West, Center
Vincentian connections with the Auvergne region begin in Vincent’s time and involve “taking the waters” at Bourbon. Later, the seminary of Saint-Flour saw the early ministry of John Gabriel Perboyre and inspired many vocations to the Vincentian congregation.
MOULINS, BOURBON-
L’ARCHAMBAULT

Moulins, the traditional capital of Bourbounnais, takes its name from its mills (moulins), property of the dukes of Bourbon. Later, the dukes made the town their residence. Moulins owes its growth to the castle (1340), now partly demolished, and to the collegiate church (1368). This church, still existing in part, has been incorporated into the nineteenth-century cathedral. In 1616, Jane Frances de Chantal came here to found a Visitation convent. She also died here during another visit, on 13 December 1641. This convent has become a girls school and retains its old chapel. Moulins today is a town of some 24,000 people.

Besides service by the Daughters of Charity here since 1684, the Vincentian connection with Moulins comes from René Alméras, Vincent’s successor as superior general. Alméras came to Moulins after spending some time taking the waters at Bourbon-L’Archambault, a few kilometers west. (Letters 2255, et al.) After a relapse, he was in danger of death at Bourbon, and Vincent wanted him to go to Moulins, since he believed that the weather is better. Alméras enjoyed the hospitality of the Oratorian house in Bourbon. There are no “waters” at Moulins, however, although Vincent says so in Letter 1065, where he is probably referring to Bourbon.

Other Vincentians also came to Bourbon for a cure. Brother Claude Le
Gentil (b. 1620), later a priest, was to come here in September 1648, and Brother Jacques Rivet (b. 1620) in May 1654. Vincent took great interest in the health of his confrères. Local tradition has it that Vincent came here, but no documents support this.

The lords of Bourbon gradually advanced in power and gave their name to the ruling house of France, with branches elsewhere, such as today's royal house of Spain. Not to be forgotten is Bourbon County, Kentucky, where the famous Bourbon whisky is made. It is doubtful that the French Bourbons ever developed a taste for it.

The Romanesque church of Saint Georges preserves a relic of the True Cross, a gift of Saint Louis, king of France, to his sixth son, Robert de Clermont, who became lord of Bourbon. It has been in the church since the end of the thirteenth century. Daughters of Charity worked at Bourbon-l'Archambault from 1665, where they helped in the hospital and in a residence for the elderly. In recognition of their service, the town permitted the sisters to bury their deceased members in the parish church. They continued their work for patients and the local poor from 1866 until about 1903. They have returned to continue various pastoral works here. Bourbon-l'Archambault has about 2700 people.

Pierre Coste, probably incorrectly, connects Alméras with Bourbon-Lancy (Saône-et-Loire). This city of some 6000 people is a few kilometers east of Moulins and still popular for its thermal springs. The name "Bourbon" refers to an old Celtic deity, Borvo, associated with thermal springs. Both Bourbons, therefore, have waters, but the other Bourbon (l'Archambault) is more likely where Alméras had visited, as one of Vincent's letters (2411) makes clear.

The parish church of Bourbon-Lancy dates from the nineteenth century. This town too had a Visitation convent, now the site of the major thermal hotel that has made use of some of the old buildings, notably the cloister colonnade. If Alméras and the other Vincentians came to this Bourbon, perhaps they were able to lodge with the chaplain of the Visitation.

SAINT-FLOUR

The small city of Saint-Flour, population 7500, has been the seat of a bish-

Visitation convent chapel, Moulins
SAINT-MÉEN-LE-GRAND*

At the end of the sixth century, a Welsh monk, Mewen, founded a monastery here, which in later years took his name. Normans destroyed it in 919, but it took on a new life in the following century. After flourishing for several centuries, it entered a period of decline. By the seventeenth century, only two monks lived here to exercise the works of the Benedictine order.

The bishop of Saint-Malo, Achille de Harlay de Sany (1581-1646), who was also commendatory abbot of Saint-Méen, decided to establish a seminary in his abbey, the first major seminary of Brittany. The bishop, an Oratorian, invited his confreres, but they soon left, and Vincentians replaced them. The two remaining Benedictines agreed to this new situation, but their confreres elsewhere in Brittany did not. The matter reached the courts, and the Vincentians, although at first allowed to stay, were then forcibly expelled. The bishop responded by sending in troops, and the Vincentians were restored after a nearly comic siege. This is probably the most difficult foundation Vincent undertook. So difficult that it became one of the leading objections put forth by the so-called “devil’s advocate” during the process for Vincent’s beatification.

Some old seminary buildings are still standing, and one of the most visible elements is the central wooden staircase. The present main building, however, dates from the eighteenth century replacing the old monastic residence. The seminary building has been turned into apartments. (*Rue Saint Jean*)

The abbey church still serves the parish. It is Romanesque with Gothic portions and has some important frescoes from the fourteenth century. The stained glass windows, among the oldest in Brittany, date from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. When the Vincentians came to Saint-Méen, they inherited the Benedictines’ obligation to chant the Divine Office in choir. Some Vincentians objected to this, and later their obligation was scaled back somewhat. The Congregation opened an internal seminary (novitiate) here in 1673, without great success. Besides teaching in the seminary and caring for the church, the Vincentians also worked out of Saint-Méen giving missions from 1645 until their departure at the Revolution. They rebuilt part of the church in the eighteenth century, and the altars they installed are still in place.

Daughters of Charity worked here in the hospital, beginning in 1640. During the Revolution, four sisters remained, supporting themselves and the poor by opening a small grocery. When the Daughters finally left in 1962, the town erected a monument in the cemetery located behind the abbey church. Their old hospital forms part of the present retirement home at the other end of the Rue Saint-Jean from the seminary.

TRÉGUIER

Another Vincentian project in Brittany was the Tréguier major seminary. At the invitation of Bishop Balthasar Grangier de Liverdis (1606-1679), Vincent agreed to this foundation
in 1648. On his one and only trip to the region, in 1649, he visited his confreres in Tréguier. Their service in the seminary was not altogether peaceful and they suffered from misunderstandings with the bishop and the chapter over finances and ecclesiastical privileges. Nevertheless, the Vincentians remained until the Revolution. After the revolutionary period, in 1819, the buildings housed a minor seminary and, with the expulsion of congregations at the beginning of the twentieth century, the commune took over the property. Such parts as remain are now used as a technical college, the Lycée Mixte. The seminary chapel, built only in 1894, is now a theater.

The small cathedral, named after Tugdual, the British monk who founded a monastery here in the sixth century, is Romanesque with Gothic elements. Its oldest parts date from the eleventh century, and the Gothic section (the nave and choir) dates from the fourteenth century. The cathedral recalls the memory of Saint Yves, buried here in 1303. Saint Yves, a native of the region, is one of the patron saints of lawyers, who often come on pilgrimage.

Further to the east, and close to Saint-Brieuc, the Daughters of Charity had a small work of charity for the sick poor in Saint-René, now a part of Hillion on a peninsula overlooking the bay of Saint-Brieuc. This mission probably began in 1646, but little is known of it. The Vincentians staffed a seminary in Saint-Brieuc from about 1664 to 1791, and the Daughters worked here from 1715 in service of the poor. They returned in 1803.
down. Four years after his ordination, he entered the Congregation of the Mission at Saint Lazare, 25 October 1786. Because his health was weak, he soon returned to Vannes from Paris to complete his novitiate and to serve as professor of theology in the major seminary. The seminary itself, now the Foyer de Mené, was located next to the parish church, Notre Dame de Mené. (9, rue Émile Burgault) The church that Rogue knew, however, has been demolished.

