I.

A SURVEY OF

AMERICAN VINCENTIAN HISTORY:

1815-1987

by

The Editorial Staff

The Congregation of the Mission was founded in France by Saint Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) in 1625, the year in which the new company received its first legal recognition. Its informal beginning dated back to 1617 when a providential event gave momentum to the introduction of what was later to be known as the Mission. The Congregation, known in France as Lazarists and in English-speaking countries as the Vincentians, arose as a response to the deplorable condition of the Church and clergy in early seventeenth century France.

The France of that century was still experiencing the effects of the Protestant reform and the religious wars which had followed it. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) had attempted to counteract the conditions in the church that had led to the Reformation, but the decrees of the council were not promulgated in France until 1615—and even after that there was lingering, nationalistic hostility to them. Torn by conflict between Catholics and Huguenots (French Calvinists) and struggling within its own ranks with the question of Gallicanism (the tendency toward an autonomous French church), France did not experience the wholesome effects of Trent until the early seventeenth century.

In January 1617, Vincent de Paul was parish priest of Clichy-la-Garenne, a village outside of Paris, and tutor and chaplain in the house of the wealthy and powerful Gondi family. During a visit to the estates of his patrons, he was called to the village of Gannes to the bedside of a man gravely ill who wished to relieve his conscience which had been torturing him for some time. Later the man related
his story to Madame de Gondi, saying, “I would have been damned had I not made a general confession to Monsieur Vincent.” Madame de Gondi and her husband were both devout persons. Deeply moved by this statement they asked Monsieur Vincent to conduct missions among these poor people who had been deprived of the consolations of religion for many years. He welcomed the opportunity and on 25 January, in the church of the village of Folleville, spoke on the need for general confession. So overwhelming was the response that in order to hear the confessions of all who came he had to call in outside help. This touching incident was responsible for Vincent de Paul’s dedication of his entire life to “preaching the gospel to the poor, especially the poor country people.”*

In order to give the missions permanence and organization, Vincent de Paul, with the financial support of the Gondis, organized a group of priests who were to evangelize the Gondi estates (1625). This group, which eventually received approbation from the archbishop of Paris, the French government, and the papacy, grew into the Congregation of the Mission. Vincent followed up the work of the missions with others, such as the Tuesday Conferences (a special association of ecclesiastical leaders) and retreats for ordinands. Out of the latter came the Vincentian-directed seminaries that helped to raise the standards of the French clergy.

As the years progressed, his work took on an enduring form and in 1658, when he gave his Community the rules by which it was to be governed, he stated its purpose in this way:

The end of the Congregation is: 1° to strive for one’s own perfection by exerting every effort to practice the virtues which the Sovereign Master has been pleased to teach us both by word and example; 2° to preach the gospel to the poor, especially the country people; 3° to help ecclesiastics in acquiring the knowledge and virtues necessary for their state.1

What was Saint Vincent de Paul's vision of this new Community? Foremost was the fact that it was apostolic. Providence had brought it together to meet a major need in the Church's task of evangelization. At the same time he saw it as occupying a lower rank in the Church. He called it the "Little Company" and told his followers that they were gleaners who followed after the older, more prestigious communities. Vincent was an profound student of human nature and realized instinctively that an individual who was personally humble and selfless could easily sublimate his pride into a large organization. He demanded of his confreres that they be humble not only about themselves but about their Community. As a result he stressed the importance of day-to-day work and dedication to the ordinary, unromantic tasks of the apostolate. He wanted his followers to be workers rather than innovators. His attitude is perhaps best summarized in his oft-quoted exhortation "let us love God, my brothers, let us love God, but let it be at the expense of our arms and in the sweat of our brow."  

The Community founded by Saint Vincent (he was canonized in 1737) spread rapidly. At the time of his death (27 September 1660) it extended to almost every province in France and numbered twenty-five houses that included mission centers, seminaries, and parishes. It had opened foundations in Poland, had undertaken missionary work in Madagascar, Ireland, and Scotland, and had opened a house in Rome.  

By the time of the French Revolution (1789) the Congregation in France numbered more than 500 priests and about 260 brothers. It was to be found in Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Palatinate, the islands of Mauritius and Bourbon, Russian Lithuania, the partitioned areas of Poland, the Ottoman Empire (including modern Greece, Turkey, Syria, and Lebanon), Algeria, and China.  

The Vincentians came to the United States as a mission of the province of Rome. Saint Vincent had first sent his priests to the Eternal City as a way of having direct communications with the Holy See (1631). It was only in 1659, however, that the Vincentians were able to find a permanent residence, the former townhouse of a local cardinal in the Monte Citorio district of Rome. This was to be the starting point of the American Vincentian mission.  

The Roman foundation brought difficulties as well as blessings. By the end of the seventeenth century a strong spirit of nationalistic rivalry had grown up between the French and non-French Vincen-
tians, the latter led by the Italians. So bitter did feelings become that an attempt was made to divide the Community into French and non-French governmental units. The attempt failed but the feelings remained.

They burst out again at the time of the French Revolution. In 1792 the Congregation of the Mission was suppressed in France and the superior general, Felix Cayla de la Garde, and his council were forced to flee the country. The superior general was eventually able to settle in Rome but died there in 1800 and after a brief period of confusion, Father François Brunet assumed government of the Community as vicar general.

In 1804 Napoleon decreed the restoration of the Congregation in France, but in such ambiguous wording that Vincentians outside of France refused to accept it. The result was that from 1804 to 1807, the government of the Community was divided between French and Italian vicars general. In 1807 unified government was restored but the schism was renewed in 1809 when Napoleon suppressed the Congregation of the Mission. There followed a long, confused period of conflicting claims until 1827 when the pope ended the division by appointing a superior general.

It was against this background that the Vincentian mission to the United States was undertaken. This mission was an offshoot of the Roman Province, an area that despite the buffetings of the Napoleonic wars had not suffered a serious interruption of Vincentian life. The American mission was to inherit the strong ultramontane (or pro-papal) orientation of the Roman Province rather than the more Gallican leanings of the French.

The Call of Louisiana

In 1815, Louis William Valentine Dubourg, a Sulpician priest who had been named apostolic administrator of Louisiana, went to Rome to recruit priests. On his arrival in Rome Propaganda erected Louisiana into a diocese and appointed Dubourg its first bishop. He resolved, however, not to accept the government of the sprawling diocese, which had come under American rule in 1803, unless he could obtain sufficient priests. During his stay in Rome, Dubourg lodged with the Vincentians at Monte Citorio. At that time the students from the college of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (commonly called Propaganda) lodged at
Bishop Joseph Rosati, C. M., Saint Louis, Missouri
Monte Citorio. The operation of the college had been suspended from 1798 until 1815 because of political difficulties, and the Vincentian house had been serving as a replacement. One evening, on returning to Monte Citorio, Dubourg heard one of the young Vincentians giving a spiritual conference to a group of clerics. So deeply impressed was the bishop-elect that he resolved to have this priest, and perhaps more of his Community, for his sparsely settled diocese. The young priest's name was Felix De Andreis.

De Andreis was born on 13 December 1778 in the village of Demonte, in Piedmont in northern Italy. In 1797 he joined the Congregation of the Mission as a member of the Turin province. He pursued his seminary studies under great difficulties, most of them caused by the Napoleonic invasions of Italy. These studies were interrupted in 1799 when the French-dominated provisional government of Piedmont suppressed all the Vincentian houses in its jurisdiction. De Andreis returned to his home but was able to resume his studies at Turin toward the end of that same year. He made his vows on 21 September 1800. Three months later the house at Turin was also suppressed, and he moved to the Collegio Alberoni, the Vincentian-directed seminary at Piacenza. It was there that he was ordained to the priesthood in 1801 and in the following year completed his theological studies.

His first years of ministry were dedicated to giving parish missions around Piacenza where, because of the political disturbances, the faithful were all but forgotten. He also worked to support the local clergy at a time of foreign domination and anti-clericalism. Between missions he assisted or substituted for professors at the Collegio Alberoni. From Piacenza he was sent to Rome. There his duties focused on the formation of seminarians of the Congregation of the Mission at Monte Citorio and the students from Propaganda. In addition he worked at the ongoing formation of the Roman clergy, especially by giving them spiritual conferences.

It was on the occasion of one of these conferences that Dubourg first encountered De Andreis. "How happy I would be," the bishop-elect remarked to a student standing next to him, "if I could have some of these priests for my diocese!" When the student informed him that De Andreis had long wanted to serve on the foreign missions, especially China, Dubourg spoke to the young priest and asked him to accompany him to the United States, primarily to establish a seminary in Louisiana. De Andreis was enthusiastic but
agreed only on condition that his Vincentian superiors would give their approval. The Italian vicar-general, Father Carlo Domenico Sicardi, vigorously opposed the idea of losing one of his best priests and claimed that it would do extensive harm to the work of the seminary and the formation of the Roman clergy. Undeterred, Dubourg went directly to the pope, Pius VII (1800-1823), who, after an audience with Father Sicardi, turned the matter over to two cardinals who consulted with the parties involved. Sicardi pleaded De Andreis's poor health, but the reason collapsed when De Andreis's physician approved his going. Sicardi then pointed out to Pius VII that it was the pope himself who had wanted the Vincentians to give missions in the Papal States and to work with the ordinands and that the removal of De Andreis would hurt this. Also, though the matter is far from clear, there had apparently been some anonymous denunciations of De Andreis's orthodoxy.

Dubourg had determined to put off his consecration until the matter was settled but changed his mind. He was made a bishop on 24 September 1815 in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi, the French church in Rome. Two days later he had an audience with the pope at Castelgandolfo and received final approval for De Andreis and five or more other Vincentians to go to Louisiana. The matter was turned over to Cardinal Ercole Consalvi, the all-powerful Secretary of State, whose skill in diplomacy had been a match for Napoleon. He informed Sicardi of the pope's wishes and the basic articles of the contract were formulated on 27 September, the feast of the death of Saint Vincent de Paul, though the contract was not signed until November.*

De Andreis set about finding co-workers for the mission. One of the first persons he turned to was his former student and close friend, Father Joseph Rosati. Rosati was born at Sora, in the kingdom of Naples, on 12 January 1789, and came from a noble family. Convinced of his priestly vocation from his earliest years, he began his ecclesiastical studies at the seminary at Sora in December 1804. Feeling a call to the religious life, he was admitted as a novice in the Congregation of the Mission on 23 June 1807. The novitiate was located at San Andrea al Quirinale in Rome and hence felt the impact of the French invasions. Because of this, Rosati received a

*See text in Appendix I
dispensation to pronounce his vows on 1 April 1808. In September of that year he began his theological studies at Monte Citorio where he came under De Andreis's direction. He was ordained to the priesthood on 10 February 1811.

During their days together at Monte Citorio, De Andreis and Rosati had often discussed their desires to go on the foreign missions. One day De Andreis asked Rosati what studies he was engaged in. Rosati replied that among other things he devoted a certain amount of time each day to the study of Hebrew. De Andreis told him, "Leave Hebrew aside. It is not what you need. Learn English." When Rosati asked why, De Andreis replied, "that language will be necessary for us, for you and me, in order to preach the word of God to the peoples who speak it." De Andreis, who had already learned some English from an Irish priest at Propaganda, gave Rosati a grammar and promised to help him with the new language. A few days later, baffled and frustrated by the chaotic rules of pronunciation, Rosati returned the book and asked his mentor never to mention the word English again. De Andreis took back the grammar but forewarned him "nevertheless you will need it."4

Rosati's first priestly work consisted of parish missions in the towns and villages near Rome. Political disturbances, however, forced him to return to Sora (June 1812). After the situation had calmed, he returned to Monte Citorio where he gave conferences to ordinands, preached to the inmates of a Roman prison, and gave missions in various parts of the Papal States. It was while he was preaching a mission at La Scarpa that he received a letter from De Andreis, telling him about the new mission venture in North America. Though Rosati had already been selected for the mission, De Andreis assured him that there was still time to reconsider. He had only to answer yes or no (con un bel sì o con un bel no).5 Not unexpectedly, the answer was un bel sì.

On 17 November the contract, authorizing and delineating the new mission, was signed by Dubourg, De Andreis, and Sicardi. It defined in clear terms that the Vincentians who were going to Louisiana were still under the government of their superiors, both local and Roman. The "essential condition" on which the contract was based was that

the missionaries will go out with him [Dubourg] as subjects of the Congregation of the Mission, to form an establishment in his
diocese, discharge the different functions appertaining to their institute, and especially to found a seminary as early as possible, by means of certain funds which have been promised them, together with the savings of the missionaries.  

To protect the Vincentian identity of the missionaries, they were to live in community as much as possible. None could accept a parish in his own name but only in that of the Congregation. Those who did otherwise were to be expelled from the Community. Revenues from these parishes were to go to the local superiors, after sufficient sums had been deducted for the support of the priest in the parish. Novices were to remain “stationary at the principal residence (which will be considered as the motherhouse and central point for all and where, in due time, the seminary is to be erected).” The superior, however, was authorized to dispense from the two full years of novitiate. Superiors were to be free “to appoint, recall, replace and dispose of their subjects, as of so many vice-curates, as is done in all places where the missionaries have the care of souls.”

After their arrival in America, the missionaries were to be given a month, not so much for rest as for an opportunity to survey the local scene and discern its needs. In the case of parishes, Vincentian participation in them should be inaugurated with a mission.

And as, through ignorance and vice, the state of these people cannot be otherwise than deplorable, since neglectis urenda filix innascitur agris [“in neglected fields there springs up the coarse fern which must be burned”], before settling in any place, the missionaries should begin by a mission...in order to make a good beginning and promote the solid and permanent welfare of these poor souls; the effects of these missions being such that they produce a complete change in a place and render it easy to preserve and continue the good thus begun.

It was also foreseen that they would “carry out, as soon as possible, the erection of a seminary which, aided by the modest pension required of the seminarists, need not, it is presumed, be delayed for very long.”

There is some uncertainty about who and how many constituted the first group of missioners. The original band consisted of three Vincentian priests: De Andreis, Rosati, and Joseph Acquaroni; two Vincentian postulant brothers, Anthony Bobone and Francis Boranvaski (the latter name is spelled in a variety of ways); and a
Bishop John Mary Odin, C. M., Galveston, New Orleans
young Belgian seminarian from Propaganda, Leo Deys. There was also a Father Pereira (a Portuguese name) who later left the group and about whom little is known.

