the Musée lanchlevici. (Place de la Vieille Église) Besides having the chateau, open to the public, the town also is a center for horse racing, continuing a tradition dating from before the Revolution. Daughters of Charity also worked in Maisons from at least 1663 until the Revolution.

Two locations west of Villedreux, Maule and Crespières, were also sites of the ministries of the Daughters of Charity in their earliest days. Two sisters were missioned to each place, where they worked for several years with the sick poor of the region. Although Louise came to visit, little is known of the work in either town. East of Maule is the small town of Les Alluets-le-Roi, site of a temporary mission to which Louise sent one or two sisters in 1654. In none of these three places is there any monument to their work.