The revolutionary government approved the Civil Constitution of Clergy on 12 July 1790 and mandated an oath to support it. Since the text of the oath seemed to weaken the authority of the Church, Rogue, along with other Vincentians at the seminary, refused to take it. Rather than leave for exile, he remained in Vannes to serve in secret. Two of his hiding places are known. (14, place Cabello, at the corner of Rue du Four and Rue de la Tannerie, and 9, rue de Trussac, now Rue de la Salle d'Asil) He escaped police capture for some time but was spotted as he was leaving his hiding place while about to bring Communion to a sick person on Christmas Eve, 1795. A plaque outside the old seminary commemorates his arrest.

Rogue was held at the Porte Prison, the imposing towers at one of the gates of the city. During his time here, he acted as a kind of chaplain to the other prisoners, bringing them whatever consolation he could. He was tried at the chapel of the Retraite des Femmes on 2 March 1796. Condemned for refusing to take the constitutional oath, Rogue was to be guillotined within 24 hours. His mother, who had visited him in prison, almost certainly witnessed his martyrdom. (Place de l'Hôtel de Ville)

His body was buried first at the Boismoreau cemetery in an unmarked grave, but his mother remembered the location. Pius XI beatified him on 13 June 1934, as part of the celebration of the Holy Year of 1933-1934. On that occasion, his body was moved to the Cathedral of Saint Peter, but it is now not exposed for the veneration of the faithful. Instead, a wax model has been placed in the chapel of the Rosary, and a plaque explains Rogue's ministry and martyrdom. The image shows him lying in death, vested as a priest, holding a ciborium to his chest. The cathedral also contains the tomb of Saint Vincent Ferrer (c. 1350-1419), who died in Vannes. A splendid tapestry, dating from 1615, commemorates him. Vincent honored him as one of his patron saints.

Among the many signs of veneration for their local martyr, the town designated the street that leads into the Rue des Lices where he was born as Rue Bienheureux René Rogue. Vincentians returned to the seminary in 1804 but remained only until 1833.

Daughters of Charity were present in Vannes beginning in 1682, and six of them were arrested and imprisoned here in the period 1793-1795. None was executed, however. They returned after the Revolution to continue their hospital ministry (beginning in 1802).

The Daughters also served in the hospital at Hennebont, some distance west of Vannes. Louis Eudo de Kerlivio (1621-1675) had studied at the Bons
Enfants in Paris, where he came to know Vincent and the Daughters of Charity. As the vicar general of the diocese, he invited the sisters, and two arrived there by 1650 to serve the sick poor, many of whom spoke only Breton. Several letters from Vincent to this community still exist. During the Revolution, the sisters were hounded from their two hospitals. One group, after evading discovery, went to Paris and were sent to open a house in Turin. Traveling with three Vincentians, they brought with them a quantity of items, including clothes belonging to the saint and, most importantly, his heart. This relic had been secreted in a large book whose pages had been hollowed out to receive it. After this turbulent period, the Daughters returned. Hennebont, greatly damaged during the second World War, is today a city of around 14,000 people.

Another small establishment of the Daughters was the fortress hospital of Belle-Ile, often called Belle-Ile-en-Mer. This work was another foundation of Nicolas Fouquet, who had purchased the island from Henri de Gondi, Cardinal de Retz, marquis of Belle-Ile. Because of Fouquet’s family connections with them, he favored the Daughters of Charity. He asked that they come to care for the prisoners and for the instruction of the poor young girls of this island located off the Brittany coast, not far from Vannes. In 1660, Vincent sent as the first superior Mathurine Guérin, who had already held important posts in the Company. She would be superior general on four different occasions. The apostolate here lasted only until 1666.
Saint Vincent's lodging,
Vincentian house, Richelieu
The region now called Centre was the site of several Vincentian works, some during the lifetime of Vincent de Paul. One of the most important was at Richelieu, a place Vincent visited several times. For Daughters of Charity, Chartres has a special meaning because of Louise de Marillac’s dedication of the Company to the Virgin Mary there.
Louise came here on pilgrimage, 14-17 October 1644. I offered the said company entirely to [God], asking Him to destroy it rather than let it be established contrary to His holy will. I asked for it, through the prayers of the Holy Virgin, Mother and Guardian of the said Company, the purity of which it stands in need . . . . I asked Him for the grace of fidelity for the Company through the merits of the Blood of the Son of God and of Mary. (Spiritual Writings, L. 111) Vincent, however, was not here with her. He came at least once to pray about an important transfer of a bishop who the saint believed should receive a more important diocese. Other visits are likely, but no records exist.

The foundress prayed in the old crypt, where a modern statue of Notre Dame de Sous-Terre (that is, of the crypt) is enshrined. Vincent probably prayed here as well. The ancient statue came from an early Christian sanctuary here, said, in turn, to have been venerated by the pre-Roman inhabitants of the region. At the Revolution, the statue was burned. To reach Chartres, the two
founders probably followed the traditional pilgrim route: Paris, Palaiseau, Orsay, Gometz, Limours, Saint-Arnoult, Gué de Longroi, Chartres. Although references to these towns and, more generally, to the diocese of Chartres, occur in Vincent’s correspondence (because of various business affairs and missions), Chartres did not play a large part in his works. Daughters of Charity continue the practice of a pilgrimage here to pray for the Company.

Vincentians staffed the Chartres major seminary from 1680 until the Revolution. It was located at Beaulieu, just south of the city. Today, the area is an industrial zone, bisected by rail lines. The Congregation also ran the minor seminary of Saint Charles from 1719. This seminary was located to the left of the Evêché, the bishop’s residence. Today it houses the departmental archives. (Rue du Palais de Justice) In the chapel of this seminary an unpleasant event took place at the time of the Revolution. Two confrères publicly took the constitutional oath, 6 February 1791. The event was intended to influence non-juring clergy to follow them. The superior of the seminary, Jean Baptiste Gratien (1747-1799), later became the constitutional bishop of Rouen. His companion, Jean Baptiste François, was a brother of Blessed Louis Joseph François, later martyred for his opposition to the same oath. Daughters of Charity began their service in the city hospital in 1664 and after the Revolution returned in 1854.

Near here is Gallardon, where a Confraternity of Charity began in 1634. Whether Vincent was present to inaugurate it is not known. Louise probably came to visit its members.

CHÂTEAUDUN, VARIZE

In 1654, Daughters of Charity opened their work in Châteaudun in the Hôtel Dieu, the city hospital. The discussion about which sisters to assign here was recorded in the minutes of the Council. Vincent insisted on sending virtuous sisters, and the council chose Jeanne Lepeintre, present at the meeting. Reflecting on the building of Solomon’s temple, built with precious stones, the founder asked Sister Jeanne: Will you be a precious stone? Will you be a ruby or an emerald? She replied, characteristically, Father, I don’t know what I’ll be; I’m really afraid that I’ll be nothing but mud. She had her work cut out for her, since the hospital was badly arranged. Her place was taken by the redoubtable Barbe Angiboust (1605-1658), who quickly brought order. Barbe had headed whatever houses she had been assigned to and exercised an influence second only to Louise herself. She died here, 27 December 1658. The hospital began in the eleventh century, but the building presently standing dates only from 1762, and it no longer receives patients. The Daughters of Charity remained here until July 1976. Local tradition has it that Vincent came here himself to inaugurate the work of the sisters. (Place de la Madeleine)

Dominating the region is the castle that gave its name to the town. It was long the home of the Longueville family, with whom Vincent had various dealings, especially concerning their support
of the Jansenists. Châteaudun has a population of about 15,000.