Before their departure the small band had a lengthy audience with Pius VII who spoke to them in a friendly and familiar way. He also granted a number of privileges, among which was that any student from the Collegio Alberoni in Piacenza could join them in spite of any promise to his diocese.

It was decided that the missionaries would depart in two groups, one of which would travel by sea, the other by land, until they would eventually meet in Toulouse. Since the anticipated seminary was to be founded in lower Louisiana, the study of French was necessary. The first group, consisting of Rosati, Acquaroni, Spezioli, Deys, and Boranvaski left from Civitavecchia on 21 October 1815. The journey by sea was slow and marked by many interruptions. Not all of these were misfortunes, for during an enforced stay in Genoa word of their mission reached two diocesan priests at Porto Maurizio, Joseph Carretti (a canon of the collegiate church there) and Andrew Ferrari. Both joined the group in Bordeaux. Ferrari later joined the Congregation of the Mission while Carretti, on his deathbed, indicated his desire to do so. After a journey of more than two months, the missionaries arrived at Toulouse on 19 January 1816.

In the meantime De Andreis and Dubourg made preparations for the departure of the second group. This included recruiting new members, soliciting funds from various royal and noble sources (including the emperor of Austria), and collecting books for the library of the projected seminary. On 15 December 1815 De Andreis left Rome together with a Father Marliani, a diocesan priest of Rome, and two seminarians from Propaganda, Casto Gonzalez, a Spaniard, and Francis Dahmen, a native of Düren in the Prussian Rhineland, who had served as a cavalryman under Napoleon. He later joined the Congregation of the Mission. They were joined by a Father Buzieres, a French priest who came to Rome from Viterbo for that purpose.

At Piacenza De Andreis was disappointed in his hope that some seminarians might join the mission. There was, however, a very important recruit in Brother Martin Blanka, a Vincentian who later rendered invaluable services during a long career in the American mission. From Piacenza the small band went to France by way of the Alps, a perilous journey in the depth of winter. They joined
their fellow missionaries at Toulouse on 25 January 1816. Shortly thereafter they again divided into two groups and met at Bordeaux in early February.

The band now consisted of De Andreis, Rosati, Acquaroni, Spezioli, Buzières, Carretti, Ferrari, Deys, Dahmen, Gonzalez, Bobone, Boranvaski, and Blanka. There were, however, some losses. Pereira, whose involvement in the whole enterprise is obscure, apparently left some time before this. Buzières and Brother Bobone left the group at Bordeaux.

The stay in Bordeaux lasted almost four months, during which everyone studied French, the priests ministered and preached in the local parishes, and the seminarians carried on a regular program of study. On 24 April 1816 they were stunned by a letter from Dubourg that informed them of two important changes. The first was that he would not be journeying to America with them. The second was that the site of the proposed seminary had been changed from lower to upper Louisiana.

The impulsive bishop had administered a major shock to the small band. His original intention had been to found the seminary in connection with the Assumption parish church at Lafourche (now Plattenville), Louisiana, so as to be near his see city of New Orleans. Circumstances in the latter city, especially the opposition of the Capuchin Antonio de Sedella, the famous Père Antoine and leader of the trustees of the cathedral, had caused Dubourg to change his see to Saint Louis. English now became as important as French, and the missionaries would have to undertake the study of a new and complex language. Fathers Spezioli and Marliani gave up in despair at the project and abandoned the group. Two new recruits, however, came forward. These were Medard de Lattre and John Flegifont, who asked to be admitted as brothers. Both made it as far as Baltimore but left the Community shortly afterward.

Dubourg reached Bordeaux on 22 May accompanied by Joseph Tichitoli, a young seminarian from Como, Italy, who wanted to join the mission and who later entered the Vincentian Community. Arrangements were made to sail on an American brig called The Ranger, which weighed anchor at midnight on 12/13 June 1816. On board were thirteen missionaries: De Andreis, Rosati, Acquaroni, Carretti, Ferrari, Deys, Dahmen, Gonzalez, Tichitoli, Blanka, Flegifont, Boranvaski, and de Lattre. Before boarding the ship, they made one last break with their pasts: they laid aside their cassocks
and donned the black suits, ties, and round hats that were characteristic of the American clergy.

The group quickly turned the ship into a floating seminary. All spiritual exercises were held with regularity, and classes were given in both theology and English. All, however, was not entirely religious as the group learned on 19 July, at that time the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul. As De Andreis described it in his journal:

A negro slave, for relapse into theft and drunkenness was to undergo the punishment that was customary in such cases—namely, to be thrown into the sea attached to a rope which passed under the ship. When it was drawn up on the otherside, the poor wretch was obliged to pass under the vessel, once or several times, at the imminent risk of losing his life in the process.* We told the captain that it was a great festival for us and begged him to pardon the unhappy delinquent for the sake of our saint. We had the happiness to succeed in obtaining our request.⁸

Sea voyages in that age were dangerous and uncomfortable, and this one was no exception. Some were afflicted by sea sickness. They encountered at least one serious storm. When after forty days at sea they were becalmed 300 miles east of Baltimore, the missionaries wrote out a vow to make a novena to Saint Vincent de Paul and to fast on 26 September, the vigil of the feast of his death. Their prayers were answered, and on 26 July they arrived safely at Baltimore. De Andreis wrote, “Our first impulse on landing was to kneel and kiss the ground but the place where we disembarked was so crowded that we deferred doing that.”⁹

The band had landed in a foreign country, with a limited command of the local language, and eighty pieces of baggage. They were quickly welcomed and helped by the Sulpicians of Saint Mary’s Seminary, whose superior, Simon Brute de Remur, would later become the first bishop of Vincennes, Indiana. Some lodged at the seminary while others were given hospitality in two local parishes. Following instructions he had received from Dubourg, De Andreis immediately wrote to Benedict Joseph Flaget, also a Sulpician and the bishop of Bardstown, Kentucky. Flaget quickly

*De Andreis is describing the punishment known as keelhauling.
replied, urging the group to come to Kentucky before the onset of winter.

The Sulpicians at Saint Mary's took up a collection in the city to help with the expenses of the journey and donated some books for the proposed seminary. The Jesuit superior at Georgetown also contributed funds. De Andreis made preparations for departure. The band was again divided into two groups. The first, under the leadership of Brother Blanka, was to go on foot to Pittsburgh together with the wagons carrying the baggage. They departed on 3 September 1816. The second group, led by De Andreis, left by stagecoach a week later.

The journey, as described by De Andreis, was harrowing. The roads were primitive and dangerous. At one point Acquaroni and two companions became lost. At another a landslide almost killed them all. The climax came when the stagedriver decided that he could not cross the flooded Juniata River and left his passengers at an inn. They eventually crossed by canoe and caught another stage on the other side. For the last segment of their trip they were compelled to abandon the stagecoach altogether, put their possessions in a wagon, and walk to Pittsburgh. It had taken them nine days to cover 240 miles. It is small wonder that De Andreis admitted to feelings of melancholy as he recalled the beauty and warmth of Rome.

Though they were well received and lodged by both Catholics and non-Catholics in Pittsburgh, they were delayed still further because Brother Blanka had not arrived with the baggage. When he did, the Ohio River was too low to permit them to take a flatboat. It was not until 26 October that the river had risen sufficiently to permit their departure. The flatboat was immediately converted into another floating seminary, with a fixed schedule of spiritual exercises and classes. Still, the missioners had time to enjoy the beauties of the new country and to stroll along the riverbanks during stopovers. Rosati admired the color and variety of American birds, though he considered their song inferior to those of Europe. De Andreis, on the other hand, was more concerned about his first sight of rattlesnakes, which he described in detail in letters to Europe.

They reached Louisville on 19 November and were immediately invited by Flaget to come to the seminary of Saint Thomas, a few miles south of Bardstown, where he had his residence. The original intention had been to leave the clerics there while the rest of the
The map describes the overland portions of the trip of the first Vincentians from Baltimore to the Barrens. They sailed down the Ohio River to Louisville, and again from Louisville to the Mississippi River.
expedition went to Saint Louis. Because of oncoming winter and the lack of accommodations in Saint Louis, it was decided that all would spend the winter at Saint Thomas. As it turned out, they spent almost two years there. Those years were occupied with the study of theology, French, and English and, for the priests, with ministering to Catholics scattered through Kentucky and Indiana.

Bishop Dubourg was initially displeased with the decision to stay at Bardstown, but after his arrival in Baltimore with new recruits for the mission (September 1817) he asked De Andreis, Rosati, Blanka, and Flaget to go to Saint Louis to prepare for his arrival there. When they arrived there in October they found a town of 2000 persons, wooden buildings, unpaved streets, and no resident priest. They were also disappointed to discover that the local Catholics were totally apathetic about the arrival of their bishop.

While Flaget was trying to ignite some enthusiasm for Dubourg's coming, a delegation arrived from the Barrens Settlement, about eighty miles south of the city. They represented a small colony of Catholics of English descent who had migrated from Maryland by way of Kentucky early in the century and who were eager to have the services of a resident priest. Up to that time the settlement had been visited monthly by Father Joseph Dunand, a Trappist at Florissant, Missouri, who was the survivor of an ill-fated attempt to found a Trappist monastery at Cahokia, Illinois. The delegates made a preliminary offer of a tract of land for the proposed seminary in return for which they would have the ministrations of the seminary priests.

Flaget took the offer under consideration and returned with Rosati to Bardstown, which they reached on 6 November. De Andreis, who was in delicate health, stayed at Sainte Genevieve, Missouri, together with Brother Blanka, both to rest and to fill in for the pastor. On 1 December Bishop Dubourg arrived at Saint Thomas, accompanied by five priests, one deacon, two subdeacons, nine seminarians, three Christian Brothers, and five Flemish laymen who intended to form a community of brothers. One of the seminarians was Leo De Neckere, who later joined the Congregation of the Mission.

Dubourg was determined to go immediately to his new see city in spite of the inclemencies of winter. He left on 12 December, together with Flaget, Father Stephen Badin (the first priest ordained in the United States), and a seminarian. On 31 December they reached Sainte Genevieve and were welcomed by De Andreis. When
Dubourg and De Andreis arrived in Saint Louis on 6 January 1818, another deputation from the Barrens, consisting of the trustees of the parish church, awaited them to discuss the offer of land. Dubourg put them off until he had an opportunity to visit the site personally. He did so in April and satisfied himself both with regard to the land and the dispositions of the people. The offer was accepted, and the seminary was to be established at the Barrens Settlement, now Perryville, Missouri.

The original offer was of 640 acres of land (the standard size of both American and Spanish land grants) that the trustees of the Barrens parish church purchased from Ignatius Layton for $900. The title to this land was given to Dubourg in a contract dated 18 June 1819. The parishioners subscribed $1500 to be paid in five yearly installments for the construction of “a seminary of learning” on the land. Dubourg, on his part, bound himself to pay $3000 to the trustees, who in their turn voided the obligation to pay so long as the land was used for the purposes specified. It was a donation, but it carried an implicit price tag.

During this time De Andreis remained in Saint Louis where he acted as Dubourg’s vicar-general and rector of the pro-cathedral, the equivalent of being the only parish priest in the city. In the midst of his many occupations there, two things stood out. One was his interest in helping and evangelizing the blacks, both slave and free. It caused some surprise among the local population that a man of culture and gentility would do such work. Equally notable was his concern for the Indians. De Andreis was fascinated by the possibility of being a missionary to the Indians and apparently achieved some mastery of the local dialect. He translated the Our Father and intended to begin a catechism, but he never had sufficient time.

On 3 December 1818 De Andreis opened the first American novitiate of the Congregation of the Mission in Saint Louis, using a small house on church property next to the bishop’s house. The first novices were a priest, Father Ferrari, and two deacons, Dahmen and Tichitoli. Father Carretti died before he could enter the Community. De Andreis called the novitiate Gethsemane and considered it the one thing closest to his heart. At about the same time he began teaching theology in a boys school founded by Bishop Dubourg, the predecessor of the present Saint Louis University.
The move of the faculty and seminarians from Bardstown to the Barrens was delayed for over a year. One obstacle was the slow pace of construction of the new seminary. The proposed building—sixty by thirty-six feet, two and a half stories, with a basement, plastered within and without—was beyond the capacities of the local people. Dubourg sent a man from Saint Louis to be the supervisor and a diocesan priest, Charles de la Croix, from Bardstown to be the architect. The latter was accompanied by the Flemish brothers who worked together with the local population.

It was not until August 1818 that Dubourg gave the signal for the move to the Barrens. On 15 September, twenty-five priests, brothers, and seminarians left Saint Thomas, going by boat to the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi and from there by land to the Barrens arriving 2 October. The buildings were not ready for them, and they had to lodge with some of the local people. At the site of the seminary itself there were only three log cabins, one of which served as a kitchen and refectory, the other two as lodgings for the Flemish brothers and Father de la Croix. The seminary of Saint Mary’s of the Barrens had begun its long and eventful history.

Life was far from easy. The lodgings of some of the priests were four miles from the log cabin seminary buildings. The climate was more extreme than the Europeans were accustomed to, and it was often necessary for them to work with the local people on the construction of the seminary buildings. In the the spring of 1819 some additional cabins were built at the seminary site, and the entire community moved into them. Rosati described one Easter Sunday meal that consisted of beans, an omelet, and hazelnuts, and spoke of the tears that overcame some of the community on that occasion.

The seminary grew rapidly, receiving reinforcements from Europe, particularly Italy, and even some local vocations. In addition, at the insistence of the local people, a lay college was opened in conjunction with the seminary. The tuition paid by the students helped to support the seminary. Other means of support were farming activities. Brother Blanka rendered special services in that regard, and Father Francis Cellini, a physician as well as a priest, planted both vegetable plots and fruit orchards. In 1819 Dubourg sent some slaves to help at the seminary and within the next few years the seminary would purchase many of its own.

In Saint Louis De Andreis had lost all his novices. Tichitoli was sent to Louisiana for his health, and Ferrari and Dahmen went to
Vincennes, Indiana. The greatest loss, however, was that of De Andreis himself, who died on 15 October 1820. He had been in delicate health for some time, but his death was a serious blow to the mission, so serious that some believed that it might not survive. Before his death, however, De Andreis had appointed Rosati as his successor. Rosati, who was already the superior of Saint Mary's Seminary, took over as superior of the American mission, with powers equivalent to those of a provincial. De Andreis was buried at the Barrens, a place that he had never visited.*

The First Growth

In March 1819 Rosati wrote that Saint Mary's Seminary had ten students. Not all of these were candidates for the Vincentian Community, but there were enough, coupled with continued reinforcements from Europe, to cause a rapid initial expansion. The personnel of the American mission continued to be predominantly Italian, but there were increasing numbers of Flemings and French, together with a small number of American-born.

