THE
AMERICAN
VINCENTIANS
Felix De Andreis, 1778-1820
(Original in the Collegio Leoniano, Rome, Italy)
The American Vincentians:
A Popular History of the
Congregation of the Mission
in the
United States
1815-1987

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Editorial Staff

John Rybolt, C.M. Editor-in-Chief
Stafford Poole, C.M.
Douglas Slawson, C.M.
Edward Udovic, C.M.

With the Generous Assistance of:

John Carven, C.M.
Frederick Easterly, C.M.
John Sledziona, C.M.
Arthur Trapp, C.M.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAB  Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, Baltimore, Maryland
AALA  Archives of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Mission Hills, California
AANO  Archives of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana
AGC  Archives of the General Curia, Rome, Italy
APF  Archives of the Propagation of the Faith, Rome, Italy
AUND  Archives of the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana
DRMA  DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives, Perryville, Missouri
GCUSA  Microfilm of American materials (to 1935) in the Archives of the General Curia, Rome: Series A, rolls 1,2; Series B, rolls 3,4,5; Series C, reels 1,2,3; Series D, rolls 1,2.

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INTRODUCTION

When the Vincentian Studies Institute was formally organized in 1980, among the tasks that it set for itself was the writing of a history of the Vincentian Community in the United States. As originally envisioned, the project was two-tiered. First would come a popular history—that is, a relatively brief, undocumented work destined primarily for members of the Congregation of the Mission in this country. After that the plan called for a more scholarly volume, thoroughly documented, intended for a wider readership. This present history, which was envisioned as the popular work, has grown longer and more detailed than originally planned. It has been thoroughly researched, but annotation has been kept to a minimum in order to make it more accessible. The fully documented work still lies in the future.

In a series of planning meetings, the members of the VSI decided that this history should cover the period from the founding of the American mission in Rome in 1815 through the year 1987. In organization it consists of a collection of signed essays, beginning with an introductory chapter that gives a general survey of American Vincentian history followed by chapters dealing with individual apostolates. The contributors have eschewed a filial-pietistic approach—that is, one in which the tone is predominantly laudatory and pious—in favor of a frank description of the vicissitudes, successes, and failures of the American Vincentians, both personal and institutional. The readership, as mentioned above, is the Vincentians of the five provinces of the United States. Although the members of the VSI decided that every Vincentian house since 1818 should be mentioned, insofar as this was possible, this is not merely an institutional history. The authors have included material on lives and attitudes, trends and developments, along with evaluations of the Vincentian contribution to the American Church.

Published in tandem with this history is a companion volume on the history of the Daughters of Charity in the United States. The two works differ in style and approach. The Daughters’ history is
the work of one author, not a series of essays, although it was written in close cooperation with an editorial committee and the VSI. It follows a more chronological approach as opposed to the organization by apostolates of this volume. Together, however, they offer a comprehensive picture of the work done by the Double Family of Saint Vincent in the United States.

Of necessity the VSI has had to establish certain editorial guidelines for this work. An attempt has been made to mention every house founded by the Vincentians in this country, together with the motivations for these foundations, insofar as they are known. Certain forms of language peculiar to the Vincentian Community have been retained, such as the use of "confrere" to indicate a member of the Community. "Visitor," however, has been dropped in favor of the contemporary "provincial." In contrast, the term consecration has been used instead of episcopal ordination, primarily for the sake of clarity. Every priest or brother mentioned by name is a Vincentian unless otherwise indicated. The initials C.M. are used only with the names of Vincentian bishops. First names of European Vincentians who worked in the United States are given in the English form except where there is none. This was the procedure followed by the confreres themselves. Endnotes are used only for direct quotations. Footnotes contain explanatory material that does not properly belong in the text. Foreign words and phrases have been translated, except in some few cases when they are almost the equivalent of English. Dates have been taken from original documents whenever possible. Others are drawn from Catholic Directories, Community personnel catalogues, and other printed sources. These sources vary in reliability. There is no treatment of the Vincentian Community in the Philippines or Puerto Rico. Although both these countries were once American possessions, their Vincentian histories are totally distinct from that of the United States.

In matters of style and format the contributors have followed the Chicago Manual of Style, Thirteenth Edition (1982). This manual prefers the use of the lower case for words like mass and bishop. The VSI, however, has made certain adaptations with regard to capitalization: church refers to a building, Church to the institution; Province is capitalized when it is part of a proper name, such as Eastern Province; Community and Congregation are capitalized when referring to the Congregation of the Mission.
The Vincentian Studies Institute wishes to express its thanks to the five provincials of the United States for their unfailing support of the Institute and its works. This support has been both financial and personal. Their encouragement has been of great help in bringing this laborious project to a happy conclusion. In addition, thanks are owed to the former American provincials who read and commented on the manuscript. Similarly, confreres in specific apostolates, such as universities, seminaries, and parishes, have contributed a great deal by reading the manuscript and making suggestions. The VSI also wishes to thank the directors and archivists of the following diocesan depositories of church records: Alexandria, Austin, Bardstown, Baton Rouge, Belleville, Brooklyn, Buffalo, Dallas, Denver, Houma-Thibodaux, Jackson (which includes Natchez), Lafayette, Little Rock, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Notre Dame, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reno, Scranton, Saint Louis, Salt Lake City, San Antonio, San Francisco, and Vincennes. Acknowledgement is also made of the Sulpician Archives, Baltimore, Maryland; the civil archives in Cape Girardeau, Los Angeles, Perryville, and Saint Louis; the state libraries of Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, and Missouri. Of Vincentian archives, the VSI wishes to express its gratitude to all five provinces but especially to the DeAndreis-Rosati Memorial Archives at Saint Mary's Seminary, Perryville, Missouri, and the Archives of the Eastern Province at Saint John's University, Jamaica, New York; the archives of the Motherhouse in Paris, the General Curia in Rome, and the provincial archives of Ireland, Madrid, Mexico, the Netherlands, Rome, and Turin. And finally acknowledgement is paid to the archive of the Propaganda Fide in Rome.

Thanks are also extended to all those members of the Community who shared their personal recollections with the contributors to this volume. The authors, however, reserve to themselves the blame for any errors arising from these recollections.

An expression of appreciation is also due to those who read and evaluated the original manuscript: Father Thomas Croak, C.M., of DePaul University and Professor Philip Gleason of Notre Dame University. Special thanks, also, to our cartographer, Father Douglas Slawson, C.M., who drew the maps for this volume.

When the Vincentian Studies Institute first undertook this history, it believed that a paucity of information and sources would cause it to be relatively brief. The contributors have been delighted and overwhelmed by the richness of the material and the wide
scope of Vincentian history in this country. If, on the one hand, this has caused the book to be tardy in appearing, it has also caused it to be more comprehensive. With this in mind, *The American Vincentians* is now presented to those included under its title.