Before coming to Châteaudun, the sisters had begun a small house in Varize, a short distance east. Two had arrived here in 1652 to work for the sick and to teach the children. Daughters of Charity remained in the service of this small town until 1780. They left because the local lord was no longer interested or able to support their work. The old castle and the parish church remain, but the Prussians burnt the rest of the town in 1870 in retaliation for being attacked by its defenders. Consequently, the Daughters' house and school are probably no longer standing.

Some 40 kilometers south of Châteaudun is the city of Vendôme. It was here that a relic of Jesus was venerated: a tear shed by him at the tomb of Lazarus (actually a piece of quartz with a visible drop of water inside). This supposed relic disappeared after the Revolution and, in any case, was spurious. Nevertheless, several miracles had been reported concerning it in the early part of the seventeenth century. When asked whether one or more of the sisters at Châteaudun could go there on pilgrimage, Louise did not forbid it. (Letter 587) The former Benedictine monastery church of the Trinity, which housed the relic, is today a parish church.
West and south of Vendôme is the tiny village of Lublé, today numbering about 130 people. Again, in the lifetime of the founders, about 1654, the Daughters of Charity had a small work for the poor: a hospital and school. Little is known of this work, however.

**FONTGOMBAULT**

The abbey of Notre Dame de Fontgombault has over the centuries sheltered a remarkable number of different religious families. Benedictines lived here from the late eleventh century. Trappists were here from 1849 to 1903, but Benedictines are again in possession of this foundation. Vincentians were here for a few years (1742-1779) as part of their work in the seminary for the archdiocese of Bourges. Nothing in the great church or in the public part of the abbey recalls their work—something the modest founder would have probably approved. The small town of Fontgombault is home to about 1000 people and certainly owes its origin to the abbey.

Another abbey, some 20 kilometers east on route D6, is better known for someone who spent practically no time here, Jean Duvergier de Hauranne, known usually as the abbé of Saint Cyran. The old abbey of Saint Cyran, from which he took his name, is in Saint-Michel-en-Brenne, a town of some 500 inhabitants. Most of the abbey has been taken down, but some old buildings remain. In light of later developments, it might have been better for the Church had Duvergier come here to stay and not propagate the teachings known as Jansenism. Vincent, however, agreed with the abbé’s request for his confrères to give missions in the parishes depending on this abbey.

**LIMOURON**

Limouron (or Limoron) was a hamlet (just a farm today) by Villamblain, near Châteaudun. Vincent came here in June 1638. The reason for his visit was that this property was at the time the Benedictine priory of Saint Mary Magdelaine, ceded some time previously to Adrien Le Bon, prior of Saint Lazare. Le Bon did not live here and was only its titular prior. This title passed to Vincent when he took over Saint Lazare from Le Bon. Vincent described it as a simple little priory we have, two leagues from Orléans . . . It consists of a farm, where there are two farmers, each having two plows for tilling about four hundred (arpents) [about 600 acres] of land, in one piece all around. (Letter 992, 2 October 1647) Vincent’s presence here demonstrates his interest in matters agricultural, something he pursued all through his life. He also admired the faith of its inhabitants: That place belongs entirely to God . . . how admirable is the effect of His goodness on those people! (Letter 330, June 1638)

**ORLÉANS**

The important city of Orléans often figured in the letters of Vincent and Louise. We have one letter that he wrote from here (Letter 1091), dated 25 February 1649, and it is clear that Louise was also here. The main reason seems to
be the location of the city on the transportation routes. Otherwise, there was no house of the Congregation of the Mission or the Daughters of Charity in this city before the Revolution. The Vincentians opened a mission house in 1869 and remained until about 1903. Today, Orléans is a city of more than 150,000.

A few kilometers southwest of Orléans is Cléry-Saint-André. This town of some 2500 people is notable for its enormous basilica, Notre Dame de Cléry. The origin of this pilgrimage site is lost in legend (a statue of the Virgin Mary found in a bush by peasants), but it can be traced to the thirteenth century at least. The present church, dating from the fifteenth century, contains the tomb of Louis XI (d. 1483) and his wife. It can be supposed that Louise stopped here at various times, although this cannot be proven from existing records. Vincent mentions the town in one letter to Louise (Letter 410), apparently relying on personal experience. The two founders must have visited many such shrines.

**RICHELIEU**

In 1621, Armand Jean Du Plessis (1585-1642) purchased Richelieu from family members, a small village with the manor house that had been family property since 1350. When Du Plessis, former bishop of Luçon, became a cardinal, he assumed the name of this fief. To honor his principal minister, Louis XIII made the town the center of a duchy-peerage in 1631, attaching to it several outlying fiefs. The cardinal saw to the building for himself of a sumptuous chateau and park here to replace the traditional family home. His magnificent and prideful chateau was demolished after 1814, but the park with its entrance gates and
walls, some seventeenth-century outbuildings, and the foundations of the chateau remain. A large statue of the cardinal stands at the main entry.

The small town of around 2500 people, built on a rectangular plan in Renaissance style, is still surrounded by interesting ramparts and moats. Two city gates remain, as do remarkable private and public buildings. On the Market Square, in front of the church, the Halles are noteworthy for their seventeenth-century woodwork.

Richelieu’s parish was officially erected in 1638, and the church was built during that year. Notre Dame de l’Assomption is built in a classical style, as befits the classically designed town. The main altar, however, dates from the eighteenth century, and the Blessed Sacrament chapel is dedicated to Saint Vincent—the main items being the painting in the dome, and the large painting over the altar, depicting Vincent preaching. The sacristy houses some elegant woodwork, paintings from the chateau, as well as a chalice and paten, which the duchess of Aiguillon, the cardinal’s niece, presented to the saint. A copy of this chalice is in the Vincentian museum of the Paris motherhouse. The
organ was begun in the seventeenth century. The baptismal font is original, dating from 1637. The cardinal's coat of arms figures prominently on the vaults over the altar. His cardinal's hat is depicted with six rows of tassels, one more row than most ordinary cardinals possessed, probably because Richelieu was also a duke and peer of the realm, and the king's principal minister. (The hat itself, drooping and dusty, hangs above Richelieu's tomb in the chapel of the Sorbonne.) Several Vincentians were buried under the floor in the middle of the church, between the four main pillars, but their graves are not marked.

The cardinal, seeking an active religious congregation for his duchy, offered a residence to Vincent, the contract for which was signed in 1638. By it, Vincent agreed to send ten priests. Four were to serve the parish, prepare the ordinands of the diocese and give priests' retreats. The other six were to give missions so that the whole duchy would be evangelized every five years. Although Vincent reluctantly acceded to the cardinal's demands, he insisted that Notre Dame become a model parish. The cardinal agreed to provide a steady source of
funds for their support, including income from properties such as rental houses and farms. Vincent wrote several letters on the subject of this foundation and in later years even began a novitiate in the house. After the cardinal’s death, his favorite niece and heir, the duchess of Aiguillon, continued to provide support.

Vincent visited here several times (1638, 1639, 1640, 1642, and 1649). He mentioned the good order and piety of the people and observed that the taverns were not much frequented, especially on Sundays and feast days. The Vincentian pastors erected a Confraternity of Charity. During the Fronde, he sent the novices from Paris to Richelieu for their safety.