The demands for their service increased just as rapidly. The Vincentians pursued their traditional apostolate of parish missions though in a sporadic fashion and in a form somewhat different from that of Europe, as will be seen in chapter III. At a early date they were to be found in Lower Louisiana, serving at the cathedral in New Orleans and at Lafourche, Grand Coteau, Thibodaux, and Donaldsonville to the north. Within a very few years the Vincentians were active in various missions and parishes in Missouri, Illinois, Arkansas, and Louisiana.

In 1823 the Congregation received some of its most important recruits. John Mary Odin, a native of France, and John Timon, a native of Pennsylvania, both entered the Community and would eventually be numbered among its greatest men. A new band of Vincentians came from Rome, among whom was Brother Angelo Oliva, an experienced and skillful stonecutter. Rosati had already

*De Andreis's death was hastened by his ignorant but well-meaning doctor who dosed him with calomel, a derivative of mercury, during his last illness. See Vincentian Heritage, IV (1983), no. 2, 136, n. 14.
Saint Mary's Seminary, Perryville, Missouri
determined to build a magnificent church at the Barrens and he regarded Oliva as an angel sent from heaven. Brother Angelo supervised and personally cut most of the stone for the seminary church, commonly known as the church of the Assumption. The church was begun in 1827, was completed enough that services could be held from 1830 on, and was consecrated on 29 October 1837. Unhappily Brother Oliva did not live to witness that event. He was also responsible for the stonework on the old church of Sainte Genevieve (since torn down) and the old cathedral in Saint Louis.

This expansion was not without cost. Father Ferrari died in New Orleans in 1822 during a yellow fever epidemic. Fathers Tichitoli and Dahmen had to be recalled from their stations because of ill-health and exhaustion. Another major loss, though in a different form, was that of Joseph Rosati himself.

In 1822 Rosati was shocked to learn that Ambrose Marechal, the archbishop of Baltimore, had persuaded Rome to appoint him as titular bishop of Tenagra and vicar-apostolic of Mississippi and Alabama. Dubourg and Rosati worked to fend off the appointment, which both of them believed would have been fatal to the diocese of Louisiana. They had partial success. Rosati avoided going to Mississippi and Alabama, but he was made a bishop and became Dubourg's vicar-general. He was also coadjutor with right of succession for three years, after which the diocese was to be divided, and Dubourg given the right to choose that part which he wished to govern. Rosati was consecrated at the church of the Ascension in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, on 25 March 1824. Dubourg was the consecrating bishop, assisted by two priests, one of whom was Père Antoine. During the ceremony a collection was taken up for Saint Mary's Seminary.

Rosati's workload increased enormously. He continued to be the superior of Saint Mary's and the American Vincentian mission. He traveled constantly on various kinds of visitations. At the request of the vicar-general of Puebla, Mexico, he ordained priests for various Mexican dioceses which were without bishops after independence was achieved in 1821. At one point he consecrated 300 gallons of holy oil for the churches of Mexico. In 1825 he successfully forestalled a plan advanced by the impulsive Dubourg to move the entire Vincentian establishment from Missouri to Louisiana. Dubourg, however, had still another shock in store for his coadjutor. In 1826, while in Europe for the ostensible purpose of recruiting more priests, Dubourg resigned his see. The Holy See
accepted the resignation and divided the diocese in two, New Orleans and Saint Louis, with Rosati as apostolic administrator of both. Rome wanted to name him to New Orleans, but Rosati demurred and instead became the first bishop of Saint Louis.*

The diocese of New Orleans went to Father Leo De Neckere, who informed Rosati of the appointment in December 1829. Rosati consecrated him bishop of New Orleans on 24 June 1830 and thus found himself relieved of his responsibility for that diocese. De Neckere had been born in Belgium, 7 June 1799, and at the time of his consecration was only thirty years old, the youngest bishop in the history of the United States. He was a brilliant man who was especially gifted in languages. He was fluent in Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, German, and Italian. According to Rosati, "he had learned English within only a few months and so well that he spoke and wrote it with purity and elegance and pronounced it as if it were his mother tongue." He died at New Orleans on 5 September 1833, while ministering to victims of a yellow fever epidemic. His early death was a serious loss to the Congregation of the Mission and the American church.

Ever since his appointment as bishop, Rosati had insisted on the need for a superior for the American Vincentians. Father Francesco Antonio Baccari, who had succeeded Sicardi as Italian vicar-general in 1819, finally agreed. The priest selected was Father Angelo Boccardo, one of those whose names had been suggested by Rosati. In 1827 Boccardo reached New Orleans, bringing with him a package containing numerous letters and 2000 francs donated by the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons. While boarding the steamboat that would take him to Missouri, he accidentally dropped the package into the Mississippi River. Understandably distraught, he made immediate plans to return to Italy. Despite Rosati's urgings, Boccardo refused to return to the United States. Later he had a change of heart and asked several times to

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*Rosati's reputation as an outstanding bishop has continued to grow since his death in 1843. One historian calls him "the most influential Italian-American of the Middle West and one of the greatest Italian immigrants to the United States in the nineteenth century." See William Barnaby Faherty, S.J., "In the Footsteps of Bishop Joseph Rosati: a Review Essay," Italian Americana 1, no. 2 (1975):281. In 1931, the small town of Knobview, Missouri, which was settled by Italian farmers, changed its name to Rosati. It is now best known for the winery in the area.
be sent back to the American mission, but his superiors always refused.

Rosati’s second choice was Father John Baptist Tornatore (1783-1864), whom he had known at Monte Citorio. Most of his priesthood had been spent teaching dogmatic theology, Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Philadelphia having been one of his more famous students. At the time of his appointment he was teaching dogma at Monte Citorio and was an assistant to Father Baccari. He arrived at New Orleans in April 1830 and after remaining there for De Neckere’s consecration, went to the Barrens. On 6 January 1831 he was appointed superior of the American mission, with powers equivalent to those of a provincial, and also vicar-general of the diocese of Saint Louis.

In most ways the choice of Tornatore was a strange and unfortunate one. He was forty-six years old, beyond middle age by nineteenth century standards. Though he wrote fluent French, he never mastered English and could scarcely speak the language. His opinions were so rigoristic as to border on the absurd. He strongly opposed the teaching of any worldly subjects at the college, including music, art, dancing, and fencing. A notable alumnus of the college, Andrew Jackson Grayson, who was second only to John James Audubon in his depiction of North American birds, was forbidden to practice his art during his student days. Later in his life Tornatore denounced the laxity of a superior who permitted conversation at table on Christmas and Easter and wrote a long letter to prove that those who approved such innovations were guilty of mortal sin. When Bishop Kenrick sent him a copy of his *Theologia Moralis*, Tornatore replied that he had never believed that a student of his could become such a laxist. He also tended to be a disruptive figure in the houses to which he was sent.

It was inevitable that his superiorship should be a turbulent one. On the positive side, he was responsible for completing the seminary church at the Barrens. The church was modeled on the church at Monte Citorio, but its height had been reduced somewhat. Tornatore sent Odin to Europe on a fund-raising tour. This provided the impetus for finishing the church, which was consecrated by Bishop Rosati in a splendid ceremony in 1837.

The negative, unfortunately, outweighed the positive. One serious problem arose from the presence of the college boys at the seminary. The seminarians were used as teachers, and many Vincentians disapproved of the mingling of the two. Others felt that
it was not a proper Vincentian apostolate, although the Community
did operate such colleges in other parts of the world, including
Italy. In 1835 the superior general and his council ordered the
suppression of the college. The order was later stayed, but the issue
was not entirely settled until the lay collegians were transferred to
Saint Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, in 1844.

Equally serious was the discontent that surfaced among the
brothers at the seminary. Originally, most of these were Italian, but
later other ethnic groups, such as Irish and Germans also joined
them. Prior to the 1830's most of the brothers were stationed at the
Barrens, where their work included tailoring, stonecutting, cooking,
gardening, farming, and shoemaking. In the European concept of
the Vincentian life, the brothers were the economic underpinning of
each Community house. Rosati and De Andreis had constantly
asked for more brothers, pleading that without them it was impos­
sible to carry out the apostolate properly. The general attitude
toward the brothers was highly paternalistic, and it was assumed
that they were humble and submissive.

On the surface the complaints that the brothers began to voice
in the 1830's centered around the harsh climate of Missouri, the
poor quality of the land, the primitive living conditions, and the
need to move the seminary to a better location in Louisiana. While
these may have been issues, a deeper one appears to have been the
seminary's increasing use of slaves. It was universally true in the
United States that free laborers and slaves could not work side by
side or at the same tasks. The free workers, in particular, resented
being lowered to the same level as slaves. The experience at the
Barrens was similar. The brothers and slaves could not work
together, and there was constant bickering between the two groups.
The brothers had absorbed this American concept, as well as some
others, and their resentment at being implicitly equated with the
blacks was probably a major source of their discontent. To stop
this, Tornatore had recourse to repressive measures, and within a
few years some nine brothers and students had left the Community.

The American Mission, 1818-1835

In the years of its dependence on the Roman province, the
Vincentian mission in the United States experienced a rapid growth
in personnel though its apostolates remained somewhat restricted.
The central house, Saint Mary's of the Barrens, was the diocesan seminary for the Louisiana Territory, a Vincentian house of formation, and a lay college. The Vincentians were also to be found in parishes up and down the Mississippi Valley and were giving sporadic missions in the same area.

A key concern was that of securing adequate financial support for the province. This came from a number of sources. In Europe the Roman province contributed men and money to the best of its ability. Father Sicardi was especially zealous in soliciting funds. Father Baccari, together with Father Bartolomeo Colucci of the Roman province, contributed not only money but books, vestments, and clothing. Bishop Dubourg, in his visits to Europe, carried on active fund raising campaigns. When Leo De Neckere had to return to Belgium in 1826 for reasons of health, he spent a good part of his time soliciting books and vestments for the seminary and even succeeded in obtaining an organ for the seminary church. As has been mentioned, Odin went to Europe on a fund raising tour for the seminary church at the Barrens. A very important source of funds was the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, organized at Lyons, France, in 1822. Six years later the Leopoldine Society of Vienna was organized and also made contributions.

Some support came from the tuition and fees that were charged the lay students at the college at the Barrens. The administration at the college attempted to obtain money from the Missouri legislature on the basis of being equal to the public schools of the state, but there is no record of any success. Money was also borrowed from individuals and banks, despite the fact that the European Vincentians had a strong disaste for any form of indebtedness.

In the United States the principal source of support came from the land and its cultivation. The original 640 acre grant at the Barrens was quickly augmented and although the land was considered to be of rather average quality, it was farmed assiduously. The land, however, was in the name of Bishop Dubourg and his successors and this caused a multitude of complications.

The story of the various transfers of the land at the Barrens is one of byzantine complexity. The title was originally given to Dubourg, together with what appears to have been a $3000 bond of debt that guaranteed its use for religious purposes. Before his departure for Europe in 1826, Dubourg gave Rosati his power of attorney. At some time during that year the priests at the seminary pointed out to Rosati the precarious situation of the Congregation
of the Mission in the United States, that is, it possessed no land whatever. On 12 December Rosati paid the parish trustees $900 for the original grant and on the following day sold this tract, together with the seminary mill and fifty additional acres, for $1.00 to Fathers Odin, Dahmen, and Joseph Paquin. Why he purchased land to which he had a clear title and which was supposedly donated is not immediately apparent. Equally puzzling is the fact that on 17 June 1833 he drew up a formal declaration in Latin that the land belonged wholly and entirely to the Priests of the Mission. Shortly thereafter, on 10 August, Odin, Dahmen, and Paquin sold the land to Tornatore for $4000. Less than six months later, on 23 January 1834, Tornatore sold the land to John Timon for the same amount of money. On 3 February 1837 Timon wrote to the superior general that after consultation with some lawyers, he had put most of the Community's property in Tornatore's name and the rest in the names of Dahmen, Odin, and John Boullier. He had also had these men make out wills, conveying their property titles to other Vincentians. All of these documents were registered before a judge and witnesses and then given to Timon. On 1 January 1843, Tornatore signed a will which left the seminary lands to Fathers Dahmen, Blase Raho, Thomas Burke, and Peter Chandy. On 18 May 1848, Tornatore sold the lands for $10,000 to Fathers Thaddeus Amat, Thomas Burke, and James Rolando.

The most plausible explanation for these transactions can be found in article XIII, par. 5 of the Missouri constitution, "No religious corporation can ever be established in this state." In a literal interpretation this meant that no religious community could be incorporated and hence could not own land. Out of this grew the need also for the various Vincentians, who replaced the original lay trustees of the parish and seminary, to hold title to the Vincentians' lands. This would also explain why the European Vincentians in positions of authority, such as Rosati, De Neckere, John Brands, and Tornatore, sought naturalization so quickly after their arrival in America.

Somewhat surprising to modern readers is the fact that the seminary and the Vincentians throughout Missouri and Louisiana supported themselves by means of slaves. From the day of his arrival in the United States, Felix De Andreis was determined that unlike the Sulpicians and the Jesuits, the Vincentians would never become slaveholders. In 1819, however, he was forced to accept the American reality when Dubourg sent some slave women to work in
the kitchen at the seminary. When Baccari learned of this, he expressed serious reservations, not over the fact of slaveholding, but because women, of any state or color, were being admitted into the house. De Andreis replied with a long letter of explanation and gave what were to be the standard justifications for Vincentian slaveholding: the lack of brothers and the fact that “necessity knows no law.” The identification of the brothers’ work with that of slaves was repeated many times and undoubtedly helped to fuel the brothers’ discontent.

De Andreis would have liked to recruit free blacks and mulattoes as brothers but realized that such a move would have ended the Congregation of the Mission in the United States. “No white man will ever again be willing to join us because here there is such a deep-rooted prejudice that a white man is dishonored if he associates with such people.” He suggested establishing for America, and for America alone, a third class of Vincentians composed of such persons and distinct from priests and brothers. His imaginative proposal was never implemented.