Because the cardinal was the king’s principal minister, chief and general superintendent of navigation and commerce, the court came to call. When they did, the pastor of Richelieu would be called on to officiate at solemn functions. Vincent wrote Bernard Codoing (1610-c.1678) on how to behave himself in the presence of twelve-year old Louis XIV and his court. [The King] does not like long speeches, so do not make any. Tell him, however, that you have come to offer His Majesty the services of the Company and to assure him of its prayers that God may be pleased to bless him and his armies, to preserve him for many years to come, to grant him the grace of subjugating the rebels and of extending his empire to the ends of the earth; in a word, that God may reign over his States. (Letter 1234, dated 1650, after the cardinal’s death) Unfortunately for the king, the letter arrived too late. In 1660, the king returned with his new wife, his mother, and an enormous following. René Alméras celebrated a baptism at which His Majesty was the godfather.

Two Daughters of Charity also came to Richelieu in 1638 to work for the sick and teach poor girls. Louise came here to visit her sisters. Vincent addressed several letters to that community of Daughters, one of the earliest outside Paris and the first outside the Ile de France. The location of the Sisters’ hospital occupied a large section,
fronting on the Place des Religieuses, extending to the walls at the northwest corner, ending at the Porte de Chinon. They remained here until the eighteenth century, possibly until the Revolution. The Revolutionaries also seized the church building and there installed the Goddess of Reason. Later still, public meetings were held as well, while the few remaining Catholics were permitted one side nave for their worship.

A large *community house*, built by the cardinal and located behind the church, is only partly used. Poorly furnished at the beginning, it was for a while one of the novitiate of the Congregation. Vincent recalled that his confreres recited their office in common, not in the parish church, but in an oratory in this house. (Conference 213) The Richelieu house is one of the oldest community houses still standing, but Vincentians no longer occupy it. The commune seized it at the Revolution and has since sold part of it. In that section is to be found the room which the saint is said to have used. Vincentians returned briefly as pastors from 1876 to 1885. Today, the entire pastoral area of Richelieu and several surrounding villages is called the parish of Saint Vincent de Paul.

On the dark side of things, the Richelieu Vincentians house became involved in the notorious cases of demonic possession of nuns at Loudun, Chinon and Louviers. The formerly Protestant town of Loudun had seen Catholic worship and communities reestablished after much neglect. The appointment in 1617 of a pastor, Urbain Grandier, whose appreciation for and practice of celibacy was negligible, led to much disorder. The prioress of the Ursulines thought she was possessed, and Grandier agreed to become the convent’s spiritual director, with predictable results. Public exorcisms did not put an end to the problems, but a shabby trial led to Grandier’s being burned alive, 18 August 1634, in the presence of thousands. All this, of course, took place before the arrival of the Vincentians in Richelieu. The alleged possessions continued, however, until 1641. Vincent even cited some sentences for the Daughters of Charity concerning the need of conversion, said to have come
from demons speaking through the nuns. (Conference 87, 18 November 1657) The Daughters had a hospital in Loudun from 1684 to the Revolution.

In a related case, some women in Chinon, a few kilometers north, pretended to be possessed and made damaging accusations against two local priests. They were led in this by another priest who had been one of the exorcists at Loudun. In 1640, an unnamed Vincentian at Richelieu supported their cause from the pulpit. Vincent reacted quickly and had the man reprimanded. (Letter 459)

A third case broke out in 1643 at Louviers and lasted until 1647. In this town in Normandy, some distance north of Richelieu, a monastery of nuns was affected with problems of three priests involved in sacrileges, magic and sorcery. The principal subject was burned alive as a sorcerer, and his two accomplices, already dead, also had their corpses burned. Although the Richelieu Vincentians were not involved, Vincent was, as a member of the Council of Conscience. These strange episodes give some context to the ministry of the early Vincentians in Richelieu.

SAINT-DYÉ-SUR-LOIRE

Vincent wrote a letter from here to Antoine Portail (13 October 1644). Neither in this letter nor elsewhere does he mention his reason for coming here. Because of its location on the river Loire, it is possible that it was merely a stopping place. Geneviève Fayet, Madame Goussault, a close collaborator of Vincent and Louise, reported to him that she had come here also but only to dine. I found the church very well looked after, and the poor and the children better instructed than anywhere else. (Letter 135, 16 April 1633) Other than that, there is no indication of any Vincentian activities here, nor even a Confraternity of Charity, such as might have been founded if Vincent had come here to give a mission. Saint-Dyé is still a small town, with fewer than 1000 inhabitants.
Saint Vincent's chalice and paten, parish church, Richelieu
The region of Limousin, taking its name from the porcelain center of Limoges, has little of Vincentian interest. Two towns, however, Le Dorat and Ussel, have a connection with Saint Vincent himself.
DORAT (LE)

Determined Vincentian pilgrims will appreciate visiting the motherhouse of the Sisters of Marie Joseph et de la Miséricorde at Le Dorat, since these sisters succeeded the Congregation of the Mission at Saint Lazare in Paris. In 1850, the French government committed to them the care of the women prisoners kept in the old priory.

The sisters left as the buildings were gradually demolished in the 1900s. They took with them some of the keys used in the old institution. These, along with a bell, the gift of Anne of Austria to Vincent, are kept in a small building on their motherhouse grounds. This bell, erroneously called a silver bell (it is bronze, probably with some silver added to give it a good tone), was originally used to summon the ordinands to their spiritual exercises. When the sisters arrived, they placed it in a new location as their main bell. After their departure, they received the bell as a souvenir.

Le Dorat today numbers about 2500 people, living in the shadow of an impressive Romanesque collegiate church.

USSEL

This city located in the central hill country of France was the capital of the duchy of Ventadour. The duchess of Ventadour, Marie de La Guiche de Saint Gérand (d. 1701), devoted herself to charitable works after her husband's
death. She was one of Louise’s main supporters and was present at her deathbed. At the request of the duchess, two Daughters of Charity had come here in 1658.

The sisters had hesitated to come, given Ussel’s distance from any Vincentian house. Vincent gave them this advice: This is the main point for you—to make God known by your spiritual service to the poor, while serving them corporally, as it is our principal purpose to instruct and then serve the sick poor. (Conference 94, 1658) When the sisters arrived, they found that their work was to aid the sick and keep a school. They lived in an isolated house and had great difficulty with the dialect and the local food. Since the work got on their nerves they sang for their amusement. (Louise didn’t want them to be heard outside.) A local tradition holds that the sisters left Ussel and went to meet Vincent at Moulins, but he urged them to go back: Return, my daughters, return to Ussel. Providence will take care of you. Indeed, the Daughters did not leave this apostolate, the civil hospital, even at the time of the Revolution. They were compelled to leave, however, when the hospital was put under lay control early in the twentieth century. Nevertheless they continue in other works here.

Ussel, today with a population of about 12,000, has preserved the small ducal home of the Ventadours. Several ancient buildings exist in the old town, among which is the old hospital, today housing the Hôtel de Police and several other civic organizations. Nothing in the parish church recalls the presence of the Daughters.
Church window, Lézigné
Many sites in the region of the river Loire were blessed by the ministry of Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. The hospital at Angers, in particular, is well known. Also, the tragic events of the Revolution profoundly touched these Vincentian works.
ANGERS**

The city of Angers, the capital of the old province of Anjou, extends along the banks of the river Maine. With a favorable climate and location, its vines have flourished for centuries. Angers began in Celtic times, fell to the Romans, and in the ninth century was assaulted by Normans. During the Middle Ages, it was under the control of the counts and dukes of Anjou. One of them, Henry II Plantagenet, became king of England. Because of these connections, it was only in the fifteenth century that Angers became definitively united to the French crown. The dukes of Anjou had their seat in Angers and were buried in the cathedral of Saint Maurice. The city suffered greatly under the revolutionary government, and many believers were martyred for the faith. The cathedral commemorates these martyrs visually in a beautiful bas-relief on the altar of the south transept. Noteworthy in the cathedral are its exceptional windows and extensive tapestries. Today the city has some 160,000 inhabitants.