The greatest increase in slaves at the Barrens took place while Rosati was superior. His first known purchase was of an eight-year-old boy in 1821. By 1830 there were twenty-seven slaves at the seminary, of whom seven were probably rented from local people, though that was still the largest single concentration of slaves in the county. There was a high turnover in the slave population at the seminary. The seminary also bought and sold slaves to various priests, parishes, and religious institutions up and down the Mississippi valley.

Slaveholding presented numerous problems, though not about the morality of slavery itself. Priests found it difficult to discipline slaves. Slaves and brothers could not work together in peace. Families were sometimes separated by rentals and hirings. Worst of all was the scandal caused by the fact that the seminary slaves had less religious instruction than those of other Catholic masters in the vicinity. In 1836 John Timon, the provincial of the newly independent American province and a foe of slavery (he avoided the bishopric of Bardstown because it was in a slave state), began a process of reuniting separated families and phasing out slaveholding. This was done not by manumission—for the status of the free black in Missouri was not considered an improvement—but by sale to local Catholic families. There were, however, still two slaves at Saint Mary's Seminary in 1860.
Slaveholding was not the only area in which the first Vincentians adapted to the American reality. Almost from the first they used the English forms for their Christian names. Those in positions of responsibility became American citizens within a relatively short time after their arrival in this country. Most attempted to learn English and to use it, but the continued use of French in the area from Saint Louis to New Orleans made this difficult. Although Rosati apparently had a good command of English, he rarely used it in letters to his clergy and confreres. With the permission of the Italian vicar-general they adapted their dress to the forms used in the United States and altered their daily schedule to fit local conditions.

The acceptance of things American was not total. Many early Vincentians expressed their disapproval of whiskey and the American passion for dancing. Their relations with non-Catholics, whom in the earliest days they invariably called "heretics," varied. Public religious disputations were a fairly common feature of the times, and the Vincentians participated in them. Individual conversions were frequent, especially in the Barrens area. In general, the Europeans were surprised by the friendly and respectful attitude of Protestants toward priests. By the end of his life Rosati was using the expression "separated brethren."

The American Province, 1835-1888

Just before the general assembly of 1835, John Mary Odin, representing the American mission, penned a report which he submitted to the superior general, Jean-Baptiste Nozo. Odin stressed the importance of the Vincentians' living together in community rather than in scattered mission stations. He recommended the suppression of the lay college at the Barrens in order to relieve the seminarians of the burden of teaching and to prevent the mingling of clerical and non-clerical students. In place of the income from tuition and boarding fees, Bishop Rosati should pay a prorated amount for each diocesan student at the seminary. Finally, he recommended that the American mission be made an independent province and that John Timon be named the first provincial superior. In some form or another, all of these proposals were accepted by the superior general and his council. On 2
Bishop Stephen Vincent Ryan, C. M., Buffalo, New York
September 1835 Nozol decreed the establishment of an independent American province, the first one outside of Europe.

Not unexpectedly Rosati objected both to the calling in of the scattered Vincentians and the suppression of the college. The latter was rescinded by Nozol in 1837. The problem of mixing clerical and lay students was solved when the latter were sent to the newly opened Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, in 1844. Rosati, in apparent exasperation over the whole matter, attempted to start his own diocesan seminary in Saint Louis in 1838 but was unable to see it to completion.

Most important of all was the fact that less than twenty years after the arrival of the first Vincentians in the United States, the mission (which had only one official Vincentian house) had become an independent province and had a native-born American at its head. It now entered one of its most dynamic periods.

John Timon was born at Conewago, Pennsylvania, on 12 February 1797. His father was a merchant who moved from place to place, until in 1819 he settled in Saint Louis. There Timon came under the influence of Felix De Andreis. He decided to study for the priesthood in the Congregation of the Mission at Saint Mary’s Seminary. He was ordained by Bishop Rosati on 23 September 1825. The early years of his priesthood were spent in teaching at the Barrens and in missionary activity with his confreire and friend, John Mary Odin. The two were involved in missions in southeast Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas. Timon received notification of his appointment as provincial on 16 November 1835. At first he was inclined to refuse the offer because the American Vincentians were burdened with heavy debts and the prospects of beginning a new province under these conditions were not encouraging. He was finally persuaded to accept the post and proved to be one of the outstanding leaders in the history of the Congregation of the Mission in the United States.

During Timon’s term as provincial (1835-1847), the American province benefited from conditions in Europe. Religious and dynastic wars in Spain, together with anticlerical legislation, caused the exile of a number of Spanish Vincentians, many of whom came to the United States. These included men of great talent, such as Thaddeus Amat, later the bishop of Monterey-Los Angeles, Michael Domenec, the future bishop of Pittsburgh and Allegheny, and Mariano Maller, who avoided an American bishopric by going to Brazil. Recruits came from other countries also, including Italy,
France, and Belgium. Timon enjoyed an extraordinary reputation in the American church, a reputation that extended to the province of which he was superior.

Timon believed that the primary apostolate of the American Vincentians was the work of diocesan seminaries. As will be seen in chapter II, this work had an explosive growth during his provincialate, when it seemed that the bishops of the United States were determined to make the Vincentians the primary agency for the formation of the their clergy. In retrospect, he probably expanded too rapidly and sometimes had to juggle personnel in different houses. Marc-Antoine Poussou, the acting superior general (1841-1843) after Nozo’s resignation, ordered him to take on no more seminaries. It was believed that the province was overextended and that there should be fewer houses with more men. Timon also encouraged missionary activity but believed that his province should not be so committed to parishes as it was. It was Timon, with his pronounced aversion to slavery, who began to phase out the peculiar institution among the American Vincentians.

Timon attempted to put the province on a sound financial footing. He continued to seek contributions from Europe, especially from the Parisian motherhouse. Timon was apparently on very good terms with Jean-Baptiste Etienne, secretary general and later (1843-1874) superior general of the Congregation of the Mission. Etienne sent money, both in direct contributions and in mass stipends. For many of these transactions, Timon’s mediator was Ramsay Crooks, the successor to John Jacob Astor as president of the American Fur Company in New York, who as a young fur trader had married into one of the old French families of Saint Louis. Timon also invested provincial funds in the Bank of Missouri but, either on his own initiative or the recommendations of advisers, he did not put any money into the Second Bank of the United States, which collapsed during the Panic of 1837.

In light of Timon’s involvement with the work of the province, it is all the more remarkable that he contributed so greatly to the revival of the Church in Texas. He and Odin had both had experience in giving missions in Texas prior to its independence from Mexico (1836). Two years later, in 1838, Bishop Anthony Blanc of New Orleans wrote to Rosati and Timon that the Holy See wanted a reliable report on the religious situation in the new republic. As a result of this Timon went to Galveston in December 1838, together with Francis Llebaria, a member of the faculty at
Assumption Seminary at Lafourche, Louisiana. After surveying the situation in Texas, he made out a full report which he sent to Blanc, who in turn forwarded it to Rome. One result of this was that Timon, who had already refused the coadjutorship of Saint Louis (September 1839) was made prefect apostolic of Texas, with faculty to confirm though without episcopal ordination (12 April 1840).

Timon dispatched his friend, John Mary Odin, to Texas as vice-prefect, together with Peter Doutreluingne. Timon returned to Texas in December 1840 and brought with him letters that were the equivalent of Rome's recognition of the republic's independence. He and Odin secured an act from the Texas congress that returned large amounts of property to the ownership of the Church. In 1841 Texas was made a vicariate apostolic, and Odin was named titular bishop of Claudiopolis and vicar-apostolic of Texas. In 1846 he became the first bishop of Galveston. He was consecrated in New Orleans by Bishop Blanc on 6 May 1842. He was bishop during the War with Mexico, just as later he would be archbishop of New Orleans during the occupation by Union forces.

At some unknown time during his provincialate Timon drew up an "Epitome" or summary of provincial regulations. They were illustrative of the adaptations that the American Vincentians had made to local conditions. Thus, for example, the time of rising had been changed from 4:00 A.M. to 5:00 A.M. At some later period it was changed back to 4:00 A.M., probably because of the drive for uniformity by Jean-Baptiste Etienne during his term as superior general. Somewhat more quaint were the determinations of the days when communion could be received and the discipline taken. Most surprising is the fact that more than half the document is taken up with the question of the purchase and preparation of food in the houses. Timon was adamant that superiors take proper care of the health of their personnel and the food be nutritious and fresh. In the same vein he ruled that all teachers were to have one full day off each week and added the Fourth of July to the list of approved holidays.

Between 1847 and 1857 the American province suffered losses from which it would take decades to recover. The first of these was Timon himself, when in 1847 he was appointed the first bishop of Buffalo, New York. Having refused six other bishoprics, he felt that he could not refuse the seventh without being labeled a disobedient and intractable priest. It was a serious loss to the province. In rapid succession Thaddeus Amat was named to Monterey-Los Angeles,
Michael Domenec to Pittsburgh, and John Lynch to Toronto. There is a story that the Vincentian superior general, Jean-Baptiste Etienne, complained to Pope Pius IX about these appointments and was told, "you plant the garden and we will pluck the flowers."

At the same time the restoration of political and religious peace in Spain and other parts of Europe brought about the recall of many of the Vincentians who had been working in the United States. The province was suddenly faced with a major personnel shortage. In addition, as will be seen in chapter II, disagreements with bishops caused the Vincentians to withdraw from most of the diocesan seminaries that had been accepted.

Timon was succeeded as provincial by Mariano Maller (1817-1892), a Catalan who was one of the most highly respected priests in the United States. He had entered the Congregation of the Mission in Madrid, Spain, on 23 June 1833. The following month the Community in Spain was suppressed by the liberal government, and Maller went to Barcelona where he made his vows on 29 June 1835. Because of the turmoil caused by the First Carlist War (1835-1839) he and a number of other Vincentian students went to Paris to take their courses in theology. In 1839, while still a deacon, he came to the United States and was assigned to Assumption Seminary in Plattenville, Louisiana, where he was ordained to the priesthood on 22 March 1840. In 1841, at the age of twenty-four, he was appointed superior of Saint Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, a post he held for five years, for one of which he was vicar-general of the diocese. He was reluctant to accept the office of provincial but finally did so in the spring of 1848. He was thirty years of age.

During his provincialate he negotiated the union of Mother Seton's Sisters of Charity with the Daughters of Charity in Paris, a union finally achieved on 25 March 1850. Saint Stephen's parish in New Orleans was opened in 1849, and the property for Saint Vincent's church in Germantown, Pennsylvania, was acquired. While still provincial, he was also the provincial director of the Daughters of Charity, with his residence at Emmitsburg, Maryland.

Maller continued the high level of leadership set by Timon. About the year 1849, together with Thaddeus Amat and John Lynch, he drew up a report and a set of recommendations on the American province which were sent to the superior general. The major problem, they emphasized, was personnel. "There are a good number of them but not enough to edify or uphold regularity."
They suggested that a number of persons who had not proved useful should be recalled to their native countries and requested at least two French-speaking and one English-speaking priests from Europe.

From the point of view of apostolates, the report recommended that the province restrict itself "more and more to the functions proper to our vocation," including "the missions that we hope to give." Because of the personnel shortage Maller and the others suggested the consolidation of the houses that the province wished to keep and the abandonment of the others.

Although the province was $50,000 in debt, the authors of the report did not consider this alarming. "It seems impossible to begin anything of importance in America without incurring some debts.... Either incur debts or remain where we are forever." There would have been no foundations at Cape Girardeau or Saint Louis if the province had not begun "American style." There was, in addition, no immediate prospect of getting out of debt.

In 1850 Maller learned that he was one of the nominees for bishop of Monterey, California. The diocese was given to another, but since it seemed inevitable that he would eventually become a bishop, he asked to be transferred out of the country. Bishop Francis P. Kenrick of Philadelphia later told Stephen Vincent Ryan, when the latter was the American provincial, that had he known that, he would have prevented it, merely to keep Maller in the country. Maller was relieved of the office of provincial in 1851 but remained as director of the Daughters of Charity. In 1853 he was assigned to Brazil as director of the Daughters of Charity. In 1855 he was named provincial of Brazil. After he had asked to be relieved of this post, he remained as director of the college of Curaçá until 1861. In that year he was appointed secretary general of the Congregation but in the following year returned to Spain as provincial. He was exiled by the revolution of 1868 and did not return until 1876. The following year he was sent to make a special visitation of the American province, but his commission expired in 1878 with the death of the superior general, Eugène Boré. He died at Madrid on 20 February 1892.

Maller was succeeded by Anthony Penco (1813-1875), an Italian, who was somewhat shy and reticent by nature. He was a native of Genoa, Italy, and came from a wealthy family. His father had opposed his religious vocation, but he was able to enter the Community at Genoa on 18 July 1835. He took his vows two years
later. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1840 and in that same year came to the United States. After serving briefly at two parishes in Louisiana, he taught at Saint Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, Saint John's Seminary in Rose Hill, New York, and Saint Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. He was nominated provincial on 23 September 1850 but did not accept the position until the following March.

In a circular letter of 1 November 1852, Etienne gave a rather gloomy assessment of the American Province. Looking over more than thirty years of Vincentian history in the United States, he admitted that Providence had undoubtedly called the Community there in order to render great services to the Church. Unhappily, this history “is far from presenting us with the consoling results that would have been expected.” He went on to speak of “unfortunate ups and downs, aborted projects, sterile arrangements, failed undertakings, deceived hopes that had caused so much work and sacrifice to be without fruit.” He accused the American Province of substituting human wisdom for divine faith, an accusation that he defined in the following terms:

You have tried to build before having properly laid the foundations of the building; you have sought to make a ripe and abundant harvest rise up before cultivating the seed that has been entrusted to the ground; it is by reason of an unenlightened zeal that you have undertaken so much without having measured your strength beforehand, calculated your resources, and above all, without having examined whether you were following Providence or running ahead of it.  

It was a harsh evaluation but for the most part accurate. The admonition did not do any permanent good because the same problems reappeared at later dates.

Penco was faced with a serious manpower shortage and overextended apostolates. In 1853 he wrote to Etienne:

Without help we shall soon be hors de combat [out of the fight] because oppressed as we all are by excessive fatigue, we cannot take care of ourselves, we totally ruin our health, and as experience shows, we are old at forty.  

He added that if no help was forthcoming, he would have to retrench the province to two or three houses. Otherwise he would
be ruining the health of the Vincentians and causing discontent among the bishops in whose dioceses they were working.