Vincent came to Angers in 1649, following Louise, who had visited twice before (1640, 1646). She saw to the installation of the Daughters of Charity in the ancient hospital. They arrived because of the persistence of Guy Lasnier (1602-1681), the abbé of Saint

Commemorative plaque,
Hôtel Dieu, Angers

Hôtel Dieu, Angers
Étienne de Vaux. He had met Vincent at Saint Lazare during a retreat and determined to ask Daughters of Charity to staff the hospital. Abbé de Vaux became a great benefactor and counselor of theirs. He also had the foresight to preserve many letters from the founders. Ladies of Charity, organized on the same model as those at the Hôtel Dieu in Paris, also helped serve the sick at the hospital.

The hospital of Saint John where the Daughters and the Ladies served was founded in 1175 by Étienne de Marçay, an official of Henry II, in reparation for the murder of Thomas Becket (1118-1170). Daughters of Charity were in this important hospital, the oldest surviving one in France, from 1639 until the Revolution, and afterwards from 1806 to 1854. At that date, the hospital became a museum. Its main exhibition hall had been used for the sick and contained more than 200 beds. This meant that there would sometimes be more than 200 patients, since many would share beds in times of epidemics. The main hall remains as it was when the Daughters of Charity were here but without the beds. The pharmacy contains ancient vessels and utensils used to prepare medicines. It was here that Sister Odile Baumgarten worked from 1777 to 1794, when she was executed for the faith. At the door of this large hall, a plaque recalls the service of the sisters and the visits by Louise and Vincent. In 1854, the Daughters of Charity left the old hospital to be with the sick transferred elsewhere. The sisters remained there until 1869 but have since returned to other works.

In the old hospital chapel, modified in the eighteenth century, are two small altars built in 1740; one of them was dedicated to Saint Vincent but now holds a statue of the Sacred Heart. The enclosed cloister walk is an architectural jewel, a masterpiece of twelfth-century carpentry. Louise and Vincent certainly strolled along the pavement in this cloister. At the end of the garden is a large building used, among other things, as a storeroom. Sister Marie Anne Vaillot worked here up to the time of her arrest.

Marie Anne Vaillot (b. 1734) and Odile Baumgarten (b. 1750) were among 35 Daughters who worked at the hospital. Bans on religious congregations and religious and ecclesiastical dress were enacted in 1792. Certain religious houses were allowed to continue, however, such as the hospital at Angers. Consequently, the Daughters of Charity remained until the summer of 1793, at which time the
local revolutionary council demanded that the sisters should take the revolutionary oath and put aside the habit. A few did, but the majority refused. The oath became obligatory in the following January, three Daughters were arrested for not supporting it. One was freed, but Sisters Marie Anne and Odile were tried, found guilty, and then sentenced to death by firing squad. On 1 February 1794, they and some 200 others, tied together in pairs to a central rope, were paraded from the prison through the city to the killing field. On the way, Sister Odile dropped her rosary, hidden beneath her clothes, but the guards kept her from retrieving it. Another woman did, and it has been preserved until today. The other Sisters were arrested and condemned to deportation to French Guyana. Grateful citizens in Lorient, the port for the embarkation, saved them from their fate.

At Avrillé, a town adjacent to Angers on the northwest, route N162, is the Field of the Martyrs. At the time of the trials, it was a simple field. The condemned were led here and lined up before trenches dug to receive their bodies. Amid prayers and singing led by the Daughters, they were shot and dumped into the waiting graves. These ten common graves contain about 2000 individuals, although only about 800 can be identified from records. In an effort to limit the number of beatifications, 100 candidates were chosen based on the records that they left behind stating that they died for the faith. The others, presumably, were killed for political or social reasons. Since the executions, the Field of the Martyrs has become a place of pilgrimage, prayer and reflection. The small chapel, begun in 1848, is dedicated
to Saint Louis. Its windows depict the various scenes of the executions. In the chapel's sanctuary are plaques listing the names of the beatified martyrs. One was a priest, Noël Pinat, beatified 31 October 1926; Pope John Paul II beatified the other 99 on 19 February 1984. Of those, twelve priests and one Benedictine nun were guillotined. The other 84, mainly poor women and Daughters of Charity, were shot during the period from 12 January to 16 April 1794. Two major pilgrimages are held each year: 1 February, the liturgical feast of the martyrs; and 25 August, to honor Saint Louis.

Although Vincentians had earlier given missions in the diocese of Angers, it was only in 1674 that a permanent mission house began here. In 1692, a novitiate opened in the same house, although it was never as important as the Paris novitiate. Jean Henri Gruyer made his novitiate here, however, a fact that adds some luster to the institution. It was located in the former Hôtel des Granges, Rue Valdemaine, although no trace of it seems to exist today. This mission house continued here until the Revolution. The church attached to the house became one of the Angers prisons during the revolutionary period, beginning in 1794. The Vincentians began a new mission house in 1860, and it continued until 1903. It has since been demolished. (18, rue de la Meignanne)

Vincent's departure from Angers was, like his arrival, marked by an accident and misadventures. As related below, he nearly drowned near Durtal before arriving and, on leaving for Rennes, his horse was spooked while crossing a wooden bridge. The noise of a nearby mill frightened it, and the horse and its saintly rider nearly fell into the millpond. In the evening, he arrived at a shabby inn that he had to share with the innkeeper's drunken friends. Later, when Vincent arrived in Rennes, an anti-royalist sympathizer recognized him and threatened to kill him. Another priest saved his life, and Vincent was able to continue unharmed the following day.

Daughters of Charity came to Rennes in 1675, and took up work in the parish as well as in the local prison, unusual work for them at the time. One of the sisters, Jeanne Montagnier (d. 1802), devoted her life to this work. At the Revolution, since she too refused the oath, she was condemned to the same prison for a year. During her imprisonment she continued to minister as best she could to her fellow inmates. The Daughters returned in 1808 and continue various works in the city.

**FONTENAY-LE-COMTE**

Local tradition has it that Vincent visited here, though on what occasion and for how long is unknown. His friend, René Moreau (1605-1671), received him here. This priest was later the vicar general of the diocese of Maillezais. Beyond this, nothing is sure, since this Moreau does not appear in any of Vincent's extant writings. Since Fontenay was not far from other places that Vincent visited in 1649, he might have taken that occasion to see his friend. Also, Fontenay is not far from Richelieu, which the saint visited several times.
A Vincentian mission house existed in Fontenay from 1676 until the Revolution. Daughters of Charity worked in the hospital here from 1726 to the Revolution, and afterward until 1903. The Vincentian house was located in the chateau of Terre-Neuve. (Corner of rues Rapin and Jarnigande) Fontenay today is a city of more than 14,000 inhabitants.