Because of the personnel shortage Penco withdrew the Vincentians from the direction of the diocesan seminary in Philadelphia. He also accepted the direction of Saint Joseph’s parish in Emmitsburg, Maryland, where the Vincentians continue to work to the present day. During his provincialate Assumption seminary in Lafourche, Louisiana, which the Vincentians had directed since 1838, burned to the ground and the students were moved to New Orleans. Plans were laid for building a new seminary, but by that time he had left the country.

Like Maller, Penco was considered episcopal timber, being nominated for the coadjutorships of Saint Louis and Chicago. In 1854 he returned to Italy after the death of his brother, who had squandered the family fortune. He overcame the financial crisis while at the same time acting as director of the Collegio Brignole-Sale-Negroni, a missionary seminary in Genoa. He was also rector there from 1865 until his death in 1875. Prior to his return to Italy he had appointed John Masnou, a Spaniard, as substitute provincial (in official language, pro-visitor).

A Catalan like Maller and Amat, Masnou was born at Manresa, Spain, on 23 September 1813. He entered the Community at Madrid in 1831, made his vows two years later, and was ordained there at an unknown date. During the First Carlist War he fled to Paris with other Spanish Vincentian students and returned to Spain sometime around 1837-1838. In 1853 he came to the United States and was assigned to teach at Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. He was officially appointed acting provincial on 1 February 1855. Masnou governed the province for a little less than two years. During that time he participated in the plans for a new seminary in New Orleans and accepted Immaculate Conception parish in Baltimore. During that time also, John Lynch founded the seminary of Our Lady of the Angels at Niagara Falls, New York, the ancestor of the present Niagara University. In 1856 Masnou was appointed provincial of Spain, though he did not return there until January 1857—he succeeded another former American and Mexican missionary, Bonaventure Armengol. Masnou held that position until 1862, when he was sent to Mexico where he was provincial until 1874. In that year Boré sent him as a special commissary to Latin America. Until 1878 he served in
Paris as assistant for Mexican affairs. After Bore's death, he returned to Spain, where he died 29 January 1893.

From the end of 1856 until the following June Bartholomew Rollando was the acting provincial. On 29 June 1857 Stephen Vincent Ryan was appointed provincial (29 June 1857) and held the position for eleven years. Ryan was born at Almonte, Ontario, Canada, on 1 January 1825. While he was very young, his parents, who were Irish immigrants, moved to Pennsylvania. Ryan entered Saint Charles Borromeo seminary in Philadelphia in 1838 and there came into contact with the Vincentian Community when the province assumed direction of the seminary in 1843. He joined the Congregation in 1844 and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Peter Richard Kenrick of Saint Louis on 24 June 1849. He taught at Saint Mary's of the Barrens from 1849 until 1851 and at Saint Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau from 1851 until 1856. In 1856 he was appointed superior and rector and in the following year became provincial.

Ryan's provincialate was not marked by any notable expansion of works, except in New Orleans. During his term the new diocesan seminary (commonly called the Bouligny seminary) was opened in 1858 in conjunction with Saint Stephen's parish, which was opened in that same year. The seminary was closed for financial reasons in 1867, likewise during Ryan's term. In 1858 also, the province accepted the direction of Saint Joseph's church which had until then been under the direction of diocesan priests.

In 1862 Ryan removed the Vincentian formation program from the Barrens to Saint Louis and in 1868 from Saint Louis to Germantown, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The seminary of Our Lady of the Angels in Niagara Falls, which had been opened the year before Ryan became provincial, was probably the most successful diocesan seminary that the Vincentians directed at that time. In 1865 the province undertook the direction of a seminary in Los Angeles, California, which, after an uncertain beginning, became Saint Vincent's College. It lasted until 1911.

Ryan himself was very interested in the parish missions and encouraged them as much as possible. Still more, he himself was an active missionary and spent a great deal of his time and energy in that ministry, as will be seen in chapter III. His work, however, was hampered by lack of personnel.

On 8 November 1868, much against his will, Ryan was named to succeed Timon in the see of Buffalo, and the Vincentian prov-
ince again lost one of its leaders to the episcopate. During his episco
copate he demonstrated considerable interest in the clergy, schools,
and the care of the poor. He also gained the reputation for being
a liberal and farsighted bishop. Though his health had never been
good, he lived to be seventy-one years old, dying on 12 April 1896.

Ryan’s successor as provincial was John Hayden, a native of the
Barrens.* He was born there in 1831 and was baptized by Timon.
After attending school at the Barrens, he entered the Community
on 3 May 1849. He was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop
Kenrick in Saint Louis on 8 September 1853. He served as the first
Vincentian pastor of Saint Joseph’s church in New Orleans. He also
served as delegate to the sexennial assembly of 1867 in Paris.** After
the assembly he stayed on for about a year, acting as English-
speaking secretary for the superior general. On 1 May 1868, when
he was pastor of Saint Vincent’s church in Germantown, he was
nominated provincial. He was then thirty-seven years old. He was
a man of great talent and promised to be an outstanding leader.
Unhappily, while making a visitation of Saint Vincent’s College in
Cape Girardeau, he contracted typhoid and died suddenly on 2
November 1872, at the age of forty-one.

During his provincialate the question of the division of the prov-
ince, which Maller had proposed to the provincial assembly of
1844, was raised again. It was approved by the superior general and
his council in 1870 but, as will be seen, it was not implemented. The
most important foundation during his tragically brief term was that
of Saint John the Baptist College in Brooklyn, New York, the
present Saint John’s University. The demand for personnel at this
new establishment caused him to cut back on the work of the
parish missions. He also wanted to make Saint Mary’s of the
Barrens, which since 1866 had been only a parish and working
farm, once again a theological seminary. In 1870, however, he aban-

*Ryan was the first to mention in print the story that Hayden was the son of the
widow Hayden at whose home some of the first Vincentians stayed after their
arrival at the Barrens in 1818. This was not true.

**Ordinary general assemblies, that is, those held on a regular basis rather than to
elect a superior general, were summoned every twelve years. Sexennial assemblies
were held at the mid-point between the regular assemblies to decide if an extraordi-
nary general assembly was needed. If it was, the sexennial assembly became a
general assembly.
doned the idea and suggested selling the seminary, using the money to finance the home missions.

With Hayden's death, the pioneer era in American Vincentian history came to an end. Within a short space of time the Community had produced a series of remarkable leaders: De Andreis, Rosati, De Neckere, Timon, Odin, Maller, Ryan, Amat, Hayden, and John Lynch. It was a level that would not again be reached in a comparable period of time. Most of these became bishops and it was clear that Vincentians were being removed from important positions in the Community for the sake of the episcopate.

The choice for Hayden's successor fell on Thomas J. Smith but Smith declined. The superior general then named James Rolando, an Italian, who held the position from 1873 until 1879.

Rolando was born at Arno, Italy, on 16 May 1816. He entered the Congregation of the Mission in 1833 and made his vows a little over two years later. He left for the United States in the year 1840 and in the following year was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Blanc in the church of the Ascension, Donaldsonville, Louisiana, the same church in which Joseph Rosati had been consecrated. His first assignments were in educational works: Saint Charles Seminary in Philadelphia, Saint Vincent's College in Cape Girardeau, Missouri, and Saint Mary's Seminary in Perryville, Missouri. He then served as pastor of Saint Vincent's church in Saint Louis and Saint Vincent's church in Germantown. In 1863 he returned to Italy but after a year as vice-president of the Collegio Brignole-Sale-Negroni, he returned to the United States. Except for a brief sojourn in Paris, he was steadily engaged in parish work and was pastor of Saint Vincent's in Saint Louis when he was named provincial. At the age of fifty-seven he was the oldest man to hold the office up to that time.

Rolando appointed the first mission band in the province and thus began the work of systematizing the Vincentian parish missions. During his term the first mission was given to blacks, in Washington, D.C. He also accepted the direction of Saint Vincent's parish in Chicago, Illinois.

In 1877 Eugène Bore, the superior general, sent Mariano Maller, the former provincial, to make a special visitation of the American province. Maller's commission ended with Bore's death in 1878, but not before he had completed a comprehensive report on the status and personnel of the province. Like Etienne in 1852, he judged that
the American mission had not lived up to its promise. The two great problems were factionalism and debts.

The factionalism arose from the melange of nationalities—Italian, French, German, Americans, and Irish. The principal division was between the Italians and the Irish, with the Americans and other nationalities rallying behind the latter. The Irish-American group considered itself to be progressive and thought that only it could grasp the spirit of the country and turn the natural ardor of the Americans to the good of religion. The Italians, in turn, claimed that piety, simplicity, and regularity were being lost. They accused the Irish-Americans of dissipation, independence, a worldly spirit, of having too much contact with the laity and of paying them too many visits. To this list they added other manifestations of the modern spirit, such as smoking, drinking, and the loss of vocations. Maller saw two possible solutions: to turn all authority over to the Irish-American group or, as the Europeans suggested and other communities had done, import enough European Vincentians to offset the influence of the others. Though Maller was somewhat inclined toward the second solution, the first was the one adopted.

The amount of indebtedness in the province was a matter of grave concern, even fright. European Vincentians traditionally had a horror of contracting debts. The situation in the United States was quite different. Indebtedness carried no stigma and was even a means of demonstrating a good credit rating. The report that Maller, together with Lynch and Amat, had drawn up about 1849 tried to explain that point to the superiors in Paris. Even the bishops in America were in debt. Archbishop Kenrick of Saint Louis told Maller that in the United States in order to know what someone was worth, the last thing to consider was how much he owed. The danger, as Maller was careful to point out, lay in what would be called in modern terms the “domino effect.” In the complex network of creditor-debtor relationships, the failure of one could redound on all the others. The province had narrowly avoided such a catastrophe in November 1877 when Thomas Burke, the superior of Saint Vincent’s in Saint Louis, died and his creditors feared for their loans. Fortunately, his successor, Edward Hennessy, was able to calm them. The incident, however, showed the fragility of the situation. The province had a particular difficulty in that there was no provincial treasurer and the provincial had only a limited acquaintance with the finances of individual houses. Local
superiors and treasurers were free to contract debts on their own. Three houses—Brooklyn, Niagara, and Chicago—accounted for most of these. Saint John’s College in Brooklyn had a debt of about $167,657, most of which had an interest rate of 7%, which was high for those days. The Seminary of Our Lady of Angels in Niagara, which was “in the saddest state possible,” owed approximately $218,572, and Saint Vincent’s parish in Chicago had a debt of $50,000. Of the other houses, the house in Germantown (whose debt was not kept separate from that of the province) owed $70,000; Saint Vincent’s parish in Saint Louis owed $170,625, but most of this was interest free, and there was enough income to pay what interest there was. Saint Mary’s Seminary in Perryville, which had only nine persons in the house and a working farm, had a debt of $21,000 or $42,000, depending on whose figures were accepted. In a masterpiece of understatement Maller noted that “the books are not well kept.” Saint Vincent’s College in Cape Girardeau owed about $62,922, Saint Stephen’s in New Orleans $40,750, and Saint Joseph’s $459. The house in La Salle, Illinois, was the only one specifically listed as debt-free. Not having visited the house in Los Angeles, Maller did not comment on it. If Maller’s figures were correct, the total indebtedness of the province passed $800,000, an astronomical sum at that time.

Maller was at pains to point out that these debts had been incurred before Rolando’s appointment as provincial, though he doubted that Rolando was the man to remedy it. The Irish-American faction in the province was very critical of the provincial, alleging his timidity, indecision, his tendency to agree with the last person he talked to, and his incompetence in matters financial. Maller tended to agree with this assessment and toward the end of his report advised that a new provincial would be necessary.

Maller concluded his report by giving the following summary of the American Vincentians:

If you look at the American confreres as a whole, they are not notable for behavior, decorum, the spirit of faith, mortification of the senses or external regularity. But if you get to know them better, you find them open, sincere, hardworking, flexible, and submissive, so that it is not so difficult to lead them as it may appear at first sight. But it is necessary to understand them and win them over. We must pray to God that he will give them a good provincial, for if the provincial knows how to win them, he will succeed in paying the
debts and then the province of the United States could become one of the most flourishing in the Congregation.\textsuperscript{18}

In 1879 Rolando resigned, ostensibly because of ill-health and became the director of novices in Germantown, a position he held until his death on 26 November 1883. He was succeeded as provincial by Smith, who accepted this time and who was provincial of the single American province from 1879 until the division of 1888 and after that of the Western Province until 1905. In announcing the appointment, Antoine Fiat, Bore's successor as superior general, wrote:

We have been appalled at the knowledge of the enormous debts with which many of your houses are oppressed. There is a great necessity of applying some remedy to so great an evil. That is why we would recommend to the local superiors to contract no more new debts but by a reasonable economy tied to a wise administration to extinguish the old ones as soon as possible.\textsuperscript{19}

He also urged the province "to substitute men servants for women as soon as it can be done in all our houses in which women are employed," a problem that had been agitated since 1819. Neither of these counsels was put into practice in the American Province.

A native of County Cavan, Ireland, (the same one from which Stephen Vincent Ryan's parents had migrated) Thomas Smith was born in 1832 and came to the United States at about the age of twenty. He entered the Community at the Barrens in 1854 and was ordained to the priesthood 26 June 1857 at the Barrens. Smith's most energetic years were those of his direction of the single province. He personally engaged in parish missions and sometimes absented himself from provincial administration for long periods in order to do so. He appointed a second mission band and at one point had four mission bands operating simultaneously. In order to move the missions farther west, he accepted the direction of a parish in Kansas City, Missouri.

Smith was an autocratic and occasionally choleric personality who tended to keep decision making in his own hands. Typical was his decision about the construction of a chapel and student residence building at Saint Mary's Seminary in Perryville. He decreed that it would be inserted in a narrow space between two existing buildings, something that necessitated its being perpendicular to the other two. The result was that the windows of many student rooms
looked out at brick walls. In later life Smith tended to become reclusive.

Under Smith the first effort was made to incorporate the province. On becoming provincial Smith discovered that the property of Saint Vincent's church in Saint Louis was held in the name of three Vincentians. He did not trust one of these, Edward Hennessy, and so the province was formally incorporated in the state of Missouri on 30 July 1879. The precise difficulties that Smith had with Hennessy are not known but it is significant that Hennessy refused to sign the incorporation papers. There is some uncertainty about the scope of this incorporation. In 1893 Francis Nugent was once again trying to incorporate the Western Province but without success.