LE MANS*

Vincentians came to Le Mans in 1645 under Bishop Emeric Marc de La Ferté (1608-1648). He established them in the former hospital of Notre Dame de Coëffort, which became an important house for the Congregation. The Vincentians were hospital chaplains at the Hôtel-Dieu, received seminarians, gave retreats to ordinands and preached missions all around the area. At the time of the difficulties of the Fronde, Vincent considered sending some of his confrères to Le Mans to get them out of Paris. This did not happen. Instead, Vincent had to absent himself from Paris and took the occasion to visit Le Mans (in March of 1649). As a member of the Council of Conscience, he had not recommended its bishop for ordination, something the bishop knew. The situation was potentially embarrassing. Nevertheless, Vincent asked the bishop’s permission to stay at the seminary, and the bishop responded graciously. Vincent is also believed to have preached in the cathedral here on that occasion. He later found it necessary to encourage one of his confrères, Guillaume Cornaire (b. 1614), who had written complaining of the boredom of his apostolate. (Letter 1228) Shortly after, Cornaire’s life became more exciting: his confrères had to hide items from soldiers in the area to prevent pillaging. (Letter 1460)

In its later history, the Le Mans seminary endured many trials, especially financial problems involving its many lands, woods, houses and dependent chapels. Its most distinguished alumnus was probably Pierre Collet (1693-1770). He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1717 and became a much-published theologian and biographer. His life of Vincent de Paul was the great biography of the eighteenth century. The seminary continued until 1791. In the revolutionary era, one Vincentian professor who suffered was Jean Guibaud (1761-1794), who went into hiding. A woman desiring the promised reward betrayed his location. He was then arrested and executed in Le Mans. Another faculty member, François Martelet (1760-1798), was also condemned for not taking the constitutional oath. He was arrested and shot at Besançon.

Daughters of Charity were sent here to the Le Mans hospital in 1646.

Notre Dame de Coëffort, Le Mans
because of their good work at Angers and since the hospital chaplain and the superior of the seminary were both Vincentians. Their foundation did not succeed, however. They returned in 1802 to a more successful apostolate in the hospital, lasting through the century. They continue their pastoral works here.

The church building had been the main hall of the former hospital, and it has recently been restored to its early layout, similar to that of Angers. Closed to the public for many years as the army was using it, Notre Dame de Coëffort was restored to the Church for worship on 28 October 1951. One window on the façade retains the image of the seal of the Congregation of the Mission. The old hospital property has now become
the Lycée Gabriel Touchard. The square in front of the hospital/church was at one period called Place de la Mission, but its name has been changed to Square Washington. One street leading into the square, however, is still called Rue de la Mission. Modern Le Mans is a city of around 150,000 people.

Abelly recounts that, while going from Le Mans to Angers, about two kilometers southwest of Durtal, Vincent’s horse stumbled down the steep bank of a small creek, swollen by rain, and probably pinned his rider under him. Vincent’s traveling companion, a priest, saw him and saved him from drowning. Completely drenched, Vincent remounted his horse, went quickly to a nearby farm to dry out and not surprisingly grew feverish. This unnamed priest left the Congregation but asked several times to be readmitted. When he reminded Vincent that he had once saved his life, Vincent wrote that he should return to Saint Lazare, where he would be received with open arms. The creek has various names, but it is called Pouillet, near the Durtal road (N23). A small farm, La Goillerie, could be where the saint and his companion stopped. A modern window in the village church of Lézigné,
south of Durtal, recalls this event, dated to March or April 1649. (Letters 1097, 2004) The window, dated 1937, depicts Saint Vincent catechizing the children of the family while their mother dries his cloak by the fire.

LUÇON

In 1638, when Cardinal Richelieu, the retired bishop of Luçon, invited Vincent to send missionaries to Richelieu, he also asked for missionaries for his former diocese, which members of his family had served as bishops for many decades. The two parties signed a contract to this effect, and missionaries came to the diocese of Luçon. Vincentians were to remain here from that year until the Revolution.

The saint himself traveled to the city of Luçon, perhaps in 1633, and later to visit his confreres. He did so probably in early May of 1649 during his long absence from Paris, partly as a way of distancing himself from the troubles of the Fronde. While here, he lodged at the seminary (Rue de l'Hôtel de Ville). Luçon today has a population of around 9000.

The cardinal provided a large house suitable for the missionaries as well as for ordinands. The country house of Pont de Vie, located at Le Poiré-sur-Vie, was their ordinary residence from 1641 to 1680. It does not appear to be extant. The Vincentians also had a house in Luçon itself, designed to care for the “New Converts” from Protestantism. Little is known about this work. The diocesan seminary, which the Vincentians directed from 1771 to 1791, is more tangible evidence of a Vincentian presence. Their seminary became a military barracks but was demolished in the 1930s.

During Vincent's western journey, a tradition holds that he visited La Roche-sur-Yon, the most important town in the region. Here his friend Jacques de La Boucherie lived in the parish of Saint André d'Ornay, a short distance west of the town. Another tradition associates Vincent with a visit to Fontenay-le-Comte at the same time (see above). The fact is, however, that it is exceedingly difficult to track the saint's movements. Nevertheless, we know some of the places he visited, and he had to pass through others. Hence, it is likely that these old traditions have some basis in fact.

The missionaries had a country house at Beaulieu-sous-Mareuil, a farm area on the outskirts of Mareuil-sur-Lay-Dissais, a few kilometers southeast of La Roche. Eventually they also received responsibility for the local parish, Saint Pierre (from 1678). The building itself was used both as an ordinary residence and as a country house. When the confreres received care of the seminary in Luçon itself, they also lodged seminarians at Beaulieu. Vincent, of course, did not come here.

NANTES

At the lower end of the Loire valley stands Nantes, today a city of some 250,000 inhabitants. For centuries it disputed the title of Capital of Brittany with Rennes—Rennes won. On one of its many islands, which have recently been reclaimed from the river and incorporated into the city, stands the Hôtel Dieu,
the city hospital. In August 1646, Louise herself came here with six sisters to open the house. It is located on one of the former islands and maintains its traditional appearance. (Quai Moncousu)

Vincent visited the sisters here on his lengthy journey through Brittany, arriving about 19 April 1649. He remained here for around ten days. René Alméras, as the director of the sisters, also visited, as did other Vincentians in their turn. One of the reasons for these repeated visits was difficulties between the sisters and the hospital administrators. The hospital prospered, however, and the sisters remained until the Revolution. They returned to Nantes in 1819.

Unconnected with the apostolate of the sisters was the occasional presence of Vincentian missionaries embarking for or returning from Madagascar. Nantes was and is an important port.

Its name lives on in the Edict of Nantes. Henri IV promulgated this document in 1598 in Nantes to give a measure of religious toleration to French Protestants. The growing power of the Huguenots, as they were called, and their quasi-independent status within France, led Louis XIV to revoke his grandfather's edict in 1685. A great exodus of French Protestants ensued, and the galleys gradually began to fill with pastors and others who had refused to obey the law.

SAUMUR

The most notable Vincentian feature of the city of Saumur is the shrine of Our Lady, Notre Dame des Ardilliers. The story is that, in 1454, a farmer discovered in his field a statue buried in the ground, perhaps hidden there to keep it away from the depredations of soldiers. It was a Pieta, the Virgin Mother with the dead Jesus on her knees. This farmer eventually placed the statue by a spring that arose near where he discovered the statue. People came to see and pray, and then believed in the miraculous effects of the spring. So was born the pilgrimage that continues to the present. The people of Saumur built a chapel (consecrated 1553), and the Oratorians developed the pilgrimage, particularly to challenge the many Protestants in Saumur (after 1585). Louis XIII contributed to the reconstruction of the shrine and gave it thereby the status of a Royal Chapel.

Cardinal Richelieu, despite his reputation for being more interested in politics than religion, took responsibility for building a chapel to the left of the nave in 1634. It is here that the pilgrimage statue is venerated today. In 1940, the ensemble suffered major damage from a battle, but it was restored and blessed anew by the future Pope John XXIII, then nuncio to France.

It appears that Vincent came here at least once, and he recommended that Louise do the same on her travels. This is known from several letters dated 1638 and 1639. In addition, she and the first sisters sent to Nantes stopped here in 1646 on their way to open the hospital there. Otherwise, there is nothing to recall their presence here. Modern Saumur has a population of about 30,000.
Poitou-Charentes

Since the region of Poitou-Charentes is far from Paris, it did not have much connection with visits or ministry of the two founders, Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac. Before Vincent's call to found the Congregation of the Mission, he was the titular abbot of Saint Leonard de Chaume in Dompierre. The other sites in this region are principally associated with the work of the Vincentians and are especially noteworthy for the effects of the Revolution on the Congregation. (Poitiers, the capital of Poitou, is treated under Richelieu.)
ANGOULEME

As often happened, the diocese of Angoulême received Vincentians in the founder’s day to preach missions, beginning in 1634. The local clergy had previously had a good experience with a type of Tuesday Conference for priests and some retreats for ordinands. Consequently, the bishop invited Vincent to send priests for a seminary, but it was only with the expansion of the Congregation of the Mission into more seminaries after the founder’s death that a permanent house in the city of Angoulême was founded. In 1704, Vincentians began a seminary and ran the parish of Saint Martial attached to it. This work continued until 1791. The seminary used a former Carmelite convent, although the building no longer stands. (Boulevard Berthellot) A new church dating from 1853 has replaced the former Saint Martial. Vincentians returned to serve in the major seminary from 1856 to 1903, when they were expelled from nearly all their houses in France. They returned again to serve from 1919 to 1959. Apart from a small relic of Saint Vincent, nothing in the church recalls the Congregation’s service here. (Rue de l’Eglise Saint Martial) An important pilgrimage chapel, dating from the thirteenth century, was attached to the same parish. Notre Dame d’Obézine (also written Aubézine, even Bézines) drew so many pilgrims that the Vincentians undertook the building of a larger chapel, which served from 1732 to 1897. The present chapel was completed in 1929. (Rue des Bézines and rue de Montmoreau) Angoulême today numbers about 43,000 inhabitants.

The fate of the community attached to the seminary and parish demonstrates what happened elsewhere at the Revolution. The superior was banished and went to Turin. One priest, Louis Janet, died of ill treatment aboard the “Washington,” in the harbor of Rochefort, 10 September 1794. The other three priests were deported and probably died in exile. The brother, Jean Eloi Paris, was put on the “Washington” as well but was later released, only to be put back into prison, at age 68. His subsequent history is not known.

Commemorative cross, Saint Leonard de Chaume
DOMPIERRE-SUR-MER

Among the many murky areas in Vincent’s early life is his being the abbot of Saint Leonard de Chaume, near La Rochelle. Indeed, the very name of the abbey has fallen out of local consciousness, and all that remains is a small settlement south of town on route D108, with perhaps a dozen houses, called collectively “the Abbey” (L’Abbaye). A sturdy stone cross stands on the site, bearing only the word PAX and the date 1610. The parish church of Saint Pierre, however, has a plaque commemorating the saint’s presence in the parish.

In his desire to provide himself with an income, Vincent did what many other priests of his day were also doing. He became an abbé, that is, an absentee abbot of a non-existing community, with rights to the income but also with certain obligations. According to extant documents, the abbey was in ruins, apart from a couple of houses and walls. To fulfill his obligations, Vincent came here in 1610, performed all the required symbolic acts (visiting the ruins of the chapel, opening and closing some doors) and then dealt with the people living in his buildings. He also appointed a procurator to handle the affairs of the abbey lands. Besides this property, Vincent also succeeded some feudal rights to the administration of justice. It is clear, however, that his tenure was not peaceful. Unable to satisfy his legal obligations, he became embroiled in lawsuits. Wisely, he got out of this affair by 1616. Perhaps reflecting on his experience, he said to his confreres in 1659: Experience has taught many the difficulty of obtaining [benefices]. They have been cheated of their hopes, and are now objects of derision to the world. They are regarded as persons who have allowed themselves to be deceived, like children chasing butterflies, or, indeed, like those who wish, as they run, to capture their shadows. . . . Everything seems to be made of gold and silver, but, in reality, there is nothing but lead. (Conference 219)

The modern town of Dompierre has fewer than 2000 inhabitants.

LA ROCHELLE

In the late sixteenth century, the city of La Rochelle became a semi-independent Protestant stronghold. As a
result, its Catholic inhabitants gradually diminished in number. In a sermon on the catechism, delivered between 1613 and 1617, Vincent reflected on the impact of teaching the catechism in La Rochelle. At La Rochelle there are about 1500 Catholics, and all the others are Protestants. These Catholics did not know what they believed in fifteen or sixteen years ago, until God sent them a good doctor who began to catechize the children. Little by little he did so well that, by the grace of God and by this little catechism, he made those people so good that I am ashamed of myself when I am with them and I see that they surpass me greatly in charity. (Coste, 13, 29) Just what Vincent had been doing in La Rochelle remains to be determined, although it was probably because he was titular abbot of the Chaume abbey. The doctor may have been a friend of his. Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu both determined to reclaim La Rochelle politically and religiously, in part because of the city's strategic location on the Atlantic. The cardinal himself led the siege of La Rochelle (1627-1628), and the novelist Alexandre Dumas used this event as one of the settings for his novel The Three Musketeers.

After the crown recovered the city from the Huguenots, the government was able to bring about the erection of La Rochelle as a diocese. Vincent had a hand in this. As a member of the Council of Conscience, he proposed the bishop of Saintes, Jacques Raoul de La Guibourgère, for the new diocese. Vincent counted La Guibourgère as a friend and esteemed his abilities. The new diocese was constructed from the former diocese of Maillézaïs and from parts of the diocese of Saintes.

The bishop needed a cathedral, and the former Protestant church sufficed until it was accidentally destroyed by fire. The cathedral of Saint Louis began in 1742 but was completed after the Revolution and consecrated only in 1862. Its façade remains unfinished, and its interior furnishings date only from the nineteenth century. This church has a major window in the choir dedicated to Saint Vincent de Paul, shown with poor young children, as is typical of the nineteenth century. Whether this window takes its origin in Vincent's general care for the poor or in the presence of his confreres in La Rochelle is unknown.

The Jesuits had a royal college (a secondary school) and a seminary here beginning in 1629. When they were expelled in 1762, Vincentians were invited to replace them for the seminary, and they did so in the following year. They remained in charge of the major seminary from 1763 until 1790, when the Revolution suppressed all religious congregations. The seminary has been changed into a high school, the Lycée Dautet. The institution had extensive properties and gardens, located against the old ramparts, but some of the property has been sold off. (Rue Dalayant) Some buildings of the old Jesuit college remain, but only the chapel dates from before the Revolution. The familiar Jesuit coat-of-arms is still visible on the façade of this chapel. The institution is still in use as a college. (Rue du Collège)

In the nineteenth century Vincent-
tians returned to the seminary. It was refounded in a new location in 1851, and they remained there until 1903. This seminary originally incorporated elements from the church of Saint John, but this latter has completely disappeared. In addition, no sign of its former use remains on the façade of the present building. (26, rue Saint Jean, now 6, rue de la Monnaie) The Daughters of Charity opened a school here in 1831 and continued with other works of charity.