**The Division of the Province**

As early as 1844 there had been recommendations that the size of the United States demanded that there be more than one Vincentian province. In 1870 Hayden and his council sent a formal request to Paris for a division. On 17 May 1870 Etienne and the general council approved the proposal in principle but decided to delay a final decision until the next general assembly. Shortly thereafter some American confreres who had traveled to Paris for the celebration of Etienne's fiftieth anniversary as a Vincentian renewed the request. On 4 August 1870 the general council reaffirmed both the decision to divide and the decision to delay. Etienne wrote to Hayden to ask him to put a stop to all discussion of the question in the province. “It is fitting to leave the examination of all questions of this nature to those who have received from heaven the governance of the Community. They alone have the light and grace to decide them.”

Smith renewed the request in 1885, and Antoine Fiat, the superior general at that time, took action. Smith asked for and received James MacGill as his assistant provincial and began preparations for the coming separation. These included the reopening of the apostolic school (minor seminary for Vincentian candidates), novitiate, and scholasticate at Saint Mary's Seminary in Perryville, Missouri. On 4 September 1888 Fiat wrote to the Vincentians of the United States that because “the number of houses in your province has grown and because the very considerable distances that separate
them make it difficult for the visitor [provincial] to discharge the duties of his office,” the province was being divided. The boundaries would follow “an imaginary vertical line extending from the west border of the state of Indiana in the north to the state of Alabama [sic] in the south.” The Eastern Province, with MacGill as provincial, would include the houses in Germantown, Niagara, Brooklyn, Baltimore, Emmitsburg, and Bordentown (New Jersey).* The Western Province, under Smith, had the houses at the Barrens, Chicago, La Salle, Saint Louis, Cape Girardeau, Los Angeles, New Orleans, and Jefferson City, also called Bouligny, a suburb of New Orleans. 21

James MacGill, the first provincial of the Eastern Province, was sixty-one years old when he received the position. He had been born at Serably, County Cavan, Ireland, (the same county as Smith in the West) on 20 May 1827. After some preliminary studies at the Irish college in Paris, he entered the Community at the motherhouse in Paris in 1850. He came to the United States in the following year and was ordained to the priesthood at Saint Louis, in 1853. His earliest years of ministry were spent in education (he was one of the founders of Saint Vincent’s College in Los Angeles) and in parish missions and parishes. In 1874 he was one of the nominees for coadjutor bishop of Kingston, Ontario, Canada, but the appointment went to another. During the twenty-one years that he was at the head of the province, only one new house was founded, the mission house at Springfield, Massachusetts. In 1909 he resigned because of age and ill health and died two years later, 18 May 1911, at Germantown, at the age of eighty-four.

He was succeeded by Patrick McHale, a person of great experience in Vincentian governance. His early priestly career had been spent mostly in teaching, both in colleges and seminaries and he had also been a pastor. At the request of the superior general he had gone as commissary (special visitor) to the provinces of Cuba and the Philippines. He had also been sent twice as special visitor of the Western Province, first in 1909 and again in 1918. The latter visitation aroused a good deal of antagonism against him because of his efforts to secure the removal of Thomas Finney as provincial of the West.

*In fact there was no house as such in Bordentown, just land that had been purchased for one.
Under McHale the Eastern Province expanded. A mission house was opened in Opelika, Alabama, a church and school for blacks in Philadelphia, a mission house at Bangor, Pennsylvania, and the first Vincentians were sent to Panama. In 1919 he was elected assistant superior general, the first American to hold that position, and he retained it until his resignation in 1932. He died at Germantown, 12 March 1937.

In the West Smith became the first provincial of the Western Province. In 1898 William Barnwell wrote of Smith that he was “of a choleric temperament, is reserved, and does not speak of the affairs of the province, except to a few. . . . On the first impulse he resents opposition, but afterwards he subdues nature, and often adopts the opinion contrary to his own, and respects the man who gave it.” Barnwell also pointed out that Smith was highly regarded among the bishops of the United States and had been nominated bishop of Brownsville, Texas, but had returned the bulls. As Smith grew older, he became more reclusive and rarely left the seminary at the Barrens. In part this was because of illness—he suffered from a disfiguring cancer of the nose. More and more the administration of the province fell to Barnwell and after 1902 Smith was in virtual retirement.

During his term the province undertook the direction of Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis (1893) and opened Saint Vincent's College, now DePaul University, in Chicago (1897). Parishes were accepted in Kansas City, Missouri, Whittier, California, Long Beach, Mississippi, and New Orleans, Louisiana, the latter being Saint Katherine's parish for blacks. In 1900 the diocesan seminary for New Orleans was reopened at Saint Stephen's parish. Shortly before his death on 23 September 1905, Smith agreed to accept the responsibility for a college and parish in Dallas, Texas.

Barnwell succeeded Smith. The new provincial was a native of Baltimore, where he had been born in 1862. Ordained in 1885, he had spent his entire priestly life at the Barrens where he served as novice director, student director, and superior at Saint Mary's Seminary, Perryville. His four months as provincial, however, were too brief for him to accomplish much. He died of a stroke in Saint Louis on 25 January 1906, at the age of forty-four.

His successor was Thomas O'Neil Finney, one of four brothers who were priests in the Western Province. A native of New Orleans, where he was born in 1872, he had briefly attended Niagara University and then entered the Community in 1892. After his ordination
in 1898, he went to Rome where he received his doctorates in theology and philosophy in 1901. At the time of his appointment as provincial he was director of novices at the Barrens, where one of his younger brothers, Joseph, was a novice under him. He had been ordained a little over seven years.

Finney remained in office for twenty years, and in general it was a trying period for the Western Province. He was a reticent person who tended to give superiors a free hand. As a result DePaul University went heavily in debt. In Los Angeles the financial maneuvers of Joseph Glass not only created a large debt but ultimately led to the closing of Saint Vincent’s College. The province’s worst entanglement was with the University of Dallas, where Finney’s brother, Patrick, was both president and superior. In 1917 it was discovered that Dallas had a debt of over $700,000, and within a short time the province was on the verge of bankruptcy. Though this was avoided, the province lurched from one financial crisis to another until Finney went out of office in 1926. After that he became rector of the Saint Louis Preparatory Seminary and later provincial treasurer.

The personnel in the two new provinces for the most part remained where it was at the time of division. In practice that meant that the Eastern Province had forty priests and twelve brothers in five houses, the average age of the priests being 43.6. The Western Province had forty-seven priests and nineteen brothers in nine houses, with the average age of the priests at 46.9. The eastern houses were clustered in the middle states area of the eastern seaboard, whereas those of the west were more widely scattered. The apostolates of the two provinces were more or less the same: seminaries, missions, parishes, and colleges.

Financial Problems

The move toward division had met with opposition. The arguments most frequently raised against it were the familiar ones of money and manpower. It was claimed that the American province was not financially viable enough to be separated into two parts and that the proposed provinces had insufficient personnel, both in numbers and in quality, to stand alone.

The first argument, that of finances, had some validity. In the 1880s, the American province was not financially strong and, in
fact, had numerous debts. Though there are insufficient data for definitive conclusions, it appears that the financial situation of both provinces was better in the aftermath of division. By 1893 the Eastern Province was free of debts. The Western Province felt financially strong enough to incur the expenses connected with the opening of Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis and Saint Vincent’s College in Chicago. By 1905 about half the houses of the Western Province were self-supporting, and the province had a cash surplus of $20,000.

This happy situation changed drastically in the first decades of this century. By 1909 the Eastern Province had a debt of $400,000, an enormous sum in those days. How or why this happened is not clear. The Western Province was brought to the edge of financial disaster by its three lay colleges: Saint Vincent’s College in Los Angeles, DePaul University in Chicago, and the University of Dallas. In Los Angeles, Joseph Glass speculated in land, made no distinction between personal and house money, and ran up large debts. In Chicago, Peter Vincent Byrne ran up heavy indebtedness (over half a million dollars by 1909) through construction of new buildings. In Dallas, where Patrick Finney was accountable to no one, the debt of $700,000 was incurred without the knowledge of the provincial or his council.

In 1909 Thomas Finney borrowed some $97,000 from the superior general. It did not resolve the situation. By early 1918 the province was on the brink of bankruptcy. Finney appealed to the superior general for a loan of two million francs ($350,877) and his intercession to get a loan from the Spanish province. The general refused, but the province was given a reprieve in the form of a $200,000 loan from the western province of the Daughters of Charity.

Both provinces had to sell land to pay their debts, but the situation was worse in the West. Valuable properties in Cape Girardeau, La Salle, Dallas, and Los Angeles were sold, but not enough was realized to erase the debt. By the mid nineteen-thirties and early forties the situation eased in both provinces. Needed income came from organizations such as the Miraculous Medal Associations, the Vincentian Press, the Vincentian Foreign Mission Society, and The Vincentian magazine. Additional help came from benefactors, such as Mrs. Maria Kulage of Saint Louis, whose largesse paid for the scholasticate building at the Barrens. The contributions of the Edward L. Doheny family of Los Angeles to the financial rescue
Father James Rolando, Provincial
of the Western Province, though important, have probably been exaggerated. There were no comparable benefactors in the Eastern Province. In both provinces improved financial practices and increased professionalism in accounting and investing helped to stabilize the situation.

**Personnel**

The problem of manpower was more pressing in the West than in the East. The latter, with its more concentrated houses and more gradual expansion, was able to retain large numbers in fewer houses and thus avoid overextension. The West had a large upsurge in vocations during the first decade of the twentieth century, and the average age of the personnel was quite young (38.3 years in 1904). In 1910, of the 110 priests in the province, only thirty-seven had been ordained more than fifteen years. Ostensibly a happy situation, this actually produced severe strains. There was no pool of experienced men from which to draw leaders. Individuals such as Patrick Finney, Michael Ryan, William Musson, and Joseph Glass became superiors within four or five years after ordination. These men stayed in power for years and were responsible for serious errors of judgment, especially in finances.

The financial crises and other problems adversely affected morale in both provinces. The result was a flood of complaints to the superior general and the recurring call for extraordinary visitations. In fact, such visitations were surprisingly frequent between 1890 and 1926, especially in the West.

**Moving Forward**

Generally, between 1930 and 1945, both provinces made slow but steady progress. Financial pressures eased somewhat after the years of the Depression. In the East McHale had been succeeded by Frederick Maune, who was provincial from 1919 until 1932. He had been born at Brooklyn, New York in 1871 and had entered the Vincentian Community at Saint Vincent's Seminary in Germantown on 25 August 1888, just nine days before the division of the provinces. He died at Springfield, Massachusetts, on 3 December 1935.
During his term as provincial the Eastern Province entered the foreign mission field a second time, in the province of Kiangsi in China. He established a parish and mission house in Jackson, Michigan, and during his term the province also accepted parishes in Baltimore, Germantown, and Groveport, Ohio.

In 1932 Maune resigned and Slattery succeeded him. William Slattery was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on 7 May 1895. He entered the Community in 1913 and was ordained to the priesthood on 8 June 1919. After graduate studies in Rome, he was assigned to Saint Vincent's Seminary in Germantown, where he remained for twenty-five years, serving as director of novices, superior, and finally as provincial. Slattery's term as provincial was marked by the continuation and expansion of the work of parish missions and parishes that served as mission centers. A mission house was established in Toronto, Canada, in 1933, to which a parish was later attached. A parish was also accepted in Niagara. The new Mary Immaculate Seminary, the scholasticate for the Eastern Province, was begun in 1936 and completed in 1939.

The outbreak of World War II created new problems. During the German occupation of France (1940-1944) all communication with Paris was cut off. Charles Souvay, superior general since 1934 and the first American citizen to hold that position, died on 19 December 1939, shortly after the war began and the Community was governed by a vicar-general, Edouard Robert (1939-1947). Slattery, like most other provincials, was compelled to act on his own. In 1946 he went to Paris to be assistant to the vicar-general and in 1947 the general assembly elected him superior general.

On 16 March 1926 Michael S. Ryan, the rector of Kenrick Seminary in Saint Louis, was appointed provincial of the Western Province. Apparently he had not been consulted about the matter for he quickly secured the testimony of three doctors that his high blood pressure made it impossible for him to accept. Ryan's term was the briefest in the history of the province. On 28 April William P. Barr was appointed to replace him. Barr's name had not been on Thomas Finney's list of suggested replacements, and there is no evidence of anyone's having urged his appointment.

Barr was born at New Orleans in 1881 and entered the Congregation in 1896. He was ordained in Rome in 1903 where he obtained his doctorates in theology and philosophy in 1905. His priestly ministry was almost entirely in educational works. As provincial he showed a great deal of energy and decisiveness. He closed the
University of Dallas, while retaining Holy Trinity parish, and terminated the province's connection with Saint Mary's parish and Laneri College, both in Fort Worth. He made a visitation of the missions in China. During his term the province accepted the direction of preparatory seminaries in Kansas City, Missouri, and Los Angeles. He also began to bring some financial stability to the province, though much of his work was undone by the Great Depression. He left office in 1932 and became a faculty member at Kenrick Seminary. On 21 March 1938 he was reappointed provincial, but because he was believed to have cancer he resigned after three months (3 July 1938). In 1939 he became the first rector of Saint John's Seminary in Camarillo, California, and worked in the seminary apostolate until his death on 20 June 1964.

Barr was succeeded in 1932 by Timothy Flavin, who had been born in Ivesdale, Illinois, in 1887. He entered the Community in 1908 and was ordained in 1916. His entire priestly ministry was spent in education, both at DePaul University and in various seminaries. When he took office, the province was feeling the impact of the Depression. The provincial treasury was so depleted that it was impossible to send students to Rome for higher studies. The office of provincial seems to have been taxing for him, and he resigned for reasons of health in 1938. In subsequent years he taught at the preparatory seminary in Los Angeles, was treasurer at DePaul University, and then was provincial treasurer. He died on 20 February 1946.