Another Vincentian connection is that in Vincent's time several of his confreres embarked here for the Madagascar mission. One of them, Charles Nacquart (d. 1651), left a description of how he and his fellow-missionary, Nicolas Gondrée (d. 1649), spent a month here in 1648. With the bishop's permission, they spent the morning in the hospitals and, during Easter week, served prisoners as best they could. (Letter 1179)

Today, La Rochelle is a thriving city of around 75,000 persons.

POITIERS

Although the ancient city of Poitiers, now with a population of about 80,000, did not have a Vincentian house in the time of the founder, his confreres from Richelieu were active in the diocese giving missions and ordination retreats. At length, in 1681, the bishop invited the Congregation of the Mission to assume the direction of the major seminary, which it continued until the Revolution. The buildings, many times rebuilt, still stand and today house the administrative offices of the Banque de France. (Rue des Carmelites) In 1710, the Vincentians began the minor seminary, Saint Charles. This building, too, remains, having been transformed first into a military barracks (1795-1945), and then into apartments. (3, rue du 125e. de l'Infanterie) One of its students, who later attended the major seminary, has been canonized (1933). André Hubert Fournet (1752-1834), a priest of the diocese of Poitiers, founded the Daughters of the Cross, known as the Sisters of Saint André. His collaborator in this work was Jeanne Élisabeth Bichier Des Ages (1773-1838), also canonized. A small street near the cathedral, Rue Saint Vincent de Paul, commemorates Vincent's presence here in his sons and daughters. Poitiers is a thriving city of some 80,000 residents.

ROCHEFORT*

The river Charente runs to the sea through Rochefort. Although the city had a church from the eleventh century, Rochefort owes its religious and economic growth to the military port built here in the seventeenth century. The government also built a naval hospital here, probably because of its river, its seaside location and its hot springs. The buildings of the former naval hospital of Rochefort have been transformed into residential apartments. The city has a population of about 25,000.

In 1683, Vincentians were invited to open a special seminary here to prepare navy chaplains. The background for this choice appears to have been the seminary in Marseilles where Vincentians had been preparing chaplains for the royal galleys. The Rochefort
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In 1683, Vincentians were invited to open a special seminary here to prepare navy chaplains. The background for this choice appears to have been the seminary in Marseilles where Vincentians had been preparing chaplains for the royal galleys. The Rochefort
the memory of the 829 priests and religious deported on the hulks of the Year II (1794).” A yearly pilgrimage originating in La Rochelle keeps alive the memory of these deportations of the clergy. A submersible causeway, accessible at low tide, connects the mainland with this island, now a vacation colony. People come here today to gather seafood, particularly oysters and mussels.

An important monument to the martyrs is at Port-des-Barques, where the land joins the causeway to Ile Madame. This monument, a tall obelisk flanked by statues of Saints Peter and Paul is part of a larger open-air shrine where mass is regularly celebrated. No names appear on these monuments, which state only that priests and religious perished here. Pope John Paul II beatified 64 of the priests (but not the two Vincentians) on 1 October 1995.

Also of historic interest at Port-des-Barques is a commemorative plaque and bust of Gilbert Du Motier, the marquis de Lafayette (1757-1834). He embarked from here on 10 March 1780 to go to America, where he served as an officer of the American revolutionary forces. He then returned to France where he served the revolution as well.

After the revolutionary period, the Daughters of Charity were able to resume their habit and renew their vows. The Vincentians who had remained in hiding had left by 1793. Despite the tragic end of the Vincentian work at Rochefort-sur-Mer, their apostolate here was fruitful. It led to other establishments in the region: the mission house at Fontenay-le-Comte and the seminary at La Rochelle.

SAINTES

Vincent opened a house in Saintes in 1644. Its purpose was the preaching of missions, as elsewhere. A seminary began at the same time, and several extant documents demonstrate how it was supported financially—principally through the income from various parishes. One of these was the church of Saint Vivien in the city of Saintes. This church today has no reminders of the work of Saint Vincent, although the old seminary was located beside it. Today, the seminary is used as a military barracks. Just behind this church is the Petit Rue du Séminaire, leading up to the old property.

In 1656, Louis Rivet, the anxious superior of Saintes, heard strange noises in his house every night. He thought that there might be ghosts and so informed Vincent. The latter analyzed the issue carefully and offered two avenues of investigation. First, he recalled that certain individuals [at Saint Lazare] made strange, lugubrious sounds with their voices in order to frighten others. Maybe they
were up to no good, perhaps counterfeiting money in the basement. Second, however, if you cannot give any other explanation, have recourse to the blessings of the Church, repeated if necessary. Rivet might even try to have the bishop perform them. Vincent wisely suggested that the superior not become upset. (Letter 2140) The confreres continued their works at Saintes until 1791. What happened to the nightly visitors is a mystery.

In 1857, long after the Revolution, Vincentians resumed their work in the seminary. In that same year, they took charge of the ancient parish church of Sainte Eutrope. This eleventh-century church is still one of the glories of Saintes, although Huguenots damaged it considerably. The seminary eventually moved to another location but still exists. Street names mentioning the seminary lead to it. The Daughters of Charity also came to Saintes, beginning in 1700. They returned in 1872 to undertake the care of orphans and other works of charity.

The last bishop of Saintes was Pierre Louis de La Rochefoucauld-Bayers (1744-1792). Killed at the Carmelites in Paris during the September massacres, he was beatified 17 October 1926. Hundreds of others, including his brother, François Joseph (1736-1792), the bishop of Beauvais, and two Vincentians, Louis Joseph François and Henri Gruyer, perished at the same time. A special chapel is dedicated to Pierre Louis in the cathedral. Saintes lost its official status as a diocese in 1648 when it was partly absorbed by the new diocese of La Rochelle. The name of the diocese, however, carried on until the Revolution. The modern city of Saintes has a population of about 25,000.
ments by the Water of Saint Vincent. This sacramental involved drinking or otherwise using water blessed with a relic of the saint. The same results were reported from waters blessed in honor of other saints. Today's Agen is a city of about 30,000 inhabitants.

BERCEAU-DE-SAINT-VINCENT-DE-PAUL***

Vincent de Paul was born in the Landes of Gascony, in the diocese of Dax. The term "Gascony" refers to that region of southwestern France that extends from the Garonne river south to the Pyrenees, and "Landes" refers to a part of Gascony that is relatively flat and generally not fertile. It is interesting to note that, because of the closeness of Gascony with the French Basque region, the names "Gascony" and "Basque" have the same origin (gascon in early French - vasco in Latin - basco in the local dialect). Because of the abundant material concerning the birthplace and other locations associated with Vincent, this text is divided into the following sections: I. The De Paul family, II. The Berceau (his birthplace), III. Pouty (the local town), IV. The countryside where he lived and worked, V. Buglose and Gourbera, VI. Dax (where he attended school), and VII. Sites in the Dax region.

I. The De Paul Family

What did the name De Paul mean? In many parts of France the particle "de" is a sign of some noble origin. In Gascony, however, the particle "de" meant nothing other than joining the given name of an individual to the name of his or her house. A person was named after a saint at baptism and, since several persons often bore the same name, it was customary to follow it with the name of the house where they lived or the property that they farmed, using the particles "de" "du" or "de la" between the two. With the passage of time the names thus