After Barr's brief interregnum, Marshall F. Winne was named provincial (3 July 1938). A native of California, he had been involved in both educational and parochial work. At the time of his appointment he was pastor of Saint Vincent's parish in Kansas City, Missouri, and principal of the parish high school. Like Slattery in the East, he found himself cut off from communication with Paris during the Second World War. He was active and energetic. During his term seminaries were accepted at Camarillo, California, San Antonio, Texas, and Bethany, Oklahoma. Three parishes were accepted, two in Texas and one in Perryville, Missouri. He set up the Miraculous Medal Novena Band in the West, opened the house of studies in Washington, D.C., and established the Vincentian Foreign Mission Society. He also began the association with the Religious Information Bureau in Saint Louis.
Diverging Paths

The impact of the division of the provinces seems to have been strong from the beginning. There are relatively few records of individuals' seeking to be transferred from one to the other. Geographical distances and rapid growth of new recruits in both provinces weakened the bonds of mutual knowledge and contact. William Barnwell, who died in 1906, was the last provincial of the Western Province who had lived in the single American province—and that for only three years. Only eighteen years after the division, there was a provincial superior, Thomas Finney, whose knowledge of the East was restricted to a short period as a student at Niagara University. Psychological separation followed hard on geographical separation, in no small part because of the large numbers of candidates who entered both provinces in the early twentieth century.

Both provinces expanded but at different rates and in different ways. As will be evident in later chapters, the Eastern Province remained more concentrated. The new houses that it opened were not at great distances from the older ones and they also contained relatively larger numbers of men. The geographical spread of the Western Province was wider, and some of the houses, especially parishes, had few members. In general, the East remained more consolidated than the West.

The Eastern Province showed the same stability in its apostolates. Although it successfully operated two colleges which later became universities (Saint John’s and Niagara), it still emphasized parish missions, an emphasis that will be treated in full in chapter III. The Western Province, on the other hand, began to concentrate on educational work, both seminary and non-seminary. Especially after 1900, the young and ambitious personnel of the West saw its future in colleges and universities rather than missions or parishes. Despite Fiat’s warnings, the province began an improvident move toward lay education, accepting or negotiating commitments in Chicago, Dallas, Fort Worth, Portland (Oregon), and Lincoln (Nebraska). The resources of the province, both in manpower and money, were not equal to the commitments, and the result was an ongoing series of crises. Thomas Finney, as provincial, revived the time-honored but dubious expedient of using scholastics as teachers in these institutions, something that proved harmful to the formation and education of future Vincentians.
Both provinces became involved in the foreign missions. The Eastern Province began sending men to Panama in 1914 and to China in 1920. The Western Province reluctantly followed suit in 1923. These stories are treated in chapter VI.

The demands of the new century brought to the fore the question of professional preparation of confreres for their apostolates. Already in 1882, Fiat had followed up a decree of a previous general assembly with a circular letter in which he encouraged the provinces throughout the world to send some of their better men to Rome to obtain higher degrees. He also mandated that Vincentian scholastics should take at least two years of philosophy and four of theology. The response of the two American provinces was somewhat slow because of manpower shortages. The East, however, soon had a more or less regular program for such degrees. In the West the response was slower because the provincial, Thomas Smith, believed that such preparation was unnecessary and that any Vincentian could teach any subject in the classroom. Despite that, a few western confreres obtained Roman degrees during his time.

The programs accelerated in both provinces and Roman degrees predominated until about the beginning of World War II. They appear to have been relatively common among those Vincentians who taught in major seminaries. It must be admitted, however, that in the earlier days the quality of Roman doctorates left much to be desired. The academic requirements were not demanding, and the awarding of a doctorate in theology could bring with it, at almost no extra effort, a doctorate in philosophy. Programs of graduate studies outside of Rome began in the 1930s but did not become the norm until after the Second World War. The construction of a house of studies adjacent to the Catholic University in Washington, D.C., in 1940 was of great help to both provinces.

Ethnic differences existed between the two provinces. The vast majority of the Eastern Province was Irish in origin. One reason for this was that the houses of the East were situated in cities with large concentrations of Irish, such as New York and Philadelphia. The ethnic composition of the Western Province was more mixed, reflecting the French and Irish influence of New Orleans and the German influence of Saint Louis. In both provinces the majority of vocations seems to have come from parishes directed by the Vincentians. Fewer came from the Vincentian-directed diocesan seminaries because of a longstanding policy against recruiting in those institutions. Formal vocation recruitment did not begin until
the 1940s. Until 1918 the Western Province had more priests than the East, and the average age was younger. After that the ratio changed drastically and the East has since outnumbered the West.

The influx of first and second generation Irish into the American Vincentian Community after the Civil war coincided with the appearance of a relatively new problem that superiors were ill equipped to cope with: alcoholism. From the 1870s on it was a major topic in the provincials' correspondence with the superior general. As far as can be determined, the problem was more acute in those areas where work pressures were most intense—that is, the missions and the colleges. It is incontrovertible, however, that the overwhelming majority of those mentioned by name were first or second generation Irish. Superiors tried to deal with what was regarded as an increasingly serious situation by warnings, transfers, and as a final measure, expulsion from the Community. In addition to the scandal that was caused, the problem seriously threatened the work of at least one apostolate, the parish missions, and created a great deal of scandal in another, the universities. "How difficult it is to destroy that vice," wrote Rolando in 1875.23

Both provinces experienced a drastic decline in vocations to the brotherhood in the period of the 1920s and 1930s. The reason is not clear. Traditionally, the brothers had occupied a second rank in the community. Until 1949 they were not named in the personnel catalogues but simply lumped together as frères coadjuteurs, along with the number assigned to each house. Until recent times, especially in larger houses, there was a rule of separation between priests and brothers. No matter how long a brother had been in the Community, he never took precedence over even the youngest priest. Whether this sort of ranking or discrimination had anything to do with the decline in vocations is difficult to say. When Brother Edward Puncher took vows in the Western Province in 1937, he was the first brother to do so since 1910. In the years following the Second World War, the Western Province recruited brothers more actively than the East and soon had a larger number.

In the Western Province from about 1905 on, the brothers began to take names in religion, a practice at variance with Vincentian tradition (though it was a common practice in Germany and Austria at that time). How or why this started is not known, but it became general. In 1954, this same province, under its provincial, James Stakelum, decided that the brothers should wear the same type of habit as the pioneer Italian confreres. In Italy this dress,
with an external white collar and a rosary at the belt, had been worn by both priests and brothers and was identical with the habit of the Redemptorists. * Because of complaints from the brothers and the difficulty of tailoring the new habits, the innovation was eventually dropped.

From the 1840s to shortly after the time of the Civil War there also existed another class of person associated with the Community: the oblates. These were pious laymen who lived with the Community but took no vows. They followed at least part of the Vincentian order of the day and contributed their work to it. Many seemed to have given their money to the Community, either during their lifetimes or by will, and then to have come to live and work with it. The oblates were never numerous and most seem to have been older Irishmen. There never has been an adequate study of who and what the oblates were.

The Polish Vice-Province

The establishment of the Congregation of the Mission in Poland dates back to the time of Saint Vincent himself. Throughout its history the Polish province had to suffer much from persecution, restriction, and adversity. After being virtually destroyed during the disastrous partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, 1795), the province was reestablished in 1866. Less than forty years later it would be called on to send missionaries to the New World.

In May 1903 Archbishop Frederick Katzer of Milwaukee invited the Vincentians of the Province of Cracow in Austrian Poland to staff a parish in his see city. Although the Vincentians received their appointment and were prepared to leave for America, the archbishop’s sudden death caused the project to be aborted. Later in that same year the Polish provincial received a request from Brazil to send a team to give missions to the large Polish population in that country. Since he already had a band that had been prepared

*The Redemptorists, in their turn, borrowed their habit from the Vincentians, whose rules and customs strongly influenced the Redemptorists’ founder, Saint Alphonsus Ligouri. All Italian Vincentians continued to dress in that way until 1964. Their dress was changed in that year because of the transfer of the General Curia from Paris to Rome and the consequent need for uniformity.
to leave for the New World, he decided to send them. Their route took them through New York, and there their journey ended. They were invited to give a mission to the Poles of Saint Casimir's parish in Brooklyn. During the course of the mission Bishop Michael Tierney of Hartford, Connecticut, asked them to take over Saint Stanislaus parish in New Haven. The parish was also intended to be a mission center. In 1905 Bishop Tierney gave the confreres a second Polish parish, Saint Michael's in Derby, Connecticut, to be used as a central house and mission center.

The first pastor and superior was Father George Glogowski (1872-1920), a native of Zabrze, Poland. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1898 and was the first superior of the mission (1903-1920) and the person considered to be the founder of the Polish mission in the United States. In addition to New Haven, he was the pastor and superior of the parishes and mission centers at Conshohocken, Philadelphia, and Erie, Pennsylvania. He is credited with being the first vice-provincial, though it seems that vice-provincial status was granted after his death.

In 1906 the Polish Vincentians founded a parish in Conshohocken, where they also briefly directed a high school. In 1908 Tsar Nicholas II relaxed restrictions in Russian dominated Poland, and as a result several of the Polish confreres returned to their homeland. Within two years the situation had altered again, the Vincentians were expelled, and resumed their American mission. In 1909 in response to an invitation from Andrew Ignasiak, a diocesan priest of Erie, Pennsylvania, they preached a mission there and with the help and encouragement of Ignasiak decided to establish a school for Polish boys. In 1910 the Polish provincial, Gaspard Slominski, made a visitation of the Polish mission in the United States. He decided to withdraw his men from Conshohocken, sell the house, and use the money to open the high school in Erie. Saint John Kanty College, as it was called, opened in September 1912.

From 1907 to 1922 the Polish confreres staffed Saint Hedwig's parish in Philadelphia. In 1923, at the invitation of Bishop Thomas Molloy, they assumed responsibility for a large parish, Saint Stanislaus Kostka, in Brooklyn. In 1926 there was another opening in Connecticut, Saint Joseph's in Ansonia, divided from Derby. In 1920 the Polish mission became a vice-province within the territorial boundaries of the Eastern Province. It was notable for a vigorous educational and parish mission apostolate. The first vice-provincial was Paul Waszko (1920-1929), who was born in Twar-
dawa in 1873 and ordained to the priesthood in 1898. He served successively at New Haven (1904-1906) and Derby (1906-1923), Connecticut, and Brooklyn, New York (1923-1927). He served as pastor and superior of the latter two houses while vice-provincial and was instrumental in founding a mission house in Whitestone, New York, in 1922, and in building a residence in Erie for another mission group in 1927. He died in 1929 at the age of fifty-five and was succeeded by Stanislaus Konieczny (1929-1931), a native of Przeworsk, where he had been born in 1876. After serving in the educational apostolate in Poland, he came to the United States in 1905 and served in various parishes. In 1907 he returned to Poland, but came back to the United States four years later. Most of his apostolate was spent in the missions and as editor of the *Family Treasure* magazine. He died in 1940.

The next vice-provincial was Anthony Mazurkiewicz (1931-1956), born at Torun, Poland, in 1877, and ordained in 1903. From 1908 until 1925 he was superior and pastor of various parishes and mission centers. From 1925 until 1929 he was pastor of Saint Vincent's parish in Bydgoszcz, Poland. On his return to the United States he was superior and pastor in Brooklyn (1929-1935), and New Haven (1938-1963), during which time he was also vice-provincial. He died in 1963. Paul Kurtyka (1956-1957) was appointed vice-provincial when Mazurkiewicz stepped down after twenty-four years in the position. Born in Poland in 1891, Kurtyka served as head of the Polish mission in Wenchow, China, from 1932 to 1946 and then came to the United States to join the vice-province. After one year, he handed over his duties to his successor, Casimierz Kwiatkowski (1957-1964). Kwiatkowski was born in Poland in 1896 and ordained to the priesthood in 1920. Most of his priestly life was spent in parish work, and his term as vice-provincial overlapped with his superiorship of the house in Ansonia. During his term of office another mission house was built and staffed in Utica, New York, in 1962. He died in 1969. His successor, Edward Gicewicz (1964-1966), was the first American born vice-provincial. He was ordained in 1938 and during World War II served as a chaplain in the air corps, achieving the rank of major. Both before and after his term as vice-provincial he served in all the principal apostolates of the vice-province.

He was succeeded by Henry Sawicki, who served as vice-provincial (1966-1975), and briefly as provincial of the New England province (23 April to 10 October 1975). In addition to the other
apostolates of the vice-province, Sawicki had also served in the China missions (1937-1945). In 1975 the Polish vice-province became the Province of New England and after Sawicki's brief tenure as full provincial, Julian Szumilo became provincial (1975-1981). During his tenure as provincial, a provincial house was founded in West Hartford, Connecticut; a new apostolate was accepted at Bishop Brady High School in Concord, New Hampshire; a small parish taken over in Lisbon Falls, Maine; and Saint John Kanty Prep School in Erie was closed in 1980 after sixty-eight years of service. Waclaw Hlond (1981-1987) followed as provincial. In 1983, the province accepted direction of Saint Peter's parish in Concord.

From World War II to Vatican II: 1945-1965

It should go without saying that the great expansion of church life in the United States after the World War II found a parallel within the Vincentian Community. The upheavals in society caused by the war exercised a profound influence in general religious practice. At the same time, American Catholics enjoyed greater acceptance as Americans. Catholic identity and visibility were high and respected in many fields.

Large ordination classes in both provinces characterized the immediate prewar period. After interruptions caused by the war, numbers rose again at all levels of formation, from high school through theology. At the same time, provincial leadership began to urge vocational recruitment. James Stakelum in the Western Province made this a theme of many of his circular letters. Although the province's first full time vocation recruiter, Father Joseph Wagner, had been assigned in 1946 during Father Marshall Winne's term, over the objections of many confreres who considered it a departure from Vincentian tradition, Stakelum was the one who systematized and consistently urged on the recruitment program. The Eastern Province appointed its first vocation director, Father William McClimon, in 1948.

James Stakelum was born in New Orleans in 1904. He entered the Community in 1922 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1931 by Bishop Edward Sheehan, C.M. After serving at the Barrens as a faculty member and assistant novice director, he was sent to Rome in 1935 for higher study. In 1936 he was trapped in Barcelona by
the Spanish Civil War and was rescued by an American ship. After obtaining his Ph.D. in philosophy he returned to the United States and served for thirteen years in the seminary apostolate. He was named provincial in 1950 and remained in office until 1962.

Daniel Leary was the first post-war provincial in the East, where he succeeded Slattery in 1945. He was born at Emporium, Pennsylvania, on 18 August 1901 and entered the Community in 1920. Most of his priestly life was spent in educational work, both at Saint John's University and Mary Immaculate Seminary at Northampton (Pennsylvania). He was provincial from 1945 to 1954 and died at Germantown, 2 July 1982.

Growth in the American provinces took the traditional forms of more members and more secure financial resources. These in turn led to the opening of new houses, although it should be noted that these houses did not generally enlarge the type of works the Vincentians were engaged in. Rather, they generally expanded apostolates already undertaken. Breadth of expansion was gradually matched in depth, such as the movement for accreditation of academic institutions, the appointment of provincial deans of studies, and greater professional preparation of the confreres for their works. One concomitant experience, however, was the need to decline the increasing number of requests to staff seminaries. These came from bishops who were, in their turn, experiencing an increase of candidates just as the Community was.

Together with growth in resources came a more active and centralized provincial administration. Areas previously left to individual decisions in matters of observance were now tightly regulated. Fathers Slattery and Taggart in the East and Stakelum in the West were scrupulous in demanding observance of the traditional Common Rules, as well as the increasing number of general and provincial regulations. The number of rules about the time of rising, the length of vacations, reading at meals and the form of grace to be said before them, the use of automobiles, even the style of coffins, came under close scrutiny. The demand for uniformity and obedience reached to the minutest details. In the theoretical framework of the day, the will of God was manifested through duly appointed superiors.

This outlook was reinforced by the publication of the long-delayed Constitutions of 1954. Although these were to govern the Community only briefly (1954-1969), their origins reached back to the general assembly of 1919, which was responding to the demands
of the 1918 code of canon law. There was great insistence at that
time, as during the two succeeding assemblies (1931, 1933) on the
secular nature of the Congregation of the Mission, that is, that it
was not a religious community in the canonical sense of the term.
The process of bringing the Vincentian constitutions into line with
canon law was interrupted by the Second World War. After the war,
when communication and travel became possible again, a draft
constitution was accepted by the thirty-first general assembly (1947),
and this text eventually received papal approval in 1953. Father Slat­
tery, now the superior general, promulgated the new constitutions
in 1954.

These constitutions brought centralization to its peak. They were
largely legal in tone, regulating the life and works of the Congrega-
tion of the Mission in precise detail. Laws were laid down for prece-
dence among members (provincial first, then local superiors,
priests, clerics, and brothers), the duties of superiors, the vow of
poverty, entering and leaving the house, the rule of silence, the prac-
tice of austerity, and the exercises of piety.

It also brought the Vincentian Community much more under the common law for reli-
gious.

Though some parts of these constitutions were unenforceable,
they, together with provincial regulations, served as the subject of
the official visitations made every year or at least every other year
by the provincials. In the West, geographical distances made such
frequent visitations impossible. For that reason Stakelum asked
Paris to establish two vice-provinces in the western region. His
council discussed the matter in mid-1957, and he formulated the
proposal early in 1958. It was quickly approved by the superior
general and announced on 19 July 1958, the date of the dedication
of Saint Vincent's Seminary in Montebello, California, and at that
time the feastday of Saint Vincent de Paul. The two vice-provinces
that resulted were those of the South, with headquarters in New
Orleans, and Los Angeles. Father Maurice Hymel was the first vice-
provincial of the South (1958-1970), followed by Bernard Degan
James Richardson was the first vice-provincial (1958-1968) and was

Since the territory of the Eastern Province was less extensive and
its houses more concentrated, there was no need for such a division.
The East, however, had the Polish Vice-Province within its own
borders. The overlapping of territorial jurisdictions caused difficul-
Father William M. Slattery, Superior General
ties, especially as the vice-province began to lose its Polish character and its members increasingly pressed to become an independent American province.

In both provinces, as the number of houses and men grew and financial viability increased, the spirit among the Vincentians often appeared to be contented and self-satisfied. There was a great deal of overwork, but it was often accepted as an essential part of Vincentian life. The Vincentians of the period knew who they were, what they were about, the value of their ministries, and the direction in which they were going. This outlook, largely shared by the overall American church, was to be rudely challenged within a few years.

The Impact of Vatican II: 1965-1987

The period from the end of the Second Vatican Council (1965) to the present has decisively affected the Vincentian Community in the United States, just as it has every other aspect of the Catholic Church. They have been two decades of change, questioning, turmoil, confusion, discovery, and progress. This period is so recent and the events so close that it is difficult to write it as history. The treatment that follows is more personal and impressionistic than scientifically historic.

During that period, the Eastern Province was led by Fathers Sylvester Taggart (1955-1967), James Collins (1967-1972), John Nugent (1972-1981), and Gerard Mahoney (1981—). The provincials of the Western Province were Fathers James Fischer (1961-1971), Cecil Parres (1971-1975), and after the division of the provinces 1975-1978), Hugh O'Donnell (1978-1987), and John Gagnepain (1987—).

In the decree Perfectae Charitatis the Vatican Council had decreed that each community should study and seek anew its particular charism, particularly as found in the work and teachings of its founder. The thirty-third general assembly, held in 1963 while the Council was still in session, decreed that the superior general should establish a commission to examine the whole life of the Community in the light of Vatican II and help prepare for adaptation. Father Slattery did so on 27 November 1965. From that point on, the move toward aggiornamento (updating) was officially sanctioned in the Congregation of the Mission. This decision was to be
the primary object of the extraordinary general assembly of 1968-1969.

The commission undertook the laborious task of preparing questionnaires and position papers for the use of the provinces in working toward their own concept of adaptation. In the United States this usually took the form of meetings, almost innumerable ones in the recollections of those who took part. These concentrated on the spirit of Saint Vincent, decentralization and collegiality, the role of superiors as fraternal rather than paternal, the meaning of poverty, common prayer, and the role of brothers. The responses from the provinces were returned to the commission which collated them and distributed them as a working document. And so more meetings followed.

In the United States the provincial and vice-provincial assemblies became the forums for extensive, and even acrimonious, debate over the future life of the Congregation of the Mission. Differences of opinion on how fast the changes should come and what their direction should be were deep-rooted. There was a wide representation of opinion and an open forum for discussion at these assemblies. The Western Province, following a lead from the house at DeAndreis Seminary in Lemont, Illinois, rejected the preparatory document altogether and formulated its own.

The thirty-forth general assembly met over a two-year period (1968-1969) and, by any standard, was a difficult series of meetings. Much that was new was argued and debated with great heat. In general the contribution of the American provinces was substantial, perhaps even pivotal, in the deliberations of the assembly. Father Slattery, following the wishes of the majority of delegates, resigned in order to permit the election of a successor who would have a fixed term. Father James Richardson, who had distinguished himself on the preparatory commission, was elected on the fifth ballot and became the second American-born superior general.

It fell to Father Richardson to implement the interim constitutions formulated by the assembly. The issues of subsidiarity and accountability in governance at all levels, with legislative power given to provincial assemblies, brought into question the underlying issue of the nature of the Community in terms of governance. The experience of the Americans led them to work out of a constitutional background of religious freedom, with a democratic and egalitarian tone. They ordinarily sided with the individual against the commonality and set a tone of tolerance and flexibility,
imitating the pluralism which they knew in the United States. On these bases, the Americans tended to view the Community as a federation of provinces with the superior general as the guarantor of unity. The more traditional view saw the Community as an extension of the superior general, successor to Saint Vincent de Paul, with provincials acting as his delegates on the local level. The federalist view prevailed, though in subsequent assemblies many delegates moved to return to the traditional one.

None of this took place without tension. For some too rapid a change had taken place and they felt dislocated. For others the renewal had been unnecessarily slow. These tensions surfaced in the conflict between corporate and individual needs ("doing one's thing" in the expression of the time) and in disagreement over the meaning of the vows, especially poverty and obedience, in an age of affluence and freedom. Many left the Community and the priesthood, embracing the new freedom, at some times feeling cut loose from accustomed support systems, and at others discouraged over the whole process of aggiornamento. This situation led provincial authorities to pay greater attention to the care of individual confreres. Issues such as hospitalization insurance, attention to chemical dependency and mental health, the use of professional counseling services, retirement, and institutionalized sabbatical programs for all confreres, and not just for those involved in academics, came to have a regular place in the thinking of the provinces.

Understandably, renewal varied from place to place. Some houses, often the larger ones, retained a major part of the familiar structure, such as clerical dress, traditional daily vocal prayers, and private celebrations of the Eucharist. Others experimented broadly. Through it all, the inexorable force of change brought about many adaptations in lifestyle. Predominant among these was a change in the role of the superior. Once an office to be coveted for its authority and prestige, a superiorship was now difficult to fill as provincials found the leadership role held in low esteem. The superior found his function to be that of a coordinator and animator of community life, not its center. The superior could no longer command as he once had. Sometimes younger and inexperienced men had to take the job, with a consequent weakening of their authority.

The same tensions were to be found in the discussions about apostolates. In all the provinces, each work received a thorough, if
not always unbiased, review. These reviews or studies showed basic agreement on fundamental values but questioned methods of provincial organization for long-range planning. They likewise highlighted tensions between the demands of community living and the demands of the apostolate. A review of the numbers of institutions opened and closed after 1965 shows that, at least until the 1980s, few if any works were begun and many were closed. In some cases traditional works moved from one location to another, or living arrangements were changed so that the confreres would not be working in the same place in which they were living.

In 1974 the joint assemblies of the province and vice-provinces of the western region voted in favor of erecting the vice-provinces into independent provinces. The issue of permanent province division was both a practical and an emotional one, and the debate was intense. Father Richardson and his council acted on the recommendation, and the effective division took place in 1975. The new provinces kept the same boundaries that they had as vice-provinces, but entered into complex agreements concerning common formation and its finances. Father Louis Franz became the first provincial of the Southern Province (1975-1982), followed by Dennis Martin (1982---). In California Father Joseph Falanga was named provincial (1975-1978), followed by John Grindel (1978-1987) and Jerome Herff (1987---). In that same year, after a long series of requests, meetings, and official visits, the Utica (Polish) vice-province became the independent Province of New England. Father Henry Sawicki, the last vice-provincial, was the first provincial for a brief period.

The general assembly of 1974 reelected Father Richardson as superior general but produced little more than declarations of a hortatory character for the worldwide Community. Nevertheless, the issue of service to the poor, already faced in the 1968-1969 assembly, loomed ever larger and called into question the fundamental end of the Community. This issue was gradually translated into positive action in the provinces and involved matters of lifestyle and concern for the poor, the object of so many of Saint Vincent’s activities.

The general assembly of 1980 had as its task the definitive edition of the constitutions and statutes. Not unexpectedly, the most difficult part of the work was the definition of the very nature of the Congregation of the Mission, that is, its purpose. Intense discussion, maneuvering, and eventually compromise produced a clear
statement: “The end of the Congregation of the Mission is to follow Christ, the evangelizer of the poor.”

The twenty years following the close of Vatican II brought rapid and sometimes traumatic change to the American Vincentians. There was a serious loss of personnel who already belonged to the Community, as well as decline in the number of recruits. The apostolic schools at Cape Girardeau, Beaumont, and Montebello were closed and those at Lemont and Princeton faced serious questions about their future. The direction of diocesan seminaries, the traditional Vincentian work that had first brought the Congregation of the Mission to the United States, declined to such an extent that could no longer be considered a major apostolate. Closures of or withdrawals from diocesan seminaries in the western region included the minor seminaries in Kansas City, San Fernando, and Tucson, and the major seminaries in Houston and San Antonio. In the same period, the Eastern Province withdrew from its seminaries in the archdiocese of Miami, both major and minor, and from Albany, the successor to Our Lady of the Angels in Niagara. All the provinces recast the style and location of training given to their own candidates to a greater or lesser degree.

During this same period, the confreres withdrew from a number of parishes, though with less overall impact on identity as the withdrawal from seminaries entailed. Within the parishes themselves, the confreres experienced major tensions, since the local church no longer existed as the center of Catholic life. Their parishioners, part of a mobile society, came to pick and choose parishes outside of their geographical areas, and parish devotions often moved away from being private and individual to public and communitarian. Symptomatic of this was the decline in the Marian orientation of the Community, as attested by the cessation of special prayers and devotions to Mary, and the virtual demise of the Miraculous Medal Novena Band, especially in the West.

At the same time the individual provinces undertook many initiatives, such as revived interest in parish missions, new foreign mission assignments (Kenya, Burundi, Guatemala), and a more conscious attempt to work with the materially poor, especially with those who had not been evangelized or who lived without the presence of a priest. Several new parishes began, especially in areas in need of priests, and some of these assignments were accepted on a limited time basis, as a way of maintaining a certain kind of missionary mobility. Paradoxically, as the number of recruits to the
Community declined, the number of co-workers from outside the Community grew. Vincentian works began to employ more laypeople and religious women, especially Daughters of Charity, in significant and collaborative positions. Many apostolates and individual confreres experienced demands for better professional training and certification where it had not previously been considered necessary—for example, in hospital chaplaincies. Increasing interest was also shown in prayer, simple living, a home-like quality of common life, and in the personal relationships that should exist among the confreres.

These changes, viewed from the perspective of the 172 years since Bishop Dubourg first met Felix De Andreis, seem rapid and revolutionary to some, overdue and improvised to others. Only the future will tell whether the Community's attempt to return to its sources and original charism will allow the Congregation of the Mission to continue to proclaim Saint Vincent's living of the gospel to the modern world.

ENDNOTES

6. A copy of the contract can be found in AGC, Etats-Unis.
7. Horace, Satires, I, 3:37. It is interesting that the only citation in the contract is of a Roman poet.
8. Life, 98.
10. Contract between Dubourg and the Trustees of the parish of Saint
Mary's church, the Barrens, 18 June 1818, DRMA, II-C (MO)-9-B-1, land grants and deeds.


12. De Andreis to Baccari, 4 February 1820, copy in DRMA, De Andreis letterbook #2.

13. De Andreis to Baccari, from Saint Louis, 23 September 1819, APF, Scritture riferite nei congressi: America Centrale, dal Canada all' istmo di Panamà, 1700-1883. With rare exceptions American born blacks did not begin entering the Vincentian Community in the United States until the 1960s.


16. Penco the Italian assistant general, 26 April 1853, DRMA, Penco Papers, vol. 2.

17. Etats-Unis: Visite de M. Maller 1878, GCUSA, series C, roll 1, item 192, f. 49.

18. Ibid.


20. Etienne to Hayden, from Paris, 10 October 1870, DRMA, Hayden papers.


22. Barnwell to Fiat, 20 April 1898, GCUSA, series A, roll 2, item 420.

23. Rolando to Boré, 12 May 1875, GCUSA, series C, reel 3, item 22.